

Special Union for the International Patent Classification (IPC Union) Committee of Experts

**Fiftieth Session
Geneva, February 8 and 9, 2018**

REPORT

adopted by the Committee of Experts

INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee of Experts of the IPC Union (hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”) held its fiftieth session in Geneva on February 8 and 9, 2018. The following members of the Committee were represented at the session: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom and United States of America (30). Lesotho, the United Arab Emirates, the Eurasian Patent Organization (EAPO) and the European Patent Office (EPO) were also represented. The list of participants appears as Annex I to this report.

2. The session was opened by Mr. F. Gurry, Director General, who welcomed the participants. Mr. Gurry stressed the importance of the work of the Committee for the revision of the IPC in the framework of the IPC Revision Roadmap and, in particular, in the areas of new emerging technologies. He also emphasized the work done so far for the improvement of the IPC-related IT systems and, in particular, of the Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based IT system, e.g. the IPC Text Categorization (IPCCAT), which would tremendously help future classification as well as reclassification for offices.

OFFICERS

3. The Committee unanimously elected Mr. Pascal Weibel (Switzerland) as Chair and Messrs. Klaus Höfken (Germany) and Christopher Kim (United States of America) as Vice-Chairs.
4. Ms. XU Ning (WIPO) acted as Secretary of the session.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

5. The Committee unanimously adopted the agenda, which appears as Annex II to this report.
6. As decided by the Governing Bodies of WIPO at their tenth series of meetings held from September 24 to October 2, 1979 (see document AB/X/32, paragraphs 51 and 52), the report of this session reflects only the conclusions of the Committee (decisions, recommendations, opinions, etc.) and does not, in particular, reflect the statements made by any participant, except where a reservation in relation to any specific conclusion of the Committee was expressed or repeated after the conclusion was reached.

REPORT ON THE PROGRESS ON THE IPC REVISION PROGRAM

7. Discussions were based on Annex 10 to project file [CE 462](#) prepared by the International Bureau, containing a status report on the activities of the IPC Revision Working Group (hereinafter referred to as the "Working Group"), in particular on the IPC Revision Program.
8. The Committee noted that the average number of revision projects per year in all technical fields from IPC-2016.01 to IPC-2018.01 was at the same level. The total number of revision projects increased since IPC-2017.01, particularly in the electrical field.
9. The Committee also noted that the number of C projects decreased, while the number of F projects increased since IPC-2017.01; the number of new F projects would further increase in the future. The number of new entries which entered into force in IPC-2018.01 was considerably higher than that in IPC-2017.01. The Committee also noted an increase of the duration of the IPC-phase period since IPC-2017.01.
10. The Committee further noted that IPC Definitions had been created to a greater extent based on revision projects as well as on systematic maintenance projects of the removal of non-limiting references from the IPC scheme and their integration into IPC Definitions.
11. The International Bureau delivered a more detailed overview of maintenance projects in the status report with a distinction between *ad hoc* and systematic maintenance projects.
12. The International Bureau was invited to prepare a breakdown of new entries per technical field in the status report for consideration by the Committee at its next session, to help planning the workload of the Working Group among technical fields.
13. The Committee expressed its satisfaction with the work done by the Working Group and encouraged offices to actively participate in the development of the IPC revision and, in particular, under the Updated IPC Revision Roadmap.

REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF THE CPC AND FI REVISION PROGRAMS

14. The United States of America and the EPO gave a joint oral [presentation](#) on the recent developments concerning the CPC. Japan presented an oral [report](#) on the progress of FI/F-Term.

15. The Committee was informed that the frequency of CPC releases would be four times for 2018, namely January, February, May and August 2018, and a pre-release would be made available one month before each entry into force. It was foreseen that the compilation of changes of the CPC and its Cross-Reference List (CRL) would be available soon. The Committee also noted a scenario by April 2019, when the CPC symbols provided by offices using the CPC would be kept at family level, instead of at document level as in the current practice.

16. The Committee was informed that the frequency of FI revisions would be twice per year, i.e. in June and November. The Committee was also informed about the use of “Broad Facet” in Japanese patent classification in addition to FI and F-term covering cross-cutting technologies. It was further informed about the availability of information in both English and Japanese on the JPO website on classification, in particular the IPC-FI-CPC scheme parallel viewer and the FI/F-Term revision information. The Committee was also informed that the alignment of the FI with the latest version of the IPC had reached 99.3% in November 2017 and the Committee expressed its gratitude to the JPO for its efforts to align the FI with the latest IPC.

17. The Committee shared the understanding that the coherency between the IPC and other Classifications was critically important and the efforts to enhance and maintain such coherency should be continued.

AMENDMENTS TO THE GUIDE TO THE IPC AND OTHER BASIC IPC DOCUMENTS

18. Discussions were based on project files [CE 455](#) and, in particular, on Annexes 53 and 55, submitted by the International Bureau and Sweden respectively, containing compiled amendments to the “Guidelines for Revision of the IPC” (Guidelines), which integrated comments by offices.

19. The Committee adopted, with some modifications, the amendments to paragraphs 13, 17, 27 and 40 of the Guidelines, as well as the introduction of new paragraphs 20bis and 51bis and a new Appendix VII relating to “Guidelines for converting existing classification schemes to the IPC” into the Guidelines, which appear in Annexes 59 and 60 to the project file.

20. The Committee also adopted the integration of the IPC Definition Template into Appendix VI of the Guidelines, as adopted by the Committee at its 49th session (see paragraph 25 of document IPC/CE/49/2).

21. The Committee further invited the International Bureau to review the *Guide to the IPC* and the Guidelines with respect to the appropriate use of “Definitions” and “definitions” and to prepare a proposal, where needed, for electronic adoption by the Committee, which would appear in Annexes 34 and 35 to project file [CE 454](#) and Annexes 61 and 62 to project file [CE 455](#).

22. With respect to paragraph 15 in Appendix VII concerning the proper use of the precedence references in the scheme, Sweden was invited to review the current paragraph 38 of the Guidelines and propose amendments where needed for the consideration by the Committee at its next session.

23. The Committee noted that there was a desire to include, in the *Guide to the IPC*, the description concerning the IPC revision cycle and the IPC reclassification timeframes. The Committee therefore invited proposals in that respect for consideration at its next session.

UPDATING OF IPC GREEN INVENTORY

24. Discussions were based on project files [CE 509](#), in particular on Annex 1 including a proposal prepared by the International Bureau relating to the updating of the IPC Green Inventory.

25. The Committee noted that the IPC Green Inventory had not been updated since its publication in 2011 and the strong desire from the IPC user community to keep the Inventory up to date. The Committee expressed its gratitude to the International Bureau for its initiative and effort in the updating of the IPC Green Inventory based on the latest IPC 2018.01. The Committee further invited the International Bureau to perform similar update of the Inventory each time a new version of the IPC enters into force.

26. The Committee also noted the strong desire from the IPC user community to make better and more efficient use of the IPC Green Inventory in searching for Environmentally Sound Technologies (EST), as well as in preparing statistics in the relevant technical fields.

27. In that respect, discussions were based on a proposed scenario by the International Bureau in the said Annex 1, i.e. the possibility to create a new universal indexing/tagging scheme in the IPC to cover, as much as possible, parts of the EST, and to cover, in the future, new emerging technologies (NET), e.g. Artificial Intelligence (AI). The new scheme would be independent from the existing IPC scheme and would be universally applied.

28. The Committee agreed that the issue should be considered and further investigated immediately in view of the strong desire from the IPC user community and the rapid development of NET. Having foreseen the urgent nature of the task, the Committee decided to establish an Experts Group in that respect to consider the need for a new universal indexing/tagging scheme in the IPC covering cross-cutting technologies in general, in which the following offices volunteered to participate: Australia, Brazil, China, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States of America and EPO. The International Bureau would also participate with a special status to ensure coordination and Secretariat tasks. The Committee agreed that its other members could join the Experts Group at any later stage. The EPO was appointed as leading Office of the Experts Group.

29. The Committee invited the members of the Experts Group to prepare a report to the Working Group at an appropriate time, bearing in mind that the required reclassification workload must be avoided or, at least, minimized.

30. The Committee recommended that the Experts Group conduct its work independently by any feasible means, e.g. by WIPO IPC e-forum, IPC External Wiki, exchanging emails, video conferences, physical meetings, etc. Travel constraints, however, should be taken into account when conducting physical meetings.

HANDOVER OF THE WORKING LISTS MANAGEMENT FROM THE EPO TO WIPO

31. The International Bureau delivered a presentation on the status of handover of working Lists management from the EPO to WIPO and associated IPC working List Management (IPCWLM) project.

32. The International Bureau also informed the Committee about the main outcomes of the Task Force on IPCWLM business requirements which took place earlier in the week and its conclusions in Annex 14 to project file [CE 492](#).

33. The Committee adopted all recommendations of the Task Force and, in particular, the proposal of IPC reclassification lifecycle and the proposed approach for the legacy versions of the IPC.

REPORT ON IPC-RELATED IT SYSTEMS

34. The International Bureau delivered a [presentation](#) on the recent developments in AI-based automatic text categorization in the IPC (IPCCAT-Neural) in English and French.

35. The International Bureau informed the Committee that IPCCAT-Neural was able to predict among the 73,000 entries of the full IPC with 80% accuracy, which was similar to that previously achieved at main-group level only.

36. The International Bureau emphasized the importance of IPCCAT-Neural training data (WIPO-DELTA) based on DOCDB XML data processing and computing of both CPC and IPC symbols and proposed to make this collection available upon request to research institutes as incentive for further progress in this domain.

37. The International Bureau also informed the Committee about the feasibility of expanding the scope of IPCCAT-Neural application to other languages through the use of machine translation, e.g. "WIPO Translate", an instant translation tool, specially designed for patent documents. The Committee noted that such expansion was currently under progress.

38. The International Bureau therefore proposed that the Committee at its next session would consider the integration of IPCCAT-Neural technology into the future IPCWLMS as a potential alternative to replace the default transfer currently applied in the last stage of the IPC reclassification process.

39. The Committee adopted the changes in IPC Master Files and their by-products recommended by the International Bureau in Annexes 1 and 2 of project file [CE 501](#), which would enter into force in the official publication of IPC-2019.01.

40. The Committee noted the changes in the presentation and layout of IPC Definitions recommended by the International Bureau in Annex 3 of project file [CE 501](#) and agreed that presentation and layout of definitions should allow for structured sections or subsections by adding headings for one or more paragraphs, for emphasized text by using bold, italics and underlined text. The Committee decided to create a maintenance project [M 787](#) with the International Bureau as Rapporteur to further review the cases with non-standard expressions for keywords and propose solution to them. The Committee invited the International Bureau to further investigate the feasibility to implement the adopted changes in the presentation and layout of IPC Definitions and to prepare a proposal where needed for electronic adoption by the Committee at a later stage.

41. The International Bureau also delivered a [presentation](#) on the recent achievements and developments in the IPC Revision Management Solution (IPCRMS), in particular on the successful preparation and publication of IPC-2017.01 and IPC-2018.01 by using IPCRMS. The Committee was also informed that the IPCRMS was ready to allow the use of new indicators ("T" and "L") as adopted at its 49th session in paragraph 122 of the Guidelines and the implementation of the new function of scheme "Import/Export".

42. The Committee repeated its invitation to Offices to make better use of the IPCRMS for drafting IPC revision proposals and submitting comments.

SURVEY ON THE IPC-RELATED IT TOOLS

43. The International Bureau made a presentation on the results of the evaluation on program 12 and its recommendation regarding IPC-related IT tools, and presented the proposal concerning the time frame of the recommended survey, based on the working document in Annex 2 to project file [CE 509](#).

44. The Committee agreed with the proposed time frame and its cooperation for the survey.

45. This report was unanimously adopted by the Committee of Experts by electronic means on March 2, 2018.

[Annexes follow]