

Special Union for the International Patent Classification (IPC Union) Committee of Experts

**Fifty-First Session
Geneva, February 20 and 21, 2019**

REPORT

adopted by the Committee of Experts

INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee of Experts of the IPC Union (hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”) held its fifty-first session in Geneva on February 20 and 21, 2019. The following members of the Committee were represented at the session: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, and United States of America (29). Djibouti, Viet Nam, The Eurasian Patent Organization (EAPO), European Patent Office (EPO), Confederacy of Patent Information Users (CEPIUG) were also represented. The list of participants appears as Annex I to this report.

2. The session was opened by Mr. F. Gurry, Director General, who welcomed the participants. Mr. Gurry stressed the importance of classification and the achievement of the IPC Committee for the revision of the IPC in the framework of the IPC Revision Roadmap by mentioning the number of new subdivisions in the previous years, and, in particular, extended his gratitude to members of the Experts Group for Semiconductor Technologies (EGST) for its work done so far. He also emphasized the progress of the improvement of the IPC-related IT systems and, in particular, of the handover of the IPC Working Lists Management (IPCWLM) from the EPO to WIPO, and of the Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based IT system, e.g. the IPC Text Categorization (IPCCAT). Finally, Mr. Gurry also thanked the members of the Committee for their commitment to the development of the IPC.

OFFICERS

3. The Committee unanimously re-elected Mr. Pascal Weibel (Switzerland) as Chair and Messrs. Klaus Höfken (Germany) and Christopher Kim (United States of America) as Vice-Chairs.
4. Ms. XU Ning (Mrs.) (WIPO) acted as Secretary of the session.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

5. The Committee unanimously adopted the agenda, which appears as Annex II to this report.
6. As decided by the Governing Bodies of WIPO at their tenth series of meetings held from September 24 to October 2, 1979 (see document AB/X/32, paragraphs 51 and 52), the report of this session reflects only the conclusions of the Committee (decisions, recommendations, opinions, etc.) and does not, in particular, reflect the statements made by any participant, except where a reservation in relation to any specific conclusion of the Committee was expressed or repeated after the conclusion was reached.

REPORT ON THE PROGRESS ON THE IPC REVISION PROGRAM

7. Discussions were based on Annex 12 to project file [CE 462](#) prepared by the International Bureau, containing a status report on the activities of the IPC Revision Working Group (hereinafter referred to as the “Working Group”), in particular on the IPC Revision Program.
8. The Committee noted that the number of new entries that entered into force in IPC-2019.01 decreased since IPC-2018.01 below the average number of 759 new entries per year since IPC-2015.01. A very high number of new entries was expected in future versions. The Committee also noted a trend in the number of the revisions from 2015 to 2018. The International Bureau explained that the number of IPC revisions is one of the performance indicators in the field of Classification and it expects that the level of the new entries in the next IPC version will reach at least the top number of the previous versions.
9. The Committee further noted an increase in the number of revision projects from IPC-2019.01 over the previous years. The number of C and F projects remained on the same level as in IPC-2018.01; the number of new F projects would increase in the future. The Committee also noted that in addition to the FiveIPOffices, offices such as Brazil, Sweden, Germany, the United Kingdom and Canada submitted revision requests under the framework of the Renewed IPC Revision Roadmap (Roadmap). The Committee encouraged all offices to actively participate in the IPC Revision Program, in particular, by submitting revision requests under the framework of the Roadmap.
10. The Committee expressed its satisfaction with the work done by the Working Group and invited it to consider a flexible approach in discussions of the revision projects at its physical meetings, e.g. by approval of proposals page-by-page instead of entry-by-entry, where appropriate, taking into account the authorisation by the Committee to adopt the effective use of more flexible and efficient format for its work. It was agreed to use project [F 082](#) as a pilot project to carry out discussions on revision proposal electronically by using the IPC e-forum (IEF) to the extent possible. Only issues where no agreement could be reached electronically would be discussed during the Working Group sessions. Offices were invited to use the IEF more actively for the discussion of all IPC revision projects and to submit comments and counter proposals well in advance of each session of the Working Group.

11. The International Bureau was invited to include, in the status report, the number and status of the projects within the framework of the Roadmap for information to the Committee as from its next session. The International Bureau was also invited to update the list of candidate areas for revision by indicating the areas where revision has been done recently, as well as by removing areas from the list, for example areas with associated indexing schemes.

REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF THE CPC AND FI REVISION PROGRAMS

12. The United States of America and the EPO gave a joint [presentation](#) on the recent developments concerning the CPC. Japan presented a [report](#) on the progress of FI/F Term.

13. The Committee was informed that the frequency of CPC releases would remain as four times for 2019, namely January, February, May and August 2019. As of February 2019 CPC release, CPC incorporated all previous IPC Amendments. The Committee also noted that currently 53.5 million patent documents were classified in CPC. The Committee was also informed about some new CPC products, such as a searchable “Notice of Changes” archive, CPC as open linked data, as well as about the progress of CPC compilation of changes and the impact of the CPC International project.

14. The Committee was informed that the frequency of FI revisions would be twice per year, i.e. in June and November. The Committee was further informed about the reform of the FI system, i.e. the integration of the new IPC into FI would be twice a year instead of once per year in order to allow complete integration into FI of the new version of the IPC before its entering into force in January. The Committee also noted that the alignment of the FI with the latest version of the IPC had reached 99.5% as of November 2018 and the Committee expressed its gratitude to Japan for its efforts to align the FI with the latest IPC.

15. The Committee shared the understanding that the coherency between the IPC and other Classifications was critically important and the efforts to enhance and maintain such coherency should be continued.

CONSIDERATION OF THE NEED TO CREATE A NEW CLASS COVERING SEMICONDUCTOR TECHNOLOGY

16. Discussions were based on project file [CE 481](#), and in particular, on Annex 52, containing a rapporteur report prepared by the EPO.

17. The Committee noted that since the establishment of the Expert Group on Semiconductor technology (EGST), the EGST had three physical meetings on the fringes of corresponding Working Group meetings to discuss specific issues under subclass H01L. The rapporteur report of Annex 52 presented two possible solutions and approaches concluded by the EGST so far, i.e. “New class(es)” approach, which was supported by a majority of the EGST and “Stay in H01L” approach, which was supported by a minority of the EGST members which expressed concerns about the reclassification workload which would result from the “New class(es)” approach.

18. The Committee decided to endorse the “New class(es) approach” and mandated the EGST to continue its work by focusing on this approach only. The Committee further mandated the EGST to progress on the creation of a framework for “new class(es)” and test the building of the scheme(s) under the new framework, e.g. with cost analysis.

19. The Committee invited the Experts Group to prepare a report(s) for the next session of the Committee, with special attention to minimizing the required reclassification workload.

20. The Committee extended its gratitude to the EPO, the leading office of the EGST, and the member offices of the EGST for the efforts made and their contribution to the work done so far. The Committee further encouraged the members of the EGST to continue their work in the direction as decided in paragraphs 18 and 19, above.

AMENDMENTS TO THE GUIDE TO THE IPC AND OTHER BASIC IPC DOCUMENTS

21. Discussions were based on project file [CE 454](#), in particular on Annexes 37, 38 and 40 to the project file, submitted respectively by the EPO, the International Bureau and Canada, containing proposed amendments to the *Guide to the IPC (Guide)*.

22. With respect to the proposal by the EPO in Annex 37 concerning the application of the note for multi-aspect classification in common rule areas in the IPC, the Committee agreed to create new project [CE 512](#), with Sweden as Rapporteur, to further discuss on how to amend the *Guide* in that respect.

23. As for the amendments to paragraph 187 proposed by Canada in Annex 40 concerning the term “handling” in English and “manipulation” in French, the Committee agreed with the amendments for “handling” in English. As for the definition of the term in French, the Committee decided to create new maintenance project [M 791](#) with Canada as Rapporteur for continued discussion, taking into account its use, specifically in the area of data processing.

24. The Committee adopted, with some modifications, the amendments proposed by the International Bureau in Annex 38, to paragraphs 87bis, 94 (French version only) and 183 (English version only) which appear in Annexes 46 (English version) and 47 (French version) to the project file. These amendments would be included in version 2019 of the *Guide*.

25. Discussions were also based on project file [CE 455](#), and, in particular, on Annexes 62 and 63, submitted by Sweden and the International Bureau respectively, containing compiled amendments to the “Guidelines for Revision of the IPC” (Guidelines).

26. The Committee adopted the proposed amendments by Sweden to paragraph 38 of the Guidelines, as well as the amendments proposed by the International Bureau to paragraph 65 of the Guidelines and paragraph 19 of Appendix VII, which appear in Annexes 65 and 66 to the project file.

REMOVAL OF NON-LIMITING REFERENCES (NLRs) FROM THE SCHEME OF THE IPC

27. Discussions were based on Annex 29 to project file [WG 191](#), containing a rapporteur proposal on an updated plan to remove non-limiting references (NLRs) from the scheme of the IPC.

28. The Committee recalled its decision at the forty-seventh session to adopt a plan to remove NLRs from the scheme (see Annex VII to document IPC/CE/47/2). It was noted that the procedure to be applied to the maintenance projects (M 200 to M 500) would require further clarification, particularly with respect to decisions on the proposed amendments in the said maintenance projects (see paragraphs 21 and 22 of the document IPC/WG/40/2).

29. The Committee adopted, with some modifications, the updated plan to remove NLRs from the scheme by agreeing on the continuous application of the existing plan with updates included in paragraphs 1, 7 to 9 and new paragraph 10, which appears in Annexes 32 and 33 to the project file.

HANDOVER OF THE WORKING LISTS MANAGEMENT FROM THE EPO TO WIPO

IPCWLMS Status Report

30. The International Bureau delivered a [presentation](#) on the status of the handover of working lists management from the EPO to WIPO and associated IPC Working List Management (IPCWLM) project as well as the summary of the timelines.

31. The International Bureau also shared the outcome of the IPCWLMS-2019.01 simulation-testing phase that took place in February.

32. The International Bureau indicated that no concrete example was found which proved the non-compliance of the simulation with the agreed Distribution Algorithm and thus would further proceed with the development of IPCWLMS.

33. The Committee took note of the contents of Annex 18 to project file [CE 492](#) (Outcomes of the IPCWLMS- 2019.01 Simulation Testing), and decided to conduct the second round of testing based on a recent update of DOCDB XML and an updated list of reclassifying offices for which the International Bureau would provide the improved simulation reports. It was decided that the simulation based on the same contextual data as above but with an empty list of Do It-Yourself Office (DIYO) would also be provided and the case study using concrete examples would also be prepared by the International Bureau in order to help offices understand how the agreed Distribution Algorithm would concretely work.

34. The International Bureau indicated that the additional testing iterations could occur in March 2019, upon provision of an updated list of reclassifying offices.

35. The Committee confirmed that the purpose and the scope of the second round of testing was the compliance of the simulation with the agreed Distribution Algorithm. It also shared the understanding that the development of IPCWLMS would be built upon what had been implemented so far, unless a problem of compliance was found at the second round of testing.

36. The Committee encouraged offices that did not participate in the first testing phase to do so at the opportunity of an additional iteration.

Issues Relating to the IPCWLMS Working List Generation Based on Working List Distribution Algorithm

37. The International Bureau presented a proposal in Annex 17 to project file [CE 492](#) regarding the need for confirmation from IP offices to be DIYOs and the need for a decision by the Committee on how to distribute Working Lists to offices of non-members of the IPC Union.

38. The Committee agreed to invite IP offices to confirm whether they would like to be DIYOs. The Committee decided that the WL distribution could be extended to offices of non-members of the Strasbourg Agreement, e.g. to WIPO members States.

IPC Reclassification Files as from IPCWLMS

39. The International Bureau delivered a [presentation](#) on technical changes in relation with IPCWLMS.

40. The International Bureau presented the proposed changes made to Working Lists and Results Lists file names in order to harmonize their naming convention with other IPC files (see Annex 18 to project file [CE 492](#).)

41. The International Bureau also shared its intention to convert Working Lists and Results Lists Document Type Definition to the XSD format standard.

42. The Committee approved the above proposals in paragraphs 39 to 41.

IPC Reclassification Statistics

43. The International Bureau delivered a [presentation](#) on the status of the backlog of IPC reclassification as it appears in IPCWLMS on the basis of DOCDB XML full-extract of August 2018.

44. The International Bureau informed the Committee that the trend shared in the past years through IPCRECLASS is confirmed in IPCWLMS with a cumulative amount of five million patent families to be reclassified across IPC 2009.01 to IPC 2019.01.

EXPERIENCE FROM OFFICES ON COMPUTER-ASSISTED (E.G., AI-BASED) CLASSIFICATION

45. Discussions were based on [presentations](#) about the experiences on computer-assisted (e.g. AI-based) Classification at respective offices given by the following offices: Australia, Brazil, China, France and Japan.

46. The Committee noted that in most offices that made presentations, the main development around AI was for the purpose of routing patent applications to the relevant examination divisions using the AI-based automatic classification.

47. The Committee shared the importance of the exchange of information in this field and agreed to continue to have this agenda item for future sessions and invited offices to share their experiences and initiatives on computer-assisted (e.g. AI-based) classification.

SURVEY ON THE IPC-RELATED IT TOOLS

48. The Committee noted a report on the results of the survey on the IPC-related IT tools in Annex 34 to project file [CE 509](#). The International Bureau was invited to prepare guidelines with practical examples on how IPC Revisions Management Solution (IPCRMS) can be used by rapporteurs and translators of the IPC revision projects in order to make better use of the system, facilitate discussions on proposals and increase the effectiveness of the IPC revision process. On the basis of the survey results discussions on IPCCAT within the IPC Official Publication (IPCPUB) took place under Agenda item Report on IPC-related IT systems (paragraphs 51 and 52, below).

REPORT ON IPC-RELATED IT SYSTEMS

49. The International Bureau delivered a [presentation](#) on the status of IT-related developments in relation with IPC support.

50. In response to comments made during the survey on IPCCAT, the International Bureau proposed a new search tab to be implemented in the IPC publication platform in order to increase the visibility of IPCCAT and improve user-friendliness of its user interface.

51. The International Bureau also reported on the positive outcome of the prototyping of cross-lingual text categorization in the IPCCAT and informed the Committee of its future implementation in IPCPUB.

52. The Committee endorsed EPO's suggestion to make an all in one RCL file available in PDF format in IPCPUB each year as well as in the IPC Download and IT Support area of the IPC website (see Annex 25 to project file [CE 447](#)).

53. The International Bureau informed the Committee about the status of the most recent developments in the IPCPUB 7 platform and explained the merit and constraints of its new archive mode applied to legacy IPC versions.

54. The Committee endorsed the International Bureau additional proposed changes to IPC definition Master Files and confirmed their implementation for the coming IPC publication (see Annexes 5 and 6 to project file [CE 501](#)).

55. The International Bureau invited offices to ensure that reference to IPC resources in the Internet e.g. hyperlinks to IPC symbols through IPCPUB, conform to WIPO URL structure i.e. <https://www.wipo.int>.

56. This report was unanimously adopted by the Committee of Experts by electronic means on April 8, 2019.

[Annexes follow]