

## CLIENT ALERT

### European Patent Office's Study on Patent Applications for Self-Driving Vehicles Technologies in Europe

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In November 2018, the European Patent Office (EPO) published a study aimed at providing a comprehensive picture of current trends and emerging leaders in technologies related to self-driving vehicles (SDV), based on patent applications ranging from 2011 to 2017. Below are some examples of the key findings from this study.

Firstly, this study documents the steep rise in patent applications relating to SDV. It reveals that the annual number of applications increased by more than 330 percent between 2011 and 2017, with almost 18,000 patent applications being filed in the last 10 years. This growth rate is more than 20 times the general growth rate for patent applications with the EPO for the same period.

Secondly, the study shows that among the top 25 applicants, who are responsible for 40 percent of all SDV-related patent applications, half operate in transport or related industries while the other half operate in *ICT for automotive and Telecommunications*. Four large tech companies (Samsung, Intel, Qualcomm, and LG) head the list of self-driving vehicles applicants because of their high share of patent applications in the *Communication and Computing* technology fields. The study also highlights that this category of applicant tends to seek broader international protection than is usually sought for established automotive technologies, which suggests that applicants for SDV-related technologies tend to align their patent filing strategies with the usual practices of the ICT industry.

Finally, the study gives some interesting insights on the global origins of self-driving vehicles-related patent applications. It reveals that Europe and the U.S. retain a strong lead in SDV innovation, having received about 1,400 patent applications each in 2017. U.S. applicants focus on *Communication and Computing technologies*, while European applicants center on *Vehicle handling, Smart logistics and Perception, analysis & decision*. At the same time, the Asian market is becoming increasingly involved in innovations related to SDV. In 2017, applicants in Japan accounted for 468 applications, applicants in the Republic of Korea for 382, and applicants in the People's Republic of China for 194.

Based on the most recent patent information from the EPO, this study highlights the fast pace of innovation and the importance of digital technologies in the field of SDV. It provides an interesting perspective on the increasing role of a variety of innovative companies, many of which are new to the transport industry, as well as indicating in which SDV fields established automotive firms and other companies are most innovative.

[The full study can be found here.](#)

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