

Patent attorneys and EPO Examiners have a glimpse behind the scenes

At Nederlandsch Octrooibureau it is our advisors' daily task to deliver the best IP services to our clients, whether prosecuting applications, maintaining patents in opposition or revoking competitor's patents are involved.

How nice it would be to have full insight into the working manner and way of thinking of "the other side", that is, the intellectual property organizations responsible for granting and, if needed, revoking patents.

Advantageously, for some years now the European Patent Office (EPO) has made it possible for patent examiners on the one hand and patent attorneys on the other hand to have a glimpse behind their respective scenes. The official PRAKTIKA EXTERN and PRAKTIKA INTERN programmes allow experienced EPO examiners to exchange their knowledge with industrial and patent attorney firms, and vice versa. The aim is for both parties to have the opportunity to interact and develop a better idea of the issues and challenges in a different professional environment dealing with intellectual property.

The mission statement of the PRAKTIKA INTERN programme, run by the European Patent Academy, is "to promote equal access across all current and future EPC contracting states to training opportunities related to international and European patent law and practice". Every year, EPO receives about 30 to 60 applications from patent attorneys wishing to spend an internship at one of the EPO directorates.

Depending on the applicant's level of experience, placement is possible within Search, Examination and Opposition (Directorate General 1, DG1) or

the Boards of Appeal (Directorate General 3, DG3). Every year, approximately 15 places are available in DG1, and 3 to 4 in DG3.

For PRAKTIKA EXTERN, patent attorney firms can express their readiness to host one or more interested examiners for a 2-4 weeks' stay. Based on their particular wishes, the examiners and host firms are closely matched.

During recent years, Nederlandsch Octrooibureau has been actively engaged in both programmes. Rene van Duijvenbode, European Patent Attorney and associate partner in our office in The Hague, successfully applied for PRAKTIKA INTERN. In September 2008 he spent a three-week internship with the Boards of Appeal (DG3) in Munich. Jessica Kroeze, European Patent Attorney in our office in The Hague, was also accepted for a three-week internship with the Boards of Appeal in October 2011. Both were closely involved in the day-to-day work of board members, including the preparation of summons, attending oral proceedings and drafting of decisions. This appeared to be of great value in gaining mutual understanding for the different interests at stake for patentees versus EPO. Furthermore, there was ample opportunity to discuss recent case law and exchange views regarding future developments in the patenting domain.



Nederlandsch Octrooibureau was pleased to welcome two experienced EPO examiners in the past months of September and October: an examiner from EPO in Rijswijk (Netherlands) in the Chemistry and Life Sciences section and an examiner from Munich (Germany) in the Mechanical, Electrical and Physical Engineering section. From day one, they were submerged in the daily practice of our office, while at the same time serving as highly rated sources of information for our attorneys. In addition, they contributed to the education of trainees as well as experienced attorneys by taking on an active role in mock oral proceedings organized at our office and by lecturing on selected topics.

The involvement of Nederlandsch Octrooibureau in the PRAKTIKA EXTERN and PRAKTIKA INTERN programmes has been of indispensable value for the exchange of knowledge and experience between our advisors and EPO. With this, Nederlandsch Octrooibureau will be able to serve clients even better.



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