

Preface

In 2001, the Commission of the European Communities published ‘Enforcing small firms’ patent rights,’¹ the research for which had been directed by one of the authors of the present book. In this research, European individuals and firms which had taken advantage of the ‘Small Entity’ discounts in the United States Patent and Trademark Office were a fundamental component of the database.

That research covered the years 1994 to 1997, and the resulting information proved to be so useful that it was considered worthwhile to extend it to 2003 so as to give a full ten year period of results. In doing so, its coverage was also expanded to every country in the world which had acquired a USPTO patent during the ten years. Valuable additional measures, including citations, payment of maintenance fees, differences between invention categories and the extent to which the inventions of non-American inventors are actually owned within the United States, were added.

The present book is the result and it is hoped that it will make a useful contribution to the information needed for making comparisons of inventive output internationally. Since most of this comes from the developed countries, it was first considered that comprehensive data should be provided for those countries that are members of the OECD, with summary information for all other countries. However, it was quickly discovered that Israel, although not an OECD member, has such a high level of inventive activity that it ought to be included with the advanced countries. In particular, it provides an illuminating and important point of comparison with a group of OECD countries, close to Israel in terms of GDP and population, including Denmark, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand and Norway. It is important to note, therefore, that the term OECD* is used throughout the book to mean ‘OECD countries plus Israel’.

One of the surprises to emerge from the expanded data was the inventiveness of Taiwan’s Individual inventors, as measured in this particular way. The total number of Small Entity patents acquired by residents of Taiwan exceeds that of any other nation, other than the US. In fact, over three quarters of all the non OECD* Small Entity patents were granted to Taiwanese residents and, crucially, the majority were in the Individual category. As will be seen, the number of Small Entity patents acquired by most countries in the non OECD* group is negligible, being typically less than one per year.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This database was made possible by the freedom of access which the United States Patent and Trademark Office provides to its information, and we are grateful to Mr Jim Hirabayashi of that office for extracting what we needed from their records so frequently and so expeditiously.

The major part of the data concerning citations accompanied the text *Patents, Citations, and Innovations* by Jaffe and Trajtenberg,² and we are grateful to Dr Bronwyn Hall for the additional citations data up to the end of 2002. We also acknowledge with thanks financial support provided by the Research Fund of the European Patent Office, although of course that Office bears no responsibility for the results.

William Kingston (wkngston@tcd.ie)

Kevin Scally (kscally@tcd.ie)

School of Business Studies, Trinity College, Dublin

NOTES

1. EUR 17032. *Enforcing small firms' patents rights*. Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
2. Jaffe, A. B. and Trajtenberg, M. (2002) *Patents, Citations, and Innovations: a window on the knowledge economy*, Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press.