

GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINATION

EUROPEAN UNION

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OFFICE

(EUIPO)

Part A

General rules

Section 1

Means of communication, time limits

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1 Introduction

This part of the Guidelines includes those provisions that are common to all proceedings before the Office in trade mark and design matters, except appeals.

In the interests of efficiency and in order to prevent parties encountering different practices, the Office applies procedural rules consistently.

Proceedings before the Office can be classified into two broad types: **ex parte** proceedings, which involve only one party, or **inter partes** proceedings, in which two or more parties are in conflict.

The first category comprises, in particular, applications for registration or renewal of a European Union trade mark (EUTM) or a registered European Union design (REUD), transfer-related entries in the Register, licences, levy of execution or bankruptcy, insolvency proceedings, priority/seniority claims and conversion proceedings.

The second category includes opposition and cancellation proceedings (revocation or declaration of invalidity of a registered EUTM or an REUD).

2 Procedures for Filing and for Communication with the Office

[Article 30 EUTMR](#)

Articles [63](#) and [65](#) EUTMDR

Article 35 EUDR

Articles 65 and 68 EUDIR

Decision No [EX-18-5](#) of the Executive Director of the Office of 3 September 2018 concerning the hours the Office is open to receive submissions by personal delivery relating to registered European Union designs

Communications addressed to the Office can be submitted by electronic means, post or courier in proceedings relating to European Union trade marks and in addition by personal delivery in proceedings relating to European Union designs. Notifications issued by the Office can be made by electronic means, post, courier services or public notification.

Applications for EUTMs and REUDs must be filed directly with the Office.

E-filing is a recommended means of filing, to the extent that the system gives guidance to the applicant, thus reducing the number of potential deficiencies and speeding up the examination procedure. EUTMs filed through the Office's e-filing system are subject to a reduced fee. The Office also offers the possibility of an accelerated procedure known as Fast Track (for more details, please check the [Office's website](#)).

In the event of opting for filing by other means, the Office makes various forms available to the public, in all the official languages of the EU. With one exception, their use is not mandatory but strongly recommended. The exception is when filing an international application or subsequent designation under the Madrid Protocol, for which either the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) [MM 2](#) or [MM 4](#) form, or the Office's [EM 2](#) or [EM 4](#) form must be used.

3 Notification and Communication of Documents

The EUTMDR and the EUDIR distinguish between documents originating from the parties and addressed to the Office and notifications issued by the Office.

A document's date of notification or communication is the date on which that document, is **received or is deemed to be received** by the addressee (including the Office) (30/01/2014, [C-324/13 P](#), Patrizia Rocha, EU:C:2014:60, § 43). Exactly when receipt is deemed to have taken place will depend on the method of notification or communication.

Any notification addressed to the representative will have the same effect as if it had been addressed to the person represented ([Article 60\(3\) EUTMDR](#) and Article 53 EUDIR). Any communication addressed to the Office by a representative will be considered to have originated from the person he or she represents ([Article 66 EUTMDR](#) and Article 63 EUDIR).

If a professional representative has been duly appointed, the Office will send all notifications solely to the representative (12/07/2012, [T-279/09](#), 100% Capri, EU:T:2012:367; 25/04/2021, [T-326/11](#), BrainLAB, EU:T:2012:202). 'Duly appointed' means that the representative is entitled to act as such and has been properly appointed, and that no general obstacle exists to preclude representation by that person, such as illicit representation of both parties in *inter partes* proceedings. Filing an authorisation is not required in order to receive Office notifications.

For further details see [the Guidelines, Part A, General Rules, Section 5, Parties to the Proceedings and Professional Representation](#).

3.1 Communications to the Office in writing or by other means

[Article 98\(3\) EUTMR](#)

[Article 100 EUTMR](#)

[Article 55\(2\), \(3\) and \(4\) EUTMDR](#), and Articles [63](#) and [64](#) EUTMDR

Articles 65 to 67 EUDIR

Decision No [EX-23-13](#) of the Executive Director of the Office of 15 December 2023 on communication by electronic means

Decision [No EX-22-7](#) of the Executive Director of the Office of 29 November 2022 on technical specifications for annexes submitted on data carriers

Fax is expressly identified as a means of communication in all procedures relating to European Union designs in Article 47(2)(d) EUDIR and Article 51 EUDIR, however, pursuant to Article 2 of Decision of the Executive Director [No 23-13](#) on communication by electronic means, due to technical limitations and malfunctions affecting the reliability and preventing the uninterrupted functioning of communications by fax (and that lie beyond the Office's control), **fax is not offered and is not used**, as a means of communication in procedures before the Office.

3.1.1 Via the User Area (electronic means)

The accepted means of electronic communication with the Office in **procedures relating to EUTMs and European Union designs** is the User Area, which is a secure electronic communications platform maintained by the Office. The User Area enables users to submit applications and other documents, receive notifications and documents sent by the Office, reply to these notifications and perform other actions.

Nevertheless, exceptionally, where a technical malfunction prevents the applicant from filing through the User Area, an **EUTM or REUD application** submitted by one of the alternative electronic back-up measures available (see below) will be deemed to have been received by the Office provided that the applicant resubmits, within 3 working days of the original submission, the application for registration of an EUTM or REUD (with the same content) through the User Area. Failure to comply with these conditions will result in the original submission being deemed as not having been received. For further information on the submission of an **application for renewal of an EUTM or REUD** by one of the alternative electronic back-up measures available, see the Guidelines, [Part E, Register Operations, Section 4, Renewal, paragraph 7](#).

To facilitate resubmission, in the event of a malfunction during the electronic transmission of an application, communication or other document through the specific e-operation or e-filing in the User Area, the Office will make two alternative electronic back-up measures available:

1. an upload solution located in the Communications section of the User Area - this is a general upload platform that allows documents to be attached and sent to the Office;
2. a file-sharing solution outside the User Area; the Office will provide the account holder with access to a secure file-sharing location where the document(s) in question can be uploaded.

Technical details on the accessibility and functionality of both these alternative back-up measures are available in the [Conditions of Use of the User Area](#).

In the unlikely event that these back-up measures are not available, the Executive Director may take a decision to extend the deadlines pursuant to [Article 101\(3\) EUTMR](#) and Article 58 EUDIR (see [paragraph 4.2](#)).

The time of receipt of applications, communications or documents submitted by electronic means is the local time in Alicante (Spain) when the receipt was validated.

A series of e-operations (e-filings, e-actions and other e-operations) can be carried out via the User Area. These are accessible after logging into the User Area through the 'Dashboard' or the 'Online Services' sections of the account.

In addition, in certain *inter partes* proceedings, when both parties are registered users of the User Area they can file joint requests that are validated (signed) electronically by the two parties.

If an account holder uses one of the standard e-operations in the User Area to file a submission, that e-operation will prevail over any other statement or observation made by the account holder through other means on the same day, provided that the Office does not receive a withdrawal of the e-operation on the same day (see [paragraph 3.1.6](#)) for same day withdrawals).

Where a communication submitted by electronic means, is incomplete or illegible, or the Office has reasonable doubts as to the accuracy of the transmission, in accordance with [Article 63\(3\) EUTMDR](#) and Articles 67(3) and 66(2) EUDIR, it will advise the sender and invite it to retransmit the communication or to submit a signed original of the document in question to the Office by post or any other available means within a specified deadline. If the retransmission is complete, the date of receipt will be considered to be the date of the first transmission, except for the purposes of establishing a filing date for an application. Otherwise, the Office will not take the transmission into account or will consider only the received and/or legible parts (04/07/2012, [R 2305/2010-4](#), HOUBIGANT/ PARFUMS HOUBIGANT PARIS et al.).

For further information on the filing date, see the Guidelines, [Part B, Examination, Section 2, Formalities](#) and the Guidelines for Examination of Applications for Registered European Union Designs.

For further information on the User Area, and in particular on the proper use of the user account and the sanctions imposed in the event of the prohibited disclosure of User Area credentials, please see paragraph 4(b) of the [Conditions of use of the user area](#), annexed to Decision No [EX-23-13](#) of the Executive Director of the Office of 15 December 2023 on communication by electronic means.

3.1.2 By post or courier service

Documents sent by post or courier service should be sent to the Office's official address.

Documents sent by post or courier service must bear an original signature. If a document sent to the Office is not signed, the Office will invite the party concerned to do so within a specific deadline. If the document is not signed within that time, the application or request will be declared inadmissible, or the document will not be taken into account, as the case may be.

The date of receipt is the date on which the Office receives the communication irrespective of when it was placed in the mail or postal system (28/09/2016, [T-400/15](#); CITRUS SATURDAY / CITRUS, EU:T:2016:569, § 25; 15/03/2011, [T-50/09](#), Dada & Co / kids, EU:T:2011:90, § 67). The time of receipt is the local time in Alicante (Spain).

For further information on copies of the documents submitted in *inter partes* proceedings, see [the Guidelines, Part C, Opposition, Section 1, Opposition Proceedings, paragraph 4.2, Substantiation](#); and the Guidelines for Examination of Design Invalidity Applications, paragraph 4.1, Exchange of communications.

3.1.3 Annexes to communications

Pursuant to [Article 55 EUTMDR](#), any documents or other items of evidence submitted by the party in EUTM proceedings must be contained in an annex to the submission, be numbered, be accompanied by an index with a short description of each item of evidence together with the number of pages, if applicable, and the page number where it is mentioned in the submission.

During the proceedings stage (i) when the evidence is not structured in numbered annexes; (ii) no index is sent (this meaning, when the required content of the index is not identifiable in any form); or (iii) when, on its own motion or after it being questioned by the other party, the Office finds it justified, in particular when it considers that the failure to comply with the relevant requirements significantly impairs the Office's or the other party's ability to review and assess the documents or items of evidence submitted and to understand the relevance of the same, a deficiency will be raised. A deficiency will not be raised if the content of the annexes is included in the text of the observations.

In *inter partes* proceedings

- annexes submitted by electronic means do not need to be submitted in duplicate;
- annexes submitted by post or courier consisting of paper documents (such as loose sheets of evidence) up to and including size A3 do not need to be submitted in duplicate;
- annexes submitted by post or courier consisting of paper documents larger than A3 or not on paper (e.g. data carriers, physical items of evidence such as product samples) must be submitted in duplicate, with one copy to be sent to the other party.

Where in *inter partes* proceedings relating to EUTMs, a copy is required but not provided, the annexes in question will not be taken into account. However, in *inter partes* proceedings relating to European Union designs, the Invalidity Division may invite the party to file a duplicate within a specified deadline.

For further information on items of evidence to be submitted in *inter partes* proceedings for the purpose of establishing use, see [the Guidelines, Part C, Opposition, Section 1, Opposition Proceedings, paragraph 5.3.2.1, Means of evidence, Principles](#).

In addition to the requirements of [Article 55\(2\) EUTMDR](#), the Office recommends that the following key aspects of a structured presentation be taken into account in order to facilitate the processing and handling of the files:

1. to ensure a manageably sized file, parties should limit their submissions to items of evidence that are relevant to the case and to the ground/argument in question;
2. if the documentation is sent in different batches, each batch submitted should clearly indicate the total number of batches (including the total number of pages and the number of pages in each batch);
3. for physical specimens such as containers, packaging, etc. a photograph may be taken and submitted instead of the item itself and a duplicate (unless the electronic content of the item is relevant, as in the case of a data carrier);
4. where original documents or items are sent to the Office by mail, they should not be stapled, bound or placed in folders;
5. all items sent in duplicate for forwarding to the other party should be clearly identified; however, where the original is submitted to the Office by electronic means, no second copy needs to be sent.

3.1.4 Data carriers

Annexes to communications may be submitted on data carriers.

The Office considers data carriers to be small portable storage devices such as USB flash drives, pen drives or similar memory units. External hard drives, memory cards, CD ROMs, DVDs and other optical discs, as well as magnetic data carriers of any kind are excluded.

The Office only accepts the file formats listed in Decision [No EX-22-7](#) of the Executive Director of the Office of 29/11/2022 on technical specifications for annexes submitted on data carriers, namely JPEG, MP3, MP4, PDF, TIFF, and for 3D models, STL, OBJ and X3D. The Office does not accept files in an executable file format (EXE), in a compressed file format or in an encrypted format, even if the resulting executed, decompressed or unencrypted file is in one of the acceptable file formats. Nor does the Office accept fillable PDF formats and PDF files that include added objects such as redacted (blacked-out) or added text, highlighted text or arrows.

The maximum size of each individual file saved on the data carrier is restricted to 20 MB (Article 4 of Decision [No EX-22-7](#)).

For further information, see Article 3 of Decision [No EX-22-7](#) of the Executive Director of the Office of 29/11/2022 on technical specifications for annexes submitted on data carriers.

If an annex on the data carrier does not comply with the acceptable type of data carriers under Article 2(1) or the technical specifications under Article 3 and 4 of Decision [No EX-22-7](#), the Office will deem it not to have been filed without inviting the party to overcome the deficiency (Article 6(a) [No EX-22-7](#)).

3.1.5 Signature

[Article 63\(1\) EUTMDR](#)

Article 65(1) EUDIR

Applications and other communications to the Office must be signed by the sender.

If the application or other communication is filed by electronic means, the indication of the sender's name is deemed to be equivalent to a signature.

Where a submission or supporting document has to be signed, the signature must be accompanied by the name of the physical person signing and, if the signature is on behalf of a legal person (company), it must also include an indication of the role of the physical person in the company or their authority as signatory (e.g. Chief Executive Officer, President). The Office identification number (ID) may optionally also be indicated if available. If any of these identification elements are missing from the signature, the Office may issue a deficiency requesting the missing element(s). If a submission is not signed at all, the Office will invite the party concerned to correct the deficiency.

If a deficiency is notified, and is not remedied within the set time limit, the application will be rejected or the communication not taken into account.

For joint requests submitted in one single submission by electronic means in *inter partes* proceedings, the indication of the sender's name is deemed to be equivalent to its signature; however, the other party's signature must be presented in order for the request to be acceptable.

3.1.6 Confidentiality

[Article 114\(4\) EUTMR](#)

Article 74(4)(c) EUDR

A party may, upon submitting a document or at a later stage, request that all or part of a document be kept confidential, as long as no request for an inspection of files is pending.

The party concerned must have expressly invoked, and sufficiently justified, a special interest in keeping the document confidential. For further details on invoking confidentiality and special interest, and on the examination process of confidential information, see [the Guidelines, Part E, Register Operations, Section 5, Inspection of Files, paragraph 5.1.3](#). Alternatively, the party may submit evidence in such a way that avoids revealing parts of the document or information that the party considers confidential, as long as the parts of the document submitted contain the required information. For example, where contracts or other documents are submitted as evidence, certain information may be blacked out before being submitted to the Office, or certain pages may be omitted altogether.

In principle, documents of a personal nature such as passports or other identification documents, which are submitted in particular as evidence in relation to requests for transfer, evidence of 'health data', which is submitted in particular as evidence in relation to restitutio in integrum or as supporting evidence for extension requests, and bank account extracts, which may, for example, be attached to applications and requests as evidence of fee payment, because of their inherent personal nature, confidentiality vis-à-vis any third parties is justified, and, in principle, overrides any third-party interest.

In *inter partes* proceedings, one of the parties might request the Office to keep certain documents confidential even vis-à-vis the other party in the proceedings. Although the Office can keep documents confidential vis-à-vis third parties (inspection of files), it can under no circumstances keep them confidential vis-à-vis the other party in *inter partes* proceedings. For further details concerning confidentiality in *inter partes* proceedings see [the Guidelines, Part C, Opposition Proceedings, Section 1, Opposition Proceedings, paragraph 4.4.4](#).

3.1.7 Withdrawal of communications

Submissions become effective upon receipt by the Office, provided that the Office does not receive a withdrawal of the submission on the same day. This means that a submission will only be annulled if a letter withdrawing its submission reaches the Office on the same day it was received.

3.1.8 References made to documents or items of evidence in other proceedings

For further information on how to refer to documents or items of evidence submitted in other proceedings, see [the Guidelines, Part A, Section 10, Evidence, 3.1 Reference to documents or evidence in other proceedings before the Office](#).

3.2 Notification by the Office

[Article 94\(2\)](#) and [Article 98 EUTMR](#)

Articles [56 to 62](#) EUTMDR

Article 41(1) and Articles 47 to 53 EUDIR

Decision No [EX-18-4](#) of the Executive Director of the Office of 3 September 2018 concerning public notification

Decision No [EX-23-13](#) of the Executive Director of the Office of 15 December 2023 on communication by electronic means

Written communications from the Office to the party or parties to proceedings will be 'notified'. A document is considered to be **notified** when it has been received or is deemed to have been received by the addressee, irrespective of whether the addressee has been advised of this. Consequently, the date of notification of a document is the date on which that document is **made accessible to or has reached the addressee**, and not the date on which it was sent or the date on which the person to whom it was addressed actually learned of the notification. However, exactly when receipt is deemed to take place will depend on the method of notification.

The Office can choose freely the most appropriate means of notification, apart from public notification. In practice, the Office will always opt to notify by electronic means, whenever available.

If the proper notification procedure has been followed, the document is deemed to have been notified, unless the recipient can prove that it either did not receive the document at all, or received it late. If this is proved, the Office will re-notify the document(s). Conversely, where the proper notification procedure was not followed, the document will still be considered notified if the Office can prove that the document actually reached the recipient (13/01/2011, [T-28/09](#), Pine Tree, EU:T:2011:7, § 32).

Any communication or notification from the Office will indicate the department or division of the Office and the name(s) of the official(s) responsible. These documents have to be signed by the official(s) or, if not, bear the Office's printed or stamped seal.

3.2.1 Notification by electronic means

The User Area is the sole platform through which the Office will issue notifications by electronic means, and account holders may not opt-out of this means of receiving electronic communications from the Office as long as the User Area account remains active. This applies equally to new and existing user account holders, including those who may have previously opted-out under the former rules as set out in Article 3(1) of Decision of the Executive Director No [EX-23-13](#). The Office will therefore send all notifications through the User Area, unless this is impossible for technical reasons.

The date on which the document is placed in an account holder's inbox will be recorded by the Office and mentioned in the User Area. The document is deemed to have been notified on the fifth calendar day following the day on which the document is placed in the account holder's inbox, irrespective of whether the recipient actually opened and read it.

3.2.2 Notification by post or courier

The procedure for notification by post or courier will depend on the nature of the document notified.

Decisions subject to a deadline for appeal, summonses and other documents as determined by the Executive Director of the Office will be notified by courier service or registered post, in both cases with advice of delivery.

All other notifications can be sent either by courier service or registered post, with or without advice of delivery, or by ordinary post. If the recipient's address is not in the EEA or the addressee has not appointed a professional representative, the Office will send the document by ordinary post.

Notification will be deemed to have taken place 10 days after the document was posted. The recipient can only rebut this presumption by proving that it did not receive the document or that it received it later. Indications giving rise to reasonable doubt about correct receipt are considered to be sufficient proof (25/10/2012, [T-191/11](#), Miura, EU:T:2012:577, § 34).

In the event of a dispute, the Office must be able to establish that the notification reached its destination or the date on which it was delivered to the addressee. In this regard, the Office must establish that it had created the conditions for the document to be notified to arrive within the sphere of influence of the addressee. A distinction must be drawn between, first, the transmission of a document to the addressee, which is required for due notification, and, secondly, effective knowledge of that document, which is not required for the notification to be regarded as due notification. Existence of a valid notification to the addressee is in no way conditional on its having actually been brought to the notice of the person competent to deal with it under the internal rules of the entity addressed (22/11/2018, [T-356/17](#), RoB, EU:T:2018:845, § 31-32, and the case-law cited therein).

Notification by registered letter will be deemed to have been effected even if the addressee refuses to accept the letter.

3.2.3 Public notification by public notice

Public notification will be used for all notifications where the addressee's address is unknown or where a notification by post has been returned to the Office after at least one failed attempt.

This relates primarily to post returned to the Office by the Post Office marked 'not known at this address' and post that has not been claimed by the addressee.

Public notifications will be published on the Office's website. The document will be deemed to have been notified one month after the day on which it was posted on the internet.

4 Time Limits Specified by the Office

[Article 101 EUTMR](#)

Articles [67](#) to [69](#) EUTMDR

Articles 56 to 58 EUDIR

Time limits before the Office can be divided into two categories:

- those laid down by the EUTMR, EUTMDR, EUTMIR, EUDR or EUDIR, which are therefore mandatory;
- those specified by the Office, which are therefore not mandatory and can be extended under certain circumstances.

Time limits are an essential tool for conducting orderly and reasonably swift proceedings. They are a matter of public policy and rigorous compliance with them is necessary to ensure clarity and legal certainty.

The regulations provide three measures that mitigate the rigorous application of the principle of strict observance of time limits (deadlines), depending on whether they are still running or have expired.

If the time limit is still running, the party may **request an extension** of the time limit pursuant to [Article 68 EUTMDR](#) and Article 57(1) EUDIR.

In REUD proceedings, if the time limit has expired, the party that has missed it can request *restitutio in integrum* (pursuant to Article 67 EUDR), which requires meeting formal and substantive requirements (such as showing all due care).

In EUTM proceedings, if the time limit has expired, the party that has missed it has two possible courses of action: it can either seek **continuation of proceedings** (pursuant to [Article 105 EUTMR](#)), which only requires meeting certain formal requirements, or it can request *restitutio in integrum* (pursuant to [Article 104 EUTMR](#)), which requires meeting formal and substantive requirements (such as showing all due care).

Additional information is provided under paragraphs [4.4](#) and [4.5](#) below.

4.1 Length of the time limits specified by the Office

Regarding EUTM proceedings, with the exception of the time limits expressly specified in the EUTMR, EUTMDR, or EUTMIR, the time limits specified by the Office may not be less than one month or longer than six months.

Regarding REUD proceedings, with the exception of the time limits expressly specified in the EUDR or EUDIR, the time limits specified by the Office, when the party concerned has its domicile or its principal place of business or an establishment within the EU may not be less than one month or longer than six months. When the party concerned does not have its domicile or principal place of business or an establishment within the EU, the time limits may not be less than two months or longer than six months.

The general practice is to grant two months.

For further information, see [the Guidelines, Part A, General Rules, Section 5, Professional Representation](#).

4.2 Expiry of time limits

Under [Article 101\(1\) EUTMR](#), the calculation of a time limit starts on the day following the day on which the 'relevant event' occurred.

Where the Office sets a time limit in a notification indicating a time limit in terms of days, weeks or months (usually 2 months), the 'relevant event' is the date on which the document is notified or deemed notified, depending on the rules governing the notification. A notification issued by electronic means is deemed to have been notified on the fifth calendar day following the day on which the document is placed in the account holder's inbox (see [paragraph 3.2.1](#)) and a notification issued by post or courier is deemed to have been notified on the tenth day after it was posted (see [paragraph 3.2.2](#)).

Where a time limit is expressed in months, it will expire in the relevant subsequent month on the same day as the day on which the 'relevant event' occurred.

It is immaterial whether the 'relevant event' occurred on a working day, a holiday or a Sunday; that is relevant only for the expiry of the time limit.

Where the relevant subsequent month has no day with the same number, the time limit in question will expire on the last day of that month. A 2-month time limit specified in a notification on 31 July will therefore expire on 30 September.

The same applies to time limits expressed in weeks or years.

Any time limit will be deemed to expire at midnight on the final day (local time in Alicante (Spain)).

In the event a time limit is missed, there is no provision requiring the Office to inform a party of the procedures available to it under Articles [104](#) and [105](#) EUTMR, nor, *a fortiori*, is it incumbent on it to advise that party to pursue any particular legal remedy. Therefore, the principle of sound administration is not violated by the Office for not informing of the means for rectifying a late submission (04/05/2018, [T-34/17](#), SKYLEADER (fig.), EU:T:2018:256, § 43).

A time limit that expires on a day on which the Office is not open for the receipt of documents or on which ordinary post is not delivered in the locality in which the

Office is located (Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays) will be extended to the first working day thereafter. For this purpose, the Executive Director of the Office determines the days on which the Office is closed before the start of each calendar year. The extension is automatic but it applies only at the end of the time limit (12/05/2011, [R 924/2010-1](#), whisper power (fig.) / WHISPER).

In the event of a 'general interruption' to the postal service in Spain or of an 'actual interruption' of the Office's connection to authorised electronic means of communication, any time limit that expires during that period will be extended to the first working day after the period of interruption. These periods will be determined by the Executive Director of the Office; the extension will apply to all parties to the proceedings.

Not every technical error is regarded as an 'actual interruption of the Office's connection to admitted electronic means' under [Article 101\(3\) EUTMR](#), Article 58 EUDIR. An actual interruption requires electronic communication (including all back-up options) to be disrupted for **at least 6 consecutive hours during the same working day**. For shorter interruptions, the Office will not extend the time limits under [Article 101\(3\) EUTMR](#). Parties should be wary, therefore, of filing submissions on the last day of a time limit, especially after Office working hours. If a party misses a deadline, it may consider filing a request for *restitutio in integrum* (see [paragraph 4.5](#)) or for continuation of the proceedings (see [paragraph 4.4](#)).

In the event of an exceptional occurrence (strike, natural disaster, etc.) causing a disruption to the running of the Office or a serious impediment to its communication with the outside world, time limits may be extended for a period determined by the Executive Director of the Office.

4.3 Extension of time limits

In **ex parte proceedings** before the Office, if a request is made for an extension before the time limit expires, then a further period should be allowed, depending on the circumstances of the case, but not exceeding six months.

For the rules applicable to the extension of time limits in **inter partes proceedings** (i.e. where there are two or more parties involved, such as in opposition, invalidity and/or revocation proceedings), see the Guidelines, Part C, Opposition, Section 1, Opposition Proceedings, and the Guidelines for Examination of Design Invalidity Applications.

As a general rule, the first request for an extension that is received in time will be considered appropriate and will be granted for a period equal to the original term (or less if requested). However, any subsequent request for an extension of the same time limit will be refused unless the party requesting it can explain and justify the 'exceptional circumstances' that (a) prevented it from carrying out the required action during the previous two periods (i.e. the original time limit plus the first extension) and (b) still prevent the requester from carrying it out, so that more time is needed.

Examples of justifications that can be accepted:

- ‘Evidence is being gathered from distribution channels/all our licensees/our suppliers in several Member States. So far, we have gathered documents from some of them but, due to the commercial structure of the company (as shown in the document enclosed), we have only recently been able to contact the rest.’
- ‘In order to show that the mark has acquired distinctiveness through use we started carrying out market research at the beginning of the period (on date X). However, the fieldwork has only recently been concluded (as shown in the enclosed documents); consequently, we need a second extension in order to finish the analysis and prepare our submissions to the Office.’
- ‘Death’ is also considered an ‘exceptional circumstance’. The same applies to serious illness, provided that no reasonable substitution was available.
- Finally, ‘exceptional circumstances’ also include ‘force majeure’ situations. ‘Force majeure’ is defined as a natural and unavoidable catastrophe that interrupts the expected course of events. It includes natural disasters, wars and terrorism, and unavoidable events that are beyond the party’s control.

Where a request is filed for an extension to an extendable time limit before this time limit expires and is not accepted, the party concerned will be granted at least one day to meet the deadline, even if the request for an extension arrives on the last day of the time limit.

4.4 Continuation of proceedings

[Article 105 EUTMR](#)

Continuation of proceedings is not available in REUD proceedings.

The expressions ‘further processing’ and ‘continuation of proceedings’ have the same meaning.

[Article 105 EUTMR](#) provides for the continuation of proceedings where time limits have been missed but excludes various time limits laid down in certain articles of the EUTMR.

The **excluded** time limits are the following:

- those laid down in [Article 104 EUTMR](#) (*restitutio in integrum*) and [Article 105](#) itself (continuation of proceedings), in order to avoid double relief for missing the same time limit;
- those referred to in [Article 139 EUTMR](#), that is to say, the three-month period within which conversion must be requested and the conversion fee paid;
- the opposition period and the time limit for paying the opposition fee laid down in [Article 46 EUTMR](#);
- those laid down in [Article 32](#) (payment of the application fee), Articles [34\(1\)](#) (right of priority), [38\(1\)](#) (right of exhibition priority), [41\(2\)](#) (period to remedy filing deficiencies) and [53\(3\)](#) (period for renewal), [Article 68](#) (appeal) and [Article 72\(5\) EUTMR](#) (appeal before the Court of Justice), and the time limits laid down by

the EUTMR for claiming, after the application has been filed, seniority within the meaning of [Article 39 EUTMR](#) .

However, none of the time limits in **opposition proceedings** (other than the time limit for filing an opposition and paying the applicable fee, as mentioned above) are excluded. Consequently, continuation of proceedings is available for missing:

- the time limit under [Article 146\(7\) EUTMR](#) to translate the notice of opposition;
- the time limit under [Article 5\(5\) EUTMDR](#) to remedy deficiencies that affect the admissibility of the opposition;
- the time limits for the opponent to substantiate its opposition under [Article 7 EUTMDR](#) ;
- the time limit laid down in [Article 8\(2\) EUTMDR](#) for the applicant to reply;
- the time limit under [Article 8\(4\) EUTMDR](#) for the opponent to reply;
- the time limits for any further exchange of arguments, if allowed by the Office (07/12/2011, [R 2463/2010-1](#) , Pierre Robert/ Pierre Robert (fig.) ;
- the time limit under [Article 10\(1\) EUTMDR](#) for the applicant to request that the opponent prove use of its earlier mark;
- the time limit under [Article 10\(2\) EUTMDR](#) for the opponent to submit proof of use of its earlier mark;
- the time limit under [Article 10\(6\) EUTMDR](#) to translate proof of use.

Furthermore, [Article 105 EUTMR](#) does not exclude any of the time limits that apply in proceedings for **revocation** or **declaration of invalidity**.

The party seeking continuation of proceedings must make the request, for which a fee is charged as established in [Annex I of the EUTMR](#) , within two months of the expiry of the original time limit and complete the omitted act by the time the request for continuation is received. There is no substantive requirement to be fulfilled such as when requesting *restitutio in integrum*; i.e. there is no need to justify the missing of the time limit.

- Request to be submitted **within two months of the expiry of the original time limit**

The two months available for submitting a request for continuation of proceedings is an **objective** time limit and it is **non-extendable**. Consequently, unlike in the case of *restitutio in integrum*, it is irrelevant when the reason of non-compliance with the original time limit has been removed or when the party became aware of missing the original time limit.

The request is deemed to be received only once the applicable fee has been paid (400 EUR).

Once a request for continuation of proceedings has been **granted**, the time limit is deemed to be observed and the opportunity of continuation of proceedings is exhausted. Hence, any **subsequent** request for a continuation of proceedings for the same time limit is, by definition, inadmissible, even if submitted within the time remaining of the two months available for submitting such a request. Conversely, where the initial request for continuation of proceedings is **rejected**, a **subsequent** request for continuation of proceedings will be accepted if it is submitted within the

time remaining of the two months available for submitting such a request (and the other requirements are also complied with, i.e. the fee is paid and the omitted act is carried out).

- Omitted act must be carried out **together with the request**

The omitted act must be carried out together with the request. The Office also accepts if the omitted act is carried out **before submission of the request**, so long as the request is made within the two months of the expiry of the original time limit.

However, if the omitted act is carried out **after the submission of the request**, the request for continuation of proceedings will be rejected as inadmissible. This is so even in the case where the omitted act is carried out subsequent to the request, but still within the time remaining of the two months open for such a request.

- Omitted act must be **carried out**

The party requesting continuation of proceedings must perform the procedural act whose time limit it missed (e.g. submit evidence in support of the opposition, request proof use, submit observations in reply to the opposition). If the omitted act is not carried out, the request will be rejected as inadmissible. A request for an extension of time cannot substitute the completion of the omitted act.

The verification of the admissibility of the request does not entail an examination of whether the submission complies with the **substantive** legal requirements of the omitted act. Therefore, notwithstanding that a request for continuation of proceedings may have been found admissible and the relevant fees charged, the submission for 'carrying out the omitted act' may be found not to comply with the **substantive legal requirements** of the act concerned. Therefore, parties should prepare their submissions completing the omitted act with utmost care so that the request for continuation of proceedings could serve its purpose.

Examples:

- in the case of missing the time limit for **substantiation of the opposition**, if together with the request for continuation of proceedings the party submits documents with the purpose of substantiating the opposition, the omitted act will be considered to have been 'carried out' and the request for continuation of proceedings will be granted. However, that evidence may be found to be insufficient to substantiate the opposition later in the course of its **substantive** examination;
- in the case of missing a time limit for **submitting proof of use** in opposition proceedings, if together with the request for continuation of proceedings the party submits documents with the purpose of proving genuine use, the omitted act will be considered to have been 'carried out' and the request for continuation of proceedings will be granted. However, that evidence may be found to be insufficient to prove genuine use later in the course of its **substantive** examination;
- in the case of missing a time limit for **requesting proof of use** in opposition proceedings, if together with the request for continuation of proceedings the party submits a properly formulated request for proof of use (i.e. unambiguous, unconditional and submitted in a separate document, in compliance with the

formal requirements laid down in [Article 10\(1\) EUTMDR](#)), but the earlier mark is not yet subject to the requirement of use (thus does not satisfy the **substantive** requirement of [Article 47\(2\) or \(3\) EUTMR](#)), the omitted act will be considered to have been ‘carried out’ and the request for continuation of proceedings will be granted, however, the request for proof of use will be rejected.

However, the **formal** requirements of the omitted act must be complied with in order for the omitted act to be considered as duly **introduced** and, thus, ‘carried out’.

Example:

- in the case of missing a time limit for **requesting proof of use** in opposition proceedings, if under a separate heading **within** the request for continuation of proceedings (i.e. not in a separate document as required by [Article 10\(1\) EUTMDR](#)) the party requests proof of use, the request for proof of use will not be considered to have been **introduced**, and thus, the omitted act will not be considered to have been ‘carried out’. The request for continuation of proceedings will be rejected as inadmissible.
- Outcome of the request

If the Office **accepts** the request for continuation of proceedings, the consequences of having failed to observe the time limit will be deemed not to have occurred. If a decision has been taken between the expiry of that time limit and the request for the continuation of proceedings, the department competent to decide on the omitted act will review the decision and, where completion of the omitted act itself is sufficient, take a different decision. If, following the review, the Office concludes that the original decision does not need to be altered, it will confirm that decision in writing.

If the Office **rejects** the request for continuation of proceedings, the fee will be refunded, or if not yet debited from the party’s current account, it will not be charged ([Article 105\(5\) EUTMR](#)). However, as stated above, the party may introduce a new request if there is still time remaining of the two months open for such a request.

4.5 ***Restitutio in integrum***

A party to proceedings before the Office may be reinstated in its rights (*restitutio in integrum*) if, in spite of all due care required by the circumstances having been taken, it was unable to meet a time limit vis-à-vis the Office, provided that the failure to meet the time limit had the direct consequence, by virtue of the provisions of the regulations, of causing the loss of any right or means of redress.

For further information see [the Guidelines, Part A, General Rules, Section 8, *Restitutio in Integrum*](#).