



An Innovative Public Sector in 2017 – New Solutions to Complex Challenges

EPISA2017128 The Cooperation Fund

Submitted by the European Intellectual Property Office

Every business should be able to access trade mark and design rights, and in the EU, this can be done either at national or European level. In the EU Member States, national intellectual property offices register trade mark and design rights valid in that particular member state. At European level, the decentralised agency of the EU, the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) administers unitary protection for businesses looking to secure their trade mark and design rights across the EU. This parallel system is a critical aspect of the intellectual property (IP) system, enabling businesses to obtain the right protection for their needs.

In 2010, some IP National offices had fully electronic systems, making it easy to apply online for a trade mark or design. Some did not, resulting in delays and barriers for many businesses to secure IP rights. The IP offices and main User Associations of the EU therefore began to work together on a unique venture to improve the IP system in the EU, known as the Cooperation Fund.

The Fund was financed entirely by EUIPO, with a budget of EUR 50 million. In five years, it developed, built and implemented tools and services geared towards helping users secure their IP rights in the EU, and helping EU IP offices to go move online – saving time and money for their users, particularly SMEs, which represent 99% of all EU businesses.

The Cooperation Fund was collaborative at its very core, building tools and services not just *for* users and IP offices, but *with* them. Through a project-based structure, it leveraged the expertise of EU national office experts, IP professionals and businesses to build a series of advanced tools, services and solutions that covered every aspect of the IP life cycle; from the initial search process, through to application and registration; management and also – crucially – enforcement of IP rights.

The Cooperation Fund touched every single EU IP office, with more than 300 people across the EU working to achieve its aims – national office experts based in their own Member States, EUIPO staff, businesses and IP professionals. A maximum of around 165 integrations of the tools and services was foreseen. But in the end, over 370 integrations had taken place with, on average, €1.88 million invested in each IP National Office. The IT tools developed were transferable from one IP Office to another. Each tool was entirely free to use, and reflected a different aspect of the IP process. To increase accessibility, they were all gathered through one common portal.

Five years down the road, for the first time, trade marks and designs can be filed electronically all over the EU. It has never been quicker and easier to file a trade mark or a design, through reliable and user-friendly technology. Powerful databases containing over 40 million global trade marks and 10 million global designs are at the reach of anyone who wants to use them. Businesses and enforcers are connected through a single platform to help in the fight against counterfeiting.