

Innovation Support Roundtable

Exchanging best practice in supporting innovative businesses in Europe

20-21 November 2008, European Patent Office, Munich, Germany

Raising awareness of intellectual property (IP), and particularly of its good strategic management, has become of central importance to business audiences in Europe. Training in these topics, broadly referred to as "innovation support", has traditionally been seen as the role of government patent or IP offices - simply because they are the agencies administering the IP system. This has come about partly because patent or IP offices have realised that it is not enough to simply explain how to apply for patents, trade marks or designs, but that they should be enabling businesses to properly exploit their creative potential.

However, in discussing how to target innovation support services (principally schemes to encourage the use of IP by businesses), a recent European Commission study¹ concluded:

Because their services are better known by SMEs, and, more importantly, because they may likely have a more neutral stance towards the usage of different IP protection instruments (given the patent tradition of the patent offices), *it is probably advisable that technology agencies act as entry points for customers, not the patent offices.*

(our emphasis)

In short - it is chambers of commerce, business advice agencies, technology transfer offices, science parks, innovation hubs, business incubators and the like who are the first line of assistance for many new and growing businesses. If this is where SMEs are looking for innovation support, then this is where the IP management and strategy messages of national patent and IP offices should appear. Similarly, this is where front line staff need to have a solid understanding of basic IP issues.

For several years meetings have been organised by e.g. WIPO or the EPO which have facilitated exchange between patent or IP offices on their various innovation support activities. Participants at such meetings have gained insights into the experiences of their peers in other offices which have inspired their own projects.

To our knowledge no equivalent "best practice exchange" meetings have been organised which exclusively concern the IP training and innovation support activities by those organisations, institutions and agencies which are *not* patent or IP offices. This then is the purpose of this Roundtable: to bring together the bright ideas and great experience of those *other* agencies with a vital role to play in Europe in delivering Innovation Support services and training. The Institut Européen Entreprise et Propriété Intellectuelle (IEEPI) therefore is pleased to be a partner with the European Patent Academy in facilitating this Roundtable.

¹ *Benchmarking national and regional support services for SMEs in the field of intellectual and industrial property*, European Commission, September 2007; Executive Summary paragraph 31(a). http://www.proinno-europe.eu/admin/uploaded_documents/Benchmarking-Report-SME.pdf

We propose a 1½ day programme for this Roundtable, covering three broad themes:

- Session A: Overview of existing Innovation Support activities (tell us what you are doing!)
- Session B: Overview of existing methods - case studies, e-learning, mentoring, roadshows, seminars, didactic methods (tell us how you are doing it!)
- Session C: Co-operation - now and in the future. Working with each other; working with government agencies; partnerships to match IP teaching knowledge with target audience; solving problems in these relationships (tell us with whom you are, or would like to, work!)

The agenda will be driven by the participants - those with stories to tell or questions to ask their peers will get as much out of the meeting as they are prepared to put into it.

Attendance will be free of charge at the premises of the facilitators - the European Patent Office (Munich). The Roundtable will be conducted in English.

We look forward to receiving suggestions as to content you would like to include in the meeting, particularly any presentations you might wish to make. Please respond to Mr Antoine Dintrich (adintrich@ieepi.org) or to Jeremy Philpott (jphilpott@epo.org) by 24 October 2008 if you wish to participate, and indicate any topic you would like to share at the Roundtable.

We hope to see you in Munich soon.

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