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Martha, the new Trimaran editor

Trimaran, the software replacing Casex and Caesar, introduces Martha, a customised and embedded editor, replacing Word Perfect 6.1.

Martha has been selected as successor to WP 6.1. It is an editor optimised for examiners' needs, meeting EPO technical requirements. DG 3 has also selected Martha as their editor.

Word Perfect 6.1

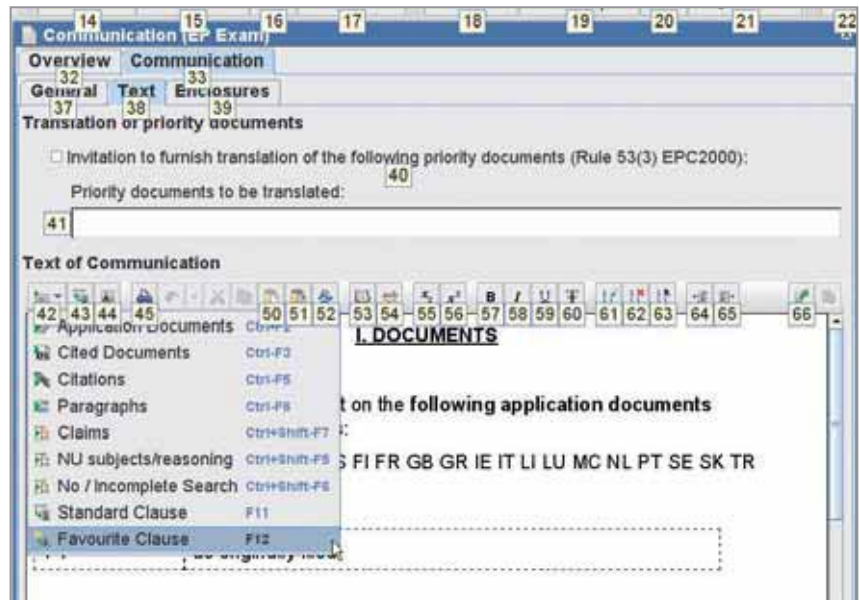
The replacement of WP 6.1 had become more and more critical. WP 6.1 is no longer supported by the manufacturer. Any problems that arise must be solved by the EPO itself. On top of that, WP 6.1 is a Windows 3.1 application and is therefore increasingly unlikely to function correctly under new Windows versions. Finally, its data format is outdated.

Why not use Microsoft Word?

One major requirement of a new editor was for it to integrate EPO functionality such as standard clauses, whilst still behaving like editors with which people are familiar, e.g. MS Word. So why was MS Word, which is installed on each PC at the EPO anyway, not the natural successor of WP 6.1? MS Word is a very large application, and difficult to integrate into other applications. New MS Word versions and updates, as regularly released by Microsoft, would have to be incorporated, and would involve substantial testing to ensure compatibility with EPO software. In the past, two attempts to customise MS Word for the EPO were abandoned.

Martha?

Martha is the name given to an off-the-shelf editor developed by RealObjects (www.realobjects.com) headquartered in Saarbrücken/Germany. RealObjects has adapted Martha to meet EPO user requirements and will support further EPO customisations. Martha was one of only two editors available on the market programmed in JAVA and saving text in XHTML format that was able to deal



Editor panel of a communication with open INSERT menu and visible key-tips

with long texts and to display documents as they appear on the printout (WYSIWYG – “What You See Is What You Get”). The use of XHTML allows optimum data exchange with other EPO applications. Since Trimaran is programmed in JAVA too, Martha can be directly “embedded” into the Trimaran code without needing a separate interface.

A good match

The embedded editor looks like any other input field – place the cursor in it and start typing. Bold, indent, underline, etc. are immediately accessible via buttons above the input field. The text is automatically saved when you go out of the input field. No separate editor has to be started first, nor closed afterwards. As with any Trimaran panel, the editor can be resized at will. If the examiner wishes to concentrate purely on editing, he/she can expand the editor to a separate full screen window, mak-

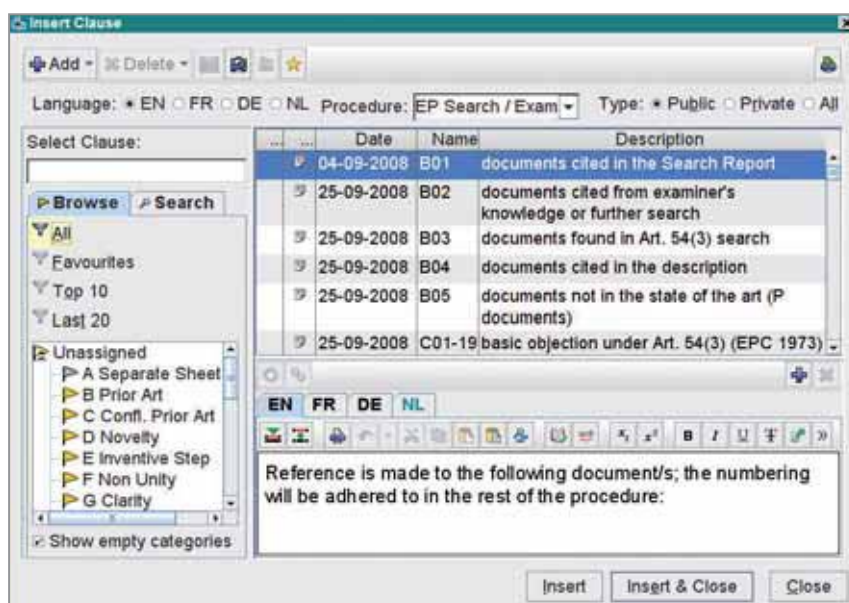
ing optimal use of available screen space.

Martha's interface is optimally tailored for examiners' tasks. Superfluous extra features (exotic fonts, configurable headers or footers, etc.) that come as a standard package with most editors, have been avoided. Instead, Martha offers predefined font sizes, standard clauses and legal numbering as recommended by Directorate Practice and Procedure.

Multiple Marthas

Martha is embedded at several locations in Trimaran. As you would expect, Martha is used in actions such as grants and communications for writing votums, written opinions, etc.

Martha is also available on the non-unity tab to edit the “Non-unity reasoning”. In this case Martha is provided in a light version restricted to text formatting options that can actually be printed on the form. The “Incomplete reasoning” and the “No search reasoning” are dealt with similarly.



Standard clauses dialogue

Standard clauses can now be used in each of these reasonings.

Martha is even provided in the Standard clauses dialogue. Standard clauses can now be edited “in situ” without having to be inserted into the text first. Martha can be used to create standard clauses within the Standard clauses dialogue.

Enhanced data insertion

With Martha, dossier data can be more easily accessed, so that in addition to traditional Application documents, Standard clauses or Cited documents, data items like Citations, Text of the claims, Non-unity subjects, Non-unity reasoning, Incomplete reasoning or No search reasoning can now be made available for insertion into the text. Parameters like Priority date, Filing date, Title and Application number are available as well.

The Standard clauses dialogue

The Standard clauses dialogue allows the examiner to insert public or private clauses into his/her text. To support

this, the dialogue offers a logical categorisation of all clauses, the possibility to compare clauses in different languages, the ability to define favourite clauses, to search in clauses and to have access to the top 10 or last 20 clauses used. As mentioned, standard clauses can now be edited “in situ” in the dialogue. Parameters like Filing date can be directly inserted into the clause, and can be replaced by the actual dossier data in the text, a particularly interesting feature when editing “Facts and submissions” in minutes of oral proceedings.

A coherent style

Martha and Trimaran share a coherent design aimed at minimising computer-related health risks. This includes full keyboard accessibility of all functions via standard short-cuts (Ctrl-C, Ctrl-V, etc.), provision of key-tips and use of speech-driven commands via Speech-

Buddy. Key-tips appear over each button when ALT is pressed, to show which short-cut activates it. Using Speech-Buddy, these commands can alternatively be triggered by voice.

Difficulties encountered and user expectations

In the regular user surveys conducted by the Trimaran team, feedback on Martha is closely monitored. The last survey, answered by several hundred Trimaran users, showed that the acceptance of Martha is less homogeneous than the mainly positive acceptance of Trimaran. Weaknesses mentioned often relate to performance, to bugs and to format conversion errors from WP 6.1 and from private standard clauses. Features like the F7 indent are sometimes felt to be missing. The effort being made to reduce the level of remaining bugs in Trimaran equally applies to Martha equally. Good alternatives to features perceived as lacking are foreseen.

Still to come

Current planning foresees the addition of dictionaries with patent-specific vocabulary to current spellchecking dictionaries in English, French and German. Currently, no grammar checker that could be incorporated into Martha is available on the market. Dragon Naturally Speaking version 10, a voice recognition software used by nearly 80 examiners around the Office will be soon made available for Martha too and an equation editor is also planned. The fact that Martha is embedded will allow further features to be implemented more easily in the future, but right now, priority is being given to the completion of the Trimaran roll-out to all examiners.

■ Thomas Ott and Alan Draper,
Trimaran project team