

III. RULES COMMON TO ALL PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE EPO

A. The principle of the protection of legitimate expectations

1.	Introduction	636
2.	Applicability of the principle of the protection of legitimate expectations	636
2.1.	Sources of legitimate expectations	637
2.2.	Limits of the legitimate expectations principle	637
2.2.1	Knowledge of the relevant legal provisions and the case law	637
2.2.2	Interpretation of substantive patent law	638
2.2.3	Weighing of interests in inter partes cases	639
2.2.4	Area of party's own responsibility	639
2.2.5	Administrative notice with no legal consequences	639
2.3.	Causal link and the requirement of proof	640
3.	Information provided by EPO	640
3.1.	Clear and unambiguous communications and forms	640
3.2.	Information provided as courtesy service	641
3.3.	Contradictory acts	641
3.4.	Information provided by telephone	643
3.5.	Decisions of the department of first instance	643
3.6.	Correction of already issued decision	644
3.7.	Information provided in the Guidelines	644
4.	Obligation to draw attention to easily remediable deficiencies	645
4.1.	General principle	645
4.1.1	Deficiency correctable within the relevant time limit	645
4.1.2	Obligation to set new time limit	645
4.2.	Examples of cases addressing the obligation to draw attention to easily remediable deficiencies	646
4.2.1	Language issues	646
4.2.2	Missing or insufficient fee payments	646
4.2.3	Electronic filing of documents	648
4.2.4	Further examples involving easily identifiable deficiencies	648
4.3.	Limits of the obligation to draw attention to easily remediable deficiencies	648
4.3.1	Area of party's own responsibility	648
	a) Filing of valid appeal	649
	b) Filing of divisional application	649
	c) Bank account information	649
4.3.2	No obligation to scrutinise submissions for deficiencies	650
5.	Obligation to enquire in case of unclear nature of request	650
6.	Legitimate expectation and case law	651
6.1.	Case law deviating from or overruling the practice	651
6.2.	Point in time from which a new decision which deviates from existing practice becomes generally applicable	652