

European e-Justice Portal Pilot by Austria , Germany and other Member States State of Play

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In summer 2007 a pilot of the European e-Justice portal was established by the Initiative of some Member States and the Council under the lead of Austria within 5 weeks.

From a technical point of view the European e-Justice Portal currently provides a portal engine, content management, account management, portal system management, security and session management, personalisation and portlet management.

Based on the above mentioned functionalities up to now the Insolvency registers of eleven Member States have been integrated: Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Triggered by the need to have translation easily available - especially expressed by the French presidency and the commission - the integration of the Austrian and the German (North Rhine-Westphalia) interpreter databases was accomplished during the second half of 2008. The database integration is done via Webservice interfaces and provides a common search feature over all interconnected databases.

Next steps should be the integration of other interested Member States. Also a legal, organisational and practical glossary should be added and technical refinements will have to be made.

Priorities concerning the content of the European e-Justice portal have been established 2007 by the council of ministers and were in the second half of 2008 refined by an action plan for e-Justice elaborated by the French presidency. The council of ministers took note of it. End of 2008 the Commission provided a technical reference for the European e-Justice portal concerning the work to be done in 2009 and envisaging a roadmap for the time after 2009.

The European e-Justice action plan contains a lot of projects which shall all be realised within or in close connection with the European e-Justice Portal: European e-Justice portal itself, interconnection of criminal records, European order for payment procedure, legal aid, European small claims procedure, translation, better use of videoconferencing technology, mediation, electronic signature, service of judicial and extrajudicial documents (by electronic means), online payment of procedural costs, interconnection of insolvency registers, interconnection of land registers (integration of EULIS), interconnection of commercial registers (integration of EBR), interconnection of registers of wills, training of legal practitioners.

The portal will ultimately provide access to the whole European e-Justice system, i.e. to European and

national information websites and/or services, at the service of citizens, judicial authorities and legal practitioners, to enhance and facilitate judicial work. Therefore a decentralised system has to be created as envisaged already in the informal JAI in January 2007 in Dresden. The aim should be to establish portals at national level as well as the European e-Justice portal at the European level which should then be joined together to form a European portal interconnection system, based on the principle of mutual trust between the participants and a high degree of decentralisation.

During the second half of 2008 the commission has decided to build up the European e-Justice portal in cooperation with a framework contractor considering the work already done by Member States. According to the decision of the Council of Ministers the European e-Justice portal should be up and running by the end of 2009. Considering this development those are the options:

- The Commission sets up a portal including the interconnection of insolvency and interpreter databases by studying the pilot portal of the Member States or
- the Commission sets up the European e-Justice portal and the database interconnection is expanded and maintained by the Member States and integrated via portal interconnection.

The clear advantage of the second solution is, that work is more efficient and results are faster available thanks to the already up and running system and the well proved skills, experience and know how of the team.

In any case sufficient financial means must be provided either by the commission or by contributions from the Member States. It is unthinkable to lay the complete financial burden on just a single country. If the financial issue cannot be solved in reasonable time we would be forced to consider the possibility to shut down the e-Justice portal. Until there is a clear perspective on the future of the pilot project any further development of the portal or the integration of other Member States must be considered as a waste of effort and cannot be justified.

These questions aside we are going to work together with our partners on the following projects, co-funded by the EC, to contribute to the further development of e-Justice within the framework of the European e-Justice portal:

- Role and Rights Based Access for Civil Justice Applications (JLS/CJ/2007-1/38)
- Interface Specification for Civil Justice Applications (JLS/CJ/2007-1/37)
- Integration Concepts for National Insolvency Registers to e-Justice portal (JLS/CJ/2007-1/36)