**PATENT ROUNDTABLE**

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The EPO considers that Patents are an exception to the general principle of free competition and enterprise and accordingly need to be granted in a very restrictive manner, applying a rigorous quality policy. That policy includes taking into account all relevant documents accessible and revealing the state of the art, including technical standards, in order to ensure the grant of legally safe and transparent patents commensurate with the inventions they protect.

The EPO has a long-standing involvement in the area of standardisation. It is committed by its mission to the delivery of high-quality services, to transparency and to advocacy. Therefore we have signed agreements with the leading Standardisation organisations, such as ITU, IEEE and ETSI, to include documentation from standard developing organisations in our patent searching activities. We also pursue a harmonised approach in this field across the major economic regions. A first step has been reached with the enhanced technical cooperation of the EPO with the patent offices of the US, China, Japan and Korea, where patent harmonisation with a view to improving and securing quality is a key perspective.

Concluding, we are convinced that patent litigation frequency and intensity can be significantly reduced by ensuring a high quality of granted patents, as well as by ameliorating institutional cooperation between the standardization and the patent systems.

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