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**Datasheet for the decision  
of 5 December 2025**

**Case Number:** T 2153/22 - 3.5.01

**Application Number:** 18171824.8

**Publication Number:** 3401863

**IPC:** G06Q20/14, G06Q20/36, G06Q20/38

**Language of the proceedings:** EN

**Title of invention:**

METHOD FOR PAYING COST OF IOT DEVICE BASED ON BLOCKCHAIN, AND SERVER, SERVICE PROVIDING DEVICE, AND DIGITAL WALLET USING THE SAME

**Applicant:**

CPlabs Inc.

**Headword:**

Payment for IoT device/CPLABS

**Relevant legal provisions:**

EPC Art. 111(1)  
EPC R. 103(1)(a), 111(2)  
RPBA 2020 Art. 11

**Keyword:**

Appealed decision - sufficiently reasoned (no)

Remittal - fundamental deficiency in first-instance proceedings (yes)



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**Boards of Appeal**  
**Chambres de recours**

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Case Number: T 2153/22 - 3.5.01

**D E C I S I O N**  
**of Technical Board of Appeal 3.5.01**  
**of 5 December 2025**

**Appellant:**  
(Applicant)

CPlabs Inc.  
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Seongnam-si, Gyeonggi-do, 13449 (KR)

**Representative:**

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**Decision under appeal:**

**Decision of the Examining Division of the  
European Patent Office posted on 5 April 2022  
refusing European patent application No.  
18171824.8 pursuant to Article 97(2) EPC.**

**Composition of the Board:**

**Chairwoman**

I. Kürten

**Members:**

A. Wahrenberg

D. Rogers

## **Summary of Facts and Submissions**

- I. This case concerns the appeal against the examining division's decision to refuse the European patent application No. 18171824.8, for added subject-matter (Article 123(2) EPC) and lack of inventive step (Article 56 EPC).
- II. In the statement of grounds of appeal, the appellant requested that the decision under appeal be set aside and that a patent be granted on the basis of the main request or, alternatively, on one of auxiliary requests 1 to 5. The appellant also requested oral proceedings as a further auxiliary request.
- III. In a communication pursuant to Rule 100(2) EPC, the Board indicated that it was minded to remit the case to the examining division due to a substantial procedural violation during the examination proceedings, and to order reimbursement of the appeal fee. The Board invited the appellant to indicate whether, in view of these circumstances, the request for oral proceedings was maintained.
- IV. In response, the appellant withdrew the request for oral proceedings and requested that the case be remitted to the examining division and that the appeal fee be reimbursed.
- V. Claim 1 of the main request reads:
1. A method of a payment for an Internet of Things (IoT) device (120), comprising steps of:
    - a) a payment supporting server (200), on condition that the payment supporting server (200) has registered

a certificate of the IoT device (120), a certificate of a service providing device (110), and a certificate of a digital wallet (130) of a user with a blockchain database (300), and manages (S21-S24) each of their corresponding blockchain transaction IDs and link information on a link between information on the IoT device (120) and information on the digital wallet (130) as a payer therefor, if a billing transaction which refers to the information on the payer is acquired (S216) from the service providing device (110), confirming (S217) validity of the billing transaction, wherein the billing transaction includes identification information on the service providing device (110), identification information on the IoT device (120), a billing detail, a smart contract including one or more payment conditions for the billing detail, and a signature value for billing acquired by signing the billing detail with the certificate of the service providing device, and wherein the information on the payer includes the identification information on the IoT device (120), and is received from the IoT device (120) in response to a request for the information on the payer from the service providing device (110);

(b) the payment supporting server (200) acquiring (S219) identification information on the digital wallet (130) corresponding to the identification information on the IoT device (120) included in the billing transaction from the blockchain database (300) by referring to the link information; and

(c) the payment supporting server (200) performing, if the billing detail included in the billing transaction corresponds to the one or more payment conditions included in the smart contract, processes of (i) confirming (S220) the payment conditions included in the smart contract and allowing (S221) the billing

detail to be paid for according to the smart contract by using the digital wallet (130) corresponding to the identification information on the digital wallet (130) acquired from the blockchain database (300) by referring to the link information, (ii) registering (S222) a payment result including a payment detail corresponding to the billing detail in the blockchain database (300) and managing its corresponding blockchain transaction ID, and (iii) transmitting (S223) the payment result to at least one of the service providing device (110), the IoT device (120), and the digital wallet (130).

### **Reasons for the Decision**

1. The main request was rejected on the grounds of added subject-matter (Article 123(2) EPC) and lack of inventive step (Article 56 EPC). In the Board's view, neither objection is sufficiently reasoned in the decision, contrary to the requirements of Rule 111(2) EPC. This constitutes a fundamental deficiency in the examination proceedings and amounts to a substantial procedural violation.
  
2. Claim 1 of the main request was considered to represent a combination of features allegedly taken from two separate embodiments, namely those disclosed in Figures 6 and 10. It was further argued that the features derived from Figure 10 had been extracted from their original context, as certain non-optional features were omitted. However, the examining division did not identify which features were taken from which embodiment, nor did they specify which elements of the embodiment in Figure 10 had purportedly been omitted.

This constitutes a fundamental flaw in the reasoning. A comparison of the figures suggests that the embodiment of Figure 10 already comprises all the features shown in Figure 6, which is also the appellant's position. Accordingly, it is not immediately apparent how claim 1 could be regarded as a combination of the two embodiments. To determine whether claim 1 contains added subject-matter, the Board would effectively have to reassess the issue from the ground up - something that is not the function of an appeal.

3. The examining division further concluded that claim 1 lacked an inventive step (Article 56 EPC).

First, they identified the *prima facie* technical features of the claim as: a server executing smart contracts, an IoT device connected to the server, a service providing device, and a blockchain database storing information corresponding to digital wallets.

The examining division interpreted the terms "IoT device" and "service providing device" broadly, as encompassing generic electronic devices. It further considered a "blockchain" to be nothing more than an abstract dataset comprising chained blocks of data, with the "blockchain database" in claim 1 therefore covering a generic database for storing such an abstract blockchain. At most, in the examining division's view, this amounted to a technical implementation of a distributed ledger of transactions executed according to validation conditions defined by smart contracts. Thus, the technical contribution of claim 1 was reduced to a server executing smart contracts, connected to generic devices, with a blockchain database storing digital wallet information.

Next, the examining division stated - without providing any concrete feature mapping - that D1, D2, or "Bitcoin" (D4) disclosed "at least" a server connected to an IoT device, a service providing device, and a blockchain database storing information corresponding to digital wallets.

4. However, the Board finds it unclear what, precisely, was regarded as the server and the service providing device in those documents. In point 2.10 of the appealed decision, claim 1 was said to differ "at most" by certain features, but these were indicated merely by striking out elements of the claim text and replacing them with generic terms, without explanation. In the Board's view, this does not amount to a sufficiently clear identification of the distinguishing features over the prior art.
5. The examining division then asserted, again without substantiation, that the distinguishing features amounted to a "non-technical method of payment". The certificates were said to serve no technical purpose, functioning only as identifiers of the parties to the payment transaction. The same reasoning was applied to the signature value, which was defined only as an approval of billing obtained by signing the billing details with the service provider's certificate, the latter likewise being characterised merely as an identifier.
6. The Board considers that the reasoning provided is neither sufficiently clear nor sufficiently detailed to explain why claim 1 lacks an inventive step. Beyond the absence of feature mapping against the prior art and the insufficient identification of distinguishing features, the reasoning on technicality is inadequate,

as it fails to consider the interaction between the claimed payment method and the technical entities involved. It may well be that the IoT device and the service-providing device merely represent participants in the payment transaction. However, the server appears to play a more substantive technical role by interacting with the blockchain database, managing the link between the IoT device and the wallet (so that the IoT device can make automatic payments without human intervention), and executing a smart contract - something the examining division itself acknowledged as a technical feature. Smart contracts were said to be known from D4, but the specific role of the server was not considered (see point 2.16 of the decision).

7. In summary, because the examining division's reasoning is insufficient to enable a proper understanding of why claim 1 is considered to lack an inventive step, the Board would be forced to re-examine the claim *de novo* in light of the cited prior art in order to make such an assessment. Again, this is not the function of an appeal.
8. For these reasons, the Board considers that special reasons exist for remitting the case to the examining division (Article 111(1) EPC and Article 11 RPBA). Since, owing to a substantial procedural violation, the Board remits the case without considering the substantive issues, the Board considers it equitable to order reimbursement of the appeal fee (Rule 103(1)(a) EPC).

## Order

### For these reasons it is decided that:

1. The decision under appeal is set aside.
2. The case is remitted to the examining division for further prosecution.
3. The appeal fee is reimbursed.

The Registrar:

The Chairwoman:



T. Buschek

I. Kürten

Decision electronically authenticated