

FICPI/AIPLA Colloquium on "A Comprehensive Approach to Patent Quality"

Quality Assurance of PCT Searches

A Presentation by Colin Philpott
Principal Director Quality Management,
European Patent Office

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Quality Framework

- PCT searches at all International Preliminary Searching Authorities are conducted under the framework of Chapter 21 PCT Search and Examination Guidelines!

Essential elements of Chapter 21

- Intended to minimise inconsistencies between authorities
- Describes minimum set of criteria for establishing a quality management system
- Loosely based on ISO9001

- Ensures that each authority has in place
 - Resources and Administration for ensuring timely and quality prosecution
 - Quality assurance measures
 - Feedback to ensure continual improvement (corrective and preventative action)
 - Regular reviews of the system
 - Reporting arrangements for feedback to the Meetings of the International Authorities

How does EPO ensure that it complies with Chapter 21?

- PCT searches have priority over other types so as to ensure that PCT time limits adhered to
- Quality management system based on ISO9001 (see separate presentation "What is a quality prosecution?")
- PCT is integrated into the system (as opposed to treated separate therefrom)

Specific quality control measures for PCT searches

- Sampling of PCT searches at operational level by an experienced quality nominee
- Quality nominee assures him/herself that
 - correct procedures have been employed
 - search properly conducted in correct classification fields”
 - proper strategy employed (where appropriate)

- If quality nominee not satisfied
 - New search conducted
 - Discussions take place with search examiner
- Overall statistics (not individual!) used to pinpoint matters in the operational area requiring corrective or preventative action
- User satisfaction surveys include feedback specific to PCT
- Regular discussions with partner offices (Spain and Sweden)