ePCT Overview – WIPO’s online service for filing and managing patent applications under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT)

https://pct.wipo.int
What is ePCT?

■ Web portal developed by WIPO that provides PCT online services for both applicants and IP Offices
  https://pct.wipo.int

■ User interface available in all PCT publication languages

■ Provides secure and direct interaction with PCT applications maintained by the International Bureau

■ ePCT-Filing with 72 PCT receiving Offices

■ ePCT allows applicants to conduct a number of electronic PCT transactions (‘Actions’) with the IB and other participating IP Offices
WIPO IP Portal - ePCT Integration (1)

- IP Portal launched in September 2019
- Existing ePCT bookmarks redirect to the IP Portal for login
- Notifications (bell icon in navigation bar) include all your messages from WIPO, e.g., ePCT, Madrid, WIPO Current Account, etc.
Example of Dashboard – customizable by the user
WIPO IP Portal - ePCT Integration (3)

Menu – always available across the portal

- File & Manage
  - ePCT
    - File and manage your PCT applications online.
  - ePCT Reference Data Look Up
    - Consult reference data for PCT applications.
  - PCT eServices Help
    - Consult our FAQs or contact us by phone, e-mail or live chat.

Digital Access Service (DAS) for Applicants
Register and manage priority documents for secure electronic exchange.

- Vienna Classification Assistant
  - A new AI-powered tool to help you classify trademark images

- WIPO PROOF
  - Produce trusted digital evidence for your Intellectual assets.

- WIPO Lex
  - Free of charge access to legal information on intellectual property (IP).

- WIPO Academy
  - The center of excellence for intellectual property (IP) education and training for WIPO member states.
ePCT – with/without strong authentication

- **Single WIPO Account** (username and password) gives access to ePCT and WIPO’s other online services
  - Create a WIPO Account here [https://www3.wipo.int/myaccount/en/](https://www3.wipo.int/myaccount/en/)

- **ePCT without strong authentication**
  - Limited functionality, document upload
  - Practical alternative to paper and fax (only very limited fax transmissions with the IB available as of 01 January 2020, and currently stopped due to the Covid-19 pandemic)

- **ePCT with strong authentication**
  - Additional identity verification allows access to all services and functions including the filing of PCT applications
  - Access to PCT applications filed as of January 1, 2009, including before publication
ePCT with strong authentication

- Best practice – set up at least 2 strong authentication methods
  - Authenticator app with one-time password on a mobile device or equivalent app for computer if use of mobile devices is not permitted, e.g., WINAUTH
  - SMS text with one-time password
  - Obtain/upload a digital certificate from WIPO (EPO smart cards are also supported)

- Set-up instructions and videos are available on the ePCT HELP page [https://www.wipo.int/pct/en/epct/support.html](https://www.wipo.int/pct/en/epct/support.html)
ePCT-Filing

- Web-based filing of PCT applications available to all PCT applicants
- Request form can be prepared in all PCT publication languages
- Real-time validation of data against the electronic processing system of the International Bureau
- Fill in the screens in the order in which they appear to benefit from re-use of certain data
- More detailed information on ePCT-Filing at
ePCT-Filing to RO/IB

- **All** data + documents are uploaded and validated in ePCT

- Real-time online fee payment to the IB by credit card or by debiting a Current Account at WIPO (only for filings with RO/IB), new PayPal
  - Payment can be made at time of filing (or later) in CHF, USD, EUR

- Possibility to make ‘same day corrections’ – countdown to midnight in RO time zone (this feature is not possible for RO/CA, RO/IL and RO/US due to 2-step process with their filing websites)

- No need to wait for record copy transmittal to access full application in ePCT
Signatures (1)

- ePCT access rights holders (eOwner or eEditor) are different from authorized signatories (applicant or agent)

- Applicant or agent may not necessarily be an eOwner or eEditor in ePCT

- Applicant or agent signatures are required for ePCT-Filing and all Actions and uploads, e.g., Rule 92bis changes, filing of Chapter II Demand, Article 19 amendments, withdrawals
Signatures (2)

- Signatures may be applied in the form of a text string or by uploading an image file.

- Also possible to indicate that signature of authorized signatory appears in an attached document.

- ‘External signature’ process allows someone without ePCT access to apply their signature to a document prepared using ePCT (e.g., where the attorney does not have access to ePCT but needs to approve and sign a document prepared by a paralegal who uses ePCT)


- See useful video at

Viewing a PCT application

Shortcut links for navigating to each section
Dropdown menu on IA number

- Gives quick access to a number of useful ePCT functions
Data

- Up-to-date bibliographic data for the PCT application with possibility to preview as publication front page layout
- Information about the target date for international publication/republication
- Where the language of filing of a PCT application is in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Russian, bibliographic data is available in those languages in addition to the English transliteration
Documents (1)

Access to documents on Record as held by the IB, but also documents submitted to ePCT participating Offices in their capacity as RO, ISA, IPEA

Documents (2)

Click on ‘More’ to view indications about the status and public availability of each document type in PATENTSCOPE, plus audit trail information, where available.
Documents (3)

- ‘View’ button allows you to view in the same browser window the TIFF version of a document as held in the IB’s electronic system that will be used for subsequent processing and publication.
Upload Documents

- ‘Upload’ shortcut button to ePCT Action to ‘Upload documents’ (mostly PDF format) to the IB and also to participating Offices in capacity as RO, ISA, IPEA
  - Types of document selectable depend on recipient selected
  - A cover letter is automatically generated – user can type a message to be included in the cover letter

- Simple, secure alternative to sending documents by mail or fax (only very limited fax transmissions with the IB available as of 01 January 2020, and currently stopped due to the Covid-19 pandemic)

- Current date and time at the recipient Office is displayed in the interface and set as date of receipt

- After upload, documents are visible under Documents and the recipient Office is notified by the system
Upload Documents – Priority Document

- Upload of digitally signed priority documents
  - Available only for priority documents issued in electronic format by AT, BR, CZ, FR, IT, PL, PT or US

Actions (1)

- Full suite of Actions only available if signed in to ePCT with strong authentication and with eOwner/eEditor access rights to an application

```
<actions>
  Select Action
  Action *
  Amendments Under Article 19 (text format only)
  Create Power of Attorney
  Declarations under Rule 4.17
  Licensing Availability Request
  Make international application available to DAS
  Observations on close prior art
  Obtain priority document from DAS
  Online Payment
  Prepare and submit indications relating to biological material (RO/134)
  Request for Early Publication
  Rule 92bis change request
  Submit Chapter II Demand
  Translation for international publication
  Upload Documents
  Withdraw Chapter II Demand
  Withdraw Designation(s)
  Withdraw Election(s)
  Withdraw International Application
  Withdraw Priority Claim(s)
</actions>
```
Actions (2)

- “Actions” should be used instead of the equivalent document upload
- The user benefits from pre-filled bibliographic data and automated validations to avoid errors; time limit checks
- Data and documents submitted through Actions are directly imported for processing with no need for retyping (reduces potential transcription errors)
- Secondary workflow benefits, e.g.,
  - Action to withdraw application automatically prevents publication if technical preparations not yet complete
  - Action to submit Chapter II Demand reroutes to IB if required for time limit (e.g., time limit just expired at IPEA/AU)
Timeline

- Date and time in Geneva, Switzerland, is displayed at the top of the screen to facilitate awareness of deadlines
- Graphical representation of PCT time limits
- Summary of key dates
- E-mail alerts for most of these time limits can be set up in Notifications Preferences

Sharing of Access Rights – eHandshake

- First step in sharing access rights to PCT applications

- Consists in the association and trusted recognition between different WIPO User Accounts with strong authentication before access rights can be shared

- eHandshakes do not directly result in shared access rights which have to be specifically assigned (default access rights options can be pre-defined)

- eHandshakes are managed within your WIPO account (select “My Account” from the drop-down menu next to your name)
Types of Access Rights

■ eOwner
  - Complete control over all aspects of the PCT application in ePCT
  - May be the applicant, agent or other individual (e.g., paralegal, assistant, secretary) who actually filed the PCT application, or another individual to whom access rights were granted by an existing eOwner

■ eEditor
  - Can do everything except assign access rights

■ eViewer
  - “Look” but don’t “Touch"
  
Assigning + Managing Access Rights (1)

- An eOwner can assign/modify/remove access rights via the Workbench (e.g. for multiple applications) or within individual applications via the ‘Access Rights’ function.
Assigning + Managing Access Rights (2)

- Access rights can be managed for multiple applications at the same time, including removal of all ePCT access rights for an eHandshake user in one step via your eHandshakes screen.

- Access rights can be automatically assigned to a default group of eHandshake users.

- Best practice - always have at least 2 eOwners to facilitate access rights management.

- Access rights should be removed for ePCT users no longer requiring access (e.g., change of applicant, change of agent, departure, etc.)

- Full history of all access rights modifications available.
eOwnership of PCT applications

- Process is automatic when using ePCT-Filing
  

- Access rights can be assigned to (confirmed) associates, including prior to filing

- Default access rights can be set up and automatically applied, either to individuals or to groups of individuals, each time you create a New IA or are confirmed as ‘eOwner’ following a successful request for access rights

- If ePCT-Filing is not used, additional steps are required to take eOwnership and gain access rights
Taking eOwnership

- Search for application outside of your Workbench and select reason “Request access rights”
Workbench functions (1)

- Your landing page – a list of all PCT applications to which you have access (eOwner, eEditor, eViewer)

- The Workbench has 7 pre-defined shortcut filter buttons to display applications filtered as per their status

![WORKBENCH](image)

- If any applications have passed 30 + 2 months from the priority date, ePCT proposes to archive them for you when you sign in

Consider archiving IAs for which the 30 month time limit [end of the international phase] has expired +2 additional months for entry into national phase in certain designated Offices. Archive
Workbench functions (2)

- Many combinations of filters are possible on the Workbench - you can choose to extend filter to archived IAs

- It is possible to save ‘favorite’ filter combinations for reuse
Workbench functions (3)

- The Workbench columns can be re-arranged by dragging/dropping; customize show/hide (‘Save columns’ to keep applied changes)

- Workbench list can be downloaded to a spreadsheet

- Select one or more applications to reveal a bar that gives access to functions such as managing access rights, archiving and organizing applications into Portfolios

- Clicking on the IA number, file reference or ‘My rights’ link will open up the corresponding application
Portfolios

- User-defined, personal ‘virtual folders’ for grouping PCT applications

- Portfolios are basically filters for viewing PCT applications in groups that are meaningful for the user who defines them

- Deletion of PCT applications from a Portfolio or deletion of the Portfolio itself only deletes the virtual grouping, not the applications themselves

- Switch between the Workbench view and Portfolio-based view of your applications
  
ePCT Notifications

- Strong authentication required to benefit fully

  - Preferences allow you to specify the events in the lifecycle of a PCT application for which you want to receive notifications

  - Informative reminders, not yet a formal communication method (planned as future step)

  - Method (e-mail, ePCT Notifications list, or both) and type of notifications

- Filters

  - Received date, read date, unread, date range

- Clearing of notifications from the list

- Only most recent 500 notifications are stored
Multilingual Address Book

- Record and store contact details of applicants, inventors, and agents
- Possibility to include English transliteration for entries in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian
- Import of existing address book (.csv extension) from PCT-SAFE or EPO online filing software
- Address book sharing based on access rights
  - eOwner (can edit, view and share)
  - eEditor (can edit and view)
  - eViewer (can view only)
Direct links to useful information

- PCT Resources page  [https://www.wipo.int/pct](https://www.wipo.int/pct)
- Quick access to other WIPO online services, e.g., DAS, Madrid (trademarks), The Hague (designs), distance learning courses, subscription to newsletters, etc.
- Office profiles (look up competent RO-ISA info, closed dates, fee amounts, filing methods, etc.)
ePCT in DEMO mode

- [https://pctdemo.wipo.int](https://pctdemo.wipo.int)
- Demo environment in which you can practice and familiarize yourself with ePCT
- Do not use confidential or sensitive data in the ePCT demo environment
- BE CAREFUL NOT TO CONFUSE DEMO MODE WITH PRODUCTION MODE!
HELP with ePCT (1)

- Use the “HELP” link in the ePCT header
  https://www.wipo.int/pct/en/epct/support.html

- FAQs and user documentation
  - Database of help info (use ‘Search’ feature to pinpoint a topic)
  - Live Chat (during business hours) available via FAQ answers
  - Webinars on ePCT
  - Useful “how to” videos

- Contingency upload service is available via HELP page to submit PDF documents to the IB (to be used only if the ePCT system is not available)
HELP with ePCT (2)

- Look up ePCT reference data held in IB data base – the basis for extensive validations in the system, including Office profiles, closed, dates, fee amounts, etc.

- PCT eServices

  - Tel: +41-22-338-9523
  - E-mail: pct.eservices@wipo.int
  - Monday to Friday, 9am-6pm Geneva time
  - Chat feature available
Thank you!