

Intellectual Asset Activities in Europe Linked to International Standardization Activities

The NEC Group has been deploying its intellectual asset activities globally. This article focuses on the intellectual asset activities that are linked to technical standardization activities in Europe.

Background

At NEC, we are confidently engaged and proactively make contributions in international technology standardization activities as an important strategy in establishing a position as a “leading global company leveraging the power of innovation realizing an information society friendly to humans and the earth.” The dissemination of international standards secures compatibility and interoperability between products and between services that are in compliance with common standards. It also guarantees their quality and performance of the products and services complying with the standards. As a result, users can benefit from a reduction in the prices of products and services as well as gaining from the feasibility of selecting and using products and services from a global point of view. With regard to the benefits of enterprises, they can deploy their products and services in the global market with lower development costs and can also concentrate their resources on differentiating their products and services in the fields in which they are strongest.

On the other hand, competition between enterprises targeting the promotion of the adoption in standards of technologies that are exclusively advantageous has been tending to become keener at the global level. Therefore, the intellectual asset activities associated with standardizations are now very important in affecting the competitiveness of enterprises. In particular, the creation of intellectual assets represented by patents that are technically necessary for compliance with the standards (“standards essential patents”) and their enforcement and licensing have become critical activities for improving the competitiveness and profitability of every enterprise.

NEC's Intellectual Asset Activities Related to Technical Standards

NEC is applying constructive use of its overseas resources for promoting international standardization activities. The core of this strategy is focused on the local affiliates based in Europe that are responsible for various R&D projects, such as in the laboratories of NEC Europe, Ltd. Many engineers/researchers belonging to these affiliates in Europe

are promoting standardization activities by participating in various technology standardization organizations. One of their activities is to propose NEC's technologies at these organizations so that they are adapted in standards. Their activities cover the standardization at; 3GPP^{*1} establishing the next-generation mobile communication standards, ETSI^{*2} establishing and approving standards in the European telecommunication field and ITU^{*3} conducting international standardization in the telecommunication field.

In order to promote linkages between the standardization activities and intellectual asset activities, NEC launched the European Intellectual Asset Centre (European IAC) in London in January 2007. European IAC is promoting intellectual asset activities in linkages with the standardization activities of its European affiliates, particularly in activities for the creation of standards essential patents and also by helping to enhance the intellectual assets activities in the technology standardization organizations.

(1) Sharing of Strategies and Information

As standardization activities are promoted based on the linkage of multiple organizations within the NEC Group, the linkages of these organizations are an important part of the intellectual asset activities. The European IAC is building its information sharing foundations for those organizations via the European Intellectual Asset Strategy Meeting. This strategy is aimed at the share of intellectual asset strategies and projects linked to NEC's standardization activities as well as of intellectual asset portfolio information related to standards.

(2) Creation of Standards Essential Patents

What is important is that the inventions made by researchers/engineers engaged in the standardization activities of European affiliates are used effectively within the intellectual asset portfolio of NEC. The European IAC is engaged in enhancing the portfolio of standards essential patents of the NEC Group by optimally applying for patents or other rights for the inventions made by the European affiliates and conducting appropriate prosecutions in patent examination by the Patent Offices. The activities of European IAC also include evaluation of essentiality of the inventions to be applied for the target standards.

(3) Proactive Participation in Organizations associated with Standardization

The issues on handling standards essential patents are most actively discussed in the field of telecommunication technology. Organizations participated by major players in this field, such as the ETSI and Next Generation Mobile Network, Ltd. are developing their activities mainly in Europe. From the NEC Group, the European IAC is confidently participating in the intellectual asset activities of these organizations in order to allow NEC to make appropriately and timely decisions with regard to intellectual asset strategies. It also monitors the IPR Policy of these organizations (such as regarding the obligation of disclosure to the standardization organizations of information related to standards essential patents) whereby NEC can comply with the IPR Policy.

As discussed above, NEC is tackling international standardization activities and associated intellectual asset activities by fully utilizing its overseas affiliates so that it can continue to be a leading global company. It is our intention that these activities will be further enhanced in the future.

*1 3GPP: 3rd Generation Partnership Project

*2 ETSI: European Telecommunications Standards Institute

*3 ITU: International Telecommunication Union