

## 1. Preliminary remarks

As repeatedly requested by users since the removal of the part of the Guidelines for Examination in the EPO ("EP Guidelines") that dealt with the EPO as PCT Authority, the EPO in the present Guidelines is publishing the specific procedures and substantive issues before the EPO as RO/(S)ISA/IPEA which until 2015 were contained mainly in internal instructions, in as far as they are relevant for the public.

These Guidelines can be used and referred to by examiners and formalities officers, as well as patent attorneys, in addition to the Euro-PCT Guide ("PCT procedure at the EPO, [International phase and entry into the European phase], Guide for applicants"), the PCT-RO (Receiving Office) Guidelines and the PCT ISPE (International Search and Preliminary Examination) Guidelines. They are complementary to, but not a substitute for, the ISPE and RO Guidelines, as well as the PCT Applicant's Guide ("WIPO PCT Guide"), all published by WIPO. They will exist in parallel with the Euro-PCT Guide which, as before, has the status of a Notice from the EPO.

Their full name is "Guidelines for Search and Examination at the European Patent Office as PCT Authority", or "PCT-EPO Guidelines" for short, and throughout these Guidelines they are referred to as "GL/PCT-EPO".

The PCT-EPO Guidelines are published as a standalone document in electronic format only, and will be revised on a yearly basis in autumn at the same time as the EP Guidelines. The electronic publication includes not only the online version in HTML format, but also a printable file.

This fifth edition of the PCT-EPO Guidelines is intended to contain at least those parts of existing internal instructions for examiners and formalities officers which are considered appropriate for publication. It should therefore not be expected to be as complete as the EP Guidelines. The aim is to gradually expand the document with each revision cycle. The major change with respect to the fourth edition is the further development of Part A.

Any indication from readers drawing attention to errors as well as suggestions for improvement is highly appreciated and may be sent by email to Department 5.2.2.1, PCT Affairs, at [international\\_pct\\_affairs@epo.org](mailto:international_pct_affairs@epo.org).

## 2. Explanatory notes

### 2.1 Overview

The PCT-EPO Guidelines follow the structure of the EP Guidelines (Chapters A, B, C, E, F, G and H, without D because there is no opposition, limitation or revocation under the PCT), and as far as possible the organisation within each chapter is similar to that of the EP Guidelines, adapted to the particularities of the PCT system.