iSupport Governing Body 23 November 2021 online meeting Minutes

Present were representatives from Austria, Belgium, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, the United States of America and the National Child Support Enforcement Association. The meeting was chaired by Paulo Gonçalves. Present for the PB were Philippe Lortie (PL), Jean-Marc Pellet (JMP), Charlotte Darbas and Jeanne Pin-Savary (intern).

I.   State of play developments of new iSupport version and future developments

1. JMP explained that developments for the new version should be completed soon, with the objective to validate the new version in early 2022 to take into account the end of year break. He invited participants to test in the sandbox.

2. PL gave the context of the next version to include a statistical report for the 2007 Convention. He announced documents have been posted on the secure portal for the Administrative Cooperation Working Group (ACWG). They include two options for the statistical report: a version with both a lighter report and the more comprehensive report, as well as a version with only the comprehensive report that would be completed by Contracting Parties according to their capacity, with an indication of whether the report was compiled with iSupport. PL underlined the importance of completing the work on the statistical report as soon as possible in order to plan, programme, test and accept the iSupport related deliverable before the end of August 2022.

II.   State of play installation of iSupport and e-CODEX

3. Participating States gave an update on their preparations. Austria indicated its willingness to install iSupport in a test environment. Brazil mentioned it was planning to start tests with e-CODEX. The Czech Republic is discussing where servers will be located with the competent ministry. Finland is testing with the 2020 version, as is also Hungary. France has installed the 2020 version in a test environment. Germany has successfully tested (including e-CODEX) with the 2019 version and is installing the 2020 version. Norway has suffered from a lack of resources, as has Portugal. The Netherlands is trying to secure resources for additional developments it wants to make. The United States mentioned a lack of resources and other projects. Sweden received a positive response for its EU grant application. The project will start in 2022. JMP indicated that Spain also submitted a similar application. The outcome is not yet known. JMP also mentioned contacts with Croatia, Cyprus and Slovenia, which contributed to the application for iSupport ITMF. Contacts also took place with Israel, Mexico and Panama. JMP will give a presentation to Ontario in December.

III.   Budget consumption

4.   JMP presented an overview of budget consumption in the present EU-funded projects. Savings on travel costs and videoconferencing will allow for some flexibility in relation to human resources and subcontracting. The higher human resources costs are explained by changes to the PB salary scale (in relation in particular to inflation), which can be difficult to anticipate.

IV.   EU Regulation on e-CODEX

5.   JMP presented the latest developments and indicated that the Regulation should be adopted this year. Considerable progress was made in relation to the inclusion of international organisations.

V.   Certificate management in iSupport

6.   JMP presented the advantages of virtual private certifying authorities, as summarised in the document "Certificate management in iSupport". A course of action will be proposed to the Governing Body once the outcome of the funding application with the Dutch postcode lottery is known (see below). Sweden remarked that the distribution processes of certificates (once they are generated) are also important.

VI.   Funding of iSupport

7.   JMP presented the request for funding with the Dutch postcode lottery, as well as the successful application for iSupport ITMF. It is also planned to apply for funding as part of Me-CODEX III. JMP also announced that Germany generously contributed € 10,000 towards iSupport maintenance costs for 2021. Portugal and France remarked that they are the only contributors at the moment, in application of the rule that the maintenance costs are paid by States using iSupport in a production capacity. They asked whether a more appropriate sharing of the costs could be considered in future, given that these maintenance costs also support States that are installing iSupport. JMP indicated that the PB will continue to negotiate with Protech and will communicate an overview of how the costs could be shared amongst participants.