Challenge Benelux Patent Platform 2030: "A straightforward solution for our intellectual property: how do we build a user-friendly, affordable and future-proof platform?"

1. Context

A patent is a temporary, exclusive legal right granted by a government for a new, useful, and non-obvious invention, which can be a product, process, method, or design. In exchange for this exclusive right, the inventor must provide a detailed public disclosure of the invention, which helps to promote further innovation. This right prevents others from making, using, or selling the invention without permission for a limited period, typically up to 20 years.

To fulfil their task regarding the administration of patents, the intellectual property services of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg have developed the Benelux Patent Platform. Today, this application is still adequate, but in order to continue to meet the needs of the service, it will have to evolve. Although it contains several parts and functionalities, it's been built using a monolithic architecture, and is structured in such a way that adjustments in one of these parts are not easy. And that's a problem, because in the world of patents things are also evolving. The integration with and dependencies on other applications is essential: the service integrates with the European Patent Office and the World Intellectual Property Organization, among others. When these other institutions make (small) changes to their applications, it means a big adjustment for the BPP platform. This may include benefiting from the standardized modules developed in the future by European Patent Office and offered to the National Patent Offices, potential use of AI and other technology advancements etc..
Another part of the challenge is user friendliness: the BPP application is currently mainly internally user-centered. The IP Offices also want to meet the needs of their external users and improve their experience in using the platform.

How can we switch to an application that puts the end users first, is agile, but doesn't have so many moving parts that maintenance becomes a never-ending task, and affordable? That is the BPP 2030 challenge. The Benelux countries now want to use a market survey, including an experiment, to see what such a future platform could look like.

What is the evolution of the problem?

It is a common threat throughout many government projects: large applications that turn out not to be future-proof, have a limited shelf life and require intensive maintenance. It entails that we spend a lot of time and money on our relatively new digital solutions. This is a high cost that should be avoided. If a solution is found for this, we can use this methodology or technology more widely within government organizations.

2. Problem definition

The 3 intellectual property Offices of the Benelux are looking to 2030. They want a platform that can stand the test of time as well as possible and can evolve with it. The current licensing

and maintenance costs for the application are considerable, even without implementing major changes. The application must be rethought and built around the 2 forms of end users:

- the external users who apply for, consult and manage the patents
- the back office users in the IP Offices that manage the administrative steps in the patent procedure

Some issues need to be rethought. Which tasks can we have the patent filers perform and how can we make this run more smoothly? Which tasks can we make more efficient for the patent administrators in the backoffice at the IP Office's side?
The current application is built using a monolithic architecture, and therefore requires a lot of work if adjustments are needed. How do we ensure that future needs do not lead to an almost complete redevelopment of the application? A lot of business input and knowledge have been invested over time in the current platform. The current platform is fully functional, including adjustments for specific national patent management processes for each National Office. We want to avoid (if possible) spending a lot of time providing the same inputs for the future platform. The technical and business documentation for the current platform is fully available.

In other words, **how do we build a base that can be easily adapted to future standards and new technologies in 10 years' time?** How do we build an application by 2030 that will still be able and sufficient in 2040?

3. Challenge

We challenge you to present a vision and, if your proposal is selected, a proof of concept on one or more module(s) or functionality(ies) of choice. The objective is to demonstrate how a new platform can be developed, or the current platform be redesigned, taking into account the following objectives:

1. Create an optimal process for patent filers and patent administrators (back office people at the IP Office) based on their needs.
2. Provide a lifespan of at least 8 years, with limited maintenance
3. Be agile for adaptations depending on external evolutions
4. Be a foundation for further developments as technology evolves
5. Make managing the internal database more efficient
6. Try to benefit from the business knowledge invested in the current application through the documentation available

A budget of **€ 29 999 or less (**tax not included) is provided for this challenge. With this budget, it is expected that the selected contender develops a proof of concept on one or more module(s) or functionality(ies) of choice (national patents, MyPage, eRegister, Fees, Persons).

The objective is to demonstrate how a new platform can be developed, or the current platform be redesigned. In other words: develop a part of the system with new tools / techniques / AI to demonstrate the efficiency of the new method.

4. Stakeholders:

- Internal users: the 3 Intellectual Property Offices that receive, control and manage all applications.
- External users: Patent attorneys and their paralegals (companies that specialize in obtaining and managing intellectual property))
- External users: The citizen who applies to obtain intellectual property, or wants to manage his property
- Nido – The government's innovation lab sponsoring this challenge as it saw a lot of opportunities for scalability. If this challenge could be solved, it could bring a lot of insights to other government services that are facing a similar challenge.
- Supranational organisations (European Patent Office, World Intellectual Property office) that request data from the IP Offices, or whose data is passed on

5. Good to know:

A lot of information about the 3 Benelux IP Offices can be found here:

- Belgian Office for Intellectual Property (DIE) | FPS Economy. Specifically about the current platform, there is this page.
- Octrooicentrum Nederland: https://www.rvo.nl/onderwerpen/octrooien-ofwel-patenten/over-ocnl
- Patent Office Luxemburg: https://patent.public.lu/bpp-portal/home

The IP Offices services employ around 45 (BE) 10 (LU) and 90 (NL) people in the 3 countries and process +/- 5.000 (1.000 BE, 2.000 NL and 2.000 LU) national applications annually. Other than the national applications, they mainly manage European patents (fee administration) which amount to around 150.000 valid European patents in each country.

A more detailed description of BPP can be found in **Annex 1: What is the BPP**. No survey or other research has yet been conducted on the satisfaction of external users.