



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 (thereinafter referred as the “EPO”) is the executive body of the European Patent Organisation<sup>1</sup> 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 to disseminate patent information. It supports innovation, competitiveness and economic growth across Europe through a commitment to high quality and efficient services delivered.

In the context of the celebrations of the EPC 40 year anniversary celebrations, the EPO Innovation Contest aim at offering universities and students in the Organisations’ Member States the possibility to explore the wealth of patent documentation and to suggest further areas of innovation, with a particular focus on green technology and sustainable development. The participants to the contest will be working in close contact with patent experts from the EPO and the Member States. They will be supported by the European Patent Academy of the Organisation and national actors like the national patent offices and the PATLIB centres.

## 2. WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM THE PARTICIPANTS?

Participants to the contest are asked to define a research project that could be of interest for further R&D, comprising the following elements:

### 2.1. A DESCRIPTION OF AN EXISTING TECHNICAL PROBLEM IN ONE OF THE FIVE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

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

### 2.2. USING IN PARTICULAR FREELY ACCESSIBLE PATENT DATABASES, LIKE ESPACENET, A PRESENTATION OF THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ART SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM IDENTIFIED

### 2.3. AN IDENTIFICATION IN GENERAL TERMS OF THE MARKET POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENTS RELATING TO THE PROBLEM

<sup>1</sup> The complete list of the 38 EPO Member States is online at: [www.epo.org/about-us/organisation/member-states.html](http://www.epo.org/about-us/organisation/member-states.html)

### 3. PARTICIPATION / EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The contest is open to students of all fields of studies, who are at least 18 years old, enrolled in a university, college or equivalent academia in one of the EPO Member States. These conditions apply equally to all team members. No participation fee is required. The participants commit to respect the terms and conditions detailed in the Annex.

**Excluded from participation:** Employees of the EPO and the national patent offices (NPOs) and their relatives.

### 4. TIME SCHEDULE AND ENROLMENT

The EPO innovation contest is divided into the following phases:

1. Enrolment and registration to 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 between **18 March - 13 June 2013**. The submission deadline for the final project papers is **13 July, 2013**. The language of the submissions shall be one of the official languages of the EPO (English, French, or German).

#### 4.1. ENROLMENT AND REGISTRATION TO DEDICATED VIRTUAL COURSE ROOM – FROM 7 JANUARY TO 15 MARCH, 2013

The National Patent Offices (NPOs) of the Member States of the Organisation will have the responsibility to select one candidacy for each of the technical fields identified in § 2.1. All students and team members interested in participating to the contest must contact the NPOs of the Member States in which their university / college / academia is located. Students and team members should submit a CV (max. 2 pages) and an outline of their project including title and topic. This initial sketch shall describe an existing problem in the above mentioned technical fields (see §2.1) and indicate why it would be worth being solved. In the case of a team, one representative must be indicated. Additional supporting documents (e.g. power point presentations, videos)<sup>2</sup> can be attached.

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

<sup>2</sup> It must be uploaded in a zip file that must not exceed the size of 4MB. Only the following file formats are allowed: PDF, AVI, MOV, MP3.

#### **4.2. DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMME AND ONLINE MENTORING (18 MARCH - 13 JUNE)**

The European Patent Academy will develop a tailor-made distance learning (DL) training programme for the participants enrolled with the goal to empower them to perform patent searches in various freely available tools and interpret the results obtained. In doing so, the participants get first-hand insight into the state of the art of their technical field of study as reflected by patent literature. Experts from the EPO, national offices, PATLIB Centres will help them to understand the patent language with regard to their respective technical field and familiarise them with its latest developments.

It is recommended for participants to actively participate in this distance learning programme, in the course of which they will also receive hints to further develop their initial idea they have sketched out at the point of enrolment to this competition. Working language of this DL programme and mentoring will be English only. However, it will be possible to ask questions and make comments in the two other official languages of the EPO too. Participants are free to attend online training sessions at their convenience. Their participation per se is no evaluation criteria of the final project paper.

#### **5. DELIVERABLES**

After the end of the DL programme, individual participants or teams will have to submit their final project paper based on the initially idea they presented, via a dedicated electronic address which will be made available to the participants enrolled at least one month prior to the deadline. The language of these submissions shall be one of the official languages of the EPO, ie. English, French, 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 submitted final papers and select the winners according to the evaluation criteria.

### Members:

#### Representatives of National Patent Offices

- *Mr Josef KRATOCHVÍL*, Chairman of the Technical and Operational Support Committee of the European Patent Organisation
- *Mr Alexandru Cristian ȚRENC*, 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 de Val SEGARRA*, Associate Professor at the School of Industrial Engineering at the Universidad Politécnica in Valencia (Spain)
- *Ms Fazilet VARDAR SUKAN*, Professor at Ege University at the Engineering Faculty, Department of Bioengineering, Izmir (Turkey)

#### EPO representatives

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

Jury members declare that they will treat equally and impartially all papers submitted in accordance with the evaluation criteria specified for this contest. Applying the principal of fair treatment, members of the jury have the obligation to disclose any reason that would prevent them from exercising their task free from any bias or prejudice. In which case, they will inform the jury's chairperson that they abstain from the respective voting.

*The Jury will apply the following evaluation criteria:*

- 1) Creativity:** the idea as presented in the final paper is innovative and a 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 integrated well in the final paper
- 3) Clarity:** the concept elaborated in the final paper is clear, logic and well visualised
- 4) Consistency:** the final paper contains the necessary differentiation and develops a consistent concept that is in line with the market needs and business opportunities identified
- 5) Idea development:** the extent to which the final paper has improved with regard to the initial description of the idea filed at the date of enrolment.

## **7. PRIZES AND AWARD CEREMONY**

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

The Jury will decide on the winning papers in September 2013. The EPO will invite the winners to attend the award ceremony on 17 October 2013 in Munich. The cost of their travel and sojourn will be borne by the EPO. The winning students/teams in each of the five categories (see 2.1) will be awarded a 5.000 € prize. During the award ceremony, the nominees will present their research project to the public.

# Annex

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

### 1/ REGISTRATION AND STORAGE OF PERSONAL DATA

During the registration process, the participants to this competition will be asked to accept these rules of participation. In case of non-acceptance the completion of the registration process will not be possible. Acceptance by the participants having personally completed the official registration form on behalf of a team will be deemed to constitute acceptance by the other members of the team.

By registering, the participants agree to grant to EPO the right to use and publish his or her name, portrait, picture free of charge for advertising and promotional purposes without additional consideration and permission, on the world-wide media, print or online, without limitation of time. At any time, EPO may also publish in any media any results of this competition for a reasonable duration.

By registering, participants agree to EPO's storage of the personal data necessary to complete the registration, for the duration of the competition. Participants are free to revoke their approval with regard to the storage of personal data and thus terminate their participation in the ongoing contest. In case of revocation of the approval relating to the data storage, the participants may send an e-mail to [academy@epo.org](mailto:academy@epo.org). Upon receipt of this revocation, EPO will delete all stored personal data immediately.

To participate in the EPO innovation contest it is absolutely essential that all personal information be truthful and accurate. Every student, either working alone or in a team, can participate only with her or his own name. Teams may also indicate a representative.

EPO reserves the right to check the validity of the registration information submitted by students at any stage during the challenge. Submissions in other languages than the three EPO official ones will not be accepted. Participation in the EPO innovation contest cannot in any way be deemed to give rise to any employment relationship with the EPO.

### 2/ LIMITED WARRANTY

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

The EPO shall provide access to its website and the tools and services mentioned above "as is". EPO shall accept no responsibility with regard to 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 the participant by an intentional or grossly negligent breach of duty by the EPO's employees, statutory representatives or auxiliary persons employed to perform duties under this competition. 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 for

(a) 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 competition.

### 4/ INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS, PATENTABILITY

The participants to the EPO innovation contest shall guarantee that all materials supplied by them for this competition 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 execution or application of this competition.

In the event that any claim by a third party relating to the alleged violation of its proprietary rights results in the EPO suffering damage or loss, the EPO shall be entitled to full compensation from the participant for such damage or loss.

The participants shall acknowledge their awareness, that ideas, innovations, inventions, etc. shall be made available to the EPO and/or the Jury in the course of this contest. The participants shall prior to the contest take any appropriate step to protect their intellectual property rights.

The award of the prizes in the context of this competition cannot be construed as being an opinion or a decision by the EPO as to the patentability of the project presented by the winning participant. Should he envisage the protection of his project by a patent, he shall follow the normal national and/or international procedures in this respect and the award of the prize by the EPO to him shall and will 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**

The participant shall be solely responsible for obtaining or holding, at his own expense, all personal identity documents (eg valid passport), entry permit, visa, etc. as may be required for travelling to and from and also staying at the EPO in Munich, Germany. The participant acknowledges that, for the purposes of obtaining such documents, the necessary procedures must be started by the participant 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 to the participant confirming the invitation to Munich for the period indicated. The participant shall also be responsible for customs clearance (if any) of his luggage.

**6/ INSURANCE**

The participant shall be solely responsible for arranging appropriate and adequate insurance cover at his own expense, for personal liability, medical costs and travel insurance prior to the commencement of his travel and for the entire duration of his/her stay and return travel.

**7/ TERMINATION OF PARTICIPATION**

Participants who (a) in the opinion of the EPO have submitted incorrect or misleading information with regard to the registration information or educational requirements; (b) are estimated to have received undue assistance from experts or have benefitted from undue privileged access to resources; (c) in the opinion of the EPO have clearly plagiarised ideas from others without indicating the source; (d) have submitted their application after the deadline for application; (e) have submitted the final deliverables/written report after the deadline indicated above; or in any other event of breach by the participant of any of his obligations arising out of or in connection with these rules of participation, the EPO shall be entitled to exclude the participant and terminate his participation in the contest forthwith without prior notice and cancel the award of the prize to the participant, if applicable. The participant shall be obliged to refund the EPO any costs the latter shall have incurred as a result of the termination of the participation, such as, but not limited to cancellation or rearrangement of travel.

**8/ JURY DECISION**

The discretionary decision of the Jury shall be binding. A review of this decision is excluded.

**9/ AMENDMENT OF RULES OF PARTICIPATION**

These Rules of Participation can be changed by EPO at any time without prior notice.

**10/ APPLICABLE LAW AND DISPUTES**

The participation 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 the 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.