

Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) Working Group

Eighteenth Session
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SEQUENCE LISTINGS TASK FORCE: STATUS REPORT

Document submitted by the European Patent Office

This document replaces document PCT/WG/18/18 to correct an error in the numbering of paragraph 10 and subsequent paragraphs in document PCT/WG/18/18.

BACKGROUND

1. The Task Force on Sequence Listings was created by the Committee on WIPO Standards (CWS), at its first session (October 25 to 29, 2010), to deal with Task No. 44 (see paragraph 29 of document CWS/1/10):

“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 proposal of the new WIPO standard should be presented along with a report on the impact of the said standard on the current WIPO Standard ST.25, including the proposed necessary changes to Standard ST.25.”

2. The Task Force was also requested:

“To liaise with the appropriate PCT body with regard to the possible impact of such standard on Annex C to the Administrative Instructions under the PCT.”

3. The European Patent Office (EPO) was assigned the role of Task Force Leader and the new standard, entitled WIPO Standard ST.26, was formally adopted during the reconvened fourth session of CWS (CWS/4BIS) in March 2016.

4. At the fifth session of the CWS, the International Bureau informed the CWS that it would develop a new common software tool to enable applicants to prepare sequence listings and verify that such sequence listings comply with WIPO Standard ST.26. The CWS therefore agreed to modify the description of Task No. 44:

“Support the International Bureau by providing users’ requirements and feedback on the ST.26 authoring and validation software tool; support the International Bureau in the consequential revision of the PCT Administrative Instructions; and prepare necessary revisions of WIPO Standard ST.26 upon request by the CWS.”

5. The PCT Assembly, at its fifty-third session in October 2021, adopted the amendments to the PCT Regulations to implement WIPO Standard ST.26 in the PCT (see Annex II to document PCT/A/53/3 and paragraphs 23 to 25 of the Report of the session, document PCT/A/53/4). The WIPO General Assembly, at its fifty-fourth session in October 2021, further approved the new “big bang” implementation date of WIPO Standard ST.26 of July 1, 2022, at national, regional and international levels (see document WO/GA/54/14 and paragraphs 178 to 183 of the Report of the session, document WO/GA/54/15).

6. WIPO Standard ST.26 entered into force on July 1, 2022, together with the modifications to the PCT Regulations, the Administrative Instructions to the PCT including relevant Forms, as well as the PCT Receiving Office Guidelines and PCT International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines.

7. Since the Standard was first adopted in 2016, there have been several updates resulting in versions 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6. At the eleventh session in December 2023, the CWS adopted the last updated version of the Standard (1.7), and a revision of the description of Task No 44, which reads now 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”.

PROGRESS REPORT

REVISION OF WIPO STANDARD ST.26

8. Since the eleventh session of the CWS, discussions of the Task Force regarding potential revisions of WIPO Standard ST.26 focused on the following (see paragraphs 6 to 13 of document CWS/12/5):

- (a) a proposal to require a subset of nucleotide analogs and peptide analogs to be represented by the corresponding unmodified residue symbol;
- (b) a proposal to lift the minimum sequence length requirement; and
- (c) some editorial improvements.

9. The Task Force concluded that further discussions and consultations on the proposals outlined in paragraphs 8(a) and (b) above, which would require a substantive update to the Standard, were necessary before any proposal for revision could be submitted to the CWS for consideration and approval. Pending such a substantive update, the Task Force decided not to propose a new minor revision of WIPO Standard ST.26 covering only editorial improvements for approval by the CWS during the twelfth session in September 2024. With regard to the proposal to lift the minimum sequence length requirement, the Task Force also agreed to collect feedback from the users of WIPO Standard ST.26 through a survey to be launched in early 2025.

WORK PLAN

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

- (a) Collaborating on any further revisions of WIPO Standard ST.26, if required, to further facilitate its implementation by Offices and applicants while remaining aligned with the requirements of INSDC and the Universal Protein Resource (UniProt).
- (b) Launch of the consultation on the proposal to lift the minimum sequence length requirement, as referred to in paragraph 9, above;
- (c) Supporting the International Bureau by testing new releases and passing on user feedback regarding their use of WIPO Sequence; and
- (d) Support the International Bureau and the Digital Transformation Task Force to improve WIPO Standard ST.92, towards its implementation by all offices before July 1, 2027.

11. The next Sequence Listings Task Force meeting will take place on April 30, 2025, and will be mainly targeted at reviewing the results of the applicants' survey and agreeing on the main changes to be included in the next proposed revision of the Standard.

12. The Working Group is invited to note the contents of this document.

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