

Committee on WIPO Standards (CWS)

Eleventh Session
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REPORT BY THE SEQUENCE LISTINGS TASK FORCE

Document prepared by the Task Force Leader

BACKGROUND

1. The Sequence Listings Task Force was created by the Committee on WIPO Standards (CWS), at its first session (October 25 to 29, 2010), to deal with Task No. 44 (see paragraph 29 of document CWS/1/10), the description of which reads:

“Prepare a recommendation on the presentation of nucleotide and amino acid sequence listings based on eXtensible Markup Language (XML) for adoption as a WIPO standard. The proposal of the new WIPO standard should be presented along with a report on the impact of the said standard on the current WIPO Standard ST.25, including the proposed necessary changes to Standard ST.25.”

2. The Task Force was also requested:

“To liaise with the appropriate PCT body with regard to the possible impact of such standard on Annex C to the Administrative Instructions under the PCT.”

3. The European Patent Office (EPO) was assigned the role of Task Force Leader and WIPO Standard ST.26 was formally adopted during the reconvened fourth session of the CWS in March 2016.

4. One of the priorities when developing WIPO Standard ST.26 was to ensure that the generated sequence listing would comply with the feature table definition maintained by the International Nucleotide Sequence Database Collaboration (INSDC). This would ensure that the filed sequence listings would not need to be further processed in order to ensure their inclusion within these databases.

5. At its fifth session, the CWS was informed that the International Bureau would develop a new common software tool to enable applicants to prepare sequence listings and verify that such sequence listings comply with WIPO Standard ST.26. The CWS therefore amended the description of Task No. 44 to read:

“Support the International Bureau by providing users’ requirements and feedback on the ST.26 authoring and validation software tool; Support the International Bureau in the consequential revision of the PCT Administrative Instructions; and Prepare necessary revisions of WIPO Standard ST.26 upon request by the CWS.” (See paragraphs 44 to 45 of document CWS/5/22.)

6. The PCT Assembly, at its fifty-third session in October 2021, adopted the amendments to the PCT Regulations to implement WIPO Standard ST.26 in the PCT system (see Annex II to document PCT/A/53/3 and paragraphs 23 to 25 of document PCT/A/53/4). The WIPO General Assembly, at its fifty-fourth session in October 2021, further approved the new "big-bang" implementation date of WIPO Standard ST.26 of July 1, 2022, at national, regional and international levels (see document WO/GA/54/14 and paragraphs 178 to 183 of document WO/GA/54/15).

PROGRESS REPORT

7. WIPO Standard ST.26 entered into force on July 1, 2022, together with the modifications to the PCT Regulations, the Administrative Instructions to the PCT including relevant forms, as well as the PCT Receiving Office Guidelines and PCT International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines.

8. WIPO Standard ST.26 was last revised in November 2022 at the tenth session of the CWS and the current version of WIPO ST.26, version 1.6, entered into force on July 1, 2023. The changes concerned the Main Body of the Standard as well as its Annexes I, II VI, VII and the Appendix to Annex VI (see document CWS/10/13 REV.2). The revision provided general improvements based on the experience acquired since the entry into force, including the addition of three new examples to Annex VI to the Standard.

9. Under the framework of Task No. 44, the Task Force presents for approval by the CWS a further revision of WIPO Standard ST.26 at the current session. The proposed revision provides general corrections and improvements, including the addition of two new examples to be added to Annex VI to the Standard. For further details, refer to document CWS/11/3. The updated version number will be version 1.7 and the date of entry into force is proposed as July 1, 2024.

10. The Task Force met for the first time with the INSDC team in September 2023 to discuss amongst other topics: data exchange policies, the alignment of WIPO ST.26 with the INSDC feature table definition and INSDC policy regarding the inclusion or rejection of short sequences. As both parties considered that the meeting was useful, this will be the first of future bi-lateral meetings.

UPDATE TO TASK DESCRIPTION

11. WIPO Standard ST.26 came into force on July 1, 2022. In order for Member States to be prepared to implement this Standard required a high degree of collaboration, in order to achieve the technical and legal updates required to support the use of WIPO ST.26. Since WIPO ST.26 was successfully implemented, the description of Task 44 will need to be modified. Additionally, the entry into force of WIPO ST.26 saw the launch of WIPO Sequence Suite into production.

12. The SEQL Task Force proposes to amend Task No. 44, the description of which would read, where strikethrough text indicates text to be removed and underlined text is text which is proposed to be added:

"Support the International Bureau by ~~providing users' requirements and testing new releases and providing user feedback on the ST.26 authoring and validation software tool~~ WIPO Sequence Suite; support the International Bureau in the consequential ~~revisions of the PCT Administrative Instructions~~; and prepare necessary revisions of WIPO Standard ST.26."

WORK PLAN

13. The following items are considered a priority in the upcoming year for the Sequence Listings Task Force:

- (a) Obtaining approval for the seventh revision of WIPO ST.26, version 1.7, by the CWS during the eleventh session;
- (b) Supporting the International Bureau by testing new releases and passing on user feedback regarding their use of WIPO Sequence; and
- (c) Working on any further revision of WIPO ST.26, if required, to further facilitate its implementation by Offices and applicants while keeping its alignment as possible and applicable with the requirements of INSDC and UniProt.

14. The CWS should note that the Sequence Listings Task Force will continue deliberations on whether there should be a removal of the minimum length requirement defined in WIPO ST.26 and an update to the definition for an amino acid to support the inclusion of a new peptoid example in Annex VI. These changes will likely require a substantive update to the Standard if approved.

15. *The CWS is invited to:*

(a) note the contents of this present document and the work plan of the Sequence Listings Task Force; and

(b) approve the update to the description of the Task No. 44 as referred to in paragraph 12 above.

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