

Glossary:International patent classification (IPC)

Statistics Explained

The **International patent classification** , abbreviated as **IPC** , was established by the **Strasbourg Agreement** of 1971. It creates a hierarchical system of language-independent symbols for the classification of patents and utility models according to the different technical fields to which they belong.

The classification system contains about 70 000 entries, i.e. classification symbols or codes that can be allotted to patent documents.

Symbols are arranged in a hierarchical, tree-like structure:

- at the highest level are the eight *sections* corresponding to very broad technical fields (e.g., Section C deals with chemistry and metallurgy);
- sections are further subdivided into *classes* (e.g., Class C21 deals with the metallurgy of iron);
- classes are divided into more than 600 *subclasses* (e.g., Subclass A21B contains bakers' ovens and machines or equipment for baking).

Further information

- [World Intellectual Property Organization \(WIPO\): international patent classification \(IPC\)](#)

Statistical data

- [Patent statistics](#) (archived)