

Preface

From 1985 to 2008, the European Patent Office (EPO), the Japan Patent Office (JPO), and the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), which are commonly referred to as the Trilateral Offices in the patent community, jointly produced the Trilateral Statistical Report (TSR). Collaboration between the Trilateral Offices has proved to be successful in the area of patent statistics. Since the 2008 edition, the TSR expanded to become the “Four Office Statistics Report (FOSR)” with the inclusion of one additional major player in the worldwide intellectual property (IP) activity, the Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO). KIPO is the editor of this 2009 edition.

This is an annual compilation of patent statistics. In addition to promoting a better understanding of the importance of patenting in the world, the report explains each Office’s operations and informs about patent grant procedures. In order to do this, the report discusses background activities at each Office, reviews worldwide patenting developments and then compares the patent related work at the Four Offices. The FOSR supplements annual reports for each of the Four Offices and also presents specific statistics that are collected by the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and as available in publications databases.

Applications for patents among the Four Offices slightly decreased in calendar year 2009. Together the Four Offices experienced a 5 percent decrease in patent applications compared to 2008. At the USPTO, the total patent application filings in 2009 were almost the same as those in 2008. On the other hand, there was a decrease by 8 percent at EPO, by 11 percent at JPO, continuing a declining trend, and by 4 percent at KIPO. JPO had the highest proportion of domestic filings at almost 85 percent. The proportion of domestic filings at EPO was 51 percent, at KIPO was 78 percent and at USPTO was 48 percent. In terms of fields of technologies, Electricity represents the highest share at each Office except for USPTO, and Textiles, paper represents the lowest. The Four Offices granted a combined total of 469 399 patents in 2009, which is a 2 percent decline from the 479 951 patents granted in 2008. The JPO and USPTO granted approximately 9 and 5 percent more patents in 2009 than in 2008, while EPO and KIPO experienced a significant decrease.

There seem to be diverse factors that influence patent filing trends. In the past, the major causes were changes in patent rules and fees. As the economy has become considerably more important in patent activities, the co-relation between the economy and patent filings is now becoming more obvious. For example, according to the *World Economic Outlook* of the International Monetary Fund, the global economic crises of 2009 caused negative growth¹ and thus seem to lead a decrease in patent filings. Nonetheless, a quantitative interpretation of worldwide patenting activity in terms of how it is specifically affected by economic factors is not easy. Other factors, such as political and technological considerations, need to be considered as well.

It was already mentioned above that there were some declines in numbers of patent filings in 2009. But previous downturns in the world economy have usually led to very mild corrections in the upward path of patent demand. On this basis we can expect that the demand for patents will grow again soon.

¹ *World Economic Outlook*, April, 2010, IMF.

Globalisation of markets and production continue to be key business trends. There is a worldwide tendency to harmonise patent laws towards common international standards and to stimulate the flow of patent applications across borders. This has had a positive impact on worldwide patent growth over recent years.

The Four Offices hope that the report brings useful information to the reader. The Offices will continue to improve and to refine the report to better serve expectations and objectives of the public. The report is also available on both the Trilateral Co-operation web site² and via a link from the new statistics pages at the Five IP Offices web site³. Material can be freely reproduced in other publications but we request that this should be accompanied by a reference to the title and web site location of this report. An additional annex appears in the web version that gives a glossary of patent related terms, and there is also a file that contains statistics from the report over a greater number of previous years.

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² <http://www.trilateral.net/statistics/tsr.html>

³ <http://www.fiveipoffices.org/stats.html>