

## 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, had 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 activity, the Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO). JPO serves as the editor of this 2010 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. 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 reports for each of the Four Offices and also presents specific statistics that are collected by the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and made available in their published data sets.

The total number of applications in 2010 among the Four Offices recovered slightly, after an earlier decline from 2008 to 2009. Together the Four Offices averaged a year-on-year increase of 5 percent in patent applications in 2010. There was a 12 percent increase at EPO, a 4 percent increase at KIPO, and a 7 percent increase at USPTO; while on the other hand, JPO experienced a 1 percent decrease, continuing a downward trend. JPO had the highest proportion of domestic filings, at almost 84 percent. The ratio of domestic filings at EPO was 49 percent; at KIPO, 77 percent; and at USPTO, 46 percent. In terms of technical fields, the highest number of patents was filed in Electrics/Electronics at each Office, except USPTO; while the lowest number at all Offices was filed in Textiles/Paper. The Four Offices in combination granted a total of 569 258 patents in 2010, a significant 21 percent increase from the 469 876 patents granted in 2009; with EPO 11 percent more patents, JPO 15 percent more, KIPO 21 percent more, and USPTO 31 more year-on-year.

There seems to be diverse factors that influence patent filing trends. In the past, some major causes were changes in patent rules and fees. As the economy has become a considerably more important factor in patent activities, the correlation between the economy and patent filings is now becoming more obvious. According to the *World Economic Outlook* of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the global economic crisis since 2008 has caused an economic slowdown<sup>1</sup> affecting the number of patent filings, which actually decreased in 2009. In 2010, however, economic recovery has increased its power, and the world economic growth was achieved by approximately 5 percent according to the IMF. Needless to mention, a direct quantitative interpretation of worldwide patenting activities is not easy. Other factors such as political and technological developments need to be considered as well.

Nevertheless, as already mentioned above, most counts related to patent filings in 2010 show an upward trend. This illustrates that patent filings trends are correlated to

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<sup>1</sup> World Economic Outlook, April 2011, IMF, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2011/01/>

## Four Office Statistics Report 2010

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developments in the world economy and may in fact be leading indicators in the recovery phase of the business cycle.

Globalisation of markets and production continue to be key business trends. There is a worldwide tendency to harmonise patent laws with 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 this report brings useful information to the reader. The Offices will continue to improve and refine the report to better serve expectations and objectives of the public. The report is also available on-line<sup>2 3</sup>. Materials can be freely reproduced in other publications but we request that this should be accompanied by a reference to the title and a 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 covering more years.

EPO, JPO, KIPO and USPTO

With co-operation of WIPO

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<sup>2</sup> Trilateral Co-operation web site, <http://www.trilateral.net/statistics/tsr.html>

<sup>3</sup> Five Offices website, <http://www.fiveipoffices.org/stats.html>