

Committee on WIPO Standards (CWS)

Tenth Session
Geneva, November 21 to 25, 2022

REPORT BY THE SEQUENCE LISTINGS TASK FORCE

Document prepared by the European Patent Office

SUMMARY

1. This document provides a summary of the work of the Sequence Listings Task Force (SEQL Task Force) since the ninth session of the Committee on WIPO Standards (CWS). WIPO ST.26 entered into force on July 1, 2022 and the Task Force has been working on providing a revision to this Standard for the tenth session.

BACKGROUND

2. The SEQL Task Force was created by the CWS, at its first session held in October 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.”

3. 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”.

4. 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 (see paragraph 52 of document CWS/4BIS/16) in March 2016.

5. At its fifth session, the CWS agreed on the “big bang” scenario as the option for the transition, which required all Intellectual Property Offices (IPOs) to transition from WIPO ST.25 to ST.26 at the same time. It was decided to consider the international filing date as the reference date and January 2022 as the transition date (see paragraphs 44 and 45 of document CWS/5/22).

6. At this same session, 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 as follows:

“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.”

7. At the sixth session of the CWS in October 2018, the Committee adopted the second revision of WIPO ST.26 (version 1.2), as reproduced in document CWS/6/16. The revision consisted of modifications to WIPO ST.26 Main Body and its Annexes I, II, III, IV and VI, as well as the addition of a new Annex VII titled *Transformation of a Sequence Listing from ST.25 to ST.26* to facilitate the transition between the two Standards.

8. At the seventh session, which took place in July 2019, the CWS adopted some substantive amendments and editorial corrections to Annexes I and VII of WIPO ST.26 version 1.3 (see document CWS/7/14).

9. At its eighth session, which took place in December 2020, several editorial and substantial revisions were approved (version 1.4) (see document CWS/8/6 Rev.).

10. The PCT Assembly approved at its 53rd session in October 2021 the amendments to the PCT regulations as proposed in the document PCT/WG/13/8. The WIPO General Assembly 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

11. Subsequent to the ninth session of the CWS, the SEQL Task Force carried out discussions on the wiki to discuss the proposed revisions to WIPO ST.26 and met twice to discuss the performance issue reported for the WIPO Sequence Suite and the support model once the WIPO Sequence Suite was live in production.

12. 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, the forms as well as the PCT receiving Office Guidelines and PCT International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines.

REVISION OF WIPO STANDARD ST.26

13. WIPO Standard ST.26 was last revised in November 2021 at the ninth session of the CWS (version 1.5). The changes concerned the Main Body of the Standard as well as Annexes I to III (see document CWS/9/12 REV) and included several editorial and/or minor modifications for clarity and alignment with UNIPROT.

14. Under the framework of Task No. 44, the Task Force shall propose for approval by the tenth session of the CWS the 1.6 revision of WIPO Standard ST.26. The proposed revision provides general improvements based on the experience acquired since the entry into force on July 1, 2022, including three new examples to be added to Annex VI to the Standard. Further details on the proposed revision are available in document CWS/10/13.

WIPO SEQUENCE SUITE

15. Since 2018, the International Bureau has been developing two software tool components 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 (a desktop application); and
- (b) *WIPO Sequence Validator*: validation tool for IPOs as a standalone service in the IP Offices' network (a web service incorporated into each IPO IT system to check compliance of filed sequence listings with WIPO Standard ST.26).

Collectively, these two components are known as the WIPO Sequence Suite.

16. The latest version of WIPO Sequence, version 2.1.2, is available for download on the WIPO website¹. IPOs can obtain the latest version of the WIPO Sequence Validator, version 2.1.1, by contacting the International Bureau by email at wiposequence@wipo.int.

17. For further details on the development of the WIPO Sequence Suite, bugs reported and the training provided, the Committee should refer to document CWS/10/14.

WORK PLAN AND FUTURE COOPERATION

18. With WIPO ST.26 in force, IPOs are requested to cooperate with the International Bureau by performing the following tasks:

- Providing first-level Support to its end users of WIPO Sequence;
- Forwarding requests that it cannot respond to onto the WIPO Sequence Support team established at the International Bureau;
- Encouraging its end users to update to the latest version of WIPO Sequence and to subscribe to the WIPO Sequence mailing list;
- Maintaining the deployment of WIPO Sequence Validator and upgrading to the latest version once made available by the International Bureau; and
- Participating in the various forums including the WIPO ST.26 and Sequence knowledge base and the WIPO Sequence Validator wiki and collaborating to improve or upgrade the WIPO Sequence Suite.

19. In exchange, the International Bureau will be responsible for:

- All software changes to the WIPO Sequence Suite and communicating with the Office when new versions are available;
- Responding to the Office requests for second-tier and higher support in a timely manner by providing appropriate responses to the Office in English;
- Establishing a procedure for regular updates and improvements to the software, taking into account requests that the Office may make for changes to the software;
- Defining a procedure for fixing bugs in the WIPO Sequence Suite within a pre-defined time limit; and
- Establishing and leading the WIPO Sequence forum where Office experts participate to maintain the WIPO Sequence and WIPO ST.26 Knowledge Base.

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

20. The Task Force informs the CWS of its work plan for 2022-2023, which is as follows:

- (a) Obtain approval for the proposed revision of WIPO ST.26, version 1.6, by the CWS during the tenth session;
- (b) Support the International Bureau by continuing to participate in the development and testing of the WIPO Sequence Suite and in the development of other related materials e.g., the Knowledge Base or WIPO Standards for which WIPO ST.26 is an input; and
- (c) Work on any further revision of WIPO ST.26, if required, to further facilitate its implementation by Offices and applicants while keeping its alignment with the requirements of the International Nucleotide Sequence Database Collaboration (INSDC) and UniProt.

21. *The CWS is invited to:*

(a) note the contents of this present document; and the work plan of the Sequence Listings Task Force as referred to in paragraph 20 above; and

(b) request the support of IPOs in reference to the use of the WIPO Sequence Suite, as referred to in paragraph 18 above.

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