

Google signs deal to translate European patents

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Internet search giant Google Inc. Director of Development Chewy Trehwella checks his laptop as he delivers a presentation of Google translator for patents during a press conference in Paris, France, Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2010. Google Inc. on Tuesday announced an agreement to use its technology to translate patents into Europe's many languages, a deal that officials hope will smooth the way toward a simplified European patent system after years of deadlock. (AP Photo/Francois Mori)

(AP) -- Google announced an agreement Tuesday to use its technology to translate patents into 29 European languages, a deal officials hope will smooth the way toward a simplified European patent system after years of infighting.

Google Inc.'s deal with the European Patent Office, or EPO, will make it easier for inventors and scientists from across the continent to read and

understand patents. The EPO has 38 member countries.

Disputes about which languages should take precedence on official documents has long prevented the move to a European Union-wide standard patent. The [European Commission](#) has been pushing for a unified system, but Spain and Italy have refused to accept its contention that it should be enough to have patents translated into English, French and German.

The European Commission says the agreement with [Google](#) should help do away with the huge translation fees that prevent growth and hurt small businesses. It is presently 10 times more expensive to apply for a patent in Europe than in the United States.

Officials say they hope the Google translation will also appease some countries' fears that they will be at a [language](#) disadvantage.

Benoit Battistelli, president of the European Patent Office, said for those countries the deal is "a kind of compensation, so they can accept the idea that for economic reasons it's necessary to choose only a few languages and not to use all of them."

Carlo d'Asaro Biondo, Google's vice president for southern and eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa, said the company did not expect any immediate financial profit from the deal.

The agreement benefits Google by giving it access to a vast body of patents already translated into different languages. That will improve the Mountain View, California-based company's machine translation technology, which "learns" languages by comparing translations that have already been carried out by professionals.

The EPO will feature the Google translation service on its website.

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