



This document was funded by the European Union's Justice Programme (2014-2020)

iSupport

cross-border recovery
of maintenance obligations
*pour le recouvrement transfrontière
des obligations alimentaires*

iSupport Governing Body, 4 October 2018 Summary of discussions

Participants

The meeting was chaired by Floor de Jongh Bekkali representing Norway. In attendance were representatives of the European Commission, Austria, Brazil, the state of California, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United States of America and the university of Thessaloniki. Switzerland was excused. The Permanent Bureau (PB) was represented by Philippe Lortie, Charlotte Darbas and Jean-Marc Pellet.

A recording of the meeting is available here:

<http://assets.hcch.net/docs/ff4a2149-8c87-4178-900f-8d8d98892edc.mp4>

Introduction

First Secretary Philippe Lortie introduced the meeting and thanked all participants in attendance. He indicated that Alisha Griffin stepped down from her position as director of California's department of child support services. He thanked Alisha for her work, including chairing the Governing Body, and welcomed her continued involvement as observer in the iSupport Governing Body. She will continue to assist the PB, possibly in helping to raise funds for the development of iSupport. Following consultations with some participants, Floor de Jongh Bekkali was named as a possible new chair for the Governing Body. Philippe Lortie asked if there was any objection. None was raised and the meeting proceeded.

Report on September 2017 decisions

The iSupport coordinator presented an overview of the achievements since the last Governing Body. Two new versions were released in December 2017 and August 2018. They include a number of functional improvements, translation to German and Portuguese, compatibility with additional browsers, the capacity to separate the caseload in several jurisdictions and the possibility to use two-factor authentication. The August 2018 version also gives States the capacity to edit templates in their own language and add their logo. This will also allow the PB to produce translated versions of the 2007 Convention forms.

A new version including encryption in the application will be finalised for the beginning of 2019.

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The iSupport coordinator also noted the recent progress in establishing new connections, with Estonia, Finland and Norway. It is hoped that they can soon start using iSupport in a production capacity. Brazil has also made significant progress. In this respect, the establishment of the e-CODEX connection has proved to be one of the main difficulties. However, the contractor, Protech, has now acquired significant knowledge about e-CODEX and contact is maintained with the e-CODEX consortium to express iSupport's requirements. Cooperation on a broker (central messaging facility) is also being sought with e-CODEX. One participant wondered about the impact of the incoming encryption version. The PB indicated that, indeed, the new encryption version would, because of this very feature, not be compatible with previous versions. This means that, for instance, data sent from the August version to the encryption version would not be displayed correctly. This does not mean that data present in an August version installed by a State will be erased when that State moves to the encryption version. The need for smooth transitions has repeatedly been brought to Protech's attention. The PB also highlighted that it is strongly recommended that States use the latest version in circulation, as required in the implementation agreement, and transition at the same time.

Implementation agreement

After the expiration of the current implementation agreement on 31 August 2018, the need for a new agreement was raised by several participants. For those countries which have already signed the agreement, it is proposed to extend it through an exchange of letters with the PB. Countries that have not signed the agreement would be invited to sign an amended version.

Both would reflect the following proposed amendments:

- References to "until 31 August 2018" in Article 3 shall be construed as reference to "until 31 August 2020"
- Article 8 shall read as:

"Provided that the State of XX has financially contributed to the iSupport PM project under the EU Grant Agreement 800806 –iSupport PM, the fixed annual maintenance fee of €75.000 will be solely borne by the Hague Conference until 31 August 2020.

The Hague Conference will monitor any additional maintenance costs that may occur and inform the State of XX and the Other States in advance, should the costs of incidents or RFCs be on course not to be covered by the fixed amount.

In this case, the State of XX and the Other States will then be invited to confirm their interest in iSupport and their willingness to contribute to the additional costs, on the basis of an estimate provided by the Hague Conference. The additional costs will be divided by the number of units (UPU) of all States operating iSupport and apportioned among these States in accordance with their respective number of units allocated for the purpose of the Regular Budget of the Hague Conference.

Should the State of XX or any Other State not be willing to contribute to the additional costs, it will inform the Hague Conference of its willingness to terminate the agreement, which will be immediately effective, in accordance with Article 12.

Fees will be charged in Euros.

The State of XX must make payment of a correctly rendered invoice within 30 days after receiving the invoice.

If a State implements iSupport in the middle of the financial year, any costs exceeding the provisional budget here above mentioned will be allocated on a pro rata basis using the number of days that iSupport will be operational that year, for that State.

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For the purpose of this article, the State of XX commits to using the latest recommended version of the iSupport system, within a reasonable timeframe to upgrade to the latest version, as well as to fulfilling its obligations under this Agreement.”

As the text of Article 8 was amended after remarks from a State, participants are invited to indicate if they have any objection to this new wording.

Philippe Lortie remarked that, while iSupport is financed until 2020, there is expectation from the European Commission that the project be financially sustainable at this stage. He recommended the setting up of a working group to consider several options, including:

- Carrying on with annual agreements, where States would be billed for human resources and maintenance services,
- Moving all of the iSupport expenses to the regular budget of HCCH. This may not be acceptable for those States which are not taking part in iSupport yet,
- Combine the two options, with human resources costs as part of the regular budget and maintenance service costs provided for by States using iSupport covered by annual agreements. This might be more acceptable to a larger number of States, as the iSupport coordinator will promote the system to the wider community of HCCH members.

A working group will be set up with a view to preparing the 2020 Council on General Affairs and Policy of HCCH. Proposals should be presented in due course to the Standing Committee of the Council of Diplomatic Representatives.

Research on cloud computing

The iSupport coordinator presented a short document on cloud computing. Having a single cloud for iSupport would greatly simplify the implementation by countries but problems in terms of data security and purpose limitation would arise. In the absence of an international instrument, it can only be a prospect for the long term. This must be distinguished from the possibility to have a national cloud for the implementation of iSupport. For this latter solution, guidelines are available. Norway indicated a progressive move to cloud environments for its own infrastructure. Germany mentioned remaining security problems. The PB invited participants to exchange best practices on this technology.

Transition to iSupport PM and work programme for 2018-2020

Following the start of iSupport PM on 1 September 2018, the iSupport coordinator presented the available budget, which will cover the maintenance of the software. There is some flexibility under some expense categories but transfer to subcontracting expenses would require approval of the European Commission. The iSupport coordinator remarked that the iSupport software was now stable and the main priority was to secure the involvement of more countries. He also indicated that, as far as iSupport's Grant Agreement with the European Commission is concerned, improvements should focus on user-friendliness and the facilitation of international transfers of child support funds.

One participant mentioned the discussions on the 2019-2023 European e-justice action plan, where iSupport's connection to the European e-justice portal will be identified as priority A. They also indicated e-CODEX's willingness to provide technical support. Another participant mentioned the ongoing consultation on the 2019 CEF delivery roadmap. One country indicated that an e-CODEX broker for iSupport would be a priority. A country noted that additional feedback has been provided to the contractor concerning the separation of

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jurisdictions and the iSupport Coordinator acknowledged that this feedback is being considered.

In the short term, the PB will concentrate on the delivery of the encryption version and on the connection of new countries. A working group will be convened to work on updated requirements (a deliverable to the European Commission is due for 28 February 2019).

The chair thanked the participants for their attendance and concluded the meeting.

Annex – list of participants

Hrvoje Grubisic	European Commission
Johann Kickinger	Austria
Mathias Maurer	
Arnaldo José Alves Silveira	Brazil
André Veras Guimarães	
Sâmia Cristine F. de Albuquerque	
Agata Bárta	Czech Republic
Marketa Novakova	
Anastasia Antonova	Estonia
Antti Elovaara	Finland
Sarah Gerling-Stock	Germany
Elisabeth Shepherd	
Leo de Bakker	Netherlands
Torsten Kirschner	Norway
Siri Risnes	
Floor de Jongh Bekkali	
Alisha Griffin	Observer
Paulo Jorge Gomes Goncalves	Portugal
Mary Butler	United States (OCSE)
Donna Bonar	
Anne Miller	
Yvette Riddick	
Lamia Spedden	
Todd Smith	
Hannah Roots	
Michelle Meier	United States (California)
John Winning	
George Pangalos	University of Thessaloniki
Zoi Kolitsi	University of Thessaloniki

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