

From: Marc Krier <mkrier@epo.org>
To: "SCIT.mail" <scit.mail@wipo.int>
Date: 9/16/03 10:19AM
Subject: Reply to C. SCIT 2583 (ISO 3166-1 Newsletter V-8 on Serbia andMontenegro)

Dear Mr. Roach,

In reply to Circular C. SCIT 2853, dated August 21, 2003, the EPO regrets the adoption of country code CS for the new State of Serbia and Montenegro by the International Organisation for Standards, for the following reasons:

In the present case, the allocation of the 2 letter code CS by ISO will lead to severe drawbacks to users of patent information worldwide. Indeed the former State of Czechoslovakia is represented with about 175,000 records in the esp@cenet database and in the holdings of commercial providers. A re-allocation of this code to another country will have the following consequences amongst others:

1. A severe risk of non-unique identifiers at the level of the country code and the publication number.
2. The mix-up between different countries in the result list of of queries in databases, when restricting the search to country code "CS". Even expert users will not remember the allocation change over time.
3. Substantial costs involved to adapt programs for management, workflow and statistics related to country code CS.

The EPO understands however that a decision by ISO cannot be turned back by WIPO at this stage and that a departure from the ISO standard in ST.3 creates another level of confusion with users, and political difficulties with the State of Serbia and Montenegro.

The EPO would like however to draw your attention to this particular case, where the previous country (Czechoslovakia) has already published numerous patent documents, as opposed to earlier cases like SY, AN and even RU (Romania, changed to RO in 1978). The case is also different from the one where the same country changes country code (eg JA->JP and many others in 1978). For cases like the present one, it would be useful to involve Members of WIPO in an early stage of discussions at ISO.

Taking into account all arguments, the EPO agrees to adopt the proposal in C. SCIT 2583, and proposes to ensure by an appropriate and timely consultation that the number ranges to be used by the new country, will not conflict with those used previously by Czechoslovakia. To this end, it is sufficient that the new numbers have at least a length of 8 (eight) positions, eg 2004123456, or 10000001. Would the International Bureau be in a position to explore this request with Serbia and Montenegro?

Yours sincerely,

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