



30 April 2020

Responding to COVID-19

A joint message of support for inventors from the USPTO and EPO

The coronavirus outbreak has changed our daily lives almost beyond recognition. The staff of the European Patent Office (EPO) and United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) stand in solidarity with everyone affected.

Beyond the instances of personal hardship, we are now seeing a significant negative impact on the global economy. Every day, we learn further of the economic effects in nations in various degrees of lockdown.

In these challenging times, it is our innovators, inventors and all those involved in pioneering research who will play a central role in the recovery of our economies and societies. In both the US and Europe, industries that make intensive use of intellectual property rights (IPR) generate approximately 40% of GDP and are directly and indirectly responsible for around 30% of jobs. They are the driving force behind exports, amounting to more than one trillion USD or EUR each year.

Among these IPR-intensive industries are the innovative companies, research centers and universities that are researching and developing tests, vaccines, and treatments that could put an end to the coronavirus pandemic. Their work is fundamental to us as people and as a society fighting to take care of its vulnerable members and those in need of medical care. Indeed, such innovation has long served as the driving engine of human development, and will continue to do so.

To support innovation during this crisis, the USPTO and the EPO stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the innovation community. Our Offices are now offering assistance through time extensions and fee deadlines, as well as flexibility on hearings, such as offering video conferences or postponements.¹ By doing so, we hope to continue supporting inventors with high-quality intellectual property rights that help them attract investment and licence technology, create jobs, and enter new markets with confidence and predictability.

Our Offices will spare no effort to give users the support they need. We will develop our capacity to respond to the difficult circumstances that applicants face. At a time when the dissemination of knowledge is crucial, we will persevere in developing the tools that can help scientists all over the world. We will continue to enrich our public patent databases, which are free to access and contain hundreds of millions of documents from all over the world. They present a wealth of technological knowledge that can help inventors and researchers everywhere build on previous developments, gain new insight and help identify potential suppliers, technology partners, and customers.

The USPTO and the EPO stand united in our effort to support the public in this crucial time, and we will build on our longstanding relationship to provide everyone in the IP community with the support they need.

Andrei Iancu
USPTO Director

António Campinos
EPO President

¹ For more information on how the USPTO and EPO are adapting their services and regulations in response to the coronavirus pandemic, see their websites: www.epo.org/news-issues/covid-19.html and www.uspto.gov/coronavirus.