

Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) Working Group

Seventeenth Session
Geneva, February 19 to 21, 2024

SEQUENCE LISTINGS TASK FORCE: STATUS REPORT

Document prepared by the European Patent Office

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).

PROGRESS REPORT

ENTRY INTO FORCE AND FURTHER REVISION OF WIPO STANDARD ST.26

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. WIPO Standard ST.26 was last revised in December 2023 at the eleventh session of the CWS and will enter into force on July 1, 2024 (version 1.7) (see document CWS/11/3 and paragraphs 49 and 50 of the Summary by the Chair of the session, document CWS/11/27). The revision includes two new examples within Annex VI, the Guidance document, some improvement regarding the consistency of terminology used and some editorial changes.

WIPO SEQUENCE SUITE

8. The International Bureau has developed a software suite to enable patent applicants to prepare sequence listings compliant with WIPO Standard ST.26 and to enable patent Offices to verify the compliance of filed sequence listing data with WIPO Standard ST.26:

(a) WIPO Sequence: authoring and validation tool for applicants (standalone desktop application); and

(b) WIPO Sequence Validator: validation tool for IP Offices as a standalone service in the IP Offices’ network (web service incorporated into each IP Office IT system to check compliance of filed sequence listings with WIPO Standard ST.26).

9. WIPO Sequence 2.3.0 is available for download on the WIPO website¹. Patent Offices can obtain WIPO Sequence Validator by contacting the International Bureau by email at wiposequence@wipo.int.

10. The next version of the WIPO Sequence is planned for the beginning of 2024 and is targeted to improving the performance of primarily the WIPO Sequence Validator, while keeping current functionalities. Users are encouraged to update to the latest version of the WIPO Sequence Suite when it is made available to reduce the possibility of issues occurring when filing sequence listings.

¹ <https://www.wipo.int/standards/en/sequence/index.html>

11. To help support users, the International Bureau has been collaborating with patent Offices to produce a knowledge base of answers to regularly asked questions and common issues. This knowledge base, known as WIPO Sequence and Knowledge Base, has been available to the public since June 1, 2022².

12. WIPO Sequence users are encouraged to sign up to the new email list for important announcements and information on software updates and related issues. Users will be prompted to register for the list when downloading the software from the WIPO Sequence homepage³.

13. The International Bureau has also developed training content in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish and has organized numerous training webinars for applicants on WIPO Sequence and for patent Offices on the use of WIPO Sequence Validator. Recordings of these training courses are available on the WIPO Standards Webinars page⁴.

UPDATE TO TASK DESCRIPTION

14. The CWS, at its eleventh session in December 2023, agreed to amend the description of Task No. 44 to take into account the implementation of WIPO Standard ST.26 and the launch of WIPO Sequence Suite into production:

“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”.

WORK PLAN

15. Support the International Bureau by continuing to participate in the testing of new releases and passing on user feedback regarding their use of WIPO Sequence Suite.

16. Support the International Bureau and the Digital Transformation Task Force of the CWS on the development of a WIPO standard on data package format for the electronic exchange of priority documents and certified copies. This new standard will support Offices in enabling the transmission of sequence listings in WIPO Standard ST.26 format⁵.

17. Prepare work on any further revision to WIPO Standard ST.26, if required, to further facilitate its implementation by Offices and use by applicants while keeping its alignment with the requirements of the International Nucleotide Sequence Database Collaboration (INSDC) and UniProt.

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

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² <https://www3.wipo.int/confluence/display/WSSKB/WIPO+Sequence+and+ST.26+Knowledge+Base+Home>

³ <https://www.wipo.int/standards/en/sequence/signup.html>

⁴ https://www.wipo.int/meetings/en/topic.jsp?group_id=330

⁵ A draft of a new standard was presented to the eleventh session of the CWS in December 2023 (see document CWS/11/20 Rev.). However, the CWS agreed that further work was required on the draft Standard: the Digital Transformation Task Force was thus requested to present a revised draft for consideration and adoption at its twelfth session in September 2024 (see paragraphs 43 to 48 of document CWS/11/27).