



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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**NOTE**

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from : Office for Official Publications of the European Communities  
to : Working Party on Legal Data Processing  
Subject : State of progress for NAT-Lex

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*[On 25 May a heavy storm disrupted the electricity supply to the main Data Centre machine room in the JMO, Luxembourg causing the breakdown of several servers, amongst which that housing NAT-Lex. As programmes are being reinstalled according to priorities NAT-Lex is still unlikely to be available on 10 June 2005.]*

**1. Introduction**

NAT-Lex is a common access for sources of national law developed by the Publications Office at the request of the Council working party on legal data processing. The interest in this project is the development of a single harmonised multilingual search interface that will facilitate the access to legislation across the European Union.

## 2. Development (Reminder)

The first stage of the NAT-Lex project (Phase I August 2002-April 2003) defined the architecture of the web user interface with the establishment of the common search fields and the target services to be included in the second phase of the project. This first phase covered online documentation services for France, Austria, Finland and the United Kingdom.

Phases II and III (2003-2004) followed the mandate of the Council working party on legal data processing to:

- (a) restrict the coverage to national legislative collections only but extend the scope to all 15 pre-May 2004 Member States;
- (b) examine the possibility of harmonising the format for the display of search results across the different sources;
- (c) improve and adapt the interface and help texts.

Thus in 2004 the site was graphically improved with the extension in coverage to national legislative databases of the 15 Member States in 11 language versions. Technical helps were added and the incorporation of the Eurovoc thesaurus to assist the searching in unfamiliar languages.

In 2004 the Council working party further mandated the Publications Office to:

- (a) identify appropriate legislative sites for the new post-1 May 2004 Member States and develop the site to include these;
- (b) stabilise the access with a view to opening the site to the public in 2005;
- (c) draft juridical help texts initially in the 11 original languages but since extended to all 20 languages in so far as possible.

From October 2004 the Publications Office has been working on the extension and adaptation, where necessary, of NAT-Lex. In general identifying sites for the new Member States has proved more complicated than initially thought and various sites both for new and old Member States have been subject to changes automatically cancelling access via NAT-Lex. Unfortunately these changes to national databases are only discovered at random when the access to NAT-Lex no longer works. This makes the process of adaptation to NAT-Lex cumbersome as adaptation requires each time to follow usual financial procedures before work can commence. Work between April and May 2005 came to a standstill due to technical problems linked to the programmed closing of the CELEX machine and transfer to new machines.

Drafting of the legal help texts has begun for the original 11 Member States and should be completed for July 2005.

To prepare for the opening of NAT-Lex service to the public it will be necessary to adapt the site's specifications to the new EUR-Lex site together with the revised Europa requirements. Furthermore before the site can be opened to the public a new name will have to be found as the current name is already in use.

### 3. Status of the development work as at April 2005

#### 1. Belgium – Moniteur belge

OK

#### 2. Czech Republic – Ministry of the Interior

National site changed since January 2005 requiring further adaptation work

#### 3. Denmark – Retsinfo

OK

#### 4. Germany – Juris/Bundesrecht

OK minor corrections

5. Estonia – eRT

National site subject to connection problems.

6. Greece – ET

Despite some policy changes (offers now free consultation to the contents pages for all OJs published in 2005) there is still no free access to the official journal archives. Consultation only permitted to presidential decrees and legislation (number of law). Limited use. New evolutions might come.

7. Spain - BOE

Addition of a further collection option requiring some adaptation.

8. France - Legifrance

Changes to the national site removed the access to the consolidated legislation collection. Work required to adapt search mask.

9. Ireland – Attorney General site

National site changed requiring further development/adaptation work

10. Italy – NIR

OK

11. Cyprus

Currently no freely accessible national site

12. Latvia

No national site available

13. Lithuania – Seimas database

Development work currently underway.

14. Luxembourg – Legilux

Adaptation to the changed national site completed

15. Hungary

No free of charge national site currently available

16. Malta – Laws of Malta (EN and MT) Ministry of Justice

Development work progressing

17. Netherlands – Wet –en Regelgeving

OK

18. Austria - RIS

OK

19. Poland

No national site available

20. Portugal – Infocid

Site Digesto has changed again requiring further development work

21. Slovenia

No national site available

22. Slovakia – JASPI

Work underway. Problems with special characters due to the format used in the national site

23. Finland – Finlex

National site appears to be undergoing changes which will require further adaptation in NAT-Lex

24. Sweden – Lagrummet

Correction work underway

25. United Kingdom – HMSO (to be changed)

OK some adaptation work carried out

The list above demonstrates the sensitivity of NAT-Lex to any changes occurring in the national sites. This could have an impact on its long-term viability. The only site with a relatively stable access is that of Spain due to the use of XML in the source site and the development of web services. Current adaptations are purely for the addition of a further feature in the search.

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