

## Turkish Patent Institute gets electronic makeover

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**WTR, 10.01.2013**

The Turkish Patent Institute (TPI) has improved its online system to ensure that users are able to file, track and oppose applications in just a few clicks. It has recently announced - on its website and in seminars organised in Ankara and Istanbul - details of further steps to implement a system that is both more efficient and in keeping with the demands of the contemporary technological society by January 2013.

The current website has a user-friendly interface divided into clear sections for patents, trademarks and industrial rights, with links for filing applications, file tracking and searching under each heading to ensure that the website is navigated with ease. Since 2008, the website has also enabled applicants/attorneys to file applications, view documents and deal with post-application procedures online by using e-signatures/mobiles. A notable feature within the amended system is the addition of a new tab, 'My Files', leading to documents which can be accessed only by the responsible attorney using his/her unique number. However, this amendment is likely to pose problems - for instance where the attorney leaves the firm - as the documents cannot be viewed by the firm.

Further, the TPI has expressed plans to convert to a totally paperless system where notifications are to be communicated electronically. Such a change will enable trademark applications to be processed a lot quicker. The TPI has stated that it aims to review trademark applications within a six-month period, including the opposition period (three months), as opposed to the current application process which can take up to 12 months.

The TPI has also acknowledged the prevalence of e-commerce. A credit card system, which has been in use since July 2012, ensures that payments are made instantaneously, and without the need to pay a certain sum to the bank in order to produce a receipt number which must be inputted into the current e-signature system. The procedure will become faster following the TPI's decision to merge the costs of filing a trademark application and issuing a trademark into a one-off lump sum that must be paid upfront, meaning that users will not have to make repeated payments at different stages of the application. However, this proposal can be brought into effect only once the legal regulations governing the payment of trademark applications have been amended.

The TPI's aim of providing an efficient system has also been underlined by changes brought to the categorisation of classes within the application process. Under the current system, there are two ways of recording the classes under which the trademark application has been made: users may either select a class number, which the TPI's website automatically fills in with the specification of the Nice Classification, or select Class 99 and provide a tailored specification list. New amendments enable users to control the contents of the specifications that have been automatically filled in by allowing them to remove irrelevant categories of goods or services, thereby minimising the amount of applications made in Class 99. However, this amendment only allows users to remove entire categories of goods and services, as opposed to particular items. Therefore, it seems likely that Class 99 will remain popular in future applications.

In summary, the TPI's move towards a wholly electronic system brings some important and necessary improvements. Benefits of the new electronic system include:

- the speed and transparency of the new system;

- the fact that applications are delivered instantly; and
- the addition of file tracking features.

The new system will also substantially reduce the workload of the TPI, which is currently burdened with the task of physically scanning and processing hard copies for all applications. This change will no doubt make the process less laborious for all involved, while the elimination of paper will please the environmentally conscious.