

# Trilateral Cooperation

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Description Trilateral Cooperation is a loose cooperative agreement between the European Patent Office (EPO), the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), and the Japanese Patent Office (JPO), the world's major patent-granting institutions. Founded in 1981, its functions include the sharing of statistical data and efforts to promote the harmonization of patent-granting processes between the three member organizations. One of its stated goals is to help create a global patent system. Trilateral Cooperation's most important activity is preparation of its annual Statistical Report, which draws on the annual reports of its member offices, plus statistics from the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The Report has tracked the explosion in patent application and grant volume over the past twenty-five years, one of the most apparent consequences of economic globalization. Despite the slowdown in global economic growth beginning in 2000, this explosion has continued as countries increasingly harmonize their patent legislation by joining the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) or regional patent conventions.

Trilateral Cooperation is illustrative of a desire amongst many proponents of open markets to create harmonized, global intellectual property standards, but its exclusive nature points to the deep global divides regarding intellectual property. The EPO, USPTO, and EPO process nine out of ten of the world's patent applications, and the Trilateral Agreement reflects the institutional strength of developed countries in the field of intellectual property rights. Other interests, whether developing countries or NGOs, which propose alternate ownership models have lacked the organization and unity to successfully challenge the private ownership model of intellectual property, making increased global harmonization of the private ownership model likely in the future.