



The London Agreement

The London Agreement is a voluntary agreement to which individual countries within the European patent system sign up as and when they want to. There are two groups of countries – a first group which have a local language which is one of the EPO languages of use (i.e. English, French or German) and a second group which has a non-EPO language as their language of use.

For the first group of countries – those countries which have signed the London Agreement and which work in any of the three languages of the EPO - any translation requirement post-grant is prohibited.

These countries are:

UK	Luxembourg
Germany	Liechtenstein
France	Monaco
Switzerland	

The second group of countries, which do not have as one of their official languages an EPO language, are entitled to a translation of at least the claims into one of their own languages, and they can, if they want to, prescribe a language (of the EPO three official languages) into which the description that precedes the claims shall be translated.

Of countries in the second group, some have specified that the text should be in English. Some do not mind what language (so long as it is one of the three EPO languages). So far as we are aware, no-one has specified French or German. Those countries in this second group, who have subscribed to the London Agreement, are:

Croatia	Netherlands
Denmark	Latvia
Iceland	Slovenia
Sweden	Finland (from 1 November 2011)
Hungary	

So for these countries, only the claims needs to be translated and the rest of the text can be in English.

Non-London Agreement Countries

The countries that have not actually signed up to the London Agreement continue to require a translation of the full text and claims into their own language.

It is expected that over time, more and more countries will sign up to the London Agreement, possibly specifying that the text should be in English.

List of cheaper countries

As things stand, if the original European patent is in English, then the patent can be maintained in force in the following countries by translation of, at most, the claims, and in some cases no translation at all is needed.

These countries are:

Croatia	Iceland	The United Kingdom
Denmark	Latvia	Slovenia
Finland (from 1 November 2011)	Liechtenstein	Sweden
France	Luxembourg	
Germany	Monaco	
Hungary	The Netherlands	

Appointing an Address for Service in each country is still highly desirable. The cost is approximately £500-£800 per country - down from approximately £2,000 per country (\$800 - \$1,300 each, down from \$3,500 each).