

Technology and Innovation Support Centers (TISCs)

The Technology and Innovation Support Center (TISC) program of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is a global program created in 2009 to enable developing countries, least developed countries and countries in transition to better exploit their innovative potential (see <https://www.wipo.int/tisc/en/>). The TISC program helps countries to access and make more effective use of patent information, scientific and technical literature and search tools and databases, thus boosting their IP capacity.

Innovation can come from any country and takes many forms. However, not all innovators have local access to the technological insight and related IP services they need to fully capture and protect their IP rights. The TISC program assists and empowers inventors and entrepreneurs, building on the rich set of technology information disclosed in more than 100 million published patent documents and scores of scientific and technical publications. Typically, TISCs are located in host institutions such as patent offices, universities, research centers, or science and technology parks. These centers provide on-the-ground information and support to innovators where they need it most.

TISCs provide a diverse range of technology and innovation support services, from basic services to value-added services that help inventors, researchers, and entrepreneurs unlock their innovative potential, including: access to patent and non-patent databases; networking and exchange of experiences; increase awareness on IP and contribute to economic growth in the country; provide quality services on patent search and analysis; patent filing and drafting support; training on access to and use of patent information; and commercialization and technology transfer support.

Since the TISC program was launched in 2009, 80 countries are implementing national TISC networks. Over the last 10 years, over 900 TISCs have been established (see <https://www.wipo.int/tisc/en/search/>).

Regional TISC networks were also created to provide a formal platform for TISCs to exchange experiences and best practices, and to build on national and regional strengths in order to provide even more targeted support and services. Regional networks have been established among the Member States of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and in Central America and the Dominican Republic (CATI-CARD). Member States of the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) have also recently formalized a regional TISC network.

As the number of sustainable national TISC networks grows, an increasing number of TISCs provide innovators with access to locally based technology information and related innovation support services. As such, the demand for TISC services has continued to strengthen. This year, TISCs experienced the greatest surge in the number of enquiries and requests for assistance since the TISC program was launched. In 2018, TISCs received an estimated 935,000 enquiries.

Training provided by WIPO supports the development of knowledge and skills among TISC staff building their capacity to provide a range of high-quality services. Training includes on-site workshops and seminars with a focus on training of trainers, distance learning carried out in cooperation with the WIPO Academy. The topics covered by WIPO include: basic concepts and skills in patent searching; different types of patent searches, including state-of-the-art, novelty and freedom to operate, as well as patent analytics.

WIPO has developed a number of initiatives, publications, training materials and tools designed to help TISCs access and make effective use of valuable scientific and technical information. As part of WIPO's efforts to support TISCs in building capacity, two public-private partnerships have been established with leading patent database providers and publishers:

The Access to Specialized Patent Information (ASPI) program enables institutions in developing countries to obtain free or low-cost access to commercial patent database services. It is made possible through a unique public-private partnership with eight leading patent database providers; and

The Access to Research for Development and Innovation (ARDI) program aims to increase the availability of scientific and technical information in developing countries through a public-private partnership with the publishing industry. Over 50 publishers currently provide free or low-cost access to around 30,000 journals, books and reference works for 120 developing countries and territories through ARDI. The program is also a member of the Research4Life partnership, a joint initiative of several United Nations agencies, private sector enterprises, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions. Content available through the Research4Life programs can now be accessed more easily through a single common platform and login. The International Labour Office (ILO) joined Research4Life in 2018 offering access to legal publications via its "Global Online Access to Legal Information" (GOALI) program.

A number of publications have been created by WIPO to boost capacity building among TISCs worldwide. These publications are key reference sources for a range of subject areas, including patent documentation and databases, patent search, patent analysis, and TISC management. They are available in multiple languages and include brochures and guides as well as WIPO Patent Landscape Reports. These insightful reports examine patent filing trends and provide technical and business information of particular relevance to developing countries in areas such as public health, food and agriculture, environment, energy, and disabilities.

The first report in a new series analyzing patent filing trends and patenting activity in different areas of technologies was launched in 2018. This ground-breaking report entitled WIPO Technology Trends – Artificial Intelligence focuses on technologies and trends in this rapidly emerging field. The report compares patenting activity and scientific publications whilst scrutinizing top players from industry and academia across different technologies and application fields. It also highlights the geographical distribution of artificial intelligence (AI) patent protection, existing AI policies and future prospects.

The e-Tutorial on using and exploiting patent information is a free and interactive tutorial developed to help innovators learn how to use the wealth of technology information in patent documents to boost their own research and development. It comprises three sections, on patent basics, patent search and retrieval, and patent analysis. In 2018, the e-Tutorial was converted to a new browser adaptive and responsive design so that it can be accessed and used on mobile devices. This also opened up new possibilities for translation of the e-Tutorial (currently available in English, French, Spanish and Russian) into other non-Latin script languages, including Arabic and Chinese.

The eTISC knowledge sharing platform connects the TISC community and other individuals with an interest in patent information and related subjects. A range of features allow eTISC members to share knowledge and experiences across national and regional boundaries. In addition, it offers training opportunities through webinars and "Ask the Expert" sessions on a range of topics. eTISC had 2,326 members at the end of 2018 representing 126 countries.