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## **Facts and figures about the European Patent Offices**

**Headquarters:** The European Patent Office (EPO) has its headquarters in Munich, branch offices in The Hague, Berlin and Vienna, and a liaison office in Brussels.

**Workforce:** The EPO employs a total of around 6500 people, 62% of whom are patent examiners. Approximately 3450 people work in Munich, 2450 in The Hague, 250 in Berlin and 100 in Vienna.

**Patent applications / per year:** The number of patent applications has been increasing from year to year. In 1990, there were 60,000 applications; by 2006, this figure had risen to 209,000. As the global pool of knowledge has expanded, the complexity of the patent applications has increased as well.

**Granting patents:** Provided a patent application meets the formal requirements, it is subject to an initial evaluation by the search examiner. After eight to nine months, the applicant receives an initial communication together with the search report, which provides information on the state of the art. The applicant can use this appraisal to assess the chances of the patent being granted and decide whether to proceed with or withdraw the application. An average of 45 to 46 months, or just less than four years, pass until a patent is finally granted.

A patent can be upheld for a maximum of 20 years. On average, patent-holders make use of a patent for a period of nine to eleven years.

For years now, the workforce has staged numerous actions and demonstrations to draw attention to the fact that their workload has grown from year to year, which has put the quality of European patents in jeopardy. The patent examiners and administrative staff demand more time for the ever more complex patent applications and continuing scientific and legal professional development. They are also keen to see binding standards introduced for patent examinations. [10,000 patent officers fear for the future of the worldwide patent system,](#)

## [Financing of the EPO and national patent offices](#)

## [Decision-makers in the EPO](#)