

Rate and Direction of European Patenting

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Abstract of the paper

Everyday, to the purpose of patent examination, the specialists of the European Patent Office witness all technological developments. From health sciences to telecommunications, from energy to new materials, examples to illustrate the strategic view that the EPO enjoys are countless.

The time series of European patenting correlates with the economic cycle. Investments in R&D show up in terms of patenting. They lead to products arriving in the marketplace. Sales feed back into new R&D investments, and the process keeps on going.

By systematically keeping track of the areas attracting most patent applications, the EPO can identify those technologies that companies believe are most likely to make it to the market. Technology trends identified with patent information and validated by experts allow to anticipate these developments, help in achieving a comprehensive understanding of the technological forces at play, and constitute a powerful instrument of foresight.

The strategic tools and processes that the EPO has developed are used primarily to help the EPO marshal its resources internally, to ensure it has the right skills and competencies where they are needed, and to set priorities, shortening the lag between trend-setting events and decision making.

Although these insights would be invaluable to many companies and institutions, it is not easy for SMEs, universities, or other research bodies to carry out these analysis on their own, because of lack of sufficient resources.

It has become truly impossible for anyone to keep an eye on what's happening in each and every domain, because of the strong growth in patenting activities, of the fast pace of technology, and of the complexity of data interpretation. Experts in all fields are required for gathering patent information, validating it, and interpreting it. Knowledge management is required to bind the expertise together.

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