

Europäisches Patentamt European Patent Office Office européen des brevets

The role of (patent) information in the innovation process



Dir 5.4.2, Patent Information Promotion

17th May 2017

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Background and research objectives

The main objective of the research was to find out how information in general and patent information in particular ranks as a source of information in the innovation process, i.e. whether (patent) information supports innovation. Additional objectives of the research focused on:

- Identification of the actors of the innovation process
- Understanding how they use information in general and patent information in particular (to do what).
- Identification on how to best reach innovators

As it regards the project methodology, a quantitative online survey had been conducted. In total, 265 innovation process actors participated in the study.

The fieldwork took place from 11th of October to 16th of November 2016.

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Participation in innovation process



n=265; Q1: In which phase of the innovation process are you most active in your work?; Base: Actors in innovation process.

Less than half of the actors in the innovation process are most active in the development/prototyping phase, less than 1/3 in the applied research phase. 15% focus in commercialisation and the remaining 14% in fundamental research.

Relevance of information categories

Total	88%	65%	65%	1%
Fundamental research (n=38)	79%	55%	50%	3%
Applied research (n=75)	88%	71%	71%	1%
Prototyping (n=113)	95%	58%	62%	
Commercialisation (n=39)	77%	85%	77%	
 = significant positive result = significant negative result 		Technical inforLegal informat	mation Business inform on Don't know/no a	nation answer

n=265; Q3: For your work, which of the following categories of information are relevant? (multiple answers possible); Base: Actors in innovation process.

Nearly 90% deem technical information to be relevant, 2/3 determine business and legal information to be relevant. For commercialisation, business information has a higher relevance, while technical information has a lower relevance. In prototyping phase, the opposite is the case. For fundamental research, legal information has less relevance.

Innovation sources for technical information

Total	82%	72%	64%	62%	57%	52%	52%	31% <mark>25%17%</mark>	15%
Fundamental researc	n 73%	33% 60%	60%	60%	40%	50%	37%	27% 27% 27%	%
Applied research (n=66)	79%	77%	68%	65%	64%	50%	56%	35% 32%12	<mark>%</mark> 11%
Prototyping (n=107)	84%	80%	65%	62%	56%	55%	52%	29% <mark>21%</mark> 21%	<mark>6</mark> 13%
Commercialisation (n=30)	90%	70%	53%	57%	43%	53%	40%	27% 27% 1	<mark>7</mark> %
Ø number of information sources: 5.3	 Internet sites Exhibitions/c 	Patents	■ Maga Books ■	zines/journa Professiona	ls ■ Pe I associatio	ersonal co ons ■ Li	ntacts ibraries	DatabasesForums	Blogs

n=233; Q3.1: You just mentioned that technical information is relevant for your work. What source(s) of information do you currently use for technical information? (multiple answers possible); Base: Actors in innovation process.

The most important information sources for technical information are the internet (usage by 82%), patents (72%) and magazines (64%).

For fundamental research, blogs are more frequently used while patents are less frequently used. For prototyping, patents gain importance.

Innovation sources for business information

Total	83%	73%	53%	51%	46%	43% 4	2% 33%	24% <mark>22%</mark>	16%
Fundamental research (n=21)	81%	57% 43	% 52%	57%	29% 2	29% 489	% 38%	43% 24%	%
Applied research (n=53)	85%	70%	47%	47%	40%	53%	45% 28	% <mark>19% 7%</mark>	13%
Prototyping (n=66)	79%	76%	61%	52%	42%	38%	42% 35	% <mark>17%</mark> 18%	12%
Commercialisation (n=33)	91%	82%	55%	55%	55%	45% 42	2% 27% 3	36% <mark>24%</mark> 21	1%
Ø number of information sources: 4.9	Internet sitesPatents	Personal con Professional as	tacts ■Ex sociations	hibitions/co Boc	onferences oks	s ■ Maga ■ Blogs	azines/jourr Forum	als Data Is Libra	abases aries

n=176; Q3.2: You just mentioned that business information is relevant for your work. What source(s) of information do you currently use for business information? (multiple answers possible); Base: Actors in innovation process.

The most important information sources for business information are the internet (used by 83%), personal contacts (73%) and exhibitions/conferences (53%). In the phase of fundamental research, forums are used to a higher extent.

Innovation sources for legal information

Total	71%	62%	53%	48%	42%	35%	28% 22	2% <mark>16%</mark> 13%	13%
Fundamental research (n=19)*	68%	47% 37	7% 26%	47%	47%	37% 21	% 26%	32% 32%	
Applied research (n=53)	74%	64%	51%	51%	51%	40%	28% 23	% <mark>21%15</mark> %	13%
Prototyping (n=70)	70%	66%	5	4%	50%	37%	24% 27	% 20%6%6	3 <mark>%7%</mark>
Commercialisation (n=30)	70%	57%	63%	50%	33%	47% 2	27% 27%	27%17%	13%
Ø number of information sources: 4.1	 Internet sites Magazines/journet 	■ Patents nals ■ Boo	■ Persor oks ■ Exh	nal contacts iibitions/con	■ Da ferences	tabases ■ Blogs	Profe	ssional asso aries 🛛 🗖 F	ciations ⁻ orums

*Attention: small base

n=172; Q3.3: You just mentioned that legal information is relevant for your work. What source(s) of information do you currently use for legal information? (multiple answers possible); Base: Actors in innovation process.

The top three sources for legal information are the internet (used by 72%), patents (62%) and personal contacts (53%). For fundamental research, databases are used to a lower extent while libraries and forums are used to a higher extent. For prototyping, magazines, blogs and libraries have a lower relevance as information source.

Users vs. non-users of patent information as information source

Are patents used as a source of information in the innovation process?



n=263; Q3.1/Q3.2/Q3.3: You just mentioned that technical/business/legal information is relevant for your work. What source(s) of information do you currently use for technical/business/legal information? (multiple answers possible); Base: Actors in innovation process.

As it regards the usage of patents as information source for technical, business or legal information, 70% use patents for at least one of the information categories, while 30% don't use patents at all.

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Usage of patent information as information source



Q4: You just mentioned that you use patens as a source of information. Which specific source(s) do you use? (multiple answers possible) Base: Users of patents as source of information / Respondents who mentioned a source.

More than 2/3 of users of patent information as an information source actually mentioned a concrete source. Top three sources are Espacenet (mentioned by more than half), DPMA (mentioned by 3 out of 10) and USPTO (mentioned by 1/5), followed by the EPO (no specific tool mentioned) and WIPO.

Usage of patent information as information source: work area

Total		72%	69%		55%	53%	44%	41%	35% 1 <mark>5</mark>	% <mark>14%</mark> 2%	, 0
Fundamental re (n=14)*	esearch	50%	43%	29%	43%	50)% 29	9% 36%	21%	14% 7%	<i>6</i>
Applied researce (n=57)	ch	72%	65%		56%	49%	46%	51%	44% 1	119 <mark>6%</mark> 119	%
Prototyping (n=87)		82%	75	%	62%		67%	38% 37	<mark>7% 26</mark> %	9% <mark>10</mark> %2	%
Commercialisa (n=26)	tion	50%	73%	46	% 23%	58%	38%	46%	27% 3	5% 4%	, o
	Technical re Finding solu Financial an	search for produ tions to technica d investment de	ict developme I problems cisions	ent ■ ■ Le ■ Sale	Market/tech gal matters and marke	nology/cor So	npetitor wato cientific resea HR purpo	ch ■ Te arch ■ oses (e.g. reo	chnical idea Business c cruitment, h	a generati levelopme neadhuntin	on ent

* Attention: small base

n=184; Q5: In which area of your work do you use patents as a source of information? (multiple answers possible); Base: Users of patents as source of information.

Patent information is particularly used for technical research for product development (as mentioned by nearly 75%), for market/technology/competitor watch (mentioned by 2/3) and for technical idea generation (mentioned by more than half).

Usage of patent information as information source: IP activity

Total	84%	80%	71%	71%	62% 4	9% 46%	42% 34% 33% 32% 269	6
Fundamental research (n=14)*	86%	71%	50%	43%	64% 36%	57%	36% 43% 43% 29%	
Applied research (n=57)	81%	74%	72%	65%	54% 58%	54% 4	49% 40% 42%2 <mark>1% 3</mark> 9%	
Prototyping (n=87)	90%	85%	71%	83	% 67%	43% 4	1% 40% 2 <mark>6%</mark> 23%29%23	%
Commercialisation (n=26)	73%	85%	77%	62%	62% 62%	35% <mark>35</mark>	% 42% 38% 65% 19	%

Analyse the prior art
 Protect intellectual property
 Identify freedom to operate
 Analyse/monitor own/competitors' patent portfolio
 Analyse patent infringements
 Perform IP due diligence
 Draft patent application documentation
 Define a patent portfolio strategy
 Negotiate with industry players
 Market and commercialise products
 Do 'white space' analysis

n=184; Q6: Please tell us more. You use patents to: (multiple answers possible); Base: Users of patents as source of information.

Patent information is concretely used to analyse the prior art (by 84%), to protect IP(by 8 out of 10) and to identify FTO (by 71%), followed by the analysis/monitoring of the own/competitors' patent portfolio and the analysis of patent infringements.

Importance of patent information as source of information

Total	1% 7%	20%	23%	49%	
Fundamental research (n=14)*	7%	21%	14%	57%	
Applied research (n=57)	4%	23%	21%	53%	
Prototyping (n=87)	9%	18%	26%	46%	
Commercialisation (n=26)	8%	19%	23%	50%	
			1 – Not importai	ant ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 –Very important	

*Attention: small base

n=184; Q7: In comparison to other sources of information you said you use, how important are patents as a source of information for your innovation work? Base: Users of patents as source of information.

Within the group of users of patent information as information source, patent information is deemed to be important or even very important for the innovation work, as mentioned by 72%. The ones who determine patent information not to be important are a small group of less than 10%.

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Technical information usage of patent information non-users

Total	62%	55%	48%	35%	31%	28%11%9%8%5%
Fundamental research (n=20)	55%	50%	35%	50%	35%	<mark>20% 5</mark> %15% <mark>5</mark> %
Applied research (n=15)*	53%	53%	53%		40%	13% 20% 13%
Prototyping (n=21)	81%	71%	67%	33	% 24%	5% 29% 14% ^{0%} 5%
Commercialisation (n=9)*	44% 33	% 22%	67%	56%	11%	44% 11% 11 <mark>%</mark>
 Technical idea generation Scientific research Mark 	■ Technie ent ■ Lega	cal researd	ch for product development Sales and marketing			

*Attention: small base

n=65; Q8.1: What do you use technical information for? (multiple answers possible); Base: Non-users of patents as source of information.

Technical information is used for technical idea generation (mentioned by 2/3), finding solutions to technical problems (mentioned by more than half) and technical research for product development (mentioned by nearly one half). In commercialisation, technical information gains importance for market watch, business development and sales/marketing.

HR purposes (e.g. recruitment, headhunting) = Financial and investment decisions

Business information usage of patent information non-users

Total	61%	61%	37%	30%	30%	24%	21% 18% <mark>1</mark> 3%	8%
Fundamental research (n=15)*	67%	40%	13% 1	3% 13%	20%	27%	20% 13% 13	3%
Applied research (n=25)	64%	64%	40%	40%	32%	6 <mark>16%</mark>	16% 20% 20%	6 4%
Prototyping (n=41)	56%	68%	37%	34%	37%	22%	29% <mark>15%</mark> 15%	<mark>6 7</mark> %
Commercialisation (n=18)*	61%	56%	56%	22%	28%	44%	6 <mark>%22%</mark>	<mark>11</mark> %
 Business development Technical research for prod 	Market/technology, uct development Legal	/competitor watch Financial and inv al matters	■ S vestment deo ientific resea	ales and ma cisions arch I	arketing Find HR purpos	T ing solutio ses (e.g. r	Technical idea goons to technical recruitment, hear	eneration problems dhunting)

*Attention: small base

n=99; Q8.2: What do you use business information for? (multiple answers possible); Base: Non-users of patents as source of information.

Business information is primarily used for business development (by 61%), market/ technology/competitor watch (by 61%) and for sales and marketing (by 1/3). In the commercialisation phase, business information gains importance for financial and investment decisions.

Legal information usage of patent information non-users

Total	85%	20%	18%	14%	11% 9%	<mark>6 9% 8%</mark>	8% 3%
Fundamental research (n=10)*	70%	10%	20%	10%	20%	20	%
Applied research (n=19)*	79%	21%	32	2%	16%	<mark>5%</mark> 5% <mark>5%</mark>	ú 11%
Prototyping (n=24)	92%	17% 8%	8% 25%	, 2	21% 2	21% 17	% 4 <mark>%</mark>
Commercialisation (n=13)*	92%		31%		15%	23%	8%
 Legal matters Busine Finding solutions to technical 	ss development Financial and inves	ment deci	sions acting ■ Teo	■ Ma chnical r	rket/techn	ology/com or product	petitor watch developmer

*Attention: small base

n=66; Q8.3: What do you use legal information for? (multiple answers possible); Base: Non-users of patents as source of information.

Legal information is predominantly used for legal matters (by 85%), followed by business development and financial investment decisions (1 out of 5, respectively). In the prototyping phase, legal information gains importance for finding solutions to technical problems, technical idea generation, sales and marketing and technical research for product development.

Scientific research

European Patent Office

HR purposes (e.g. recruitment, headhunting)

Past usage of patent information as an information source

Have you used patent information in the past?



n=79; Q9: You did not indicate "patents" as a source of information you currently use. Have you used patents in the past? Base: Non-users of patents as source of information.

The majority (8 out of 10) have not used patent information as an information source in the past. Only 19% already used patent information as source of information in the past.

Barriers for patent information usage

Main reason for no longer/never using patent information as information source:

Patent information is no longer/not necessary for my work		32%
I don't know where to find patent information	15%	
Patent information is too complex	14%	
Our IP department deals with it	8%	
In my sector, patent information gets outdated fast	6%	
Patent information is too expensive	5%	
Our patent attorney deals with it	4%	
Other reasons	9%	
Other sources are more important	1%	
Don't know/no answer	6%	

Other reasons mentioned:

- "In comparison to other information sources, patents are not very efficient. It takes a lot of work to filter information efficiently."
- "My research field doesn't deal with patents."
- "Patent info does not explain what builds value for customers."

Other sources mentioned:

- Internet
- Legal information / laws
- Technology monitoring
- "Personal contacts, exhibits / conferences"

n=79; Q10/Q11: What is your main reason for not/no longer using patents as a source of information? Base: Non-users of patents as source of information.

Top three barriers for patent information usage are the lack of necessity for the work (mentioned by 1/3), the lack of knowledge on where to find patent information (mentioned by 15%) and the complexity of patent information (mentioned by 14%).

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Patent information users vs. non-users: innovation process

Patent information used as a source of information? (n=263)



Q3.1/Q3.2/Q3.3; Q1: In which phase of the innovation process are you most active in your work? Base: Actors in the innovation process.

Patent information users show a higher activity in development phase and a lower activity in fundamental research, while non-users are more active in fundamental research and less active in the development phase.

Patent information users vs. non-users: information categories

Patent information used as a source of information? (n=263)



Q3.1/Q3.2/Q3.3; Q3: For your work, which of the following categories of information are relevant? (multiple answers possible); Base: Actors in innovation process.

Technical information and legal information are more relevant for patent information users, while the same categories are less relevant for patent information non-users.

Patent information users vs. non-users: information sources

Patent information used as a source of information? (n=263)



n=276; Q3.1/Q3.2/Q3.3: You just mentioned that technical/business/legal information is relevant for your work. What source(s) of information do you currently use for technical/business/legal information? (multiple answers possible); Base: Actors in the innovation process; significant positive results mentioned.

While patent information users make use of databases and patents as an information source to a higher extent, patent information non-users rather rely on libraries, forums, blogs and books.

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Information source usage of LECs and MSMEs



Q3.1/Q3.2/Q3.3: You just mentioned that technical/business/legal information is relevant for your work. What source(s) of information do you currently use for technical/business/legal information? (multiple answers possible); Base: Actors in the innovation process; significant positive results mentioned.

While LECs use patents, databases and personal contacts to a higher extent, MSMEs rather rely on forums, blogs and libraries as information source.

Patent information usage and IP activity related to company size

Total	84%	80%	71%	71%	62%	49%	46% 42%	<mark>34%</mark>
1-10 employees (n=27)	63%	56%	48%	44%	41%	41%	37%19%1	1 <mark>% 26%</mark> 22% 26%
11-50 employees (n=11)*	82%	73%	73% 64	4% 55%	55%	55%	55% 55%	<mark>% 36% 55% 18</mark> %
51-250 employees (n=22)	77%	82%	68%	779	%	55%	32%1 <mark>8%36%</mark>	2 <mark>3%14% 36% 27%</mark>
> 250 employees (n=124)	90%	86%	76%	77%	69%	54%	52% 47%	40% 37% 31% 26%

Analyse the prior art
 Protect intellectual property
 Identify freedom to operate
 Analyse/monitor own/competitors' patent portfolio
 Analyse patent infringements
 Perform IP due diligence
 Draft patent application documentation
 Define a patent portfolio strategy
 Negotiate with industry players
 Market and commercialise products
 Do 'white space' analysis

n=184; Q6: Please tell us more. You use patents to: (multiple answers possible); Base: Users of patents as source of information.

In comparison to smaller companies, LECs use patent information to a higher extent for the majority of IP activities, namely: analyse prior art, identify FTO, analyse patent portfolios, protect IP and analyse infringements as well as drafting of patent application documents and license agreements.

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Innovation actors: profiles with a direct IP link

 Innovation management Generic term related to the introduction of new ideas, products or processes Key words: strategic innovation/innovation strategy, innovation pipeline, innovation "funnel" 	 Patent/IP management Patent management, patent research, patent engineering Definition of IP strategy, patent portfolio management Key words: FTO, state of the art, analyse patent infringements, market and commercialise products, etc. 	 Patent/IP consulting Consulting and advising on patent/IP strategy, management of IP portfolios Advising on IP protection
TT management	Patent attorney	
 Focus on the exploitation of technolog Bridging inventors/companies with companies 	 Explicit mentioning of the term "patent attorney" 	

n=265; Q2: Please describe in your own words in a few sentences the work that you do.; Base: Actors in innovation process.

Within the group of innovation process actors, 5 categories related to core IP activities can be identified: Innovation management, TT management, patent/IP management, patent/IP consulting and patent attorney.

Innovation actors: profiles with an indirect IP link

Research	Product management/ development	Business development	Sales/Finance/HR
 Scientific research or research in work processes Focus on early-stage development 	 Clear focus on the product side (and not IP) Key words: Product life cycle, working on/improving products Technical focus 	 Further development of companies Provision of company support/ consultancy Development of now 	 Focus on selling, talent acquisition, costs and productivity Other No clear identification of work E.g. mentioning of university degree (Dr. Ing.) company
 R&D Combination of research on technical field and product development 		services for companies	sector (water treatment), job title (plant manager)

n=265; Q2: Please describe in your own words in a few sentences the work that you do.; Base: Actors in innovation process.

Further 5 categories can be identified in which IP is not the day-to-day core business: Research, product management/development, R&D, Business development and Sales/Finance/HR.

Mapping of innovation process actors



n=265; Q2: Please describe in your own words in a few sentences the work that you do. Base: Actors in innovation process.

The mapping of innovation process actors shows the relation between the categories and the respective linkages: Innovation management is the base for patent/IP management/consulting and patent attorneys, and has a link to R&D, business development and sales/finance/HR. TT management basically links all the remaining categories, i.e. it brings together all actors in the innovation process.

Linking occupational activity and innovation process

Total	23%	21%	9% 8%	6% 5% {	5% 5% <mark>3%</mark> 29	<mark>% 8%</mark> 5%
Fundamental research (n=38)	11% 11%	24%	5% 5% 5%3	<mark>% 3%3</mark> %	16%	16%
Applied research (n=75)	23%	17%	16% 5%	9% 5	<mark>% 8% 4%</mark>	9% 3%
Prototyping (n=113)	25%	30%	3%	12% 5%	<mark>4%</mark> 2%7% 4	<mark>4%1%4%</mark> 4%
Commercialisation (n=39)	28%	13% 5	%3% <mark>13%</mark>	8% 5%	5% 5%	10% 5%
	 Patent/IP management R&D Business dev 	■ Product manag velopment ■ T	ent ■ Rese ■ Patent at ■ Sales/Fina	arch ■ Innov torney ■ P ince/HR ■ Otl	ation management atent/IP consulting her ■ no answer	

n=265; Q2: Please describe in your own words in a few sentences the work that you do.; Base: Actors in innovation process.

¹/₄ has a focus in patent/IP management, 1 out of 5 in product management/ development and 9% in research. In the phase of fundamental research, the category research gains importance in comparison to the total sample.

Company sector



*results > 3% displayed.

n=263; Q12: In what sector does your organisation operate?; Base: Actors in innovation process.

As it regards the company sector, 16% operate in the sector of engineering, 14% in university/academia and 12% in the health and pharmaceutics sector.

Company size

Total	18%	9%	15%			589	%	
Fundamental research (n=37)	27%		16%		16%		41%	
Applied research (n=74)	19%	4%	19%			58	%	
Prototyping (n=113)	13% 8	3% 1	3%			65%		
Commercialisation (n=39)	21%	1	5%	10%		5	54%	
	1-10 employee	s ∎11	1-50 employe	es	■ 51-250 empl	oyees	More than 250 employees	

n=263; Q13: How many employees work in your organisation?; Base: Actors in innovation process.

The majority of organisations (more than half) have more than 250 employees, followed by 18% of organisations with 1-10 employees, 15% with 51-250 employees and less than 10% with 11-50 employees. A smaller number of LEC are active in fundamental research, whereas a higher number of LEC can be found in the prototyping phase.

Company size: Start-up

(n=263) 1-10 employees 18% 11-50 employees 9% 51-250 employees 15% More than 250 employees 58%

For companies up to 50 employees:

Organisation is considered to be a start-up?

Q13: How many employees work in your organisation? / Q13.1: Would you consider the organisation you work for to be a start-up? Base: Actors in innovation process.

For companies up to 50 employees, 45% consider themselves to be a start-up, whereas 55% are no start-up.

European Patent Office

Number of employees

Country



n=263; Q14: In which country is your organisation primarily located?; Base: Actors in innovation process; results ≥ 1% displayed.

Nearly 1/3 of the organisations are located in Germany. 11% are from Slovenia, 7% from the United Kingdom and 5% from Sweden and the U.S.A., respectively.

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Acknowledgements

- Katharina Egger, Market Research Expert, Vienna, Austria
- Motivaction B.V. Amsterdam

With the kind support of:

Business Europe, Digital Europe, European Association of Research and Technology Organisations, European Chemical Industry Council, European Innovation Network, European Physical Society, International Association of Science Parks and Areas of Innovation, IPR Helpdesk, The European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations, University Industry Innovation Network.



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Thank you for your attention.

