

THE EUROPEAN PATENT JOURNEY: FROM THE 1474 VENETIAN STATUTE TO THE EPC AND BEYOND

ROBERTA ROMANO-GÖTSCH | CHIEF SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE | 9-11 SEPTEMBER 2026

WHAT HAVE EARLY PATENTS OF THE 15TH CENTURY GOT TO DO WITH STAINED GLASS?



THE VENETIAN STATUTE OF 1474

- ❑ **Patentability requirements:** The invention had to be new, be an ingenious device, be “of no small utility”.
- ❑ **Exclusive right:** Inventors were granted a 10-year protection in the Serenissima Republica.
- ❑ **Enforcement:** Reproduction of the invention in the Repubblica only prior agreement or license from the inventor.
- ❑ **Public Disclosure:** Inventors had to register their innovation to the Municipal authorities (Provveditori de Comun). This public records served as a form of “publication”.



*"Qualunque persona in questa città farà alcuna **nuova et ingegnosa** invenzione, non prima provata da altri, potrà farla **registrar nel registro** de' nostri provveditori di comun; con la qual conservatione **niun altro per el territorio nostro** la potrà far, et con essa exercitar, si non cum la **licentia e consentimento** del auctor, **per anni X.**"*

THE EUROPEAN PATENT CONVENTION

- ❑ **Patentability requirements:** An invention must be new, inventive, and industrially applicable. It must relate to a product, process or apparatus.
- ❑ **Exclusive right:** EP patent protects the invention and the inventor for up to 20-year in up to 46 states.
- ❑ **Enforcement:** Prevents duplication; provides the legal basis for licensing and R&D co-operation.
- ❑ **Public Disclosure:** Patent applications are published 18 months after the date of filing (or earliest priority date).



THE EPO AT A GLANCE

Our mission



We provide patent protection for inventions in up to 46 countries on the basis of one single application

6 195

employees, of which around



3 991

highly qualified **patent examiners**
working in all fields of technology

2nd largest



intergovernmental institution
in Europe

Our locations

Munich (headquarters), The Hague,
Berlin, Vienna and Brussels



Self-financing



IFRS Budget of **EUR 2.0bn**
without any public funding

IFRS: International Financial Reporting Standards

OUR HISTORY

1973 ● Diplomatic Conference in Munich

5 October 1973 ● **Signature** of the European Patent Convention (EPC)
by 16 countries

1977 ● **Entry into force** of the EPC in seven countries
Founding of the European Patent Organisation
Founding of the European Patent Office

2023 ● **Celebration of 50 years of the EPC**

2027 ● **50 years European Patent Organisation and
of the European Patent Office**

... TO TODAY... AN AREA WITH MORE THAN 715M INHABITANTS

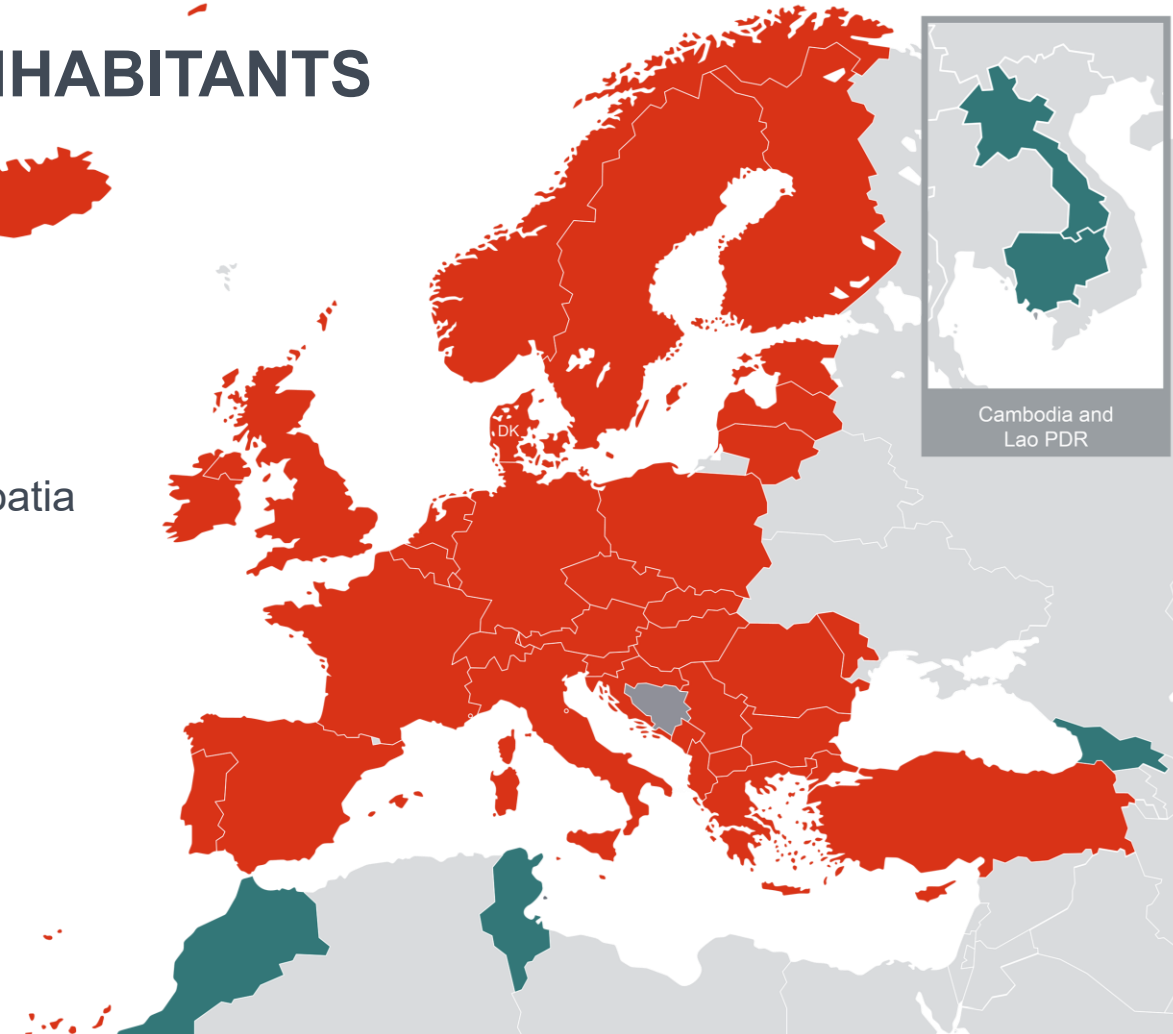
40 European member states

Belgium • Germany • France • Luxembourg • Netherlands
Switzerland • United Kingdom • Sweden • Italy • Austria
Liechtenstein • Greece • Spain • Denmark • Monaco
Portugal • Ireland • Finland • Cyprus • Türkiye • Bulgaria
Czech Rep. • Estonia • Slovakia • Slovenia • Hungary •
Romania • Poland • Iceland • Lithuania • Latvia • Malta • Croatia
Norway • North Macedonia • San Marino • Albania
Serbia • Montenegro • Montenegro • Republic of Moldova

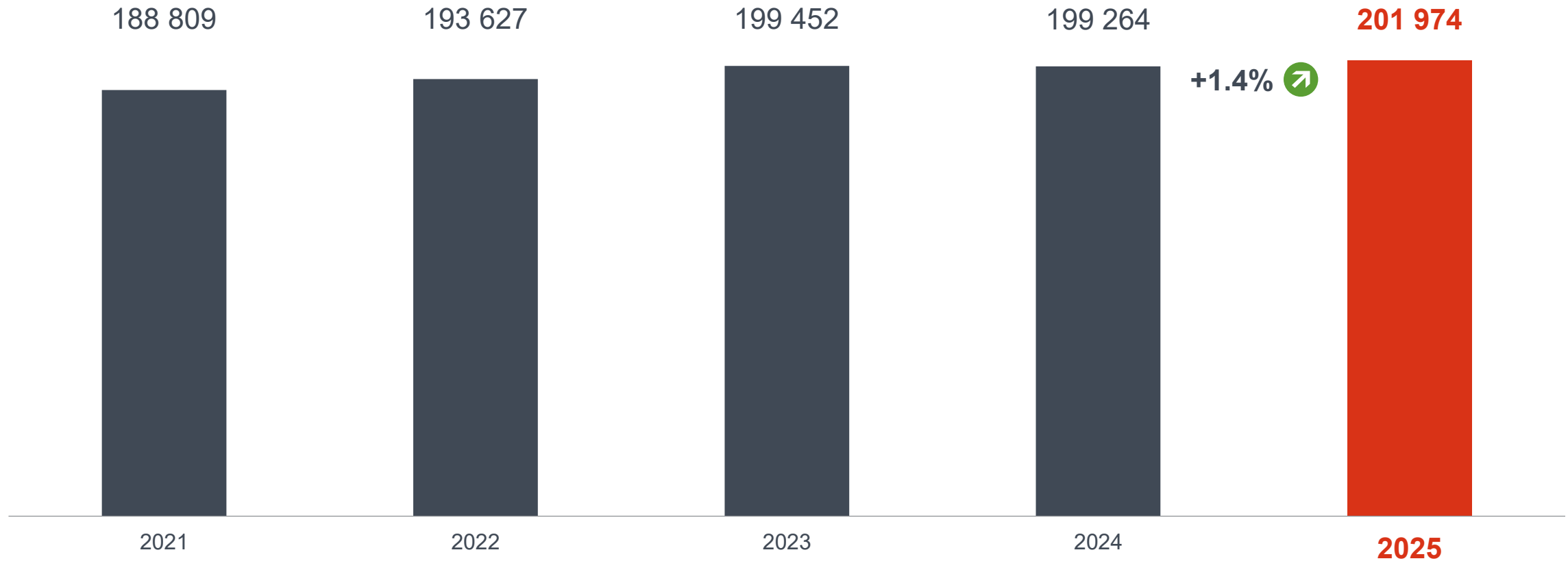
One European extension state Bosnia and Herzegovina

Five validation states

Morocco • Tunisia • Cambodia • Georgia • Lao People's
Democratic Republic



GROWTH OF EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATIONS



Source: EPO. Status: 02.02.2026.

European patent applications include direct European applications and international (PCT) applications that entered the European phase during the reporting period.

LEADING FIELDS OF TECHNOLOGY

TOP 10

			2025	Change 2024	
1	 Computer technology		17 844	+6.1%	
2	 Digital communication		17 802	+11.4%	
3	 Electrical machinery, apparatus, energy		16 997	+5.3%	
4	 Medical technology		15 905	+1.3%	
5	 Transport		9 846	-1.8%	
6	 Measurement		9 487	-1.2%	
7	 Biotechnology		8 203	-3.3%	
8	 Pharmaceuticals		7 833	-6.3%	
9	 Other special machines ranging from agriculture to 3D printing		6 284	+0.4%	
10	 Organic fine chemistry		6 000	-1.5%	

Source: EPO. Status: 02.02.2026.

European patent applications include direct European applications and international (PCT) applications that entered the European phase during the reporting period.

The definition of the fields is based on the WIPO IPC technology concordance.

COMMITTED TO SHARING PATENT KNOWLEDGE



**Espacenet - Patent
search**



**Over 18 Millions
total visits**



European Patent Register

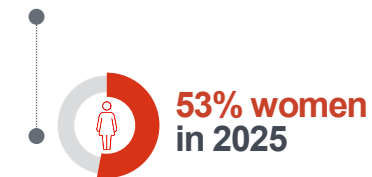


**37 263 350
total visits**



Training catalogue 2025

**27 749
learners,**



COMMITTED TO SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Observatory publications

Economic studies



Technology insight reports

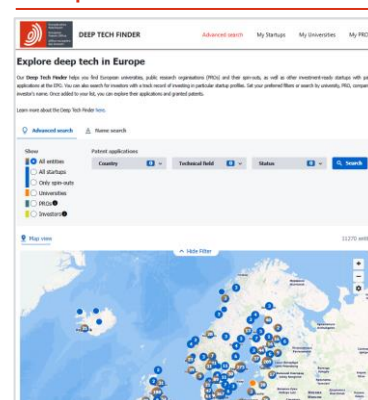


Innovation case studies

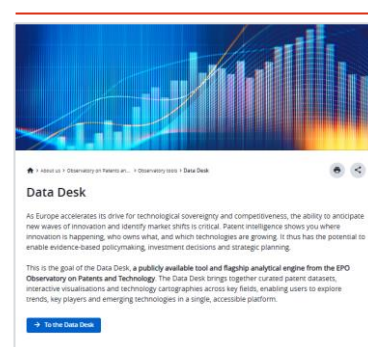


Tools

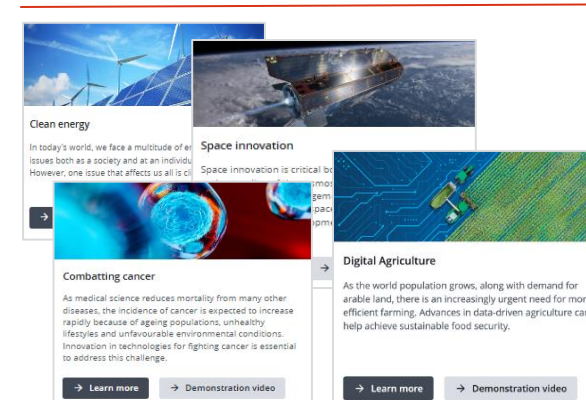
Deep Tech Finder



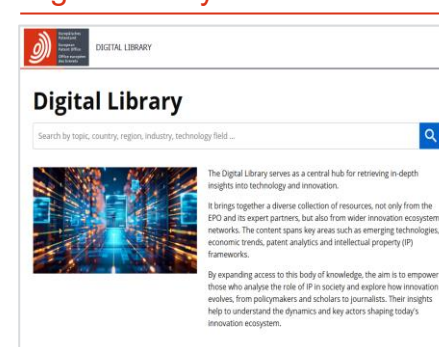
Data Desk



Technology platforms



Digital Library



Economic studies and in-depth **analysis** of **technological trends** and **innovation ecosystems** over the last decades e.g. in **assistive robotics and quantum**

Most promising technologies, regional and sectoral variations, and **players**.

... and
more to
come.

DEEP TECH FINDER dtf.epo.org

Exploring deep technology in Europe • free digital tool

Over 13 000 startups and research institutions



68 tech fields

Localise startups in their
technological fields



15 industry sectors

Combine **business** information
with **patent** information



Growth stage

Detect startups in their
development stage



Funding

Identify **investors**
in startups



European patents

Access to patent data on
Espacenet

Latest releases



New filters for **digital agriculture**,
quantum technologies and
battery circularity



Top European **public research**
organisations



Improved technology exploration



Performance of European
startups dashboard, in the
Data Desk tool

DEEP TECH FINDER TOOL: FILTER BY ENTITY, TECHNICAL FIELD

Show

- ☐ All entities
- ☐ All startups
- ☐ Only spin-outs
- ☒ Universities
- ☐ PROs
- ☐ Investors

Patent applications

Country 0

Technical field 20

Status 0

Reset filters

Search

Map view

List view (top 100)

376 universities

Politecnico Di Torino

Location: Torino, Italy

Academic personnel: 1226

Students: 35231

PhD Students: 1260

Founding Date: 1906

<https://www.polito.it/>

European patent applications: 218 | Granted: 108

Spin-outs: 9

+ Add

Name	Location	Spin-outs	Academic personnel	PhD students	Students	Applications	Founded	My list
61 Politecnico di Milano	Italy, Milano	20	2512	2171	51833	429	1863	+ Add
62 Politecnico di Torino	Italy, Torino	9	1226	1260	35231	218	1906	+ Add
63 University of Bologna	Italy, Bologna	5	4139	2468	91504	180	1088	+ Add
64 Sapienza University of Rome	Italy, Rome	5	4159	3683	117498	163	1303	+ Add

DATA DESK datadesk.epo.org

- Free digital tool with interactive visualisations and improved graphical interface
- Curated cartographies across strategic technology fields



Key trends and indicators



Regional and country profiles

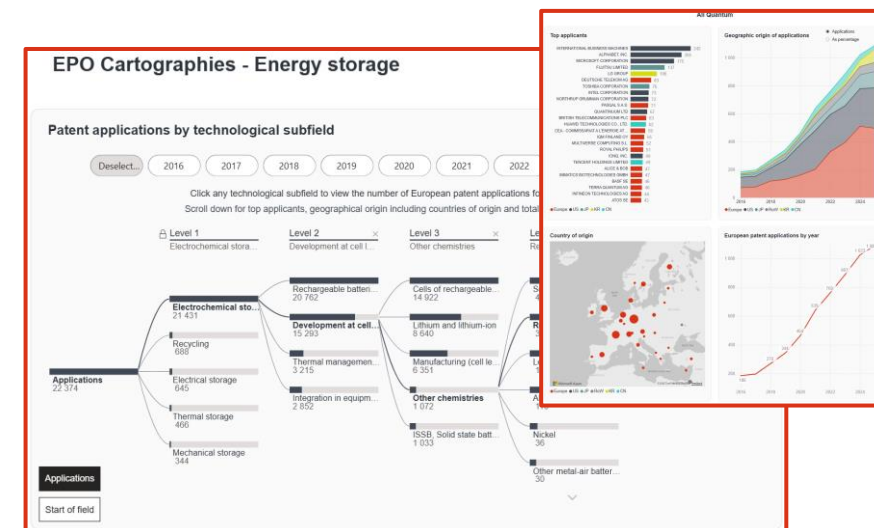


Performance of deep tech startups



Strategic technologies

1. Energy storage
2. Hydrogen
3. Power grids
4. Quantum
5. Solar, photovoltaics



Future development

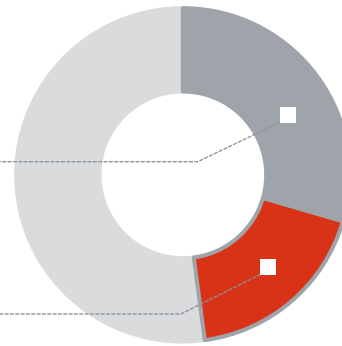
- New search filter functionality
- Addition of more dashboards, such as technology cartographies, co-application rankings for universities and research organisations, outcome of EPO procedures and IP5 statistics

IMPORTANCE OF IPR-INTENSIVE INDUSTRIES FOR EU ECONOMY

Contribution to EU GDP

IPR-intensive industries,
€ 7.7 trillion, 47.9%

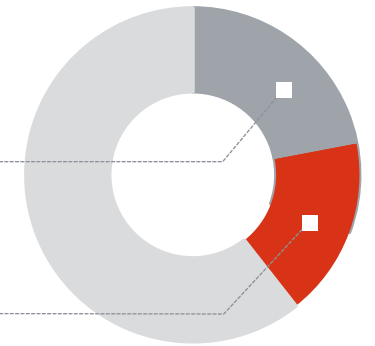
Patent-intensive industries,
€ 3 trillion, 18.4%



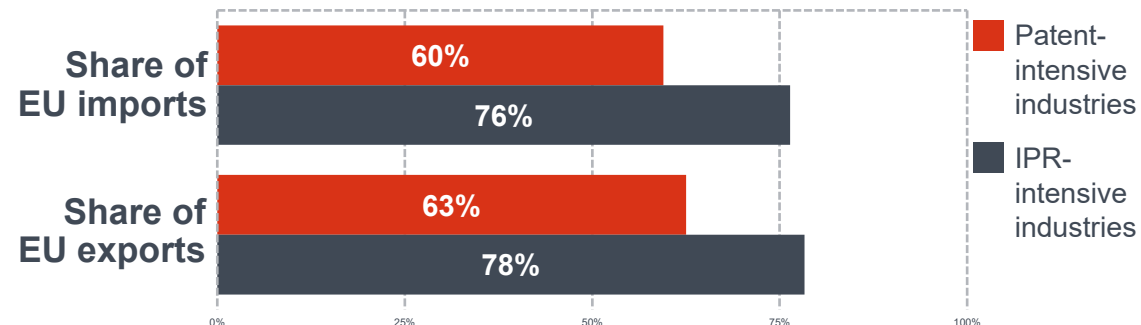
Share of EU employment

IPR-intensive industries,
65.5 million jobs, 30.6%

Patent-intensive industries,
25.2 million jobs, 11.8%



Contribution to EU trade



Wage premium



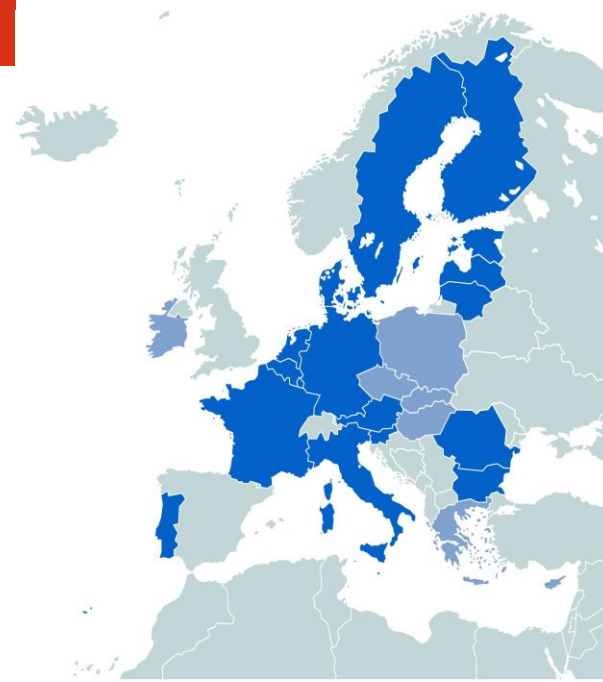
Source: IPR-intensive industries and economic performance in the European Union – Joint Report 2026 from the EPO and EUIPO - Data 2021-2023.

Note: IPR: IP rights: trade marks, patents, designs, copyrights, geographical indications and plant variety rights.

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES... THE UNITARY PATENT SYSTEM

UNITARY PATENT

- Based on a European patent, granted by the EPO under the EPC
- One centralised post-grant procedure at the EPO
- Broader uniform protection in 18 EU member states, upon a single request of the patent holder
- An additional option for patent holders, alongside the existing European and national patent systems

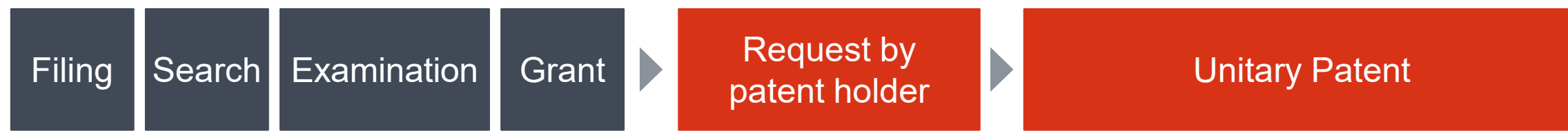


UNIFIED PATENT COURT

- Agreement on a [Unified Patent Court](#) – an international agreement setting up the Court
- One uniform litigation system providing greater legal certainty at reduced cost
- Unified jurisdiction with direct cross-border effects
- Uniform and harmonized jurisprudence

The Unitary Patent system entered into operation on 1 June 2023

A SIMPLE ONE-STEP PROCEDURE AFTER GRANT



! Based on a European patent, granted by the EPO under the EPC

! Same application and examination procedure

! High-quality product and service

! Registered in one single step at the EPO

! EPO acts as one-stop shop for all post-grant administration and all subsequent transactions

! No need for multiple parallel national validations (administrative procedures, fees, translations)

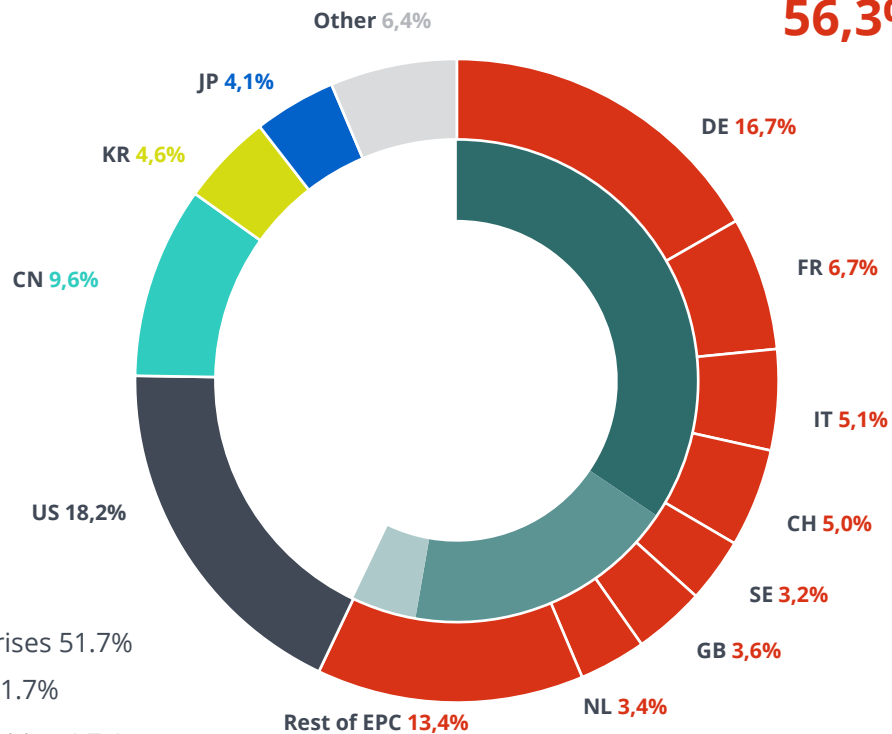
! Attractive fee level and lump sum payment for SMEs, natural persons etc. to compensate for translation costs

UPTAKE AND PROPRIETOR MAKEUP (STATUS 02.07.2026)

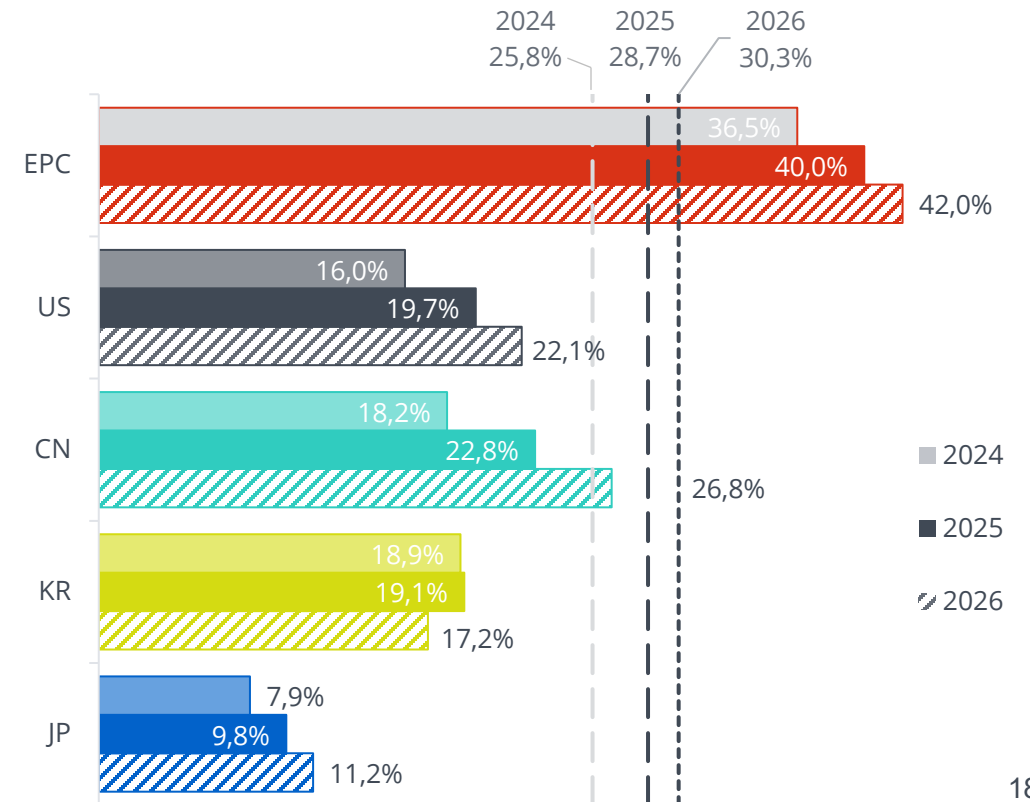
Origin and makeup of proprietors 2026

Non-EPC
43,7%

EPC40
56,3%



Uptake rate



... 2027 AND BEYOND: SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE 2025-2045

NEW STUDY

01 Retrospective assessment

Comprehensive assessment of IP ecosystem development from 2005-2025, identifying key developments and inflection points.

02 Future scenarios

Development of plausible scenarios outlining how Europe's innovation and technology landscape may evolve through 2045.

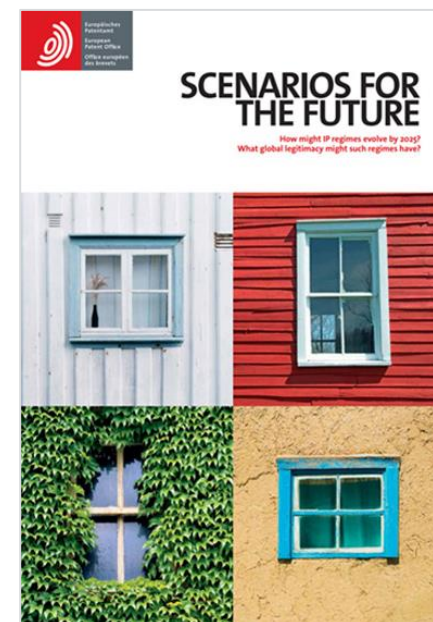
03 Strategic implications

Analysis of scenarios impact on the patent system and its stakeholders.



DASHBOARD

To ensure that the scenarios and the assumptions behind them remain connected to the evolving reality and allowing fine-tuning as we evolve towards 2045.



For more information visit the project's webpage



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