

Extension of the pilot of a USPTO email address for submitting  
general questions related to the Patent Cooperation Treaty  
and international and national stage applications

To improve the overall customer service experience of those needing information regarding the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) and international and national stage applications, the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is extending for an additional year, effective retroactively as of January 1, 2023, its pilot of an email address for submitting inquiries about the PCT and international and national stage applications. The email address is [PCTHelp@uspto.gov](mailto:PCTHelp@uspto.gov). The USPTO continuously works to ensure it provides robust services to its stakeholders. Extending the use of the email address for assistance with the PCT and international and national stage applications maintains another pathway through which the USPTO can engage with the public to better serve America's innovation community.

On January 1, 2022, the USPTO established, on a one-year pilot basis, an email address for submitting inquiries regarding the PCT, the procedures applicable to international applications filed under the PCT, and U.S. national stage applications submitted under 35 U.S.C. 371. During this pilot extension, the USPTO will evaluate results from the first year of the pilot and consider potential changes in light of any findings.

Since 1993, the USPTO has maintained a PCT Help Desk for telephonic inquiries regarding PCT issues. The PCT Help Desk is available for the general public and external customers to make inquiries about general PCT practice, how to file international applications under the PCT, how to submit national stage applications under 35 U.S.C. 371, how to file "bypass" applications under 35 U.S.C. 111(a), the status of pending applications, how to respond to communications issued in such applications, and other PCT-related issues. The annual call volume at the PCT Help Desk has been as high as 40,910 calls per year, with an average of over 22,000 calls annually over the last three fiscal years. The PCT Help Desk is staffed by experienced attorneys, legal examiners, special program examiners, and paralegals from the International Patent Legal Administration (IPLA) staff.

The IPLA is always looking to improve its services to meet customer needs. Previous customer feedback indicated a desire that the USPTO work to reduce wait times with the PCT Help Desk, to extend the hours of availability to accommodate customers on the west coast of the United States and customers overseas facing more substantial time differences, and to permit the use of modern communication mechanisms such as email to contact the PCT Help Desk. The email address was established in response to this customer feedback.

The email address is not intended for case-specific or time-sensitive inquiries, such as when a petition may be a proper response or when an established deadline is imminent. Customers should still direct those inquiries by telephone to the PCT Help Desk. Rather, the email address is intended for general inquiries. It permits those faced with substantial time differences to submit inquiries outside of USPTO business hours. Additionally, by

reducing general and non-time sensitive inquiries to the PCT Help Desk, it can allow for improved response times from the PCT Help Desk.

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