7. Examination of novelty

GL/ISPE 12.05

In determining novelty of the subject-matter of claims, the examiner should remember that, particularly for claims directed to a physical entity, non-distinctive characteristics of a particular intended use should be disregarded. For example, a claim to a substance X for use as a catalyst would not be considered to be novel over the same substance known as a dye, unless the use referred to implies a particular form of the substance (e.g. the presence of certain additives) which distinguishes it from the known form of the substance. That is to say, characteristics not explicitly stated, but implied by the particular use, should be taken into account.

A known compound is not rendered novel merely because it is available with a different degree of purity if the purity can be achieved by conventional means.

7.1 Second or further medical use of known pharmaceutical products

How the novelty of second or further medical use claims is assessed depends on the IPEA. The examiner at the EPO as IPEA examines the novelty of the subject-matter in view of the entry into the regional phase before the EPO and therefore will apply the principles as laid down in GL/EPO G-VI, 7.1 and subsections. See GL/PCT-EPO B-VIII, 2.1, for the treatment of medical use claims by the EPO as ISA.

7.2 Second non-medical use

A claim to the use of a known compound for a particular purpose (second non-medical use) which is based on a technical effect will be interpreted by the EPO examiner as including that technical effect as a functional technical feature. The novelty of the use of the known compound for the known production of a known product cannot be deduced from a new property of the produced product. In such a case, the use of a compound for the production of a product will be interpreted as a process for production of the product with the compound. Therefore, it can be regarded as novel only if the process of production as such is novel.

8. Selection inventions

GL/ISPE 12.10

Selection inventions deal with the selection of individual elements, subsets, or subranges, which have not been explicitly mentioned, within a larger known set or range. The examiner of the EPO as IPEA will assess the novelty of the subject-matter according to the principles laid down in GL/EPO G-VI, 8 and subsection.

9. Novelty of "reach-through" claims

"Reach-through" claims are defined as claims attempting to obtain protection for a chemical product (and also uses thereof, compositions thereof, etc.) by defining that product functionally in terms of its action (e.g. agonist, antagonist) on a biological target such as an enzyme or receptor. In many such cases, the applicant functionally defines chemical compounds in this way by reference to a newly identified biological target. However, compounds which bind to and exercise this action on that biological target are not necessarily novel compounds simply because the biological target which they act on is new. Indeed in many cases, the