



## Intellectual Property Offices Helpdesk services

Twenty national Intellectual Property Office across Europe are putting in place agreed standards for IP Helpdesk services for SMEs

Wherever they are based, Europe's Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) will get fast, accurate and relevant information on intellectual property (IP) from their national Intellectual Property Office. The new standards for each type and level of IP Helpdesk service are based on existing models of good practice in the field of IP for SMEs. Each national Intellectual Property Office has produced its own plan, detailing levels of service and target implementation dates.

### **Each Intellectual Property Office has been assessed and has a plan for implementing IP Helpdesk standards**

After the assessment of the quality and scope of services of all twenty offices, areas for improvement have been identified on national level as well as a 'road map' (Service Implementation Plan) for implementing the agreed standards step by step. As part of these plans, new common targets for SME Helpdesk support have been defined. They include:

- Provision of services related to various IP rights
  - Information on IP examination and registration procedures
  - Responding to enquiries with information such as fact sheets
  - Providing access to databases, including the IP register
  - Guidance in using databases and e-services
  - Signposting to other service providers and specialists in IPR issues
  - Information on enforcement issues
  - Making customers aware of informal intellectual property (IP) protection options.

All participating offices agree that actions for monitoring and measuring performance should safeguard the implementing process and foster customer satisfaction, such as:

- Regular customer surveys
- Procedures for handling customer complaints
- Service level agreement
- Accessibility

### **Appropriate information for different levels and different types of IP**

The IPeuropAware team has agreed a method of classifying SME enquiries according to the level of IP awareness and interest of the enquirer. The aim was to make sure that IP Helpdesks could give an appropriate response to enquiries at specified levels, and for all relevant types of IP right:

Primary rights:

Patents  
Trade marks  
Utility models  
Registered designs

*Sui generis* (type-specific) rights:

Semiconductor topographies  
Geographical indications  
Plant varieties

Creative rights:

Copyright

The national plans specify how information will be supplied through one or more of the following channels:

- the Internet, (downloadable from a website)
- e-mail
- postal service
- on site at helpdesk office
- newsletters
- on-site workstations
- personal assistance.

### **What the IPeuropAware research shows**

As a basis for planning and setting new standards, the national Intellectual Property Offices in IPeuropeAware carried out research into existing IP Helpdesk services. The research findings show that:

- Most national IP offices provide a good level of response to the most common enquiries - 83 per cent meet the agreed standard for patents, for example
- Helpdesks are not quite so efficient at sending out fact sheets and registration forms, with 68 per cent meeting the agreed standard.

- Guidance on enforcement issues and in the area of informal IP protection still has room for improvement, with respectively 47 and 45 per cent meeting the agreed standard.
- The more basic the level of enquiry, the better is the helpdesk response, with close to 100 per cent meeting the common set of basic services level for the better-known types of IP right (patents and trade marks).

### **Models of good practice**

Examples of good practice have been identified, to assist national IP offices in writing and upgrading their own implementation plans, under several headings:

- Integrating the findings of the helpdesk project into a wider environment inside and outside each national IP office.
- Organisation and project management of a multiple level helpdesk and external IP information sources.
- Building quality management and quality assurance measures into the implementation plan.

### **Which national Intellectual Property Offices are involved?**

The IPEuropeAware project has the active involvement of the national Intellectual Property Offices of:

- |                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| • Austria        | • Italy          |
| • Bulgaria       | • Luxembourg     |
| • Czech Republic | • Malta          |
| • Denmark        | • Poland         |
| • Estonia        | • Portugal       |
| • Finland        | • Romania        |
| • France         | • Spain          |
| • Germany        | • Sweden         |
| • Greece         | • Turkey         |
| • Hungary        | • United Kingdom |

### **IPEuropeAware: a major, pan European project**

With funding and guidance from the European Commission, almost 30 national Intellectual Property Offices and institutions across Europe are collaborating in the IPEuropeAware project. An important aim is to improve the IP protection, IP strategy and enforcement of Europe's Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). IP Helpdesks are the first point of contact for most SMEs and their advisers when seeking information about IP rights and how best to protect and enforce those rights.

### **Next steps**

All 20 of the national Intellectual Property Offices in the IPEuropeAware project now have an individual implementation plan to bring their helpdesks up to the agreed and consistent standard, meeting the needs of SMEs. Many of the offices already meet the agreed service standard in relation with some or most of the targets. Where there remain

improvements to be made, the implementation plans specify the resources required the actions to be taken and the timescales.

It is expected that all 20 national Intellectual Property Offices will meet most of the agreed service standards by February 2011.

### **Comprehensive directory of IP information sources**

A related result within the IPeuropAware project is the publication of a comprehensive Signposting Directory. This lists all contact points in each of the 20 states where SMEs and their advisers can obtain information and help on IP. The directory lists sources of information for different types of IP rights as well as for services related to IP, such as sources of finance and commercial advice. Contact points listed include:

- National IP and Patent Offices
- National government support services for SMEs
- Trade and Industry Associations, Chambers of Commerce
- Patent Attorneys and IP lawyers
- Technology and business funding organisations
- Universities and libraries

Up-to-date information will be posted on the IPeuropAware public website:

[www.ipeuropaware.eu](http://www.ipeuropaware.eu)

For more information, contact us by email:

[ipeuropaware@ua.es](mailto:ipeuropaware@ua.es)