



## **Overview of the Candidate Support Programme (CSP)**

### **1. Introduction**

The Candidate Support Programme (CSP) is an initiative of the European Patent Office in co-operation with its member states. With the CSP, the EPO is actively supporting its member states in further developing their national intellectual property (IP) infrastructure. It is doing so by providing improved access to qualified patent attorneys at national level and, in turn, to appropriate patent protection for patent applicants.

The programme is designed to help build a more inclusive and diverse patent profession by improving geographical representation and gender balance, while providing motivated candidates with the support they need to pass all five EQE papers and qualify as a professional representative before the EPO.

The CSP is open to selected candidates (students) who reside and are employed in a member state of the EPOrg that participates in the CSP. The selection and nomination of prospective candidates is managed by the national patent office (NPO) of the member state where they reside and work.

The programme follows the progressive EQE schedule and is delivered over three consecutive years. Typically, students will prepare for the foundation paper F in the first year. After passing paper F, they will prepare for papers M1 and M2 in the second year and for papers M3 and M4 in the third year. However, if a student fails paper F, they must re-sit paper F the year after and will follow the training for papers M1 and M2 that same year. By the end of the three years of CSP journey, students are expected to have sat all five EQE papers.

Participation in the CSP is governed by the principles of goodwill and good faith. The programme starts with the publication on the website of the respective NPOs of the “Conditions for participation in the CSP” document with the link to the application form.

Candidates must complete the CSP online application form and provide the following supporting documents: proof of permanent residence, a motivation letter, a curriculum vitae (CV), a letter of recommendation from their employer and proof of enrolment for the 2027 Paper F.

NPOs will download applications and supporting documents from the Single Access Portal (SiAP) platform, assess the applications and select candidates. NPOs will share with the EPO the name of candidates selected for:

- the comprehensive CSP support as described under point 2.1 below; and
- the full EQE fee support as described under point 2.2 below.

### **2. Support provided by the EPO**

Students may receive two types of support: a comprehensive support package or full EQE fee support. The financial support is not a remuneration, salary or payment in return for any specific service (any tax or social security regulation that may apply is candidates' responsibility).

#### **2.1 Comprehensive CSP support**

This comprises both learning support and financial support as described below.

##### **2.1.1 Learning support**

- (a) Access to the online training course(s) and materials provided by the EPO Patent Academy.
- (b) Online training courses, cramming courses and mock examinations provided by EQE tutors from

renowned training institutions.

(c) Dedicated coaching from an EQE-qualified professional representative to support the preparation process with the aim to pass the EQE exams; this includes answering substantive questions, helping with assignments, giving advice and monitoring students' progress. Students and their coaches will have videoconference consultations on a regular basis.

### **2.1.2 Financial support - provided per examination year**

(a) A lump sum of EUR 300 to cover expenses for learning material (preferably acquired in electronic form)

(b) A bursary of EUR 600 to cover some of the additional preparation-related expenses.

(c) Enrolment and examination fees for the paper(s) for which the candidate is receiving support.

(d) Students must request this financial support according to the details communicated by the contact person.

### **2.2 Full EQE fee support**

Full EQE fee support is available only once per selected candidate and does not include any learning support.

Selected candidates will receive full EQE fee support (without training, coaching, or bursary). This one-off payment of EUR 1 600 will cover 100% of enrolment fee and examination fees for first sitting of the examination papers.

## **3. Expectations from candidates**

### **3.1 Minimum obligations**

By applying to the CSP, students are expected to commit to:

(a) Enrol to and sit any EQE paper(s) in the current CSP year.

(b) Behave according to and uphold the principles of good will and good faith.

(c) Prepare as best as possible and do their utmost to pass the relevant EQE examination(s).

(d) Follow the training programme and carry out the related exercises, participate in the planned CSP events and complete the tasks or assignments diligently by the deadlines set by the trainers and/or coaches.

(e) Plan personal commitments and professional activities to keep up with the pace of the group training.

(f) Participate in remote study forums/groups and blogs via electronic means that are fit for purpose.

(g) Regularly and actively report to their coach on the progress of their studies, training sessions or EQE preparation work.

(h) Provide feedback to the EPO on CSP-related matters when requested.

(i) Inform the EPO contact person without delay if any circumstance arises that may impact on their participation in the CSP.

### **3.2 “Giving back” principle**

Once students have passed the EQE and have been entered on the list of professional representatives pursuant to Article 134 EPC, they commit to supporting the development of the profession in the EPO member states, in particular in the country of the NPO by which they were selected. This reflects the CSP “giving-back” principle. In coordination with the EPO, the following activities are expected:

(a) Contributing 20 hours to a twinning scheme

(b) Raising awareness about the patent profession.

(c) Support promotion activities in cooperation with the EPO, NPOs and professional associations.

#### **4. Support from NPOs**

NPOs are invited to support the CSP by taking the following steps:

- (a) Promoting the EQE and the CSP on their website and to make use of additional outreach channels to enhance visibility and interest.
- (b) Publishing the document "Conditions for participation in the CSP" and the article "Info for the NPOs website" on their website.
- (c) Downloading candidate`s applications available on the Single Access Portal (SiAP) platform, including the completed application form and supporting documents (proof of permanent residence, motivation letter, CV, letter of support from the employer and proof of enrolment).
- (d) Reviewing the applications received and selecting candidates.
- (e) Communicating the names of the candidates selected for the comprehensive CSP support and those selected for the full EQE fee support.
- (f) Informing candidates who were not selected.
- (g) Observing the timeline and deadlines shared by the EPO at the beginning of each CSP cycle.
- (h) Providing feedback to the EPO on any aspect of the CSP with a view to enhancing the cooperation.