



Trend Chart on Innovation in Europe

DE 6

General presentation of the measure/scheme/action/regulation

Country

Germany

Geographical coverage, national or regional (state region)

(National)

Title of the measure

Promotion of Inventors at the Patent Office for German Research

Information Source/Reference

www.pst.fhg.de/german/ef.htmwww.bmbf.de/foerde01/forschung/3-2-8-1-1.htm

Overview (nature, main goals)

The Patent Office for German Research (part of the Fraunhofer-Society) offers interest-free loans for inventors (individuals, researchers from universities and public research labs, inventors from small firms) in order to support them in receiving a patent for an invention. Loans have to be paid back only in the case of incomes from patents. The Patent Office also informs, advises and supports inventors in the following areas: technology transfer, intermediation in co-operation, innovation consulting, patent strategy evaluation on inventions, licencing of patents, licencing contracts.

Action Plan objective addressed by measure

II.2. Protection of IPR

III.5. Absorption of Technologies by SMEs

Administering agency

Fraunhofer-Patentstelle für die Deutsche Forschung

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Name of the manager(s) responsible for the implementation of this measure with address, fax, phone

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Description of Scheme

General Information

Reference to legal basis (e.g. act, public document, ...)

Directive on the Promotion of Inventors via the "Patentstelle Deutsche Forschung".

Does the measure receive central funding or regional funding?

Central

Start date

1955

Expected date of completion

indefinite

Previous measure (name, date, links with the current measure)

no

Reasons for launching/modifying the new measure

High uncertainty of commercial success of inventions and considerable costs of patenting inventions, especially for private individuals, researchers from universities and public research labs and inventors at very small firms, are barriers to patent invention and introduce them to the market. By providing financial funds for patenting costs, these

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barriers are reduced and innovation activities in this segment of the economy are stimulated.

Have any of the main features of the measure/scheme/action/regulation changed during its implementation

no

What is the predominant role of the government?

Funding source

Target Group

Who are the target groups of the measure?

SMEs/Industrial SMEs

Researchers

Individuals

Organisation and Implementation

Organisation and Structure

The Programme is administrated by the Fraunhofer Patent Office for German Research Inventors apply for granting of a loan directly to the Patent Office, including information on the type and nature of the invention. This information is treated as strictly confidential. The application is evaluated by the Patent Office which has the incentive to select those inventions with the highest commercialisation potential as the Office will receive a quarter of the commercialisation incomes itself. Marketing of the patent is carried out by the Patent Office. In the case of commercially successful patents, the loan has to be paid back by the inventor, otherwise neither the loan nor the costs of the Patent Bureau have to be covered by the inventor. The Fraunhofer patent office offers various types of support: a. for firms: technology transfer (search for new products/processes which are offered either nationally or internationally), intermediation in co-operation in R&D and licensing, consulting in innovation management and patent strategies. b. for universities, public research labs and private inventors: information on licensing and IPR, evaluation inventions, financial support, search for licensees, support in contracting licences, strategies, evaluation on inventions, licensing of patents, licensing contracts, supervision on licensing contracts

What are the criteria for eligibility?

Funding is restricted to those inventions which are a technically realizable, which could be patented and which have a high economic value. Support may also be provided for prototypes and models.

What is the mode of delivery of the measure?

Interest-free loan of 80 % of total patenting costs. The loan must be paid back only in the case of incomes out of the patent. In addition, incomes out of a patent go to 75 % to the inventor and to 25 % to the Patent Office. If inventors apply their patents at their own cost but use consulting services of the Patent Office, incomes out of the patent are allocated 80 % at the inventor and to 20 % at the Patent Office.

Financing : Overall budget allocated to the measure

not available

Financing : expenditure per year

For direct support to inventors: varying from year to year, about 0.5 mill. Euro in 1999. For the Patent Office: there is no specific budget, but the Office is partially financed by public funds from the BMBF. The total budget of PST in 1999 was about 5 mill. Euro, of which 47 per cent were financed by incomes from royalties achieved from patents which were developed by other institutes of the Fraunhofer Society and licensed by the PST, from consulting for firms and from internal services within the Fraunhofer-Society.

Financing : other budgetary sources (additional financing)

Public promotion of invention activities is provided via various sub-programmes within the INSTI-Network (DE_08, DE_24, DE_40, DE_48, DE_63) and within programmes at the Länder level, especially for university researchers.

Results

Result Measurement

What are the main indicators for the measurement of the results ?

no indicators mentioned

Where an evaluation has taken place, what were the main results achieved?

no evaluation carried out so far

If no official evaluation has been undertaken, have there been any indicators of success?

There are about 1,500 applications per year, of which 3 to 5 % are accepted by the Patent Bureau. Out of these 40 to 70 inventions which are patented, 20 are commercially successful. Annual income out of these successful patents is lower than 0.5 mill. Euro. The self-financing share of the Patent Office increased significantly since 1994 (from 30 to 4 per cent) indicating a successful commercialisation of patents and an increase in

consulting services offered to firms.

Observations

Which mechanisms seem to function well in the measure?

The layout of the programme seems to be efficient: the patent bureau has strong incentives to select only those inventions with the highest commercial value. Thus, public funds are allocated efficiently. As the patent bureau does not receive any direct compensation for their consulting and commercialisation efforts, it is forced to efficient internal organisation. The patent office for German research seems to function well and achieves its goals.

Which mechanisms seem to be less successful in the measure?

Commercialisation of inventions is a difficult task with high uncertainty. The layout of the programme gives incentives to restrict the number of inventions which receive public funding. Thus, the number of applied patents via this programme is small compared to the total number of patent applications in Germany (ca. 50 to 70 patent applications via the programme p.a., ca. 40.000 patent applications in total p.a.). The ratio of commercial successful patents is much better, however (ca. 20 successful patents funded by the programme p.a., ca. 2000 commercially successful patents in total p.a.).

Are there any other measures planned or in operation as a follow up to this measure? Direction of the planned measures? Objectives? Target groups?

no

