

Meeting of International Authorities under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT)

Thirty-Third Session
Geneva, October 28 and 29, 2026

PCT ONLINE SERVICES

Document prepared by the International Bureau

SUMMARY

1. The International Bureau has delivered a wide range of system improvements for applicants and national Offices, but is currently largely focused on the modernization of underlying and internal services with a view to ensuring that the system is reliable and able to respond to evolving needs and to use new technologies efficiently to improve services. AI is of particular importance and new services are being introduced that will significantly improve service delivery.
2. International Authorities are invited to comment on priorities for system development to support international search and preliminary examination.

STATE OF SERVICES

3. The International Bureau supplies online services to applicants, Offices and (through PATENTSCOPE) third parties as well as supporting its own processing activities. Direct ePCT-Filing is available to 90 receiving Offices as well as providing filing packages or embedded filing services for a further 6. Post-filing documents can be delivered using ePCT for 103 Offices in their role as receiving Office (RO) and/or as International Searching and Preliminary Examining Authority (ISA and IPEA). The services are provided in a variety of forms, to meet the needs of Offices of different sizes and automation requirements, offering common views of documents and data to applicants and Offices. Applicants are offered actions, where they can enter data that is used directly in processing, making the results faster and more accurate – in some cases offering instant self-service completion of tasks such as changes of name and address.

4. Over the past year, the International Bureau has deployed a wide range of minor improvements to assist the use of ePCT services by International Authorities, as well as improvements to internal systems that permit faster delivery of search copies and improved data quality checks for information supplied to International Authorities. Many new or improved web services have been deployed with the aim of enabling ROs, ISAs and IPEAs to develop automated systems drawing on ePCT services to reduce IT development and support costs and improve the quality and consistency of PCT services for their clients.

5. The possibility of allowing ePCT as the official delivery of correspondence from Offices in their role as RO, ISA or IPEA has been extended to Offices not using ePCT as the main method of processing. This has permitted the European Patent Office to come closer to its goal of the complete elimination of paper mailing, despite acting as International Authority for a large number of applicants resident outside of Europe and whose attorneys may not have accounts with the EPO.

6. While not strictly a PCT service, the International Bureau acts as both a depositing and accessing Office for the WIPO Digital Access Service for Priority Documents (DAS). This serves as the source for approaching 65% of priority documents furnished in the international phase with very few failures, providing a free and high-quality service to applicants. The DAS team has prepared a new API with the primary goal of supporting the new WIPO Standard ST.92 format for priority documents, allowing the exchange of priority documents containing sequence listings in their original XML format. The International Bureau expects to be ready to support this new service for PCT as both accessing (IB) and depositing (RO/IB) Office in the first half of 2027, alongside the first national implementations.

7. The use and availability of color drawings remains a key issue for PCT applicants and color publication remains a goal. The proposed informal availability of full text PDF versions of international applications including color and greyscale drawings referred to in Circular [C. PCT 1699](#) is intended to go ahead but has been delayed following queries concerning that and the proposed enhancements to the front page layout referred to in Circular [C. PCT 1704](#).

USE OF XML DATA

8. In 2025, approximately 30% of international applications were filed in XML format, but the receiving Office of China converts applications received in paper and PDF formats to XML and consequently the International Bureau receives XML for the application body of over half of international applications. Over 95% of international applications are filed with at least the request form in XML format.

9. XML is received from approximately 13 of the 25 International Searching Authorities (some are in transition, creating some but not all of their reports using ePCT), representing approximately 88% of international search reports and written opinions of the ISA.

10. Receipt of data in high quality, standard-compliant XML format permits the International Bureau to automate large parts of its work, reducing costs, speeding processing and most importantly eliminating the risk of errors in reading or transcription of data. It also enables a variety of value-added services.

11. Notably, as steps towards the goal of offering improved language services, PATENTSCOPE and ePCT offer translation of XML search reports and written opinions into any of the 10 languages of publication, using the official templates in each language to deliver an exact translation of the standard parts of reports, dates and similar coded data, relying on machine translation only for free text. These reports also offer links to patent citations and some non-patent literature citations.

12. ePCT also offers a similar functionality for forms produced by the International Bureau – all such Forms are created in XML format and can be rendered to any of the 10 languages of publication. This helps deliver an effective service to applicants whose languages are not English or French, while maintaining the requirement of documents being created in English or French so that the official record is more readily accessible to International Authorities and designated Offices that may have difficulties with other languages of publication used at the relevant receiving Offices.

13. The International Bureau intends in the future to offer equivalent functionality for other Forms and encourages Offices in their role as RO, ISA and IPEA to exchange documents in standard XML formats, with the search reports, written opinions and international preliminary examination reports being the most important for delivering high quality services to designated Offices and patent information users.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

14. Like most national Offices, the International Bureau sees artificial intelligence as a key part of the next phase of evolution of patent processing. While AI-assisted search options have been introduced into PATENTSCOPE, the focus of PCT development has been related to formalities and applicant assistance.

15. The main AI services in active use are in machine translation and OCR quality control, but new services are about to be deployed to automatically extract front page figures from the full pages of drawings and extract the text from those figures for translation. This is being implemented not solely to reduce processing costs, but also to form the basis of new services, such as delivering the drawing text to be searchable in patent databases.

16. In addition, AI will be used to extract key data from documents in order to extend automations that are already done for documents supplied in XML format, or where Offices sometimes provide accompanying metadata to describe the document accurately. These include application body content checks in relation to the confirmation of receipt of record copies, and priority documents that are not delivered using DAS or ePCT actions. Certain incoming image format documents may also be pre-classified by AI in order to speed their distribution to the correct processing arrangements.

17. Next steps expected are AI improvements to the cleaning of publication pages (such as removal of unwanted text in the margins) and conversion of image format search reports and written opinions to XML format. The International Bureau is also experimenting with more general purpose expert chatbots, able to answer specific questions based on data from authentic data sources. Where data sources include information concerning specific international applications, information security is the highest priority. For this and for systems based solely on public data and user input, the quality of answers and the ability to validate responses given are essential.

18. AI offers opportunities for new services and automations that were until recently considered impossible. However, it remains important to ensure the quality of source data. Some use cases of AI are necessary only because documents and data continue to be exchanged in image formats when exchanging the information in standard (usually XML) data formats can enable perfect data quality and automations at very low cost. The PCT System relies on extremely accurate data flowing from the applicant to national Offices, to the International Bureau and back to national Offices. For data where accuracy is essential, AI should not be used as an excuse not to exchange high-quality data in the first place.

19. The Meeting is invited to comment on priorities for the development of systems and standards to assist the process of international search and preliminary examination and the effective exchange and use of related data.

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