



Europäisches
Patentamt

European
Patent Office

Office européen
des brevets

40 EUROPEAN
PATENT
CONVENTION
YEARS 1973–2013
Innovation matters

EPO Innovation Contest

Rules of Participation

European Patent Academy

Rules of Participation

1. INTRODUCTION

The European Patent Office (EPO) is the executive body of the European Patent Organisation¹ and was set up on 7 October 1977 on the basis of the European Patent Convention (EPC) signed in Munich in 1973. Its main tasks are to examine European patent applications and disseminate patent information. It supports innovation, competitiveness and economic growth across Europe through a commitment to high quality and efficient services delivered.

As part of the EPC's 40th anniversary celebrations, the EPO is staging an Innovation Contest to give university students in the Organisation's member states an opportunity to explore the wealth of available patent documentation, and to suggest new areas of innovation, particularly in the green technology and sustainable development sectors. The contestants will work closely with patent experts from the EPO and the member states and receive support from the Organisation's European Patent Academy and national bodies such as the national patent offices (NPOs) and PATLIB centres.

2. WHAT IS INVOLVED?

Contestants will be asked to define a research project of potential interest for future R&D, comprising the following elements:

2.1. CURRENT TECHNICAL PROBLEM:

The project should describe a technical problem currently faced in one of the following five fields:

- A. Sustainable food production
- B. Eco-friendly energy production and storage
- C. Waste management, recycling and urban mining
- D. Smart transport and traffic management systems
- E. Smart house technology

2.2. USE OF PATENT DATABASES AND PRESENTATION OF THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ART

The contestants should make use of patent databases, in particular freely accessible ones, such as the EPO's Espacenet. The project paper should include a presentation of the state of the art currently available in the problem area.

2.3. GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF MARKET POTENTIAL

The project paper should also include an account, in general terms, of the market potential for the suggested solution to the chosen technical problem.

¹ A complete list of the Organisation's 38 member states can be found at: www.epo.org/about-us/organisation/member-states.html

3. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

The contest is open to students of all disciplines who are at least 18 years old, enrolled at a university, college or equivalent academic institution in one of the Organisation's member states. They may enter either as individuals or as a team. In the case of teams, the entry requirements apply to each team member. There is no entry fee. Contestants must undertake to abide by the terms and conditions set out in the annex.

Not eligible: EPO and NPO employees and their relatives.

4. TIMETABLE AND APPLICATION

The EPO Innovation Contest is divided into the following stages:

1. Application and registration for dedicated virtual course room
2. Distance learning programme and online mentoring
3. Submission of final project papers
4. Award ceremony

Online registration starts on **14 January 2013** and must be completed by **15 March 2013**. A dedicated distance learning programme will be offered from **18 March to 13 June 2013**. The deadline for submitting the final project papers is **13 July 2013**.

4.1. APPLICATION AND REGISTRATION FOR DEDICATED VIRTUAL COURSE ROOM (14 JANUARY TO 15 MARCH 2013)

The NPOs of the Organisation's member states will be responsible for selecting one individual contestant or team of contestants for each of the technical fields listed in point 2.1 above. All students or student teams interested in taking part should apply to the NPO of the member state in which their university or other academic institution is located, submitting a CV (max. 2 pages) and an outline of their project, including the title and topic. This initial outline must describe a problem currently faced in the relevant technical field (see point 2.1) and indicate why finding a solution would be worthwhile. Students working together as a team must nominate one member as a representative. Additional supporting documents (e.g. PowerPoint presentations, videos) ² may be attached.

All selected contestants will be entitled to register for the subsequent distance learning programme.

² These documents must be uploaded in a zip file not exceeding 4MB. Only the following file formats will be accepted: PDF, AVI, MOV and MP3.

4.2. DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMME AND ONLINE MENTORING (18 MARCH TO 13 JUNE)

The European Patent Academy will develop a tailor-made distance learning (DL) programme for the enrolled contestants with a view to providing them with the knowledge needed to perform patent searches using the various freely accessible tools, and interpret the results obtained. This will also give contestants a first-hand insight into the state of the art in their field of study, as reflected in the available patent literature. Experts from the EPO, NPOs and PATLIB centres will help them to understand the patent terminology used in the field and familiarise them with the latest developments.

Contestants are free to take part in the online training sessions at their convenience and their participation will not count towards the assessment of their final project paper. Nevertheless, they are strongly advised to participate actively in the DL programme as they will also receive guidance on how to develop the initial idea outlined in their application. The working language of the DL programme and mentoring will be English only. However, contestants may ask questions and make comments in the EPO's other two official languages (French and German).

5. DELIVERABLES

Once the DL programme has come to an end, the contestants must submit a final project paper based on their initial idea by e mail to a dedicated address. They will be notified of this address at least one month before the deadline for submission. The papers must be submitted in one of the EPO's official languages, i.e. English, French or German.

Deadline for submission is 13 July 2013.

6. JURY AND AWARD CRITERIA

An international jury, chaired by the President of the EPO, will evaluate the final papers and select the winners according to the evaluation criteria (see below).

Jury members:

NPO representatives

- *Mr Josef KRATOCHVÍL*, Chairman of the Technical and Operational Support Committee of the European Patent Organisation
- *Mr Alexandru Cristian ŞTRENC*, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Academy of the European Patent Organisation

epi representatives

- *Mr Tony TANGENA*, President
- *Ms Mihaela TEODORESCU*, Vice-President

Industry representatives

- *Mr Jacques BAUVIR*, BusinessEurope
- *Mr Tony ROLLINS*, BusinessEurope

University representatives

- *Ms Maria Del Val SEGARRA-OÑA*, Associate Professor, School of Industrial Engineering, Technical University of Valencia (Spain)
- *Ms Fazilet VARDAR SUKAN*, Professor, Department of Bioengineering, Faculty of Engineering, Ege University, Izmir (Turkey)

EPO representatives

- *Mr Richard FLAMMER*, Principal Director, Patent Information and European Patent Academy
- *Ms Karin SEEGERT*, Principal Director, Joint Cluster Industrial Chemistry

The jury members declare that they will treat all submitted papers equally and impartially and in accordance with the evaluation criteria specified for this contest. Having regard to the principle of fair treatment, members of the jury must disclose any reason that might prevent them from exercising their task free from any bias or prejudice. In the event that such a reason exists, they must inform the jury chairman that they will abstain from the relevant vote.

The jury will apply the following evaluation criteria:

- 1) Creativity:** the idea as presented in the final paper is innovative and the result of lateral thinking and does not simply copy technical know-how already in the public domain
- 2) Technical analysis applied:** patent information has been used and well integrated into the final paper
- 3) Clarity:** the concept elaborated in the final paper is clear, logical and well illustrated
- 4) Coherence:** the final paper shows the requisite awareness of all relevant aspects and develops a coherent concept consistent with the market needs and business opportunities identified
- 5) Idea development:** the extent to which the final paper marks an improvement as compared with the initial description of the idea submitted at the application stage.

7. PRIZES AND AWARD CEREMONY

All contestants who submit a final paper will be awarded a one year subscription to the EPO's professional search tools on PISE/GPI, starting from October 2013.

The jury will select the winning papers in September 2013. The EPO will then invite the winners to attend an award ceremony in Munich on 17 October 2013. The EPO will pay the costs of travel and accommodation. The winners in each of the five categories (see 2.1 above) will be awarded a prize of EUR 5 000. At the award ceremony, the winners will have the opportunity to present their research project to the public.

Annex

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. REGISTRATION AND STORAGE OF PERSONAL DATA

Contestants must accept these rules of participation when registering, otherwise it will not be possible to complete the registration process. Acceptance by the contestant personally completing the official registration form on behalf of a team will be deemed to constitute acceptance by all other members of the team.

By registering, the contestants agree to the use and publication by the EPO, for advertising and promotional purposes, of their name, CV details and picture free of charge and without additional consideration or permission, on worldwide media, in print or online, for an unlimited period. The EPO may also publish at any time and in any media any results of this competition for a reasonable duration.

By registering, the contestants agree to storage by the EPO of the personal data provided on registration, for the duration of the contest. Contestants are free to withdraw their approval of such storage of personal data by e mail to academy@epo.org. Upon receipt of this withdrawal, the EPO will delete all personal data stored immediately. Such withdrawal of approval will result in the contestant's elimination from the contest.

To participate in the EPO innovation contest it is absolutely essential that all personal information provided be truthful and accurate. Contestants, whether working alone or in a team, may participate only in their own name. Teams must nominate a representative.

The EPO reserves the right to check the validity of the registration information submitted at any stage of the contest. Submissions in languages other than the EPO's three official languages will not be accepted. Participation in the EPO innovation contest can in no way be deemed to give rise to any employment relationship with the EPO.

2. LIMITED WARRANTY

The EPO reserves the right to cancel or terminate the contest at any time without prior notice. The EPO will make use of this option if the contest cannot be properly carried out for any unforeseen or technical reasons (e.g. viruses in the computer system or manipulation of or defects in hardware and/or software).

The EPO shall provide access to its website and the tools and services mentioned above "as is". It accepts no responsibility for technical errors, viruses or malfunctions of its website or the provided tools, the completeness, accuracy or quality of data provided via the website or contained in the tools, non-availability (e.g. interruptions in transmission) of the website and the tools or fitness for a particular purpose.

3. LIABILITY

The EPO shall, in principle, only be liable for damage caused to a contestant by an intentional or grossly negligent breach of duty by its employees, statutory representatives or auxiliary persons employed to perform duties relating to this contest. Where a claim for compensation for damage against the EPO is based on simple negligence on the part of the EPO (including the persons listed above), the EPO shall be liable only

(a) for death, bodily injury or damage to health,

or

(b) where the duty breached is an essential obligation on compliance with which the participant is entitled to rely as a precondition for due performance during this contest.

4. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS, PATENTABILITY

Contestants shall guarantee that all materials supplied by them for the purposes of this contest are unencumbered by any third party's proprietary rights. Where appropriate, the participant shall arrange the necessary assignment or obtain the appropriate licences and authorisations, and pay any related royalties, fees and indemnities. The participants shall assume full liability vis-à-vis the EPO for any claim made against the EPO for infringement of copyright or other intellectual property rights as a result of, or otherwise related to, the holding of this contest.

In the event that any claim by a third party based on alleged violation of its proprietary rights results in the EPO's suffering damage or loss, the EPO shall be entitled to seek full compensation for such damage or loss from the contestant. The contestants shall acknowledge their awareness that ideas, innovations, inventions, etc. will be made available to the EPO and/or the jury in the course of this contest. Prior to the contest, the contestants shall take any appropriate steps to protect their intellectual property rights.

The award of prizes in connection with this contest cannot be construed as an opinion or decision of the EPO on the patentability of the idea presented by the winning contestant. Should winners wish to patent their idea, they must follow the normal national and/or international procedures and the EPO's award of a prize to them shall not constitute any precedent or implied or express decision as to the outcome of the patent granting procedure, which procedure, if and in so far as the EPO is or may be involved, will be carried out by the EPO exercising its full independence.

5. IDENTITY CARDS, PERMITS

Contestants shall bear full responsibility for acquiring and holding, at their own expense, all personal identity documents (e.g. valid passport), entry permits, visas, etc. as may be required for travelling to and from and staying at the EPO in Munich, Germany. Contestants acknowledge that they must initiate the procedures necessary to acquire such documents in due time. The only assistance the EPO can provide in this respect is the sending of a letter to the appropriate authorities and/or the contestant, confirming that they have been invited to Munich for the period indicated. The contestant shall also be responsible for customs clearance (if any) of his luggage.

6. INSURANCE

Contestants shall bear full responsibility for arranging appropriate and adequate insurance cover at their own expense, for personal liability, medical costs and travel insurance prior to the commencement of travel and for the entire duration of their stay and return travel.

7. DISQUALIFICATION

Where a contestant (a) in the opinion of the EPO has submitted incorrect or misleading information for the purposes of registration, e.g. as to the entry requirements; (b) is considered to have received undue assistance from experts or benefited from undue privileged access to resources; (c) in the opinion of the EPO has clearly plagiarised ideas from others without indicating the source; (d) has submitted his/her application after the deadline for application; (e) has submitted his/her final deliverables/written report after the specified deadline; or in the event of any other breach by the contestant of any of his/her obligations arising out of or in connection with these rules of participation, the EPO shall be entitled to disqualify that contestant from the contest forthwith without prior notice and, if applicable, cancel the award of any prize to the contestant. The contestant shall then be obliged to refund to the EPO any costs it has incurred in disqualifying the contestant, such as, but not limited to, fees for cancelling or rearranging travel.

8. JURY DECISION

The discretionary decision of the jury shall be binding. It shall not be open to review.

9. AMENDMENT OF RULES OF PARTICIPATION

These Rules of Participation may be amended by the EPO at any time without prior notice.

10. APPLICABLE LAW AND DISPUTES

Participation in the contest and these rules shall be governed by German law. Where the EPO does not waive its immunity from national jurisdiction under Article 3(1) of the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities (German Federal Law Gazette 1976, Part II, page 985 ff.), any dispute arising out of or in connection with participation shall be settled by binding arbitration with one single arbitrator in accordance with the provisions of the German Code of Civil Procedure (ZPO). The place of arbitration shall be Munich. Where the EPO waives its immunity from national jurisdiction under Article 3(1) of the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities, the courts having jurisdiction for any dispute arising out of or in connection with the participation shall be exclusively those of Munich.