Europäisches
Patentamt

European
Patent Office

Office européen
des brevets

Communication Report 2020

Executive summary

Effective communication is a vital part of the EPO's vision to empower and motivate staff to set worldwide standards in intellectual property, to be effective and transparent and to respond to the needs of our users. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic required a new emphasis on communication through online events, virtual content and social media in 2020 to ensure that the EPO remains fully connected with users and stakeholders and responds to their needs and concerns.

A major challenge that was identified was the threat of misinformation about patents and COVID-19 arising from the pandemic. In response to this, the EPO set up a special area for practitioners on the EPO website, which was visited nearly 500 000 times, and created the "Fighting Coronavirus" platform, which generated nearly 30 000 visits. We also responded directly to many media enquiries about patents and coronavirus, and published a Q&A for journalists in May.

The pandemic forced a switch to digital conferences and launches, which required the development of innovative techniques and tools. These had very positive results: the most popular event held during the year was the artificial intelligence conference in December, which generated around 7 500 engagements on social media. In total, there were almost 20 000 viewers for EPO online events held during the year.

Another important focus was social media. The number of posts on the EPO channels increased 30% from 2019 to over 3 300. The EPO also launched a new podcast channel, "Talk Innovation", which supports SP2023 by sharing information about the EPO and the patent system in an accessible and entertaining format. This has been well received: there were 19 episodes broadcast in 2020, generating around 5 700 plays in total, and the series is continuing in 2021 with interviews relating to the European Inventor Award.

To promote accessibility and transparency, the EPO divided the traditional Annual Report into two parts in 2020: the Annual Review, which included information relating to operational performance, and the Patent Index, comprising statistics on patent applications and grants. A new Patent Index section of the EPO website featured data, charts and infographics, as well as video and animated content. A media campaign for the launch generated over 1 400 media reports, and reached more than 2.5 million social media users.

Principal Directorate Communication also played an important role in supporting the operational changes triggered by the pandemic, such as teleworking and new digital workflows, by creating content to foster understanding and solidarity among EPO staff. This included the setting up of "Corona corner" on the intranet site, which rapidly became the most visited page on the site. As circumstances changed, new content was continually added and it was renamed "Strong Together".

The challenges of 2020 demanded creative, innovative and timely communications. These were essential to address the concerns of stakeholders and staff, share information about new initiatives and promote the benefits of the patent system in general. The communications initiatives launched during the year played a crucial part in promoting the EPO's digital transformation and highlighting its role in promoting innovation.

Contents

1.   Introduction

Principal Directorate Communication was set-up at the end of 2019 with the merger of the former external communication, internal communication and graphic design units. In March 2020 the principal directorate consolidated its structure by assigning all colleagues to either the new Content Creation directorate, or the Channel Management directorate. This consolidation has helped to ensure that the principal directorate can harness synergies − both in content production and distribution, and when targeting multiple audiences − while encouraging greater collaboration among its staff.

Work also started on setting up the Communication Intelligence Network (CIN) in 2020. It consists of over 25 staff from across the organisation who contribute to bidirectional communication ensuring that corporate communication correctly reaches all corners of the organisation and that intra-departmental communication is aligned with corporate messages and priorities. By pursuing a new strategy and harnessing synergies from its consolidated structure, the principal directorate significantly improved its performance and the impact of its communication to both internal and external stakeholders in 2020.

2.   Key communication campaigns 2020

2.1   COVID-19 communication campaigns

2.1.1   Strong together

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in February 2020 fundamentally changed the way that staff at the EPO work. Within a few weeks, all employees were equipped with hardware and software, enabling them to work from home. Teleworking became the new norm.

"Strong Together" web area attracted nearly **464 000** page views

Communication undoubtedly played a key role in the EPO's ability to cope effectively with the pandemic. In March, a "Corona corner" was set up on the intranet to create an online hub for all information related to the crisis and to encourage staff working remotely to share their experiences. New features were added throughout the year, with video messages of support from senior executives and staff reaching out to each other in increasingly creative ways.

In April, the intranet area was renamed "Strong Together" to reflect the sense of community it fostered. A month later, in an Office-wide survey on coping during the crisis, 78% of staff reported that the EPO was doing a good job of keeping them informed. And, by the end of 2020, "Strong Together" was the EPO's most-visited intranet page, with a total of 200 000 visits.

With the so-called second wave of the pandemic in autumn 2020, new features were added to the intranet. They included a Microsoft Teams channel, enabling employees to reach out to each other in increasingly creative ways, including via videos and by setting up interest groups to exchange views.

2.1.2 "Fighting coronavirus" platform

Over the course of 2020 the principal directorate's press team dealt with a large number of media queries related to COVID-19. Together with its social media experts, the press team actively engaged in countering misinformation about patents and COVID-19 in co-operation with fact-checking journalists, the World Health Organisation's communication team and press officers at national patent offices in the EPO's member states. In May, the EPO also published questions and answers for journalists on the topic of patents and coronavirus.

COVID-19 online area (epo.org) attracted **490 000** page views

The EPO hosts vast amounts of technical information that can be used by scientists and researchers working to fight the spread of the coronavirus. However, these experts often need help and guidance to conduct meaningful searches in EPO patent databases and find the right information to support their work.

In spring 2020, teams of EPO experts developed a collection of ready-to-use patent search strategies that non-experts could execute in Espacenet. These search strategies were published over the summer in four batches on the "Fighting Coronavirus" online platform. The platform covers 11 topics ranging from vaccines and medicines to diagnostics with 276 distinct datasets and has received over 29 000 visits since its launch in June.

"Fighting coronavirus" platform attracted **29 000+** visits

2.1.3 Giving staff surveys greater visibility

Last year saw the launch of two comprehensive staff surveys: "Strong Together: Working during COVID-19" (in May) and "Shaping the New Normal" (in September). Staff feedback represents a valuable source of insight into the challenges and opportunities faced by individuals and the organisation as a whole.

To raise awareness and boost participation rates among staff, communications campaigns were launched to support both surveys. They included the set-up of survey intranet areas, regular news items and updates, as well as direct mailings to staff. Summaries of the results were published for both surveys, together with videos featuring explanations of the survey results by independent consultants.

Based upon the findings of the survey in May, a follow-up communication campaign was also run – "From Survey to Action" – detailing the steps being taken as a result. They included supporting the roll-out of new IT equipment, as well as performance-related measures such as adjusting individual and team targets.

2.1.4 Shaping the new normal

The EPO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic massively accelerated a process of digital transformation that had already been initiated under the Strategic Plan 2023 in 2019. However, the pandemic also ushered in far-reaching changes in attitudes to the workplace. To reflect these changes and actively shape its future, the EPO began working on a new normal strategy document in 2020. Principal Directorate Communication played an active role in the taskforce set up to develop the EPO's new normal strategy and in defining corporate messaging on the topic.

2.2 Trusted partners and international co-operation

In 2020 a fresh emphasis was placed on keeping staff and external stakeholders informed of the EPO's extensive international co-operation activities. Over 45 intranet news updates (42 700+ views) and 28 news items were published on the EPO's website (432 500+ views). Highlights included:

- A report on the EPO-CNIPA heads of office meeting and the launch of a two-year PCT pilot to designate the EPO as International Searching Authority (December)
- Progress towards a validation agreement with the Organisation Africaine de la Propriété Intellectuelle (OAPI) (December)
- Strengthening co-operation with the Licensing Executives Society (LESI) (November)
- Signature of a reinforced partnership with Colombia (November)
- Co-operation with the International Energy Agency (October)
- Joint statements on the COVID-19 response by the IP5 offices (spring/summer)
- Annual meeting of IP5 heads (July) and the first meeting of the IP5 Taskforce on artificial intelligence (January).

2.3 EPO studies, Patent Index and Annual Review

2.3.1 Landscaping studies

All four landscaping studies published by the EPO's Chief Economist unit in 2020 were accompanied by targeted media campaigns. aimed at bringing its findings to a wider audience of journalists, policymakers and business decision-takers. The four studies were:

- **Patents and additive manufacturing: Trends in 3D printing technologies** (13 July), launched at the digital conference "Shaping tomorrow: 3D printing and its impact on IP". The media campaign generated 670 media clippings

- **EPO/IEA study: Innovation in batteries and electricity storage** (September): this delivered outstanding results on social media, with a highlights video generating 8 400 views on all channels and reaching 33 000 users on Twitter
- **Valorisation of scientific results: Patent commercialisation scoreboard**: European universities and public research organisations (24 November): targeted outreach to academic institutions and educational media reached some 20 000 social media users, and 300 engagement activities. A podcast on the study's findings was also posted on 22 December
- **Patents and the Fourth Industrial Revolution: The global technology trends enabling the data-driven economy** (December): this study was promoted in 10 markets in Europe and the IP5 regions with a video and audio podcast. These activities generated just over 990 clippings (25% tier-1 media), with an advertising equivalent value of over EUR 3 million. The video alone attracted over 1 300 views.

Figure 1 – Landscaping studies published in 2020

Source: EPO

In January reports by six recipients of grant funding under the EPO's Academic Research Programme were also published online, along with short videos explaining their work and the benefits of EPO funding.

2.3.2   Patent Index

The former Annual Report, traditionally published every March, was split up into two publications in 2020. The content relating to the EPO's operational performance in 2019 (timeliness, quality, key milestones, international co-operation achievements etc.) was presented in the Annual Review in June (see below). The remaining content relating to the previous year, namely statistics on European patent applications filed and granted patents published by the EPO was published online as the Patent Index 2019 in March.

A new Patent Index area on the EPO's website featured patent application statistics, analysis and attractive visualisations. It also included a video statement by the EPO's Chief Business Analyst and Chief Economist and an animated infographic video summarising the key figures. The Patent Index generated a total of 120 000 page views on the EPO's website.

Its launch was accompanied by a large-scale media campaign targeting 20 countries that generated considerable interest among journalists, policy makers and the general public. Within a month of the Patent Index launch, the campaign generated 1 400+ media reports, including print and online reports, 40 news agency reports, and six TV/radio broadcasts. The advertising value equivalency was calculated at over EUR 4.6 million.

The campaign also had a significant impact on social media, with over 2.5 million users exposed to the EPO's messages, up 211% from the previous year. There were 20 000+ clicks on content related to the Patent Index 2019 published by the EPO on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn (+86% versus the previous year), and the number of Patent Index videos views across the various online channels nearly tripled to almost 1 million.

2.3.3   Annual Review

At the virtual Administrative Council meeting held on 30 June the EPO's President presented the Annual Review. It was complemented by an attractive website area divided into the five goals of the Strategic Plan and five online annex reports on quality, human resources, engagement, the organisation's environmental impact and IT. The media campaign and video accompanying the launch of the Annual Review generated 45 000 page views on the EPO's website.

Table 1 – Media coverage comparison: Annual Review, Patent Index and landscaping studies

Campaign	Annual Report 2018	Patent Index 2019	Study: Patents and additive manufacturing	Study: Innovation in batteries and electricity storage	Study: Valorisation of scientific results	Study: Patents and the Fourth Industrial Revolution
Year of publication	2019	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020
Monitoring period	4 weeks	4 weeks	2 weeks	2 weeks	4 weeks	4 weeks
Organiser	EPO	EPO	EPO	EPO-IEA	EPO	EPO
Number of markets covered	20 (16 European Countries/ 4 Non-European Countries)	20 (16 European Countries/ 4 Non-European Countries)	7 (6 European Countries/1 Non-European Countries)	13 (9 European Countries/ 4 Non-European Countries)	None defined	10 (6 European Countries/ 4 Non-European Countries)
Total number of clippings in campaign markets	1 700	1 486	674	1 116	12	992
Tier-one clippings in campaign markets	515	-	136	243	2	230
Total number of IP media clippings	13	-	6	7	4	
AVE campaign markets	€5 755 850	€4 619 550	€2 783 500	€4 719 525	€14 300	€3 024 325

Source: EPO

Table 2 – Comparison EPO social media: Annual Review, Patent Index and landscaping studies

Campaign	Annual Report 2018	Patent Index 2019	Study: Patents and additive manufacturing	Study: Innovation in batteries and electricity storage	Study: Valorisation of scientific results	Study: Patents and the Fourth Industrial Revolution
Year of publication	2019	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020
Monitoring period	4 weeks	4 weeks	2 weeks	2 weeks	4 weeks	4 weeks
Organiser	EPO	EPO	EPO	EPO-IEA	EPO	EPO
Reach	814 919	2 541 120	48 862	50 047	20 000	70 230
Engagement	3 621	5 531	1 350	1 018	300	1 771
Video Views	260 616	981 568	7 197	8 472	-	13 472
Mentions	4 500	3 000	-	300	-	340

Source: EPO

2.4 Digital transformation

With the launch of the "Talk Digital" series in January, Principal Directorate Communication and Principal Directorates Business Information Technology (BIT) set up a monthly talk-show to accompany the digitization process at the EPO. Programme managers and employees from across the organisation met up to discuss topics that showcase digitization and its impact on their respective work areas.

"Talk digital":
3 100+ live views
2 200+ recording views

In October the Digital Transformation Hub was also launched as a central information point for all digital topics. The hub offers comprehensive information on all aspects of digitisation including new tools and workflows at the EPO. A central element of the hub is the integrated "pipeline" that offers a timeline for all activities in the digitization process.

Digital Transformation Hub:
7 300+ page views

2.5   Patent granting and quality

2.5.1   Pilot with the Chinese National Intellectual Property Administration (CNIPA)

On 12 November 2019, President Campinos and Commissioner Shen Changyu signed an agreement enabling Chinese applicants to designate the EPO as an International Searching and Preliminary Examining Authority (ISA/IPEA). CNIPA handled promotion of the agreement within China, while the EPO's promotional efforts were directed towards European and US attorneys; and especially those with Chinese clients.

2.5.2   Oral proceedings in opposition via video conferencing

Following the launch of the video conferencing (ViCo) pilot project in April 2020, a communication plan targeting patent professionals was developed in response to extensive discussion of the changes in social media. The plan was updated at every milestone of the pilot, and four news items were published (in May, July, September and November), as well as a Progress Report on the first six months of the pilot project.

2.5.3   Talk Quality

A series of "Talk Quality" monthly webinars, addressing all staff (and particularly examiners and formalities officers) was launched as part of the EPO's Commitment to Quality programme. This aims to keep staff informed of progress towards establishing a shared understanding of what quality means for our stakeholders, and of how best to maintain this quality in practice as a collaborative organisation. The initiative aims to show that both the Strategic Plan 2023 and quality itself concern all EPO staff, and not just the respective project teams responsible for driving the programme forward.

2.5.4   Boards of Appeal lectures

Regular dialogue between examiners and the Boards is essential to further enhance transparency and promote quality at the EPO. To this end, a series of case law lectures/webinars with the Boards of Appeal (BoA) was organised under the SP2023 project on learning from board of appeals outcomes. The initiative was targeted at all staff, and particularly examiners, and the lectures attracted over 1 100 participants.

2.6   Corporate culture

2.6.1   Diversity and inclusion (D&I) programme

Communication campaigns were conducted for the EPO's various D&I initiatives (e.g. International Women's Day, new Disability Policy and virtual shadowing day with disabled colleagues) and centralised via a special intranet site, which attracted nearly 18 000 hits in 2020.

The inclusion week organised at the beginning of the year saw a number of events taking place across all sites, including workshops, lunch and learn sessions and reflection groups with managers, staff and staff representatives. Christopher Street Day in Munich and the Amsterdam LGBT+ pride were supported by the EPO via internal and external communications, including videos of senior executives hoisting the rainbow flag in front of the EPO buildings.

D&I intranet pages: nearly **18 000** hits

8 intranet news items published: **20 000+** views

2 social media videos: **13 800+** views

2.6.2   iLearn

The "iLearn" platform was launched in March 2020 as a portal to access online learning along with LinkedIn Learning, Udemy and Coursera. Principal Directorate Communication supported the initiative by creating and launching iLearn on the intranet, as well as organising awareness-raising measures for all staff.

2.7   Sustainability
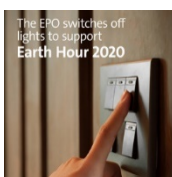
2.7.1   Financial study

The Office engaged in an in-depth review of its finances during the first semester of 2019. The communication campaign on the Financial study lasted from its publication in May 2019 until the finalisation of the bundle of financial measures in April 2020. It was complemented by communication throughout 2020 on the financial measures to be implemented as of January 2021. PD Communication helped senior management to communicate regularly, transparently and as exhaustively as possible with all stakeholders: staff, staff representatives, EPO pensioner association and delegations of the Council.

The study and the proposed measures were presented and discussed transparently and in detail. Eight news updates were published on the intranet (35 000+ views) and four live broadcasts to managers and staff were set-up. The President and Vice-President Nellie Simon were also the Financial study and the envisaged measures in a live interview broadcast on EPOtv, which was viewed live by around 2 000 colleagues.

Three explanatory videos were produced (on proposed measures, the new salary adjustment method, pensions) and in total PD Communication produced and published nine financial study videos on EPOtv (including the recordings of the broadcasts and live interview).

A special intranet page for the Financial study was also set-up, including a mailbox to gather staff feedback. A list of some 120 questions and answers was compiled to try to address all concerns. Questions raised by staff were also published as FAQs on the intranet and managers were provided with information kits enabling them to clarify remaining questions directly at the working level. The Financial study, the list of 17 potential measures and comments by the Office were also made directly accessible to the public on the EPO's website.

8 intranet news updates: **35 000+** views

4 live broadcasts to managers and staff

1 live interview: around **2 000** live viewers

3 explanatory videos

2.7.2 Environmental sustainability

Communications – both to internal and external stakeholders – are crucial to the EPO's environmental sustainability programme to promote awareness and boost support for its initiatives. Multiple environmental communication campaigns were organised to mark external events throughout 2020, including Earth Hour (28 March), World IP Day: "Innovate for a green future" (26 April in co-operation with member states' IP offices and the EUIPO) and World Environment Day (5 June).

Digital clean-up day: 1.9 million emails deleted

To mark digital clean-up day (19 September), colleagues were encouraged to delete superfluous emails and files in an intranet news item that generated 2 000 clicks. Roughly 1.9 million emails were deleted as a result of this initiative, with each email averaging 50KB and marking a significant contribution towards green IT at the EPO.

The EPO also sponsored a TedxYouth talk with Felix Finkbeiner from "Plant for the Planet" as one of the speakers on 15 May and celebrated 25 years of the Eco-Management and Audit Sceme (EMAS) on 28 September. The EPO has been EMAS certified for 11 years. By highlighting the cumulative savings over this period, the communication campaign was designed to foster staff engagement and commitment to reaching the EPO's target of going carbon neutral by 2030.

Getting EPO staff on board to go carbon neutral by 2030

Co-operation with the EPO's various environmental groups was also intensified throughout 2020. A virtual "green finance" presentation was organised on 6 May and promoted to staff Office-wide. Over 60 staff joined the presentation, which was followed by a lively question-and-answer session. Interactive workshops on "Zero waste", organised in co-operation with the Green City organisation in Munich, were also promoted during November and December. To boost engagement across the Office, staff were invited to post videos on the EPO's Facebook and Instagram accounts explaining why environmental issues are important to them.

2.8   Social dialogue

Social dialogue is about constructive exchanges with staff and their representatives on key issues and promoting consensus-building. The EPO's commitment to fostering social dialogue is clearly stated in its Strategic Plan 2023, reflecting its firm belief that internal discussion is a more effective way of addressing problems than legal action.

To build trust and effectively reach out to all staff, social dialogue must be supported by a proactive communication strategy. This strategy involves presenting complex issues in a clear and timely manner, gathering staff feedback (via special mailboxes, focus groups etc.) and channelling it into ongoing discussions.

Social dialogue intranet area: **32 000+** visits

Over the course of the year 17 intranet news items were published reporting on all meetings with the Central Staff Committee (CSC), SUEPO, and the FFPE, and on the outcomes of General Consultative Committee (GCC) meetings. These updates achieved a total of over 57 000 page views.

In addition to this regular coverage, Principal Directorate Communication also provided extensive communications support on social dialogue-related topics including the Financial Study, the Salary Adjustment Procedure, the childcare and education reform and the recognition of PhDs as professional experience.

This support spanned a broad range of communications, ranging from regular intranet reports on working group meetings and lists of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to special web areas, explanatory videos, webinars and special mailboxes for collecting staff feedback.

2.8.1   Staff committee elections

In view of the pandemic, the EPO offered candidates standing in its 2020 staff committee elections a new online communication platform for their seven-week campaigns. This encompassed an intranet area with web pages for each of the EPO's four sites, and a special promotion area on its intranet homepage. Roughly 20 intranet announcements were also published, along with videos by candidates. In a bid to bolster electoral turnout, weekly mass emails listing the candidates (with photos, background information etc.) were sent to all staff at their respective sites in Munich and The Hague.

Staff committee elections: **22 200** intranet area visits and **15 000+** news views

2.9 Events campaign

As of February 2020, a special channel for Events was created, reporting to the Channel Director. This team of five in-house experts is responsible for delivering high-level strategic events that directly involve the EPO's President or Vice Presidents and have an office-wide impact. It also supports other directorates with office-wide events by offering concept creation, programme development and other communication activities. The events team organised several high-level events in 2020, including the European Inventor Award (EIA2020), the EPO's 3D Printing Conference, Tech Day and its AI conference (see below and section 4.4 for all other events).

2.9.1 European Inventor Award (EIA) 2020/Inventors revisited

The EIA was postponed to 2021 due to the pandemic; but PD Communication organised two new campaigns to fill the gap: "Inventors Revisited" and "Inventors against coronavirus". As part of the campaigns, former EIA finalists and winners were invited to talk about their recent successes. Given that some former finalists are heavily involved in vaccine development or virus diagnostics, their research makes them leading coronavirus experts. A total of 19 journalistic videos, 12 short films for social media and three Facebook Live interviews were produced for the campaigns.

2.9.2 "Shaping tomorrow" 3D printing conference

"Shaping tomorrow: 3D printing and its impact on IP", jointly organised by the EPO and the EUIPO, took place from 13 to 16 July and marked the EPO's first major fully digital event. The conference attracted almost 2 300 registrations, as well as generating 9 000+ live stream views and video plays and reaching nearly 218 000 social media users.

2.9.3 Landscaping study campaign

The study: "Patents and additive manufacturing – Trends in 3D printing technologies" was also launched at the event with a large-scale press and social media campaign. In the run-up to the study launch, the EPO's press team reached out to media in six national markets to encourage coverage of the study and boost attendance of the conference.

Within two weeks, the campaign generated a total of 703 reports, including 157 print, 526 online articles, 18 news agency items and 2 radio/TV broadcasts with a potential reach of over 26 million people. The advertising equivalent value was calculated at over EUR 2.8 million. Influential tier-one media published 143 articles and the study attracted good coverage in trade and IP press online editions with 83 articles.

2.9.4   EPO Tech Day on artificial intelligence (AI) 2020

The EPO's first ever digital internal conference for all staff was held from 30 September to 1 October and broadcast live via EPOtv. This internal event explored the challenges and opportunities that AI presents for patenting, especially when it comes to computer implemented inventions (CII). The event was organised in close co-operation with other departments and was very well received by all EPO staff members. A total of 1 300 staff joined the event on EPOtv over the two days, while the AI technical workshops attracted 353 participants.

2.9.5   The role of patents in an AI-driven world (AI Conference)

This two-day digital conference held on 17-18 December showcased high-quality studies on AI, as well as examples of patents and practical applications of AI tools at a patent office, Almost 30 speakers engaged in in-depth discussions with stakeholders on AI and New Emerging Technologies (NET) and the event attracted around 3 000 attendees. A total of 10 535 viewers watched the conference over the two days, which reached over 284 000 users on social media. The ground-breaking concept created for the AI conference of using LED Screens, face capturing and real-time 3D animation to help launch the Avatar "Data" was a resounding success and helped to turn the conference into the EPO's most successful event of 2020, with around 7 500 interactions on social media.

3.   Communications supporting SP2023

3.1   SP2023 programmes and projects led by Principal Directorate Communication

3.1.1   Outreach and awareness

As a global standard-setter in IP, the EPO has an active role to play in raising awareness of patents and their positive impact on economy and society. This programme aims to inspire the general public and younger generations and reach out to local communities in our host cities. By demonstrating the importance of patents, the programme also contributes to fostering a sense of purpose among staff and increasing staff engagement.

Figure 2 – Communications for the EPO's Strategic Plan 2023

Programme outreach and awareness

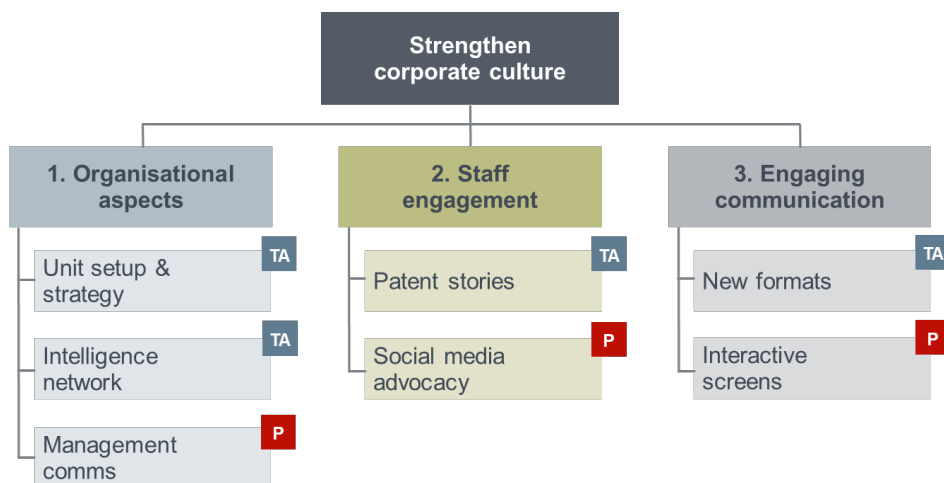| Project 5.4.2.1	Project 5.4.2.2	Project 5.4.2.3	Project 5.4.2.4	Tracked activity 5.4.2.a	Tracked activity 5.4.2.b
Next generation: European Inventor Award	Leveraging the power of data	Building a stronger brand	Committed to the local communities	Enhancing com. outreach through CoCoNet	Cultural activities
EIA	**DATA**	**BRAND**	**LOCAL**	**COCONET**	**CULTURE**

*CoCoNet = Communication Correspondents Network

Source: EPO

3.1.2 Strengthen corporate culture

This programme aims to strengthen the EPO's culture through effective and engaging communication. By developing a sense of common purpose, as well as shared values, vision and mission, this programme will foster staff engagement. The programme consists of three projects and four tracked activities.

Figure 3 – Three pillar approach to strengthening corporate culture

Strengthen corporate culture

1. Organisational aspects	2. Staff engagement	3. Engaging communication
Unit setup & strategy [TA]	Patent stories [TA]	New formats [TA]
Intelligence network [TA]	Social media advocacy [P]	Interactive screens [P]
Management comms [P]		

Source: EPO

The programme was set up in April and project managers were appointed for each of the three projects. Two tracked activities within the Management Communication project were finalised in 2020, namely the reorganisation of Principal Directorate Communication into channels and content directorates and the selection of staff to participate in the Communication Intelligence Network (CIN).

4. Annual production and impact

4.1 Online communication

4.1.1 EPO website

During 2020 the EPO's website focused on providing practitioners and stakeholders with timely information on how the COVID-19 pandemic was impacting the EPO's operations. The website generated a total of 63.7 million page visits in 2020. Based on this metric, the most popular areas of the website included: the COVID section for practitioners (490 000), the Patent Index 2019 (120 000), the Annual Review (45 000) and the "Fighting coronavirus" section (29 000).

Figure 4 – Visitors to epo.org (incl. version for mobile devices)
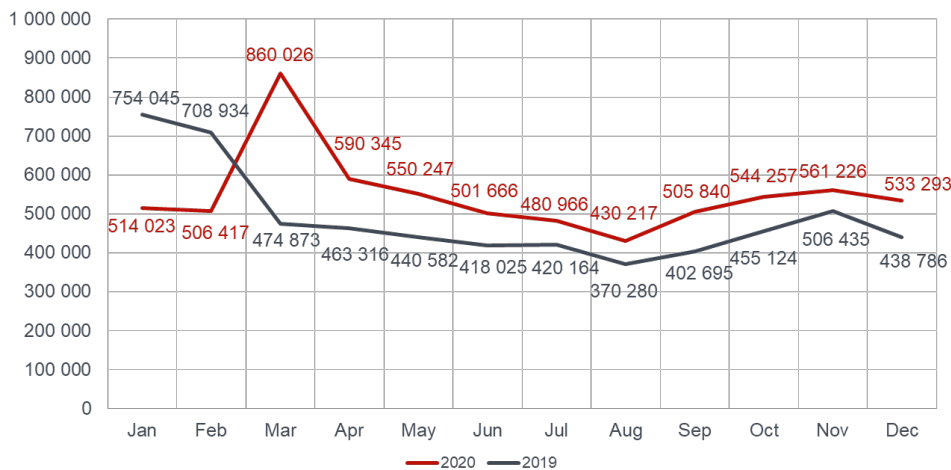

Note: From March 2020 onwards a series of robots were excluded from the data retrospectively for the previous 13 months, so for January and February 2019 only data still including those robots is available. Statistically these numbers aren't comparable to the numbers after that.

Source: EPO

### 4.1.2 EPO intranet

In 2020, the intranet continued to develop with features such as a homepage promotion area and the launch of the digital hub, as well as providing additional content for dozens of new site areas, notably for SP2023. The COVID-19 situation and teleworking had a major impact on the use of the intranet, leading to a surge in the volume of information published and user visits.

Figure 5 – Intranet page views (2019 vs. 2020)

Figure 5 – Intranet page views (2019 vs. 2020)
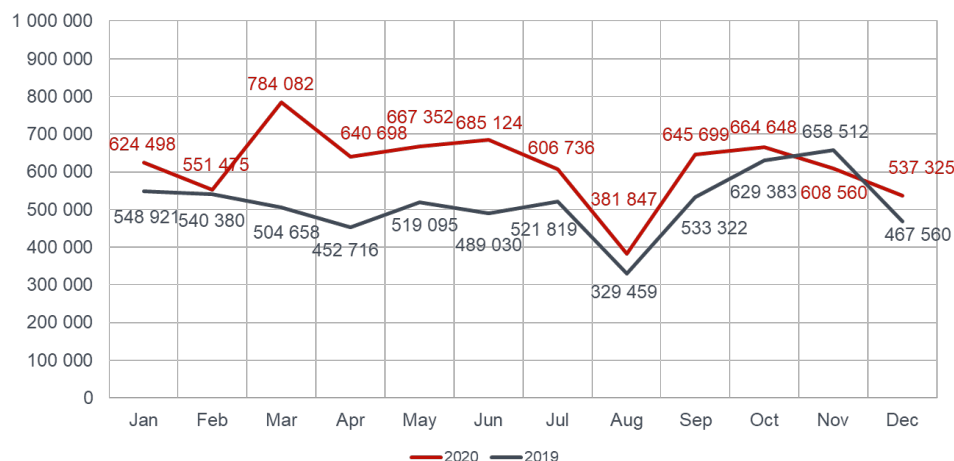
Source: EPO

Figure 6 – Number of intranet news published (2019 vs. 2020)
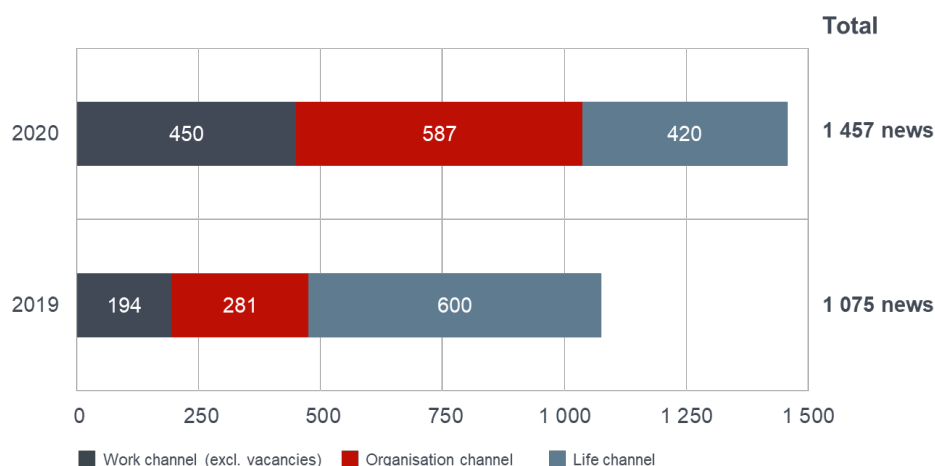
Source: EPO

4.1.3 Podcasts

In September, Principal Directorate Communication launched the EPO podcast channel "Talk innovation". The podcast supports SP2023 by enabling listeners to learn more about the EPO, the patent system and innovation through an entertaining and informative medium, with you, the EPO staff, as key content creators. A total of 19 episodes were published in 2020, generating around 5 700 plays. The social media campaign promoting the podcast episodes had a reach of roughly 360 010, with almost 42 000 trailer video views.

4.2 Social media

The impact of the EPO's social media activities increased in 2020, with over 3 300 published social media posts on the EPO's social media channels. This marked a 30% upturn versus 2019 and a 15% increase in the size of the EPO's social media community to over 229 000 (2019: around 198 500). Videos published on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram attracted over 2.2 million video views.

Over 20 external social media communication campaigns were organised last year and Facebook advertising campaigns reached over 7 million users, with over 120 000 interactions (likes, clicks, shares, comments, etc) and over 6 000 clicks through to the EPO's website. Live reporting on Twitter (over 50 live posts) and Instagram (over 100 Instagram stories) for the 3D printing and AI conferences significantly boosted reach and engagement on the event days.

Table 3 – Social media performance in 2019 versus 2020

Impact	2019	2020
Reach	47 676 730	18 293 681
Engagement	2 580 578	343 550
Post links clicks	106 762	84 812
YouTube video views	303 711	292 235
Net follower growth	57 268	33 083
Total published posts	2 554	3 387

Source: EPO

High figures for 2019 (reach, engagement, clicks) are the result of four viral videos related to the European Inventor Award.

4.2.1   New social media activities in 2020

New staff engagement campaigns were launched for Europe Day, World Health Day, EMAS, and #EPOstrongtogether. Based on top management involvement, social media campaigns were also launched with videos by the President and Vice-Presidents. Updates to the EPO's YouTube channel focused on a closer co-operation with national patent offices, a restructuring of its extensive online video library and improved a meta-tagging strategy. Together these measures generated a 50% upturn in the number of subscribers to the channel. The EPO also adopted a new approach to its Instagram account, with new types of content and interactive stories to engage followers.

4.3   Events

The Events team organised several high-level events in 2020, as well as providing consultancy support for other EPO units organising events with a strategic impact. After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, all office-wide events switched to a fully digital format. The team completed four major event campaigns listed earlier in the report under section 2.9, in addition to organising and supporting other strategic events (DG 1 All Together, CodeChallenge, East meets West and the Pan-European Seal commencement ceremony).

4.3.1 External and internal strategic events

In July, the Communication Correspondents Network (CoCoNet), comprised of communication professionals from the national IP offices and jointly coordinated by the EPO and EUIPO, held its first online meeting. Its members exchanged best practices on how they approached the COVID-19 crisis as communicators, sharing ideas and experiences.

The CoCoNet annual event was held virtually in October with a training session focused on the topic of crisis communication led by an external expert trainer. The network's annual work plan for 2021 was also discussed at the meeting along with ideas for joint communication campaigns. Over 40 communications colleagues from across Europe participated.

4.3.2 Support of other EPO strategic events

4.3.2.1 Pan-European Seal commencement ceremony

On 16 September, the first digital commencement ceremony of the Pan-European Seal Traineeship Programme was broadcast live to participants on EPOtv. In total the live ceremony and the recording was watched by over 360 viewers. The interactive ceremony concluded with a panel session where Pan-European Seal project managers discussed the programme's development and its far-reaching impact.

4.3.2.2 Virtual townhalls

The EPO held its first virtual townhall meetings in October. The "DG 1 All Together" event aimed at providing a forum for more direct interaction with and between examiners, formalities officers and top management. Four rounds of discussion focussed on key issues in the core areas of Strategy, Quality, IT and People. The meetings involved 14 speakers from across the organisation, with 2 700 participants following the event via MS Teams.

4.3.2.3 East meets West 2020

The annual East West forum was held over three days beginning on 23 November and discussed several important topics including amendments to the law, cross-lingual search possibilities and the opportunities presented by artificial intelligence (AI). The forum drew over 100 participants from 15 countries, marking the highest number in the history of the event. Shifting to an online format also allowed EPO staff to take part in the forum for the first time.

4.3.2.4 EPO CodeChallenge

On 25 November, the first EPO CodeChallenge ceremony took place. This was an internal six-week coding competition that involved programmers using AI to solve a real-world business problem: the automatic classification of climate-related technologies. A total of 68 staff members, 11 teams and 33 individuals

entered the contest and put their programming skills to the test as they worked on AI-driven solutions to automatically classify Y02 and Y04 patents. The Award ceremony was attended by 210 viewers, with total engagement on social media (likes, shares, etc.) of 274 viewers.

4.4   Press

The press team is responsible for handling the EPO's relationships with the media, monitoring media coverage, conducting media campaigns, managing interviews, and enhancing and protecting the Office's external reputation. During 2020 the press team dealt with almost 260 media queries, including almost 30 queries on the coronavirus. Together with the social media team, it actively engaged in countering misinformation.

The press team organised four major media campaigns related to EPO reports (see details below). For the major campaigns, 34 media interviews were conducted by senior management, EPO patent examiners and experts, including with tier-1 outlets DPA, Europe 1 and Bloomberg. In addition to these campaigns, 18 press releases were sent out on a wide range of topics, including news related to oral proceedings by videoconference, the launch of the EPO's "Fighting coronavirus" platform, and the EPO's decision to refuse two European patent applications in which an AI system was designated as the inventor.

The press team also monitored thousands of media outlets from around the world and produced a daily media review for management. In addition to the campaigns cited above, this monitoring identified over 1 000 articles mentioning the EPO.
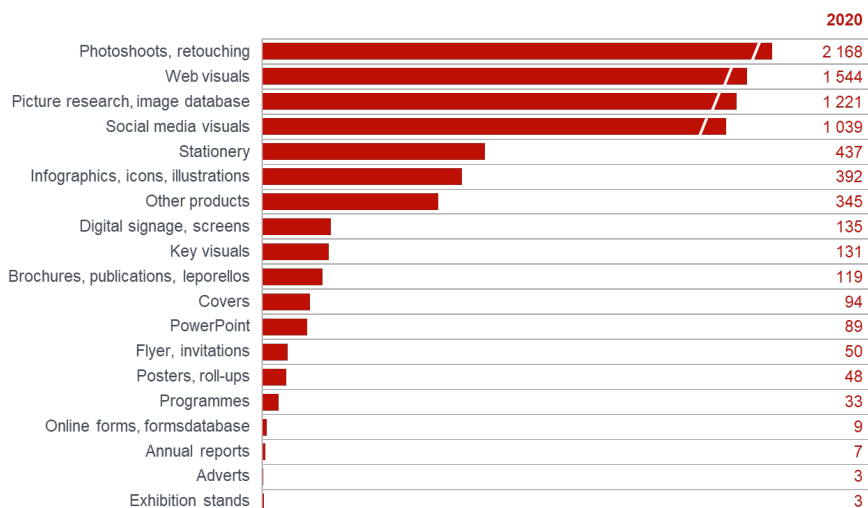
4.5   Visual Communication

The Visual Communication team supports both the Principal Directorate Communication and the office as a whole with graphic design services and audio-visual services. Graphic design includes the conception, design and layout of media, advice on usage in line with EPO's corporate identity guidelines, supporting the creation of training and event material and photography. Audio-visual services include conceiving and producing videos, animations and digital events and filming of video messages.

4.5.1   Graphic design

Since moving to Principal Directorate Communication the graphic design team has focused on strategic communication, which is reflected in the distribution of units requesting its services. Due to the pandemic and thanks to awareness raising by the graphic design team, the volume of printed products decreased dramatically in 2020. The target initially set for 2020 was to achieve 20% digital communication products versus 80% printed products, but the end-result was even better, with 90% digital products versus 10% printed.

Figure 7 – Deliverables graphic design 2020

	2020
Photoshoots, retouching	2 168
Web visuals	1 544
Picture research, image database	1 221
Social media visuals	1 039
Stationery	437
Infographics, icons, illustrations	392
Other products	345
Digital signage, screens	135
Key visuals	131
Brochures, publications, leporellos	119
Covers	94
PowerPoint	89
Flyer, invitations	50
Posters, roll-ups	48
Programmes	33
Online forms, formsdatabase	9
Annual reports	7
Adverts	3
Exhibition stands	3

Source: EPO

4.5.2 Audio-visual communication

The EPO's audio-visual team is in charge of producing corporate videos, organising live transmissions of corporate events and filming senior executives for communication purposes. In 2020, the use of meeting broadcasts, video messages and videos in general soared due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the communication campaign on COVID-19/Strong together also triggering high demand for audio-visual content.

In addition, a significant amount of audio-visual content was produced for SP2023, the focus being on the introduction of the new formats Talk Digital and Talk Quality. For these virtual talk events a new virtual studio has been set-up.

23 corporate videos
9 live transmissions of corporate events
8 video messages from senior executives
43 videos for the Strong together web page

4.6 Local partnerships

In 2020, the EPO created a new "Local partnerships" unit to foster strong long-term relations with local communities at all of the EPO's sites. The aim is to highlight the EPO's role as a responsible public service organisation that supports innovation to make the world a safer, smarter and better place; and creates added value in the life of local citizens. In 2020, around half of the activities planned with co-operation partners were either cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic. So the focus was on conceptual work and a gap analysis in terms of local engagement in corporate citizenship and the CSR strategies of other corporations.

Activities completed in 2020 included:
- The EPO's sponsorship of – and virtual participation in − the first ever digital TEDxYouth Munich entitled "Unstoppable" (15 May), which covered several important youth issues including sustainability, diversity and entrepreneurship. Communication activities focused on social channels (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram YouTube). Total users reached on social media: 19 283; total engagement on social media (likes, shared, etc.): 432

- The EPO's virtual participation in the JustPeace Festival The Hague (20 September to 24 October) featuring an interview with Vice-President Stephen Rowan
- A guided VIP tour through the EPO art collection with cocktail reception for 25 members of the young patrons of Lenbachhaus, a municipal museum of contemporary art in Munich (12 February).
- The commissioning of an exclusive corporate gift/art edition (30 copies) for VIPs, resulting from a new collaboration with a Swedish artist from the EPO art collection.
- Publication of three intranet news items on the EPO art collection
- Acquisition of 40 artworks from 11 countries for the EPO art collection, with a section focusing on the promotion of local artists.
- The production of a 35-minute documentary on the EPO art collection, shot in five countries and featuring 50 masterpieces and 20 interviews. This is the first milestone in the EPO's new digital strategy for the arts and culture and specifically addresses the importance of art in the digital workplace.