

PRESS RELEASE:

2012 annual results of the European Patent Office (EPO)

2012 – a record year for the European Patent Office

- **EPO registers record numbers of patent filings and grants**
- **Growth fuelled mainly by Asia, but Europe's share also significant**
- **Europeans break their 2008 filings record**
- **Samsung takes No. 1 spot among applicants**
- **European firms lead in eight of top ten technology fields**
- **Benoît Battistelli: “European companies are innovating their way out of the crisis”**

Brussels, 6 March 2013. Europe's innovative powers continue to grow: in 2012, the number of patent filings at the European Patent Office (EPO) originating from the 38 EPO member states reached a new peak, beating the previous record set in 2008.

“The growth of filings from European businesses is a clear indication that industry here has opted to innovate its way out of the economic crisis”, EPO President Benoît Battistelli said today, as he presented the EPO's 2012 annual results in Brussels. “The patent filings of today are shaping the innovations of tomorrow. These results confirm that Europe is not only a prime location for R&D activities but also valued as a stronghold of innovation by both technology generating and exporting companies.”

Last year, the EPO received a total of 257 744 patent filings from all over the world. This represents a 5.2% increase over 2011 (244 934) and sets a new record. The EPO also published 65 687 granted patents, 5.8% more than in 2011 (62 115).

Europe consolidates its position as strong technology region

36.5% of all filings came from the 38 EPO member states (2011: 37.5%). The top five countries in 2012 were the US (24.6%), Japan (20.1%), Germany (13.3%), China (7.3%), and Korea (5.6%). The most active European countries after Germany were France (4.7%), Switzerland (3.2%), the UK (2.6%) and the Netherlands (2.5%).

With 2.3% growth, the number of filings from Europe has recovered well from the slight decline in 2011 (-0.9%). The steepest growth rates, however, again came from Chinese (+11.1%), Korean (+9.3%) and Japanese (+9.1%) companies. Accordingly, Asian countries accounted for more than half of total growth.

The EPO also published a new record of granted patents: 65 687. The lion's share of 49.7% (2011: 52.5%) again went to European companies, whose total of 32 628 was more than the grants to US (14 605) and Chinese, Korean and Japanese firms (15 509) taken together.

Europe dominant in automotive sector and environmental technologies

European companies were leading applicants in eight of the ten most active technology fields. They were particularly dominant in transport (especially the automotive and aeronautic sectors), where over 60% of all applications came from EPO states. With shares of 50% and more, applicants from Europe also led the way in measurement technology, engines, pumps, turbines (particularly in clean energy technologies) and organic fine chemistry.

Medical technology was again the field with the most applications. This sector was dominated by US applicants (42%), followed by Europe with 38%.

In computers and IT, US and Asian firms held sway. Filings in digital communication were up by more than 20%, by far the highest growth rate of all technologies. Chinese and also Korean firms were the driving force behind that development: digital communication accounted for 42% of all patent applications originating from China.

Samsung largest applicant, four Europeans among top ten

The dynamic evolution of the electronics sector is also reflected in the list of the largest applicants at the EPO. Among the top ten firms were four European companies, four companies from Asia and two from the US. For the first time, however, the ranking was topped by an Asian company, Samsung, followed by Siemens and BASF. Robert Bosch (ranked 6th) and Ericsson (9th) are the two other European companies in the top ten. A Chinese company – ZTE – broke into the top ten for the first time, advancing from 43rd to 10th position.

“Unitary patent – a milestone in improving European competitiveness”

The strong position of European companies in the field of patents is also significant with a view to the introduction of the unitary patent and the Unified Patent Court: “The agreement reached by the EU member states is a good decision for Europe, as it will reduce the cost of patenting by simplifying the European patent system. Enforcement, too, will become consistent throughout the EU. These are milestones for improving Europe's competitiveness, as European businesses will be put on a par with their competitors in Asia and the US”, the EPO President said. “We at the EPO are proud that the EU has entrusted us with delivering the unitary patent, recognising the role of the EPO as a key enabler of innovation in Europe”, he added.

About the EPO

With almost 7 000 employees, the EPO is one of the largest European public service institutions. Its headquarters are in Munich and it also has offices in Berlin, Brussels, The Hague and Vienna. The EPO was founded with the aim of strengthening co-operation between the European states in the field of patents. Through the EPO's centralised patent granting procedure, inventors are able to obtain patent protection in the 38 member states of the European Patent Organisation.

More information and detailed statistics can be found here (links to the EPO's Online Annual Report):

[Rankings for patent filings at the EPO, from Europe and worldwide](#)
[Country rankings for number of European patents granted](#)
[Rankings for top 50 patent-filing companies](#)
[Rankings for the most active technical fields](#)

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Photograph of the President of the EPO
Photo gallery of the press conference

CV of the President of the EPO
Press conference slides
Charts from slides in high resolution (JPEG)

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