

A new milestone in global IP: Mexico's IMPI as an international patent authority

Brief Overview

On July 13, 2026, the PCT Union Assembly designated the Mexican Patent and Trademark Office ("IMPI") as an International Searching Authority and International Preliminary Examining Authority. Mexico becomes the 26th such authority worldwide and only the fourth operating in Spanish, diversifying international search options and strengthening the global patent infrastructure for applicants and practitioners alike.

Full Article

The global landscape of patent examination has a new, strategic epicenter in Latin America. On July 13, 2026, during the Assemblies of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in Geneva, the PCT Union Assembly reached a transformative consensus: the Mexican Patent and Trademark Office ("IMPI," for its acronym in Spanish) has been officially designated as an International Searching Authority (ISA) and International Preliminary Examining Authority (IPEA). This appointment is not merely a regional achievement; it represents a critical expansion of the global patent infrastructure, offering the international legal community a sophisticated new partner in the pursuit of innovation protection.

This designation places IMPI within an elite global tier. It is only the 26th such authority in the world and, crucially, only the fourth to operate in the Spanish language, joining Spain, Chile, and Brazil. For the global legal community, this shift signifies Mexico's transition from a regional administrative body to a central pillar of international patent search and examination.

The strategic value for the global legal community

For patent practitioners and their clients, this development offers immediate operational advantages. The strategic implications of this shift are threefold, moving beyond simple procedural changes to provide deep value in international IP strategy:

- **Diversification of International Search Options:** Applicants now have access to a highly qualified, technically robust alternative for international searches and preliminary examinations, promoting a more resilient global ecosystem.
- **Legal Weight and Global Foundationality:** IMPI's search reports and written opinions will now serve as the technical bedrock for patentability judgments worldwide. For practitioners, this means the legal analysis performed in Mexico carries the same international standing as that of legacy authorities.
- **Harmonization for the Spanish-Speaking World:** By offering services in Spanish, IMPI significantly lowers linguistic and procedural barriers for the Latin American and Caribbean legal communities. This aligns Mexico with regional leaders, ensuring that legal arguments and technical disclosures are evaluated with linguistic precision.

This international trust was not granted as a formality; it was the result of a multi-year institutional overhaul aimed at meeting the most rigorous technical and legal standards.

The commitment to excellence: infrastructure and standards

Earning the status of an ISA/IPEA required IMPI to undertake a massive institutional transformation. This effort was framed as a holistic commitment to international excellence, ensuring that the office’s technical and human infrastructure could support the weight of global patentability judgments.

The specific technical milestones achieved by IMPI, as validated during the appointment process, are summarized below:

Requirement Category	IMPI's Specific Achievement
Human Capital	Expansion to approximately 500 trained staff members, significantly exceeding the PCT treaty requirement of 100 full-time examiners.
Quality Management	Full implementation of a Quality Management System (QMS) based on ISO 9001:2015, featuring clear strategic process maps and a public quality policy.
Technical Documentation	Full compliance with Annex H of the PCT Administrative Instructions; processed 3,660 documents between January and March 2026.
Data Interoperability	100% of publications now in full-text XML format (WIPO Standard ST.36), ensuring seamless data integration with global IP databases.

To maintain precision, IMPI integrated high-tier digital tools, including WIPO OCR (which achieves a text extraction precision rate exceeding 90%) and WIPO Translate for the high-quality machine translation of abstracts and titles. These internal advancements were a prerequisite for the international backing that ultimately secured Mexico’s new role.

The role of international collaboration

In the specialized world of intellectual property, technical excellence is validated through peer-to-peer trust. Mexico’s path to designation was paved by a deep partnership with the Spanish Patent and Trademark Office (OEPM). This collaboration included critical technical visits in March 2026, where OEPM experts verified IMPI’s quality management structures and documentation formats.

This technical validation led to a unanimous recommendation by the Committee for Technical Cooperation (CTC) during its meeting in February 2026. The breadth of the eventual consensus in Geneva was striking, with Mexico’s appointment receiving formal backing from a diverse group of global powers, including Canada, China, France, South Korea, India, and Australia, alongside the collective support of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Future outlook: navigating the “Paradox of Invention”

While the applause in Geneva marks a historic success, the strategic focus must now shift to operational reality. Mexico faces a unique challenge — the “Paradox of Invention.” The country has been called to judge the world’s ingenuity even as its own domestic patenting rates remain modest. To succeed, IMPI must evolve from an office that is traditionally robust in trademarks to one that is a global leader in high-tech invention analysis.

The roadmap for the coming years involves several critical success factors:

- 1. Sustaining Human Capital:** IMPI's 500 examiners represent a major leap, but to put this in perspective, global leaders like China employ 16,000 examiners. Maintaining a sustainable, highly specialized workforce is the primary long-term challenge.
- 2. Operational Certainty:** Moving from designation to implementation requires signing the first official international search opinions with processing times and legal certainty that meet global expectations.
- 3. Institutional Resources:** Ensuring that the technical infrastructure and human talent receive sustained, year-over-year funding regardless of political cycles.

Conclusion

For the global legal community, a robust IMPI serves our shared interest in a diverse and accessible international IP system. By judging the world's ingenuity with precision, Mexico has the opportunity to catalyze its own domestic innovation, proving that a sophisticated IP infrastructure is the most reliable bridge to a knowledge-based economy.

At Ramos, Ripoll & Schuster®, we will continue to monitor IMPI's operational rollout as an ISA/IPEA and its practical implications for international patent strategies involving Mexico.

Practice Group

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