

## **Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) Working Group**

**Nineteenth Session**  
**Geneva, February 2 to 6, 2026**

### **ELECTRONIC PROCESSING OF INTERNATIONAL APPLICATIONS**

*Document prepared by the International Bureau*

#### **SUMMARY**

1. Priorities for the coming year include making ePCT services more accessible and effective for applicants and Offices, using artificial intelligence to improve customer service and efficiency, identifying ways to increase the use of full text processing and allow the use of color drawings, and developing systems to improve the protection of personal information.

#### **AVAILABILITY OF ePCT SERVICES**

2. The International Bureau has provided online processing services through ePCT since 2011, beginning with secure file inspection and adding filing and increasingly automated processing services for applicants and Offices. Efforts are constantly under way to enhance security, performance and usability.

3. ePCT-Filing is directly implemented at 88 receiving Offices. In addition, systems powered by ePCT provide either the request form part of the international application, or else drive filing systems delivered through alternative portals at several other Offices. ePCT accounts for around 86 per cent of international applications filed at Offices that offer either direct or embedded ePCT-Filing services.

4. ePCT services are used for processing applications at 97 Offices, mostly in the role of receiving Office, but also for some International Searching and Preliminary Examining Authorities. Applicants at other Offices may gain access to their international applications through ePCT, but will only see the documents and data that have been transmitted to the International Bureau.

5. Use of ePCT services for filing and processing is generally beneficial to applicants and Offices alike, delivering consistent services and data with a single “source of truth” visible equally to applicants, national Offices and the International Bureau (subject to limited restrictions for certain document types or where the receiving Office has not yet transmitted the record copy, in which case the documents and data will not be available to the International Bureau). Offices are able to meet their obligations without the need to invest in developing and maintaining local systems. The International Bureau benefits from documents and data being received in consistent formats that can be processed efficiently without the need to allow for Office-specific differences. All users receive the benefit of system developments simultaneously as they become available, such as the recently delivered option to view IB-issued forms in any of the 10 languages of publication, whether they were originally created in English or French.

6. However, applicants and Offices wish to use services in different ways and the main browser-based service is not ideal in all cases. The International Bureau is working to deliver common services in ways that meet different use cases and still remain practical to maintain and support. Some significant areas of work include:

(a) *Making ePCT More Effective for Large Offices:* ePCT services for Offices are fully used mostly by Offices with relatively small numbers of people needing access. This is largely because of the difficulty of maintaining WIPO Accounts with the correct access rights for a large number of examiners, as well as the limited workflow options currently available. While it is not practical to offer Offices a full federated user access model with the technology currently available, the International Bureau is working with a number of medium and large Offices to make it practical to deliver ePCT Office services for high volume users.

(b) *Integration into Office Portals:* Some Offices wish to offer “one-stop-shop” portals where their applicants can log into one system to manage both national and international applications. A “plugin” arrangement developed to deliver PCT filing services through the European Patent Office’s “eOLF 2.0” system has been found difficult to support. The International Bureau is working on a development of its Business Continuity Service to deliver a similar capability in a simpler and more reliable way.

(c) *Web Services:* A further aspect of “one-stop-shop” arrangements is the integration of services into the patent management systems used by attorneys so that a portfolio can, at least to some extent, be managed automatically. ePCT has for some years had a range of web services available that can be used by applicants’ patent management systems or for national Office automations, but has lacked an API management service that provides readily available documentation and safe test environments. Consequently, the ePCT web services have up to now only been used by a small handful of Offices and major applicants. A new API management service should be launched in 2026, opening up this possibility to a wider range of applicants and making development easier for Offices. It should also be noted that the current ePCT web services are highly specific to the PCT System. To encourage implementation by providers of patent management systems, national Offices should consider the creation of a small range of APIs common to the IB and national Offices that allow some consistent coverage of basic functionality for review of a user’s IP portfolio and the retrieval of notifications, documents and bibliographic data concerning an application within that portfolio.

## USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

7. Many national Offices are using or considering artificial intelligence to assist search and processing of national and international applications. The International Bureau has for many years used artificial intelligence in translation and classification systems, but the new generation of generative AI systems has opened up many new opportunities.

8. Use of AI within the PCT is considered extremely carefully in order to ensure that it does not introduce risks of leakage of confidential data or inappropriate processing of international applications due to faulty results. At present, generative AI is in live use only to demonstrate technical capabilities and assist staff understanding, delivering an improved route to machine translation of image-format documents to International Bureau staff only. However, work is under way on a variety of projects to deliver improvements to customer service, quality of information or efficiency. Some areas where significant results are expected in the coming year include:

- (a) Improved language assistant for simple work items, allowing the possibility of the International Bureau making Administrative Instructions under Rule 92.2(d), increasing the number of situations in which applicants may formally send correspondence to the International Bureau in languages other than English or French.
- (b) Extraction of text from drawings, increasing the efficiency and accuracy of providing front page drawing texts in different languages and for use in search engines.
- (c) Automated OCR quality control, reducing the cost and improving the quality of OCR text extraction. If this process can be delivered with the accuracy promised by early stage testing, it is expected to make the technology available to national Offices to assist in the preparation of accurate full text publications for the purpose of the PCT minimum documentation.
- (d) More reliable identification of formalities defects such as discrepancies in bibliographic data supplied in image (PDF) format.

9. More ambitious projects are also at earlier stages of consideration, requiring additional experience in prompt engineering to optimize AI processes for different variations of processes, or else working to deliver output into correct structured output formats (normally specific XML standards).

## **FULL TEXT PROCESSING AND COLOR DRAWINGS**

10. As noted at the previous session of the Working Group (see paragraph 16 of document PCT/WG/18/13), the International Bureau already creates full text PDF versions of the international publication, including any color or greyscale drawings that were submitted, in the case where the international application was delivered in XML format in the record copy and the drawings have not been replaced as part of a correction or rectification. However, this is an interim step in the publication process and the result is not currently made available or kept on file. It is proposed in future to make these PDF files available as an alternative view of the international publication alongside the existing black and white page images, which would for the present remain the official publication.

11. A PCT Circular will shortly be issued with details of the proposed formats for making this available and links to samples of PDF files prepared from real international publications showing the exact details of the PDF files and the way that they would be included and indexed in data packages delivered to Offices. It is hoped that this will help invigorate and inform discussions on moving towards official color filing and publication, as well as be immediately useful to applicants entering the national phase in Offices that already allow color drawings and are willing to accept national phase entries based on color drawings in international applications as filed, even though they have been published in black and white.

## ISSUES FROM THE COMMITTEE ON WIPO STANDARDS

12. The Committee on WIPO Standards (CWS) and its Task Forces are working in a variety of areas significant to PCT electronic processing. Some of particular relevance include:

- (a) *Implementation and revision of WIPO Standard ST.92* (Recommendations on the data package format for the electronic exchange of priority documents; see document [CWS/13/20 Rev.](#) and presentation [CWS/13/7E-IB](#)): The WIPO Digital Access Service for Priority Documents (DAS) is being prepared for use with WIPO Standard ST.92, with implementation expected across a two year transitional period from July 2026 to June 2028. The International Bureau will be ready to accept priority documents from DAS whenever necessary to handle priority documents delivered through the new route.
- (b) *Revision of WIPO Standard ST.26* (Recommended standard for the presentation of nucleotide and amino acid sequences listings using XML; see document [CWS/13/16 Rev.](#)): A substantive modification to WIPO Standard ST.26, version 2.0, was approved and information given on development of the WIPO Sequence software. This is covered in detail by documents under the “sequence listings” agenda item for this session.
- (c) *Revision of WIPO Standard ST.37* (Recommendation for an Authority File of published patent documents; see document [CWS/13/17 Rev.2](#)): A new version, version 3.0 of WIPO Standard ST.37 was approved, introducing improvements based largely on the experience of Offices creating and analyzing authority files while working on the implementation of the amendments to PCT Rules 34 and 36 that come into force January 1, 2026.
- (d) *Developing a functional specification for a DOCX to XML converter* (see document [CWS/13/12](#)): The Digital Transformation Task Force is seeking to establish a functional specification to guide Offices developing DOCX to XML converters. The International Bureau has expressed its view that to establish understanding and trust of DOCX conversion will require a closer consistency of results than could be achieved through this specification. Nevertheless, it is regarded as a useful activity in identifying ways to achieve well understood, accepted and consistent use of full text processing.
- (e) *Global Identifier for natural persons and legal entities* (see document [CWS/13/29](#)), *Data Cleaning of Names* (see document [CWS/13/15 Rev.](#)) and the *Name Standardization Task Force* (see document [CWS/13/7 Rev.](#)). Work is proceeding on efforts to improve the quality and consistency of names and entity information associated with patent applications. This may be of significance to the improved management and search of patent portfolios and assist in the development of projects such as “global assignment”.
- (f) *IP Data Exchange Task Force*: The IP Data Exchange Task Force reported on efforts to establish more open and consistent standards on the exchange of intellectual property data between Offices (see document [CWS/13/14](#)). This work complements the efforts being undertaken to improve the extent and quality of the PCT minimum documentation.

13. *The Working Group is invited:*

- (a) *to note the contents of document PCT/WG/19/6; and*
- (b) *to comment on priorities for the development of PCT online services.*

[End of document]