

What is the EQE Candidate Support Project (CSP)

This is a European Patent Office (EPO) "Co-operation Roadmap" project to support potential European Qualifying Examination (EQE) candidates from those member states which having five or fewer EQE-qualified Professional Representatives (PRs).

These 23 member states are: Albania (AL), Bulgaria (BG), Croatia (HR), Cyprus (CY), Czech Republic (CZ), Estonia (EE), FYR of Macedonia (MK), Greece (GR), Hungary (HU), Iceland (IS), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Malta (MT), Monaco (MC), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), San Marino (SM), Serbia (RS), Slovak Republic (SK), Slovenia (SI), and Turkey (TR).

What are the objectives of the project?

- achieve a higher number of EQE-qualified PRs in eligible member states;
- achieve a higher pass-rate and increase the proportion of successful EQE candidates without lowering the quality of the qualification;
- promote the role of national patent offices in developing and supporting the national Professional Representative infrastructure;
- align the national patent attorney qualification with the EQE where possible;
- promote the European Patent Attorney profession as a whole.

How will the project objectives be achieved?

- through providing enhanced preparation and training for the EQE;
- by providing a training and scholarship programme;
- a coaching programme with regular contact between students and coaches.

How will the project be implemented?

The project will comprise the selection, training, and supervision of the selected students, over a maximum period of three academic years.

The training will have two phases:

1. first phase will prepare the students for the pre-examination (first year);
2. second phase will prepare them for the main examination (this is expected to cover papers A and B in the second year, papers C and D in the third year, but the final decision will be made in May 2013, depending on the "new-style" Paper D).

The students will have a choice as to which discipline: Electricity/Mechanics, or Chemistry, they wish to follow in the second phase.

For each year of the project, it is expected that a new class of 24 students will begin their three-year participation in the project. For the EQE 2014 Pre-examination the training is expected to begin in early September 2013.

Throughout the two phases, the progress of the CSP students will be carefully monitored, allowing individual advice and support to be given as soon as possible.

What will be offered to students participating in the CSP?

The activities provided over the three years will comprise:

- participation by the students in a preparatory session to inform about the organisation of the examinations, and how to prepare for them;
- classroom training and tutorials;
- distance learning (based on classical and modern media) comprising knowledge exchange amongst the students, virtual classroom training, assignments and homework with feedback given by EPO or *epi* tutors;

Furthermore, the EPO and the *epi* will, where possible, assist the students in finding:

- an internship at the EPO, working with an Examiner in a relevant technical field;
- an internship with an established patent attorney firm in another member state.

How will the project be managed?

The EPO will manage the project, in close co-operation with the national patent offices (NPOs), and with the European Patent Institute (*epi*).

Ultimate responsibility for taking decisions, in particular regarding implementation, funding, resources, and schedules, rests with the EPO.

What are the eligibility criteria for students?

EQE candidates permanently residing and working in one of the EPO member states are eligible to apply to join the project. Candidates will enter the project one year prior to them taking the Pre-examination. This means that they must have completed a full-time training period of at least one year, and have worked full-time for one year, as defined in Article 11(7) of the REE¹. This should ensure that the candidate has already committed to a long term career as a Professional Representative.

How does a prospective EQE candidate apply to participate in the CSP?

Prospective EQE candidates must complete a CSP Application Form, and send this together with a motivation letter to the national patent office (NPO) in the member state in which they reside and work. Furthermore, if possible, you should supply a letter from your company supervisor, stating that they will support your participation in the CSP, and allow you to participate in the training events provided to you.

¹ Regulation on the European qualifying examination for professional representatives.

What is the deadline for applications to participate in the CSP?

For participation in the project starting in 2013, in preparation for the EQE 2014 Pre-examination, applications should reach the respective national patent office by Friday 31 May 2013.

May EQE Candidates apply directly to the EPO?

An EQE Candidate may apply directly to the EPO, and all information provided will be forwarded to the national patent office in the respective member state.

If, for any reason, a national patent office does not wish to organise an Applicant Review Board, individuals may apply directly to the EPO.

How are the CSP students selected?

One of the crucial elements for the success of the project is the careful selection of prospective EQE candidates who could benefit from the project. Above all, the ability and motivation of a potential student has to be assessed.

The member state NPOs are invited to each create a "CSP Applicant Review Board". The members of the board should review the applicant's EQE expert knowledge, motivation, and needs.

The respective CSP Applicant Review Board will review the applications and produce a list with an initial review of the applications. This list, together with all the original applications, is then sent to the EPO. The EQE Examination Secretariat will then check whether each applicant is eligible to take the Pre-examination. The EPO will then make the final selection of participating students, based on the NPO recommendations, the Examination Secretariat approval, and the criteria laid down in the Co-operation Roadmap, such as the maximum number of participants per member state, and current number of EQE-qualified Professional Representatives.

What support will each CSP student receive?

The EQE Candidate Support Project (CSP) provides the following support to the participating students as preparation for their EQE Pre-examination:

- classroom training/seminars provided by qualified tutors, based on 10-days training split over three sessions:
 - • a 3-day kick-off session (in September 2013, at a location to be confirmed),
 - • a 5-day CEIPI course (in November 2013, in Strasbourg),
 - • a final 2-day CEIPI cramming course / mock examination (in January 2014, in Munich).
- a selection of textbooks and other training material;
- access to the European Patent Academy's distance learning programme (EQE-online) comprising knowledge exchange amongst the students, virtual classroom training, assignments and homework with feedback given by the EPO or *epi* trainers;
- a personal *epi* Coach who will be available to answer individual questions, and help with assignments. Each Student will be in contact with their Coach for approximately one hour per week, from the start of the training up to the week of the examination;

- a bursary of EUR 150,- per month for the months during which they participate in the respective training. The bursary, is provided as a gift to the student to cover exceptional costs incurred while studying for the EQE.
- The EPO will, where possible, pay for all training, hotels, and books in advance.
- Associated travel expenses (Economy class), visas, etc are paid directly to the students on receipt of a Reimbursement Request, including the flight tickets.
- The EPO is prepared to pay 100% for language training in the language which the students intends to take the EQE examination papers. Following the signing of agreements between the EPO and the Institut français, the Goethe Institut, and the British Council for the provision of language training in the three EPO official languages, the students are requested to participate in language training provided by one of these three preferred suppliers, where possible. The individual students will be responsible for organising their required language training and for claiming the costs back from the EPO. The students must first receive financial approval from the EPO for a given course, prior to making any financial commitment.

What are the obligations of the CSP students?

In return, the student will enter into an agreement with the EPO, obliging him/her to follow the training programme precisely, to perform the related tasks diligently, and to prepare in the best possible way for the EQE.

Further elements of the agreement with the CSP students:

1. The student is encouraged to work for at least three years as a professional representative in his home country after having passed the EQE. This is in order to stabilise the quota of EQE-qualified PRs.
2. As a qualified professional representative, he/she will prepare and supervise at least one other potential candidate from his home country for the EQE.
3. In case the performance of a student is not satisfactory, or a student does not follow the programme as requested, the EPO has the right to exclude him/her from the project.
4. The student agrees that the EPO may pass on name and contact details to the respective NPO, the *epi*, and any third-party training provider. On request, the EPO will supply the student with a list of organisations to which his details have been forwarded.

Data protection

All personal data will be processed fairly and lawfully for the specific and predefined purpose of conducting and monitoring the CSP. Relevant data may be passed on to the other EPO departments and external CSP partners only in connection with CSP matters. The data will not however be passed on to any other third parties. Students may at any time request access to their personal data and have it corrected if necessary.

What is the "subvention" of the enrolment and examinations fees for the EQE examinations?

In 2012 the EPO President decided to support potential EQE candidates residing in the member states of the EPO which currently receive the highest level of financial support under the co-operation policy (CA/85/11).

This means that residents of the 19 member states (Albania (AL), Bulgaria (BG), Croatia (HR), Cyprus (CY), Czech Republic (CZ), Estonia (EE), FYR of Macedonia (MK), Greece (GR), Hungary (HU), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Malta (MT), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Serbia (RS), Slovak Republic (SK), Slovenia (SI), Turkey (TR)) will be eligible to pay a reduced fee of €50 (equivalent to 75% of the normal fee of €200). This subvention applies both to the annual enrolment fee of €200, and to the individual examination fee of €200 per examination paper.

This subvention is not dependent on participation of a given candidate in this co-operation project, however, it is financed from the EPO's co-operation budget.

Information concerning fee subsidies including the conditions for eligibility can be found in the Announcement of the EQE 2014, point II, 7.3 (OJ 3/2013, p. 166).

Candidates applying for subsidies must await approval of their request before submitting their application to sit the EQE 2014. Candidates are reminded of the strict application of the closing dates for enrolment.

Further details can be found on the EPO website at:

<http://www.epo.org/learning-events/eqe/admission/2013.html>