

FOI Release

Title: Queries regarding UK patents filed in the 1970s

Date of release: 1 July 2016

Information request:

Patents applied for by Egon Ploug, who disappeared on the ferry from Esbjerg (Denmark) to Harwich, on August 5, 1975. He was on his way to London to patent his new invention, which, according to himself, would “change the world”. This might have been a figment of his imagination, but nevertheless it sparked our interest in patenting activities in the UK in the mid-1970s. Therefore we would like to know the following:

Is it possible to make a search entry for the following options in the UK patenting database:

- UK Patents filed by Egon Ploug
- UK Patents filed by Danes in 1975 and 1976
- UK patents filed altogether in 1975 (what did people patent back then, and how does it differ from today’s patents)

Information released:

In answer to your questions, you can search for patents published during the 1970s on Espacenet, the European Patent Office (EPO) database at: <https://worldwide.espacenet.com/> . Also, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has a generic set of statistics broken down by country. For stats pre -1980 they are available to download as a single CSV file: <http://www.wipo.int/ipstats/en/#resources> .

You should note that with respect to UK patents the requirements for getting a patent granted changed with the introduction of the 1977 Patents Act so you may wish to take that into account in analysing the figures. To give you some idea of the trends in patenting throughout the 1970s Please see some extracts from our Annual Reports of 1974/5/6 that comment on trends of invention during those years. They are general observations made by our CEO at that time. You may compare them with any more recent trends highlighted in our last Annual Report and previous editions on line at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ipo-annual-report-and-accounts-2014-to-2015> , <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ipo-annual-report-and-accounts-2013-to-2014> and editions archived at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/tna/20140603093547/http://www.ipo.gov.uk/about/whatwedo/ourpublications/ourpublications-review.htm> .

You may also find some of our research publications interesting: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/intellectual-property-research-patents> .

You could also contact the British Library Business and IP Centre at <http://www.bl.uk/business-and-ip-centre> for more historical material.