

Committee on WIPO Standards (CWS)

Fourteenth Session
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REPORT ON TASK NO. 44 BY THE SEQUENCE LISTINGS TASK FORCE

Document prepared by the Sequence Listings Task Force Leader

SUMMARY

1. The Sequence Listings Task Force manages updates to WIPO Standard ST.26 and is led by the European Patent Office (EPO). Following the approval of version 2.0 of WIPO Standard ST.26 by the Committee on WIPO Standards (CWS) at its thirteenth session in November 2025, this report provides an update on the progress made by the Sequence Listings Task Force since the last session of the CWS.

BACKGROUND

2. At the first session of the CWS held in 2010, the Sequence Listings Task Force was created to perform Task No. 44. Task No. 44 is to 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 EPO was assigned the role of Task Force Leader. The Task Force was also requested to liaise with the appropriate Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) body regarding the possible impact of such a Standard on Annex C to the Administrative Instructions under the PCT (see paragraph 29 of document [CWS/1/10](#)).

3. At its reconvened fourth session in 2016, the CWS adopted WIPO Standard ST.26 (see paragraph 52 of [CWS/4BIS/16](#)). In October 2021, at the fifty-third session of the PCT Assembly, the amendments to the PCT Regulations to implement WIPO Standard ST.26 in the PCT system were adopted. The WIPO General Assembly approved to delay the "big-bang" implementation date of WIPO Standard ST.26 to 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](#)).

4. At its eleventh session in 2023, the CWS approved a revision of the description of Task No. 44, which reads as follows:

“Support the International Bureau by testing new releases based on available resources and providing user feedback on the WIPO Sequence Suite; and prepare necessary revisions of WIPO Standard ST.26”.

5. Since its adoption in 2016, WIPO Standard ST.26 has been revised several times, resulting in versions 1.1 to 1.7, and the latest version 1.7 was approved at the eleventh session of the CWS in December 2023.

6. At its thirteenth session in November 2025, the CWS approved the first major revision to WIPO Standard ST.26 since it came into force, as version 2.0 and approved the date of entry into force as July 1, 2027 (see document CWS/13/33). With version 2.0:

- (a) a subset of nucleotide analogs and peptide analogs will be required to be represented in the sequence listing by the corresponding unmodified residue symbol; and
- (b) the minimum sequence length requirement will be lifted, and short sequences – i.e., sequences with less than 10 specifically defined nucleotides or less than 4 specifically defined amino acids – will be optionally allowed to be included in a sequence listing.

In addition, several editorial amendments were made to improve the quality of the Standard.

7. The CWS also agreed on the transition requirement as proposed by the Sequence Listings Task Force, as set out in the editorial note of version 2.0 of WIPO Standard ST.26 as follows:

“The Thirteenth Session of the Committee on WIPO Standards decided that version 2.0 of ST.26 will enter into force on July 1, 2027 and apply to all patent applications with a filing date on or after that date. Exceptionally, paragraph 8 of this Standard, concerning the minimum length requirement, will apply from the date of entry into force of version 2.0, independent of the filing date of the patent application concerned.”

8. As the CWS agreed on at its thirteenth session, the approval of version 2.0 and its effective date at national, regional and international level was reported to the WIPO General Assembly in July 2026 (see document WO/GA/60/8).

OBJECTIVES

9. The following objectives were agreed by the Task Force for 2026:

- Facilitate preparations for the entry into force of WIPO Standard ST.26 version 2.0;
- Collaborate on further revisions of WIPO Standard ST.26, if required, to facilitate its implementation by Offices and applicants while remaining aligned with the requirements of INSDC and the Universal Protein Resource (UniProt); and
- Support the International Bureau by testing new releases of WIPO Sequence Suite and passing on user feedback regarding their use of WIPO Sequence.

PROGRESS REPORT

10. Since the thirteenth session of the CWS, the Task Force has met online three times in February, April and June 2026 and a fourth meeting was scheduled for October 2026 when this document was prepared. Discussions at the three meetings held primarily focused on the implementation of version 2.0, the identification of any further improvements that may be required, and progress in the development of the WIPO Sequence Suite.

11. With regard to the implementation of version 2.0, Offices considered the measures necessary to facilitate a smooth transition to the revised Standard. Particular attention was given to awareness-raising initiatives aimed at ensuring widespread knowledge of the amendments entering into force on July 1, 2027. The Task Force also considered the possible impact of the revised Standard on Annex C to the Administrative Instructions under the PCT, with the resulting legal changes to be addressed in a PCT Circular prepared by the International Bureau.

12. The Task Force discussed whether transitional arrangements were needed in view of the need to release the new software version ahead of the entry into force of the revised Standard. During the period leading up to entry into force, users, particularly test users, could inadvertently file sequence listings containing short sequences before version 2.0 becomes effective. However, the Task Force concluded that no specific transitional arrangements are necessary. Delaying the software release until shortly before the entry into force date, combined with timely communication to test users, was considered sufficient. For details on the release of WIPO Sequence Suite, see document CWS/14/3.

13. The Task Force also exchanged on further proposals for potential improvement of version 2.0 of WIPO Standard ST.26, on the understanding that there was no general support for presenting a new proposal for revision of the Standard to the fourteenth session of the CWS. Following receipt of proposals from Task Force members and discussions on the electronic forum (wiki) and during the Task Force meetings, the following issues remain under consideration for potential further improvements of WIPO Standard ST.26:

- (a) the removal of the qualifier ID references from the generated sequence listing; and
- (b) further improvements to Annex VI to increase clarity.

14. Finally, the Task Force provided expert support to the International Bureau for its activities as regards improving WIPO Sequence Suite. Members participated in a technical discussion on reviewing the proposals for updates to the functional specifications for the WIPO Sequence Suite and several demonstration sessions forming part of the development cycle.

CHALLENGES

15. The specific challenges for the work of the Task Force include:

- Timely information of applicants of the revised version sufficiently in advance of the entry into force of version 2.0;
- Identifying a suitable release date for WIPO Sequence as short as reasonably possible ahead of the entry into force on July 1, 2027 to ensure that short sequences are not included within a sequence listing in advance of the entry into force date for the new version, while bearing in mind the need for users to adjust to the updated version of WIPO Sequence when version 2.0 enters into force; and
- Software development and improvement are dependent on existing processes and resources at the International Bureau, which may impact on the options for Task Force members to provide input.

WORK PLAN

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

- (a) Facilitating preparations for the entry into force of version 2.0 of WIPO Standard ST.26, and its implementation, including by liaising with International Nucleotide Sequence Database Collaboration (INSDC) and its members;
- (b) Collaborating on any further revisions of WIPO Standard ST.26, including discussion of the items indicated above in paragraph 13, to further facilitate its implementation by Offices and applicants while remaining aligned with the requirements of INSDC and the Universal Protein Resource (UniProt); and
- (c) Supporting the International Bureau by testing new releases of WIPO Sequence Suite and passing on user feedback regarding their use of WIPO Sequence.

17. *The CWS is invited to note:*

(a) the contents of the present document; and

(b) the work plan of the Sequence Listings Task Force, as indicated in paragraph 16 above.

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