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The Working Party on Legal Data Processing met on 15 and 16 June 1998 and monitored the progress of the work carried out concerning the CELEX system and the electronic dissemination of law in general.

## **I. COMMUNITY LEGAL DATABASE, CELEX**

### **1. 1997 CELEX annual management report (Interinstitutional computerised documentation system for Community law)**

The Working Party took note of the CELEX annual management report for 1997 as contained in 8281/98 JURINFO 2.

CELEX had pursued three main objectives, which had been fully attained, apart from the other work that had been carried out such as continuation of the qualitative revision of the CELEX base.

The first of these objectives involves making available to the public the WEB interrogation graphic interface to provide simple and user-friendly interrogation of the database. This objective, which is precisely in line with the decisions taken to provide greater transparency for the European citizen concerning the European Union's achievements and better knowledge of its law (see point 5 of this report), has led to a considerable increase in direct use of the original CELEX bases.

However, it has transpired that this trend has failed to offset the significant drop in the proportion of revenue from final users of CELEX. Bearing in mind that the trend will be towards broader dissemination of EUR-Lex, as a free service to the public, it emerges from the report that there are serious grounds to fear a worsening of the situation regarding CELEX revenue which calls for compensatory measures which have yet to be defined.

Secondly, it had been possible to open up the Finnish and Swedish versions of CELEX to external users.

Lastly, production of the directory of legislation in force in Finnish and Swedish had been the third objective achieved by CELEX.

The management and dissemination work had been steered by the Interinstitutional CELEX Group (GIC) and by the Council Working Party on Legal Data Processing at its meetings on 11 June and 26 November 1997 and on 15 and 16 June 1998.

## **2. Work programme for 1998**

CELEX has set several objectives (see 8282/98 JURINFO 3), of which the following, in particular, should be highlighted.

### **(a) Setting-up of a new production system for the CELEX base**

Several projects will be carried out with a view to setting up a new CELEX production system so as to supplement the data available in the system, such as the inclusion of all the documents published in the C series of the Official Journal or the text of the Amsterdam Treaty.

In addition, the reference numbers of CELEX documents will be adjusted in preparation for the year 2000. It is intended to incorporate the four digits corresponding to the reference year (e.g. 31993R2454). This system will be implemented towards mid-1999 (see 9367/98 JURINFO 13 for further details).

### **(b) Move towards new documentation software**

A shift in the CELEX dissemination system, which is currently based on the MISTRAL software, should take place before the year 2000.

Since 1997, the Commission Informatics Directorate and the Office for Official Publications have been examining solutions in order to find a system enabling the dissemination software for the CELEX base to be incorporated. In seeking these solutions, the Office and the Informatics Directorate have taken account of precise evaluation criteria such as interrogation operability and performance, data structuring capacity, multilingual management, thesaurus management, updating performance and compliance with the architecture and products selected.

In July 1998, the Commission Informatics Directorate and the Office for Official Publications will carry out a detailed evaluation of a new dissemination architecture which could be adopted in September 1998.

## **3. Dissemination of Community law**

Currently, "EUROPA" (<http://EUROPA.eu.int>) already constitutes a system providing wide-dissemination access to data on the European Institutions, their achievements and the acts.

EUROPA provides a range of information to the European public in general and to the media in particular (450 000 documents, over 1 000 000 pages and 1 000 000 hits a day, excluding EUR-Lex and CELEX, 180 000 of which are viewed every day. 300 000 users were connected to EUROPE in April 1998, a monthly increase in the region of 20%. 33 million hits were recorded in May 1998).

Considerable growth in on-line use of CELEX has been noted due to access to the CELEX-WEB graphic interface for the public since 1 August 1997.

Currently, a website has been opened in the Europa server, providing free access to Community legal texts (EUR-Lex – "Europeae Unionis Lex") (<http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex>).

Available in the eleven official languages of the European Union and updated daily with the latest issues of the Official Journal, in the long run it will include all the following documents:

- the Official Journal, the L ("Legislation") and C ("Communications") series. The OJs are available free of charge for twenty days, and are then available against payment in the EUDOR optical archive or the CELEX database, also accessible via the Internet <sup>(1)</sup>;
- the Treaties in force (Rome, Maastricht etc.) and that currently in the process of being ratified (Amsterdam Treaty) <sup>(1)</sup>;
- the legislation in force, including the consolidated versions of certain texts;
- the texts in preparation for legislation;
- recent case law <sup>(1)</sup>.

Access to such data, which is free of charge, has proved to be of great interest to the public. Over the last few months, link-ups to EUROPA and EUR-Lex have on average increased by a very high rate from one month to the next.

This access to the EUROPA website has proved a success in terms of rendering the law adopted by the Institutions transparent to the European citizen.

Furthermore, the Working Party attached a particular interest to the legal status of electronic publication of legal data as well as to the requirements for giving such data a legal status.

#### **4. Financial prospects for CELEX**

A large-scale exercise has begun for the future of CELEX, aimed at finding solutions to counter the substantial drop in revenue from CELEX.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Already available at present.

This decrease in CELEX revenue in favour of greater transparency of European law for the European citizen and for all those under its jurisdiction, calls for a careful review of CELEX's invoicing criteria.

In the light of the foregoing, the Working Party would reaffirm the importance it attaches to:

- preserving the investment made in CELEX during previous years, and
- maintaining the level of development of CELEX, which is the guarantee of its quality.

A possible solution will be sought by adopting a new pricing method, which does not involve an excessive increase in the cost of CELEX for those who must have access to it. It is already apparent that the review will not be enough to make up for lost revenue.

This being so, it should be borne in mind that new budgetary solutions will probably have to be considered (increasing appropriations to make up for the reduction in revenue).

#### **5. Improved access to Community law and its transposition into national law**

Following the guidelines laid down in 1997, the Office for Official Publications has been asked to set up a pilot project (EULEX) to improve access to Community law and its transposition into national law.

In particular, the project enables national measures taken to implement Community Directives to be viewed on screen. The system is based on standard interfaces and uses the Internet, and gives centralised access to measures transposing Community Directives in national data bases.

The Working Party carried out an initial evaluation of the pilot project, which is still in the set-up phase. It was able to note that such a system will give access to several national data bases without the user having to know the interrogation procedures. The system can also deal with cases where access to national data bases must be paid for.

The Working Party welcomed the progress of the work, which was of great added value in this area. It requested that the work be continued in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the past for setting up the system. The Working Party agreed to re-examine the feasibility of the system at its next meeting, and the financial consequences to be drawn when the pilot project was complete.

The Working Party agreed to re-examine the draft standard form prepared by the Spanish delegation in 1994 concerning the notification of transposition of Community Directives into national law in order to improve the quality of data in sector 7 of CELEX. The Working Party agreed to finalise its discussions on this point at its next meeting.

## **II. ELECTRONIC DISSEMINATION OF LAW**

The Working Party took note of certain aspects of the policy for disseminating public legal data bases in the Member States, as contained in 8288/98 JURINFO 9 and 8289/98 JURINFO 10.

The following aspects are particularly important:

- legal provisions governing on-line dissemination (Internet and other means of electronic dissemination to the public) and the type of public data available in the Member States free of charge or not ;
- bodies which disseminate legal data on electronic networks in the Member States and any agreements or licences transferring rights to undertakings for marketing public data;
- the price of disseminating public data;
- the protection of personal data, and
- the official status of the publication of legal data in electronic form.

The Working Party agreed that the final adjustments to these texts should be made no later than the end of September 1998, bearing in mind that they would be periodically updated in the light of national electronic developments. The Working Party also noted that such data, where appropriate, should be accessible to the public electronically.

## **III. OTHER AREAS OF ACTIVITY OF THE WORKING PARTY**

### **Consolidation**

The Commission is continuing to submit proposals for codification despite existing difficulties (multilingualism, constantly developing standards).