

Patent Index 2024: European Innovation Remains Robust Amid Global Economic Uncertainties

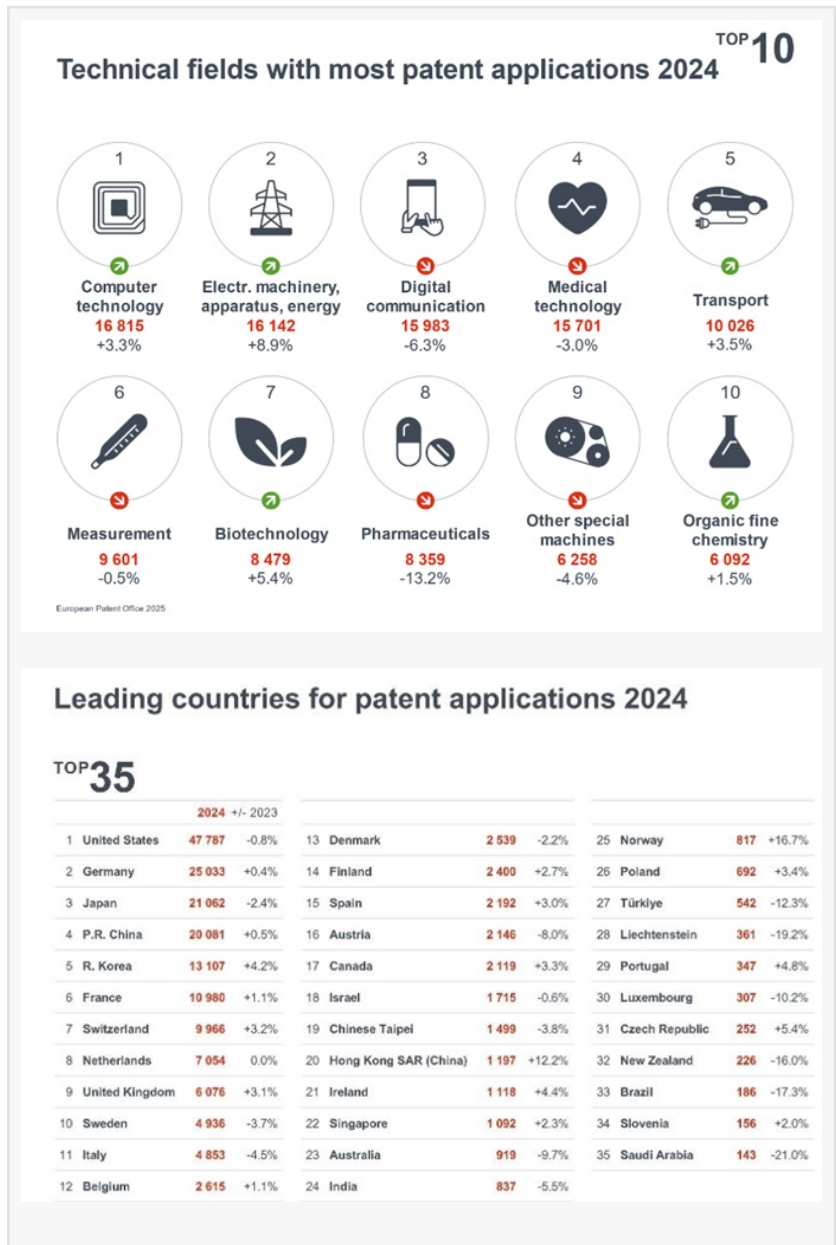
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/EINPresswire.com/ -- • European

Patent Office received nearly 200 000 patent applications last year

- Computer technology takes the lead for the first time
- Surge in AI and battery inventions
- Leading countries of origin are US, Germany, Japan, China and R. of Korea
- Samsung new top applicant, ahead of Huawei and LG
- [Unitary Patent](#) system gains momentum with over 28 000 requests in 2024
- Nearly a quarter of all patent applications from Europe filed by a small company, one in four include a woman inventor

Companies and inventors from around the world filed 199 264 patent applications at the European Patent Office (EPO) last year, according to the [Patent Index 2024](#) published today. The high level of patenting activity was on a par with the previous year (2023: 199 452, -0.1%), following three years of significant growth. Patent applications from Europe, including all 39 EPO [member states](#), rose by 0.3%, while those from outside Europe fell slightly (-0.4%).



“Despite political and economic uncertainties, European companies and inventors filed more

patents last year, underlining their technological prowess and their continued investment in R&D," said EPO President António Campinos. "The EPO's patent data is a clear roadmap for industry, policy, and investment priorities. As the Draghi and Letta reports warn, to stay competitive globally, Europe must enhance its innovation ecosystem and do more to help inventors scale up and commercialise their inventions, especially in critical areas such as green technologies, AI and semiconductors."



Computer technology takes the lead

Computer technology, which includes areas of AI such as machine learning and pattern recognition, was the leading field for the first time, with 16 815 patent applications in 2024. Electrical machinery, apparatus, and energy posted the strongest growth last year (+8.9% on 2023), driven by advances in clean energy technologies, particularly battery innovation (+24.0%). Meanwhile, digital communication, which encompasses inventions related to mobile networks, saw a 6.3% decrease.

Global and European trends

The United States maintained its position as the top country of origin for European patent applications, followed by Germany, Japan, China, and the Republic of Korea. EPO member states accounted for 43% of filings, while 57% came from outside Europe (see graph Origin of applications). Notably, R. Korea saw the strongest growth (+4.2%), China saw a 0.5% increase, while companies and inventors from the US (-0.8%) and Japan (-2.4%) filed fewer applications.

Patent applications from the 39 EPO member states were up +0.3%, boosted by growth from Switzerland (+3.2%) and the UK (+3.1%), while filings from the EU 27 member states were down -0.4%. Germany (+0.4%) and France (+1.1%), Europe's top two filing countries, were up slightly in 2024. Switzerland remained the lead country in patents per capita, followed by several Nordic countries (see graph Patent applications per million inhabitants).

Diverse sources of innovation: Large companies are major contributors

Samsung was the new top applicant at the EPO in 2024 (having last topped the ranking in 2020), Huawei dropped to second, followed by LG, Qualcomm and RTX. The top 10 includes four

companies from Europe, two from R. Korea, two from the US, and one from each of China and Japan.

Small companies use patent system to drive innovation

In 2024, 22% of patent applications to the EPO from Europe came from individual inventors or SMEs (companies with fewer than 250 employees), with another 7% from universities and public research organisations (see graph Breakdown of applicants by category). This highlights the patent system's appeal to smaller entities, further strengthened by the EPO's April 2024 fee reductions for micro-enterprises, individuals, non-profits, universities, and research institutions.

One in four patent applications includes a woman inventor

In 2024, 25% of all patent applications to the EPO coming from Europe named at least one woman as an inventor. Among major filing countries (over 2 000 applications), Spain led with 42%, followed by Belgium (32%) and France (31%).

Unitary Patent surpasses expectations in its second year

The Unitary Patent system, launched in 2023, continues to gain momentum, offering innovators simpler and more accessible patent protection across 18 EU Member States with a single request to the EPO. Unitary protection was requested for 25.6% of all European patents granted by the EPO in 2024 totalling over 28 000 requests – a 53% increase compared to 2023 (18 300 requests). Patentees from EPO member states had the highest uptake rate, with 36.5% of their European patents transformed into Unitary Patents, followed by those from Republic of Korea (18.9%) and China (17.9%) – which both saw a significant increase – then the US (16.0%), and Japan (7.9%). Top requestors were Johnson & Johnson, Siemens, Samsung, Qualcomm, and Volvo Group. Smaller entities are even more inclined to use the system, with European SMEs and universities having an uptake rate of 57.5%.

Further information

- View the Patent Index 2024 in full
- Explore and customise statistics in our Statistics & Trends Centre
- Access Unitary Patent statistics via our dedicated dashboard
- Download datasets (MS Excel) in the Download data section of our statistics page
- Check patent trends on the go with the EPO Data Hub mobile app
- Read studies on innovation trends at the Observatory on Patents and Technology
- EPO's support for SMEs, universities, non-profit organisations and other smaller applicants

Official hashtag: #EPOPatentIndex

About the EPO

With 6 300 staff members, the European Patent Office (EPO) is one of the largest public service institutions in Europe. Headquartered in Munich with offices in Berlin, Brussels, The Hague and Vienna, the EPO was founded with the aim of strengthening co-operation on patents in Europe. Through the EPO's centralised patent granting procedure, inventors are able to obtain high-quality patent protection in up to 45 countries, covering a market of some 700 million people. The EPO is also the world's leading authority in patent information and patent searching.

About the Patent Index

The Patent Index is a tool for tracking global innovation trends, offering insights into European patent application activity across industries and regions. By analysing patent data, the index serves as a barometer for technological progress, R&D investment, and the competitive landscape, helping businesses, policymakers, and researchers understand the changing dynamics of the current innovation landscape.

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