



Study and Gap Analysis

Matching the supply of intellectual property information and services offered by national Intellectual Property (IP) offices to the needs of small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

A study and gap analysis carried out as part of the IPeuropAware project suggests that European companies lag behind enterprises in countries like Japan, China and Korea in their strategic use of intellectual property rights. This leads to lower take-up of new technology, slower growth and a weaker competitive position in major markets.

The DG Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission is working closely with universities and national Intellectual Property Offices to provide targeted information and improved support services that will more closely meet the needs of SMEs. Better focused IP information will help enterprises to develop IP strategies that will help to attract investment and keep them internationally competitive.

This short synopsis sets out the findings of a recent, pan-European study, funded by DG Enterprise and Industry. It summarises how the research into IP awareness and needs was carried out and what the findings were.

IPeuropAware: a major, pan European project

With co-funding and guidance from the DG Enterprise and Industry, almost 30 national Intellectual Property Offices and universities across Europe are collaborating in the IPeuropAware project. An important aim is to improve the IP protection, IP strategy and enforcement of Europe's SMEs.

This is the most far-reaching and comprehensive project ever undertaken in Europe to improve SMEs' knowledge and effective use of intellectual property rights.

As a first step, the organisations involved have commissioned a study and report:

- to identify and analyse sources of IP information and support available from national Intellectual Property offices and associated public organisations, throughout Europe
- to establish the IP information needs and awareness levels of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) – including manufacturing companies and creative businesses– across Europe
- to highlight where business needs are not being met by current provision and identify measures to fill the gaps with better-focused, new materials and services.

A need to match supply of IP information more closely to demand

The IPeuropAware study and report indicates that:

- At the basic level of providing information about IP rights, the need for confidentiality and which IP rights may be most appropriate, there is already a good level of information provision from Europe's national Intellectual Property Offices.
- However, as international statistics show that applications to register IP rights are lower among European SMEs than they are in North America and Japan, national Intellectual Property Offices need to do more to encourage greater use of IP rights.
- At a more strategic level, although directors and managers feel that they are well-informed about using IP strategically, there is little supply of information and services from national Intellectual Property Offices in Europe. The provision of strategic-level IP information and services may need to be increased if Europe is to keep up with global trends.

The evidence

The IPeuropeAware report is based on:

- Detailed analysis of comprehensive databases of all information and support for SMEs available from national Intellectual Property Offices and related government agencies in Europe.
- A synthesis and analysis of other recent reports that examine the match between supply and demand for IP information in parts of Europe, and data on new or discontinued services collected from national Intellectual Property Offices.
- New research based on interviews with hundreds of SMEs from various sectors, across Europe, chosen because of their differing levels of awareness of IP.
- A structured comparison of the two analyses to identify gaps between businesses' stated needs, and the supply of information and services, at four levels:
 - 1. Awareness** of basic IP rights
 - 2. Protection** of IP rights (ownership of patents, trade marks or other IP rights)
 - 3. Management** of IP rights (licensing-in, access to third party IP rights, valuation of intangible assets)
 - 4. Exploitation** of IP rights (commercialisation, out-licensing, enforcement).

The information-gathering and analysis was carried out by representatives from several national Intellectual Property Offices in Europe.

Next steps

The IPeuropeAware project is developing information and support services designed specifically to meet the needs of SMEs. These are made available via national Intellectual Property Offices, some universities and other government agencies.

Up-to-date information can be found on the IPeuropeAware public website:

www.ipeuropaware.eu

For more information, contact us by email:

ipeuropaware@ua.es