Kluwer Patent Blog

Top European patent prosecution firms of 2020

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In 2020 Grünecker, Hoffmann Eitle, Dehns, Marks and Clerk and Vossius and Partner were the numbers 1 to 5 of a list based on the number of issued B1 patents where these firms were listed as the address for service on the EPO register. Company inhouse departments are included in the chart; Siemens has the highest ranking with number 18.

The list, which was compiled by European patent attorney Richard Gillespie of Inventorship.eu, confirms Munich is still at the centre of patent prosecution activities. Both Grünecker, Hoffmann Eitle and Vossius and Partner have their roots and a strong presence in the city. London is runner up with six firms in the top ten: Dehns (3), Marks and Clerk (4), HGF (6), Mewburn Ellis (8), Carpmaels and Ransford (9) and D Young & Co (10) have their origin in the UK capital. Boehmert & Boehmert (7) has its roots in Berlin.

The list is restricted to numbers of B1 grants and doesn't take into account, for instance, the importance of the patents that were granted – which is of course much more difficult, if not impossible, to establish. So what are the numbers? Well, Grünecker was responsible for 3218 granted patents in 2020, Hoffmann Eitle 2863, Dehns 2854, Marks and Clerk 2088 and Vossius and Partner 1971. The complete list comprises 441 firms and can be found here. Firms or company inhouse departments which were listed on the EPO register less than 50 times were omitted.

EPO Patent Index

According to EPO's Patent Index 2020, 133 715 patents were granted by the EPO last year, down 3% in comparison with 2019. Most patents went to (companies/residents of) EPO member states (44%: 15% to Germany, 6% to France, 4% Switzerland, 3% Netherlands and 3% to the UK), 26% to the US, Japan 15%, China and South Korea each 5%, and 5% went to other states.

Patent applications at the European Patent Office in 2020 remained stable at 180 250 (down 0.7% on 2019). "This apparent status quo conceals two contrasting trends, with a fall in applications from companies based in the US, Europe and Japan, offset by continuing growth in applications from companies in South Korea and China", according to the patent index.

Patenting activity in the healthcare sector remains strong, with the top field, medical technology, up 2.6% to 14 295 patent applications. Number 2) is digital communication 14 122 (+1,0%); 3) Computer technology 13 097 (+1,9%); 4) Electrical machinery, apparatus, energy 11 346 (+0,4%); 5) Transport 9020 (-5,5%); 6) Pharmaceuticals 8589 (+10,2%); 7) Measurement 8582 (-5,2%); 8) Biotechnology 7246 (+6,3%); 9) Other special machines 6261 (-2,5%); 10) Organic fine chemistry

5905 (-1,5%).

According to the EPO, it "shows that investment remains strong in medical research for novel vaccines and therapeutics, as well as for diagnostic devices and medical equipment." Many more statistics and information can be found here.

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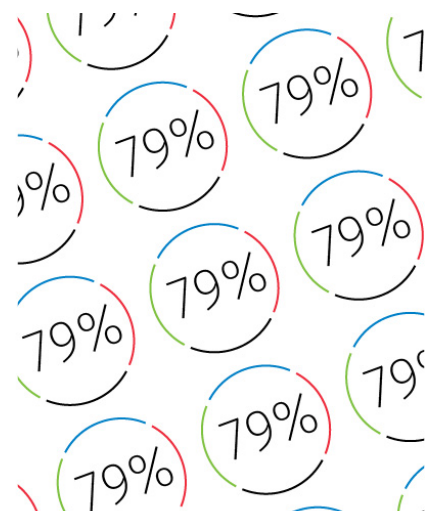
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