

Agreement

between the European Patent Organisation
and the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization

in relation to the functioning of the European Patent Office
as an International Searching Authority
and International Preliminary Examining Authority
under the Patent Cooperation Treaty

(as in force from July 1, 2008)*

* Done at Geneva on October 3, 2007, and last amended with effect from July 1, 2008 (see *Official Notices (PCT Gazette)* dated December 13, 2007, pages 213 to 219, March 13, 2008, page 21, and June 26, 2008, page 86).

This consolidated text has been prepared by the International Bureau of WIPO on the basis of the original Agreement, which exists in English, French and German.

Preamble

The European Patent Organisation and the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization,

Considering that the PCT Assembly, having heard the advice of the PCT Committee for Technical Cooperation, has appointed the European Patent Office as an International Searching and Preliminary Examining Authority under the Patent Cooperation Treaty and approved this Agreement in accordance with Articles 16(3) and 32(3),

Hereby agree as follows:

Article 1 Terms and Expressions

- (1) For the purposes of this Agreement:
 - (a) “Treaty” means the Patent Cooperation Treaty;
 - (b) “Regulations” means the Regulations under the Treaty;
 - (c) “Administrative Instructions” means the Administrative Instructions under the Treaty;
 - (d) “Article” (except where a specific reference is made to an Article of this Agreement) means an Article of the Treaty;
 - (e) “Rule” means a Rule of the Regulations;
 - (f) “Contracting State” means a State party to the Treaty;
 - (g) “the Authority” means the European Patent Office;
 - (h) “the International Bureau” means the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization;

(2) All other terms and expressions used in this Agreement which are also used in the Treaty, the Regulations or the Administrative Instructions have, for the purposes of this Agreement, the same meaning as in the Treaty, the Regulations and the Administrative Instructions.

Article 2 Basic Obligations

(1) The Authority shall carry out international search and international preliminary examination in accordance with, and perform such other functions of an International Searching Authority and International Preliminary Examining Authority as are provided under, the Treaty, the Regulations, the Administrative Instructions and this Agreement.

(2) In carrying out international search and international preliminary examination, the Authority shall apply and observe all the common rules of international search and of international preliminary examination and, in particular, shall be guided by the PCT International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines.

(3) The Authority shall maintain a quality management system in compliance with the requirements set out in the PCT International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines.

(4) The Authority and the International Bureau shall, having regard to their respective functions under the Treaty, the Regulations, the Administrative Instructions and this Agreement, render, to the extent considered to be appropriate by both the Authority and the International Bureau, mutual assistance in the performance of their functions thereunder.

Article 3

Competence of Authority

(1) The Authority shall act as International Searching Authority for any international application filed with the receiving Office of, or acting for, any Contracting State, provided that the receiving Office specifies the Authority for that purpose, that such application, or a translation thereof furnished for the purposes of international search, is in the language or one of the languages specified in Annex A to this Agreement, that such application is not an application of a kind specified in Annex A to this Agreement and, where applicable, that the Authority has been chosen by the applicant.

(2) The Authority shall act as International Preliminary Examining Authority for any international application filed with the receiving Office of, or acting for, any Contracting State, provided that the receiving Office specifies the Authority for that purpose, that such application, or a translation thereof furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination, is in the language or one of the languages specified in Annex A to this Agreement, that such application is not an application of a kind specified in Annex A to this Agreement and, where applicable, that the Authority has been chosen by the applicant.

(3) Where an international application is filed with the International Bureau as receiving Office under Rule 19.1(a)(iii), paragraphs (1) and (2) apply as if that application had been filed with a receiving Office which would have been competent under Rule 19.1(a)(i) or (ii), (b) or (c) or Rule 19.2(i).

Article 4

Subject Matter Not Required to Be Searched or Examined

The Authority shall not be obliged to search, by virtue of Article 17(2)(a)(i), or examine, by virtue of Article 34(4)(a)(i), any international application to the extent that it considers that such application relates to subject matter set forth in Rule 39.1 or 67.1, as the case may be, with the exception of the subject matter specified in Annex B to this Agreement.

Article 5

Fees and Charges

(1) A schedule of all fees of the Authority, and all other charges which the Authority is entitled to make, in relation to its functions as an International Searching Authority and International Preliminary Examining Authority, is set out in Annex C to this Agreement.

(2) The Authority shall, under the conditions and to the extent set out in Annex C to this Agreement:

- (i) refund the whole or part of the search fee paid, or waive or reduce the search fee, where the international search report can be wholly or partly based on the results of an earlier search (Rules 16.3 and 41.1);
- (ii) refund the search fee where the international application is withdrawn or considered withdrawn before the start of the international search.

(3) The Authority shall, under the conditions and to the extent set out in Annex C to this Agreement, refund the whole or part of the preliminary examination fee paid where the demand is considered as if it had not been submitted (Rule 58.3) or where the demand or the international application is withdrawn by the applicant before the start of the international preliminary examination.

Article 6 Classification

For the purposes of Rules 43.3(a) and 70.5(b), the Authority shall indicate solely the International Patent Classification.

Article 7 Languages of Correspondence Used by the Authority

For the purposes of correspondence, including forms, other than with the International Bureau, the Authority shall use the language or one of the languages indicated, having regard to the language or languages indicated in Annex A and to the language or languages whose use is authorized by the Authority under Rule 92.2(b), in Annex D.

Article 8 International-Type Search

The Authority shall carry out international-type searches to the extent decided by it.

Article 9 Entry into Force

This Agreement shall enter into force on December 13, 2007.

Article 10 Duration and Renewability

This Agreement shall remain in force until December 31, 2017. The parties to this Agreement shall, no later than July 2016, start negotiations for its renewal.

Article 11 Amendment

(1) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) and (3), amendments may, subject to approval by the Assembly of the International Patent Cooperation Union, be made to this Agreement by agreement between the parties hereto; they shall take effect on the date agreed upon by them.

(2) Without prejudice to paragraph (3), amendments may be made to the Annexes to this Agreement by agreement between the Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization and the Authority; they shall take effect on the date agreed upon by them.

(3) The Authority may, by a notification to the Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization:

- (i) add to the indications of languages contained in Annex A to this Agreement;
- (ii) amend the schedule of fees and charges contained in Annex C to this Agreement;
- (iii) amend the indications of languages of correspondence contained in Annex D to this Agreement.

(4) Any amendment notified under paragraph (3) shall take effect on the date specified in the notification, provided that, for any increase of fees or charges contained in Annex C, that date is at least one month later than the date on which the notification is received by the International Bureau.

Article 12 Termination

(1) This Agreement shall terminate before December 31, 2017:

- (i) if the European Patent Organisation gives the Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization written notice to terminate this Agreement;
or
- (ii) if the Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization gives the European Patent Organisation written notice to terminate this Agreement.

(2) The termination of this Agreement under paragraph (1) shall take effect one year after receipt of the notice by the other party, unless a longer period is specified in such notice or unless both parties agree on a shorter period.

Annex A
Languages and Kinds of Application

Under Article 3 of the Agreement, the Authority specifies:

- (i) the following languages which it will accept:
English, French, German, and, where the receiving Office is the industrial property Office of Belgium or the Netherlands, Dutch;
- (ii) the following kinds of application for which it will not act:¹
as an International Preliminary Examining Authority, international applications where the international search is to be, or has been, performed by an International Searching Authority other than the European Patent Office or the industrial property Office of a State party to the European Patent Convention.

Annex B
Subject Matter Not Excluded from Search or Examination

The subject matter set forth in Rule 39.1 or 67.1 which, under Article 4 of the Agreement, is not excluded from search or examination, is the following:

all subject matter searched or examined under the European patent grant procedure in application of the equivalent provisions of the European Patent Convention.

¹ *Editor's Note:* Under an existing notification under Article 3(4)(a)(ii) of the Agreement in force until December 12, 2007, between the European Patent Organization and the International Bureau, the European Patent Office is excluded, until March 1, 2009, from competence as an International Searching Authority and International Preliminary Examining Authority with respect to international applications filed, by a national or a resident of the United States of America, with the United States Patent and Trademark Office or the International Bureau as receiving Office where such applications contain one or more claims relating to business methods. The EPO has informed the International Bureau that this limitation will remain in force until March 2009 as foreseen in its notice dated July 27, 2006 (OJ EPO 10/2006, 555 and *PCT Gazette* No. 38/2006, page 19070); however, it will not be included in Annex A of this Agreement unless the EPO seeks to issue a fresh limitation in 2009, which will then be introduced in accordance with the procedure under this Agreement.

Annex C Fees and Charges

Part I. Schedule of Fees and Charges

Kind of fee or charge	Amount (Euro)
Search fee (Rule 16.1(a))	1,700 ²
Additional fee (Rule 40.2(a))	1,700 ²
Preliminary examination fee (Rule 58.1(b))	1,675 ²
Additional fee (Rule 68.3(a))	1,675 ²
Protest fee (Rules 40.2(e) and 68.3(e)):	
– for international applications still pending on 13 December 2007	1,120
– for international applications filed on or after 13 December 2007	750
Late furnishing fee (Rule 13 ^{ter} .1(c) and 13 ^{ter} .2)	200
Cost of copies (Rules 44.3(b), 71.2(b) and 94.2), per page	0.70

Part II. Conditions for and Extent of Refunds or Reductions of Fees

(1) Any amount paid by mistake, without cause, or in excess of the amount due, for fees indicated in Part I shall be refunded.

(2) Where the international application is withdrawn or considered withdrawn, under Article 14(1), (3) or (4), before the start of the international search, the amount of the search fee paid shall, upon request, be fully refunded.

(3) Where the Authority benefits from an earlier search (including a privately commissioned “standard” search) already made by the Authority on an application whose priority is claimed for the international application and depending upon the extent to which the Authority benefits from the earlier search in carrying out the international search and any other task entrusted to it, the search fee paid shall be refunded, to the extent provided for in a communication from the Authority to the International Bureau and published in the Gazette.³

(4) In the cases provided for under Rule 58.3, the amount of the preliminary examination fee paid shall be fully refunded.

(5) Where the international application or the demand is withdrawn before the start of the international preliminary examination, 75% of the preliminary examination fee paid shall be refunded.

(6) The Authority may provide further refunds of the international preliminary examination fee under the conditions and to the extent laid down by it.

² This fee is reduced by 75% under certain conditions (see decision of the EPO’s Administrative Council of October 11, 2000 (OJ EPO 2000, 446)).

³ *Editor’s Note:* The EPO has specified to the International Bureau its conditions for refund and amounts of refund of the search fee, published in *Official Notices (PCT Gazette)* of March 27, 2008, pages 33 to 35, and May 8, 2008, pages 59 and 60.

Annex D
Languages of Correspondence

Under Article 7 of the Agreement, the Authority specifies the following languages:

English, French or German, depending on the language in which the international application is filed or translated.
