

C. PCT 1376

April 5, 2013

Madam,
Sir,

Proposed decommissioning of the PCT-EASY service

This Circular is addressed to your Office in its capacity as a receiving Office (RO) under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT). It is also addressed to certain non-governmental organizations representing users of the PCT system.

The PCT-EASY service was introduced in 1998 “as a first step towards a future filing system which will enable applicants to create and file patent applications electronically” (PCT Gazette 8/1998). The service allowed a diskette (or now CD-R) containing bibliographic data to be provided alongside a printout of the request form and an application body in paper form at a time when it was not yet possible to submit the request form and application body in electronic form. A fee reduction was also accorded to PCT-EASY filings, as an incentive to provide the IB with the bibliographic data in electronic form.

The service was quickly very popular and by 2003 was used for 45% of all international applications. However, that year fully electronic applications became possible at several receiving Offices and the use of PCT-EASY began to decline so that it is now used in only about 2.5% of all international applications compared to 89% being filed in fully electronic format.

Fully electronic filing is now accessible to all applicants, at least by filing with the receiving Office of the International Bureau, and the International Bureau will offer in 2014 a hosted ePCT service which will allow any receiving Office which wishes to use it the option of accepting fully electronic filing without needing to maintain any special technical infrastructure. Consequently, the International Bureau believes that it is now time to prepare for withdrawing the PCT-EASY service and to concentrate resources on offering optimal systems to allow applicants to make fully electronic filing. Some receiving Offices have already themselves withdrawn PCT-EASY from the range of filing methods which they accept.

However, it is recognized that there are various situations in which applicants specifically choose to file using PCT-EASY even though the relevant receiving Office offers fully electronic filing. Consequently, it is necessary to give sufficient notice of the end of the service to allow applicants and Offices to update systems so that applicants choose to move to fully electronic filing, rather than back to paper filing.

It is therefore proposed that PCT-EASY should cease to be a recognized mode for filing international applications under the PCT from July 1, 2015. Depending on responses to this Circular, modifications would be proposed to the PCT Administrative Instructions and a proposal would be made to the PCT Assembly in 2014 to remove the relevant fee reduction from the Schedule of fees. The relevant functionality would also be removed from the PCT-SAFE software.

The aim of this change is not to disadvantage applicants who need to file their international applications on paper, but to move away from a hybrid filing system, which was only ever intended to be an interim step, towards fully electronic filing for those applicants who are able to use PCT-SAFE or similar filing software.

Comments on the proposed decommissioning of the PCT-EASY service

You are invited to provide comments, if any, to the International Bureau by June 30, 2013, on the timing and any additional action which would be required to allow this service to be withdrawn effectively, preferably by e-mail to: pctbdd@wipo.int. Following this consultation, the International Bureau will seek to announce a definite date for the withdrawal of the service by October 2013.

Yours sincerely,



James Pooley
Deputy Director General