

# WIPO



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IMPACT STATUS REPORT

*Document prepared by the International Bureau*

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. In March 1998, the Assemblies of the Member States of WIPO approved the PCT automation project now called IMPACT (Information Management for the Patent Cooperation Treaty). The project consists of the following three components:

(a) IMPACT Communication System (commonly referred to as IMPACT COR for "Communication on Request"): an electronics system for communication of PCT documents to the Offices of PCT Contracting States ("PCT Offices");

(b) IMPACT International Bureau (IMPACT IB): an electronics system for the processing of international applications as required by the Treaty and Regulations; and

(c) IMPACT Receiving Office of the International Bureau (IMPACT RO/IB): an electronics system for the handling of international applications filed with the Receiving Office of the International Bureau.

2. The Assemblies of the Member States of WIPO also agreed in March 1998 that the Assembly of the PCT Unions should be kept informed of the development of the project

(documents A/32/5, WO/BC/18/5 and A/32/7). The present document contains a progress report on the projects since the last session of the PCT Assembly. Previous progress reports to the Assembly are contained in documents PCT/A/29/2, PCT/A/29/2 Add., PCT/A/30/3 and PCT/A/31/7. In addition, a further progress report was provided at the Second Session of the Information Technology Projects Working Group of the Standing Committee on Information Technologies held in Geneva from February 3 to 5, 2003 (documents SCIT/ITPWG/2/3 and SCIT/ITPWG/2/9).

## II. SUMMARY

3. The following paragraphs provide a brief summary of the status of each component of the project. Further details and explanations are provided in the subsequent sections of this document.

4. *IMPACTCOR*. Progress on the IMPACTCOR component, although slower than had been anticipated in previous reports, is nevertheless encouraging. IMPACTCOR is now in daily use internally by the International Bureau for communicating PCT documents to Offices, both on CD-ROM and DVD-ROM as well as in paper form. Also, preparations are underway for the Internet-based document ordering functions of IMPACTCOR to be delivered to a PCT Office for pilot testing by that Office.

5. *IMPACTIB*. Previously announced deadlines for the finalization of the IMPACTIB component have not been met. It has become clear to the International Bureau that, if the current development approach were to be retained, considerably more time and resources than indicated in previous progress reports would be required to finalize this component of the project. This has led the International Bureau to make certain changes in the management of the IMPACT project, and to adopt a different approach to the work that remains to be done. At the time of writing this document, changes to the management of the IMPACT project were under way, and the process of developing and validating a new approach for the completion of the IMPACTIB component had commenced.

6. *IMPACTRO/IB*. In line with the need to develop a new approach to the IMPACTIB component, the RO/IB component is also being revised.

## III. IMPACTCOR

7. As mentioned above, IMPACTCOR is now in daily use within the International Bureau and preparations are underway for pilot testing. This comprises the following:

(a) The technical infrastructure (servers, databases, networks, etc.) necessary for the proper functioning of the system is in place and is operational.

(b) The International Bureau's manual and paper-based methods for communicating PCT documents to PCT Offices have been completely replaced by an automated system of document scanning and reproduction.

(c) The International Bureau is able to communicate documents to PCT Offices not only on paper, but also on CD and DVD.

(d) The International Bureau is now able to communicate documents on request to all PCT Offices, even those Offices requiring a high volume of documents. Prior to IMPACT COR, the International Bureau was able to transmit documents upon specific request<sup>1</sup> only to smaller Offices because of the logistical complications involved in transmitting a high volume of documents in a manual and paper-based system.

(e) Offices will be able to place orders for the PCT documents which they wish to receive through an Internet web-based interface. This online function of IMPACT COR will be tested by the pilot test Office.

8. A graphical representation of IMPACT COR is contained in the Annex to this document.

9. It is believed that IMPACT COR has already generated, and will continue for a long time to generate, important tangible benefits both for Offices and the International Bureau. Notable among these benefits are the following:

(a) All Offices will now have much greater flexibility in terms of which PCT documents they wish to receive (i.e., not all documents systematically, but only those that are needed by the Office for processing the international applications concerned).

(b) In addition, Offices can opt for different document formats (paper, CD or DVD) based on their own processing needs and storage capabilities. The significance of this benefit is highlighted by the trend in the responses received to date to a questionnaire that the International Bureau recently addressed to Offices. From the more than 60 responses received so far, it appears that 70 percent of Offices who have replied prefer to receive PCT documents on CD or DVD rather than on paper.

(c) The International Bureau can now communicate documents in a much more efficient manner to Offices. This is illustrated by the fact that whereas previously as many as eleven staff members were dedicated to this task, since IMPACT COR, only four are required (the remaining seven having been redeployed to other units in the Office of the PCT).

#### IV. IMPACTIB

10. As mentioned above, the most recent progress report on IMPACTIB was provided at the Second Session of the Information Technology Projects Working Group of the SCIT held in Geneva from February 3 to 5, 2003. In that report, it was stated, *inter alia*, that the "final iteration of [IMPACTIB] is planned for delivery to the testing team in mid-March. Final acceptance is expected in mid or late April."

11. Due to a variety of problems that have only recently been fully appreciated, it is now apparent that progress on the IMPACTIB component is, in fact, much further behind schedule than previously thought.

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<sup>1</sup> As opposed to transmitting systematically all relevant documents pertaining to all applications in which an Office was designated or elected.

12. The actual status of IMPACTIB is as follows:

(a) Since IMPACTIB in part shares the same technical infrastructure as IMPACT COR (see paragraph 7(a) above), it can be stated that the technical infrastructure of IMPACTIB is mostly in place.

(b) Only about half of the expected IMPACTIB features have been delivered for testing and can be considered reliable. No full system test has yet been possible.

(c) Initial indications demonstrate that those parts of IMPACTIB that are functional may suffer from performance and scalability concerns. Generally, these indications suggest that the system, as currently developed, may provide unacceptably slow response times if it were to be made available to the full complement of staff members who are expected to rely on the system for the performance of their daily tasks.

(d) Work on these security aspects of the system is also behind schedule.

13. In light of this situation and the amount of resources already spent on the project, the International Bureau has determined that it urgently needs to revise its approach to the project's management and to the remaining work. The new project management structure and the new approach to remaining work are further outlined in Sections VI and VII, below.

## V. IMPACTRO/IB

14. In line with the revised approach to the IMPACTIB component, a revised approach is also being taken for the IMPACTRO/IB component. This, too, will be described in Section VII below.

## VI. NEW PROJECT MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

15. Until recently, primary responsibility for the IMPACT project lay with the IT Projects Division, an organizational unit of the International Bureau that was separate and independent from the Office of the PCT and whose purpose was to implement and deliver a number of major automation activities within the International Bureau, including three which concern in particular the PCT, namely IMPACT, PCT-SAFE and CLAIMS (IPC Reform). While the IT Projects Division thus had responsibility for the development of major new information technology systems for the International Bureau, those systems, once delivered, were to be managed by the IT Services Division, which was also responsible for the information technology (IT) infrastructure, systems and services (including Information Security) that are common to all areas of WIPO.

16. In order, in particular, to address the problems encountered in connection with IMPACT as described above and, in general, to create an environment that is more conducive to the appropriate long-term evolution of IT systems for the Office of the PCT, the following organizational measures have been taken:

(a) A new Division in the Office of Legal and Organization Affairs and PCT System has been created, entitled the PCT Information Systems Division.

(b) Responsibility for all IT systems specifically dedicated to the Office of the PCT has been transferred to this Division. This includes responsibility for the development, as well as the maintenance, once development is finalized, of:

- (i) IMPACT;
- (ii) PCT-SAFE;
- (iii) CLAIMS;
- (iv) all older PCT IT systems; and
- (v) all future PCT IT systems.

17. It is believed that the above organizational changes will yield the following benefits:

(a) Making the Office of Legal and Organization Affairs and PCT System directly responsible for the IT systems specifically dedicated to the Office of the PCT will further ensure that such systems, including IMPACT, PCT-SAFE and CLAIMS, are redesigned, developed and maintained in a manner that is most consistent with the needs of the PCT system, including those of Offices and applicants.

(b) Bringing together all existing and future IT systems of the Office of the PCT under the newly formed PCT Information Systems Division will further the technical integration of such systems, minimize the risks of duplication and redundancy of effort, and should lead to more efficient use of the International Bureau's resources.

## VII. NEW APPROACH TO REMAINING IMPACT WORK

18. The new approach to the completion of the IMPACT Project will be based upon the progressive delivery of a number of streams of related automated functions that are targeted to bring the International Bureau the most essential and immediate benefit. This will be achieved through the loose integration of the operational legacy system functions (that is, functions currently carried out on older, pre-IMPACT computer systems) together with those IMPACT functions that are considered reliable. The principal streams are outlined below:

(a) The first stream will have as its principal objective the automation of the PCT publication procedure through the provision of an electronic dossier tailored to that purpose. A secondary objective of the first stream will be the provision of an electronic dossier for the formality examination procedure.

(b) A second stream will address the production of the various forms required by the PCT procedure. The production of the forms will be transferred to the IMPACT infrastructure from the legacy infrastructure as a priority, not only as a cost saving measure, but also to facilitate the subsequent electronic dissemination of the forms.

(c) A third stream will transfer to the IMPACT infrastructure the legacy system now used in the Receiving Office of the International Bureau, while at the same time modernizing its user interface and ensuring that it can continue to process applications filed electronically.

(d) In parallel to these three streams of work, an independent technical evaluation of the IMPACT software architecture and technical environment will address the issues of systems scalability and performance.

19. While the International Bureau has, in principle, decided to take the approach as described above, a further detailed business validation process was, at the time of writing this document, being undertaken. Resource levels and timelines will also be validated as they become available.

20. *The Assembly of the PCT Union is invited to take note of the status report on the IMPACT project contained in this document.*

[Annex follows]

ANNEX

# Graphical representation of IMPACT COR

