

ICT in the courtroom: the evidence is clear

By bringing the latest ICT solutions into the courtroom, eCOURT supports prosecutors, judges and lawyers in their daily activities.

Despite recent technological advances, innovation in the European judicial system is still at an early stage. Although some EU countries have started activities in this field, they are still quite limited and at a local level. At the same time, citizens' expectations of the justice system are increasing. And steps to reform the European judicial system so as to harmonise laws between Member States, present new demands. Current judicial ICT solutions are reaching their limits: new solutions are needed to enhance the process of justice, make it faster, as well as easier to share information across borders.

IST's eCOURT project (FP5) focused on these next generation systems for judicial management. It has developed a new technological platform for the European judicial community to store, process and exchange information. Its solution provides a common framework for exchanging information among European judicial systems and improves the search, retrieval and archiving of multimedia documents from trials. In addition, the eCOURT solution provides a service for European citizens to search and access the public domain information about these trials.

To reach this solution, the partners first defined user requirements by analysing in detail judicial procedures. They were then able to create an advanced integrated and automated court system that allows the user to retrieve and consult all the synchronized multimedia testimony and statements acquired during trials. This Intelligent Information Retrieval system makes document indexing quicker and more accurate. At the same time, the system is able to handle the interchange of documents and information between different countries.

The eCOURT solution has been evaluated and validated at pilot sites in Varese (Italy) and Wroclaw (Poland). In Poland, since July 2003 criminal procedures have allowed the use of audio and video recording instead of written records, provided that a verbatim transcript of the record is also kept in the case file. The parties are entitled to obtain a transcript, as well as a copy of the record (usually a tape or CD). eCOURT helped implement these requirements and brought major efficiencies in Polish judicial proceedings.

As well as the technological aspect, eCOURT fostered process innovation by applying new information retrieval and workflow management concepts to the judicial management process. By re-organising and improving judicial administration it brings better eGovernment services for citizens.

Policy Case At A Glance

Project name:	eCOURT
Reference number:	IST-2000-28199 (FP5)
Web:	http://laplace.intrasoft-intl.com/e-court/
Policy domain(s):	Justice, Freedom & Security
Policy sub-domains:	Criminal justice; judicial co-operation
Related policy measure:	Treaty of Amsterdam; Communication: Area of Freedom, Security and Justice: Assessment of the Tampere programme and future orientations, COM(2004) 401
Expected impact:	Increased efficiency and effectiveness of the European judicial system
Beneficiaries:	Judicial authorities; legal profession; citizens

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Making the Link

The projects and results described here are just one of many policy-relevant activities funded by Information Society & Media DG (DG INFSO). The Information Society Policy Link initiative aims to leverage the benefits of these activities for European policies. We are here to make the link.

For Project Consortia, we can help you to:

- Organise Policy Workshops and events targeted at the European policy community.
- Make introductions to policy-makers in European institutions and national administrations.
- Make contact with relevant and complementary projects and initiatives funded under other European programmes.
- Identify means to further exploit policy aspects of your results, including through further research, deployment and regulation.

For Policy-makers in the EU institutions and Member States, we can help you to:

- Maintain awareness of Information Society activities relevant to your policy domain.
- Identify promising projects and results within Information Society & Media DG's portfolio.
- Explore ways in which Information Society developments can support the implementation and monitoring of European and national policies.
- Build a dialogue with Information Society & Media DG on future needs and research requirements.

If you wish to utilise these project results, or those of similar activities funded by Information Society & Media Directorate-General, please get in touch.

Further Information

Information Society Policy Link initiative

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Europe's Information Society:

Thematic Portal
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