

IPC REVISION ROADMAP

Plan of Future Revision of the IPC

1. The Committee decided to take a proactive approach in identifying the areas where the IPC should be revised in the coming years. Those areas should be preferably revised where there is a large amount of patent applications from emerging countries, which are not covered by the CPC or FI, with significant growth rate, and where the number of subgroups in the IPC is not sufficient for an effective search.

Candidate Areas for Revision

2. These areas are identified in the list of Annex V to this report, prepared by the International Bureau, containing a list of 96 IPC main groups which have had increasing growth rate during the period 2004 to 2009. This List will be updated twice a year by the International Bureau taking into account updated statistical data on the number of patent applications published in emerging countries. Areas that were recently revised and where reclassification is still incomplete would not appear in the List. In addition the International Bureau would include other areas proposed by any member State, under the condition that evidence is provided that these are rapidly growing areas in emerging countries and that the IPC is not sufficient for an effective search. The Committee will review the List at each session and monitor the revision work done.

3. Revision requests to revise areas included in the updated List might be submitted by any member of the IPC Union to the relevant project of the IPC e-forum. The corresponding proposals should be based either on CPC or FI/F-term subdivisions, when available. Twice a year the Committee would electronically consider these proposals and decide which projects should be forwarded to the Working Group.

4. Revision requests might also be submitted following the same procedure as stated in paragraph 3 above by the EPO/The United States of America or Japan, in areas where major reorganization of CPC or FI, respectively, would be planned, in order to avoid discrepancy with the IPC.

Revision and Publication Procedure

5. The IPC revision procedure will initially remain unchanged. In case of unexpected increase of revision projects, the Committee will consider whether changes are needed, e.g., to create task forces dedicated to particular projects. The Working Group would give the highest priority of its work to the revision of the IPC scheme. The Working Group would be responsible for all technical or formal consideration of revision projects.

6. In order to accelerate the entry into force of schemes approved by the Working Group, the Committee decided to delegate its authority to adopt approved schemes to the Working Group. In that respect the summer session of the Working Group would be advanced to early May. The compilation of all amendments to enter into force in the following version of the IPC would be available in the two authentic languages beginning of June for final checking. An early publication of the scheme, RCL and compilation would be available simultaneously, for checking purposes, as well as the corresponding Mater Files and the Validity File.

7. The participation of Rapporteurs and translating offices is very important in this checking phase. In order to further improve the checking work, an editorial board (second pair of eyes) should be appointed by the Working Group. The International Bureau would distribute the parts of the scheme to be checked from editorial and formal point of view to its members. The International Bureau will in particular explicitly check the correspondence between the RCL and the transfer notes and version indicators in the scheme. Some offices using the Master Files would be invited to check their correctness. This checking would last for two weeks. The International Bureau will then introduce the corrections in order to prepare the final early publication for the first of July, as usual.

8. It was noted that the International Bureau intended to modernize the IPC IT management system starting in 2013. This IT system would allow the integration of FI and CPC schemes, the possibility given to rapporteurs to submit revision and definition proposals directly to the system, the display of an approved scheme as it would be published in order to allow easy early checking, and finally the creation of all Master Files and of the publication with "a push of a button". The International Bureau would coordinate with interesting offices to adapt the automatic translation tool TAPTA, currently used in PATENTSCOPE to be used in translating the scheme or definitions in other than the authentic languages.

Role of Rapporteurs

9. In order to reduce the rapporteur work from the offices owners of CPC or FI, other offices may volunteer to act as rapporteurs of revision projects when the purpose of the project is simply to bring subdivision from a local scheme into the IPC. If an office owner of the CPC or FI/F term is willing at the same time to revise the local scheme, then it is preferable that this office has the role of Rapporteur.

10. The role of Rapporteur would be to:

- check that the additional existing subdivisions satisfy the rules for revision of the IPC;
- check the existing titles and amend them in order to improve understanding or propose adequate definitions;
- propose the appropriate new IPC symbols;
- propose the adequate depth of hierarchical level, if the original local scheme is too detailed for the needs of the IPC. In that respect the file size of existing IPC groups and the file size of the proposed groups in the local scheme should be indicated; and
- propose structural changes only when necessary to improve the use of the scheme and its compliance with IPC rules. Such structural changes should avoid as much as possible intellectual reclassification of the local Patent Collection. Decisions on structural changes should be taken by consensus.

11. The Working Group was invited to explore the possibility to nominate for each revision project, a co-Rapporteur next to the Rapporteur. His/her role would be to check the proposals submitted by the Rapporteur, at various stages of a project, from a formal point of view, as well as their integration into the scheme. The co-Rapporteur could propose if a "light" maintenance of the scheme in the revised area is needed, e.g. in order to improve consistency in terminology.

Reclassification

12. During the last years the Committee has made several decisions in relation to the reclassification following the experience accumulated after the reform. Since early 2012, a new reclassification tool was implemented by the International Bureau allowing a wider participation of offices in the reclassification of completed projects. Phases of reclassification have been defined allowing more offices to participate and also automatic reclassification of not reclassified documents after a certain period, i.e., default transfers.

13. It was decided that the reclassification procedure and collaboration would not be changed. Any additional refinement, e.g. of the distribution algorithm, would be considered by the Committee in the framework of project QC 017.

Definitions

14. In the framework of revision projects, definitions would be considered only for those places where there is a need of further explanation of the scheme or its use. New subclass definitions would be considered only in those subclasses where there is evidence that the scheme or the relation of the subclass with other places is not clear enough. Only the relevant sections of the definitions would then be drafted. The definitions should be as focused as possible. For example if the scope of a subclass is clear but its relationship with other subclasses is not clear, only the corresponding section of the definitions would be developed.

15. It was noted that the International Bureau would commission a study on the consistency in classification of patent family members by different offices. This study could explore whether this consistency is correlated with the presence or absence of definitions. The results of this study would be presented at the 46th session of the Committee next year.

16. The Committee noted, with appreciation, an offer by EP/US to include in an accelerated way the CPC definitions into the IPC. In view of the important workload needed to review, adapt and translate these definitions before their introduction into the IPC, it was considered preferable to make available links to the CPC definitions from the future parallel viewer, without any other adaptation.

[Annex V follows]