

BOOM IN INTERNATIONAL PATENT FILING SYSTEM

WIPO received an unprecedented number of international patent applications under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) in 2001. Nearly 104,000 international applications were filed, representing a 14.3 percent increase on the number received in 2000. For the eleventh consecutive year, inventors and industry from the United States of America topped the list of biggest users of the system with 38 percent of all applications, followed by Germany with 13 percent, Japan with 11 percent, the United Kingdom with 6 percent and France with 4 percent.



Breakdown of PCT applications filed in 2001 by technical field of the International Patent Classification (IPC)

Physics	20.9 percent
Chemistry; metallurgy	20.8 percent
Electricity	18.2 percent
Human necessities	16.9 percent
Performing operations; transporting	13.4 percent
Mechanical engineering; lighting, heating, weapons, blasting	5.9 percent
Fixed constructions	2.6 percent
Textiles; paper	1.3 percent

In 2001, seven new countries joined the PCT, namely Colombia, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Philippines, Oman, Zambia and Tunisia. By the end of the year, the PCT had 115 members.

THE PCT SYSTEM

The PCT system offers inventors and industry an advantageous route for obtaining patent protection internationally. By filing one "international" patent application under the PCT, protection for an invention can be sought simultaneously in each of a large number of countries.

Both applicants and patent offices of PCT member States benefit from the uniform formality requirements, the international search and preliminary examina-

tion reports and the centralized international publication provided by the PCT system. The national patent grant procedure and the related high expenses are postponed, in the majority of cases, by up to 18 months (or even longer in the case of some offices) as compared with the traditional patent system. During that time the applicant receives important value-added information concerning the likelihood of obtaining patent protection as well as potential commercial interest in the invention.



PCT-SAFE

The Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) Electronic Filing Project adopted a new name at the end of February, becoming the PCT-SAFE (**S**ecure **A**pplications **F**iled **E**lectronically) Project. The new name reflects the aim of the project to supply a trustworthy, safe and secure means for filing PCT applications.

The publication, in 2001, of the legal framework and technical standards necessary to enable the implementation of electronic filing and processing of international applications in the Administrative Instruction of the PCT fulfilled the first objective of the project. The second objective, the development of PCT-SAFE – a system for the electronic filing of international applications – is expected to be fully operational in December 2003.

PCT-EASY (Electronic Application System)

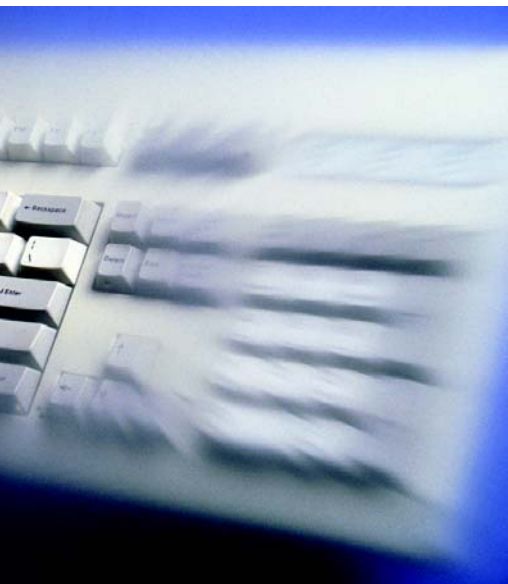
PCT-EASY, launched in 1999, is the stepping stone to the PCT electronic filing system. The maintenance and development of PCT-EASY software is a subproject of the PCT electronic filing project. In the course of 2001 there were some 18,000 downloads of the software from the PCT-EASY website, as well as some 3,000 CDs distributed.

PCT-EASY offers applicants a number of advantages in ensuring that the request part of international applications conforms to PCT requirements and in cost savings. In 2001, 36,428 applications contained request forms prepared using the PCT-EASY software. This figure represents 35 percent of all applications. Of the 86 PCT receiving Offices, as many as 65 now accept international applications using PCT-EASY software. These figures are promising for the use of PCT-SAFE when it comes online in 2003.

PCT WEB SERVICES

New and improved resources on the PCT website contributed to an overall increase in traffic on the WIPO website in 2001. One of the most popular items downloaded from the WIPO site was the PCT request form in editable PDF format, of which nearly 200,000 downloads were recorded. This new resource became available in May 2001 and will be supplemented with other editable PCT forms in 2002.

Regular online updating of the electronic version of the PCT Applicant's Guide contributed to its growing number of regular users in 2001. Visitors peaked at over 6,000 per month in December. The popularity of the PCT Newsletter was boosted by the new searchable database of all "Practical Advice" sections published since 1997 – over 4,500 visitors were recorded for the PCT Newsletter in December. The most popular resource on the PCT web pages remains the electronic version of the PCT Gazette, which regularly receives more than 25,000 visitors per month.



PCT STRATEGIC USAGE SEMINAR

For the first time, in 2001, the Japan Patent Office (JPO) recorded over 10,000 Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) filings in one year. To commemorate the event, while recognizing the increasing importance of the PCT to Japanese users, the

Representatives of companies that are leading users of the PCT discussed the strategic usage of the PCT system and stressed its advantages, calling for broader and more effective use of the PCT system in Japan. Following the opening speech, "Future Pro-patent Policy and Roles of the PCT" by JPO Commissioner Kozo Oikawa, WIPO PCT Director Gary Smith gave a presentation on "The PCT as it Enters a New Era, and its Utilization." Messrs. Osamu Yamazaki, Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., Ltd., David Reed, Procter & Gamble Company, and Wilhelm von Lieres, Siemens AG, each gave a presentation on "Patent Strategies of Enterprise and Advantages" based on their company's experience.

The speakers focused on how best to use the advantages of the PCT system the most economic and strategic uses of the system, and the future direction of the PCT. The PCT

users introduced concrete methods and strategies used in their companies. The seminar concluded with a panel discussion on various issues related to PCT Reform, moderated by Mr. Teruhisa Shimomichi, Patent Attorney, Aoki Associates.

Appreciation of the PCT system has grown significantly in Japan in the last few years, and Japanese applicants are now the third largest users of the PCT.



Panel discussions at the seminar

JPO, in cooperation with AIPPI-JAPAN (Japanese Group of the International Association of the Protection of Intellectual Property) held a PCT Strategic Usage Seminar on January 30 in Tokyo. The seminar attracted some 1,200 participants from major Japanese industries, patent lawyers and practitioners.

