

New developments in the PACE programme: Accelerated Prosecution of European patent applications

The European Patent Office (EPO) has published a major update to its Program for Accelerated Prosecution of European patent applications (PACE), which will come into effect on February 1, 2026.

What is the PACE programme?

The PACE programme is a mechanism that allows applicants to accelerate the prosecution of European patent applications, reducing the time required for the different stages of the process.

Until February 1, 2026, accelerated procedures could be requested at both the **search phase** and the **examination phase**.

Main changes from February 1, 2026

From this date, as indicated in the EPO notification of December 16, 2025, **the PACE programme will be limited exclusively to the examination phase of the procedure**, with the aim of optimizing processing times.

Secondly, it should be noted that:

- A request for participation in the PACE programme **may be filed only once** during the examination stage and for one application at a time.
- These requests **are not published** and are **excluded from file inspection**.

Once a PACE request is filed, the examining division aims **to issue its next communication within three months** of the applicant's latest procedural action.

As for the different **scenarios of exclusion**, an application will be removed from the PACE programme for any of the following reasons:

- The applicant has requested an extension of time limits.
- The application has been refused.
- The application has been withdrawn.
- In the event of failure to pay renewal fees by the due date stipulated.

Finally, the EPO also notes in the notification that additional channels for expediting the European grant procedure remain in place, as does the Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH) pilot programme.

European Patent Attorneys

At **UNGRIA**, we assist our clients in choosing the **most appropriate acceleration mechanism for European patent applications**.

Please, do not hesitate to contact us for **personalized advice on how to optimize and accelerate patent granting** through a strategy tailored to your objectives.

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