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iSupport

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

iSupport Functional Requirements Working Group (1) – Meeting (8) – 5 March 2015 Meeting

Draft Report of Meeting n°8

List of Participants

Experts	iSupport Team
Natasha BUTLER (France) - substituted Cameron COWPER (Canada) Daphne De WIT (The Netherlands) Paulo GONCALVES (Portugal) Alisha GRIFFIN (United States of America) Arnaldo JOSÉ ALVES SILVEIRA (Brazil) Pietari KORTEKANGAS (Finland) Haldi KOIT (Estonia) - excused Tanja NIEMI (Finland) Marketa NOVAKOVA (Czech Republic) Inese PLONE (Latvia) Tobias PLUM (Germany) Marielle RICHERT (France) - substitute Siri RISNES (Norway) - substituted Hannah ROOTS (NCSEA) Antonio SPAGNOLO (Norway) – substitute	Philippe LORTIE Brigitte VOERMAN Juliane HIRSCH (Chair) Marie VAUTRAVERS

1. Introduction

1. Philippe Lortie, First Secretary, welcomed the participants to the 8th meeting of the Functional Requirements Working Group and opened the meeting with a roll-call. He pointed out that the items on the agenda for the 8th meeting had already been dealt with at the last meeting and referred to a Working Paper that had been circulated earlier the same day, which was meant to serve as a basis for this meeting's discussion. He apologised for the short notice.

2. Follow-up – Last Meeting

2. No follow up issues were raised.

3. Items for discussion / decision

Case definition for iSupport

3. Juliane Hirsch, Legal Consultant to the iSupport Project, referred to the first subject described in the Working Paper: the case definition for iSupport. She recalled that comments from the United States of America supported by Canada as well as further internal discussions on the topic had brought about a re-thinking of the originally proposed case definition. Instead of defining each application as a separate case, the iSupport team proposes now a wider case definition. A case in iSupport could be defined as a case concerning the same debtor and person(s) for whom maintenance is sought and involving the same two States. She noted that when referring to States, States in the sense of Contracting States to the Convention / other instruments or EU Member States are meant. She emphasised that as a consequence of this wide case definition an establishment application for the person for whom maintenance is sought would be dealt with under the same iSupport case number as a later modification application of the debtor. Juliane Hirsch noted that the role of the Central Authority as "requesting CA" or "requested CA" would accordingly have to be determined per application. Furthermore, she detailed that when using a wide case definition an additional measure could be taken to differentiate different applications under the same case number. Any screen and document produced by iSupport relating to a specific application could in addition to the iSupport number cite an abbreviation of the application, such as for example REC-ENF-1 standing for the first application on Recognition and Enforcement in that case.

4. A number of experts, including an expert from Czech Republic welcomed the new case definition. The expert from Czech Republic stated that this was a very positive change, since it corresponds to the way her Central Authority deals with cases.

5. However, experts from Germany and Finland had concerns regarding the new case definition. The expert from Germany stated that his Central Authority preferred the original suggestion for a case definition in iSupport. He noted that his Central Authority deals with the two applications mentioned in the example (establishment application followed later by a modification application of the debtor) as two separate cases. He said the German Central Authority would not be in a position to change their case allocation system for iSupport.

6. Juliane Hirsch referred to earlier discussions on the inclusion of internal case numbers in iSupport. She recalled that besides the functional iSupport number each iSupport case will have a field that allows for Central Authorities to enter one or more internal case numbers. She highlighted that even if in the end a decision for a wide case definition for the purpose of iSupport would be taken, it would be without prejudice as to the way each State defines a case for the purpose of their internal numbering. She expressed the hope that the possibility to add two internal numbers under the same iSupport case number would address Germany's concerns. The expert from Germany noted that he could not yet agree to the suggested wide case definition.

7. The experts from Finland were concerned that the wide case definition as now proposed by the iSupport team would be very difficult to implement in Finland. They recalled that in EU Maintenance Regulation cases, the public body is functioning as the sending Central Authority for outgoing cases. However, for incoming cases, even if related to the same parties, the Central Authority at the Finish Ministry of Justice is competent. They inquired how, for example, an enforcement application being dealt with under the same functional iSupport number as the incoming modification application from the debtor could work for Finland since the public body and the Ministry do not share their cases. It was briefly discussed whether the public body and the Ministry could be using the same iSupport system and therefore having access to the same cases. The experts from Finland noted that this could be difficult due to confidentiality and data protection reasons. It was then discussed whether there might be a technical possibility for the two Finnish authorities to use two different iSupport databases and still "share" case numbers. Brigitte Voerman, Project Director of iSupport, remarked that this might be difficult since every system would

have its own technical identification. She added concerning the remote access from different locations, that States could indeed use the same iSupport system from different locations. Juliane Hirsch noted the country specific concerns of Finland and stated that further thinking would have to be done in this regard.

8. An expert from the United States of America noted that it is hard to visualise how the iSupport number will work in practice, and in particular, how cases will be allocated to their destination and to different sub-entities. She added that it would depend on what is called a subset. She stated that it would be helpful if the iSupport team could put some examples together describing how the iSupport code will be created.

9. An expert from the Central Authority of Finland referred to the particularities of the United States of America having territorial sub-units and wondered what would happen when, in the middle of the case, the debtor moves to another territorial sub-unit. She stated that then a similar problem might occur as has been described for Finland. Philippe Lortie responded that for Federal States having territorial sub-units, all will depend on the question of whether the different entities work remotely with one and the same iSupport system, or whether each sub-unit would have its own system. He added that to his knowledge Canada might be choosing the latter option when implementing iSupport. Juliane Hirsch noted that iSupport must be flexible to allow for adaptation to the different implementation scenarios that might be chosen. Brigitte Voerman added that technically she would see a difference between the concerns described by Finland where a case with the same iSupport number would be handled by two authorities at the same time and the territorial sub-units situation, where the case would have to be redirected to a different territorial unit.

Composition of the iSupport number

10. Juliane Hirsch referred to the second topic listed in the Working Paper. She stated that following further discussions the iSupport team would suggest the following composition of the functional iSupport case number:

- the abbreviation of the two States concerned:
 - (1) State of the CA that sets up the case in iSupport
 - (2) the other State involved,
- the year in which the case was set up in iSupport, and
- a 7 digit running number.

11. An expert from the Netherlands asked whether the iSupport case number would change if a closed case would be re-opened. She suggested that the number could stay the same but that a "01" at the end could be added and that should the case be re-opened a "02" could be added at the end. She stated that this was how they were currently handling their case numbers. She was concerned should in iSupport the case be granted a completely different new iSupport number when re-opened. Juliane Hirsch reassured the expert that it was envisaged to keep exactly the same functional iSupport number, *i.e.* the case number of a closed case that would be re-opened would remain unchanged.

12. Juliane Hirsch further referred to the earlier introduced suggestion to add an abbreviation for each application in iSupport. She highlighted that this abbreviation would not be part of the iSupport number itself but could be displayed prominently together with the iSupport number on screens / documents relating to the relevant application.

13. There was general agreement in the Working Group with the suggestions.

The task list

14. Juliane Hirsch then turned to the third topic described in the Working Paper. She first introduced the way tasks would be displayed and explained that it was envisaged to have a “master task list” display, a “caseworker task list” display and a “case task list” display.

Master task list

15. Juliane Hirsch detailed that the “master task list” will be accessible to persons with manager access rights and would list all tasks currently to be completed by all caseworkers. The manager may be able to sort the list by any column and could also look at certain caseworkers’ task lists. The latter can be particularly helpful should a caseworker be on sick leave and a re-allocation of tasks be necessary.

Caseworker task list

16. Introducing the envisaged caseworker task list, Juliane Hirsch explained that each caseworker will have his / her own task list. The caseworker task list will be a filtered list that only displays tasks concerning cases the caseworker is associated with. She noted should there be several caseworkers assigned to the case, the relevant task will figure in all these caseworkers’ lists. She recalled that so far the Working Group had decided that up to three caseworkers could be associated with a case, but that the addition of further caseworkers might have to be discussed as a consequence of the decisions taken for the task list functionality. Juliane Hirsch added that iSupport should ideally signal if one of the caseworkers assigned to a case is working on the task, so that the other caseworkers see that this task is underway. One option might be to allow the caseworker to identify himself on his / her task list as the one working on the particular task. Ideally, this information should automatically be copied into the other caseworkers’ task lists. She noted that the iSupport team had discussed the possibility whether the task being worked on by one caseworker should vanish from the list of the other two caseworkers, but had, for the time being, decided against this option in case the other caseworkers are misled into thinking the task is already completed. She highlighted that this also facilitates the stepping in of other caseworkers for their colleague in the case of sick leave.

Per case all open and completed tasks are listed

17. Juliane Hirsch then explained that each case will display all case-linked tasks. A list of open and completed tasks could be available, for example, in the case management section. She added that the list of open tasks would contain a column noting the individual caseworker identified as the one working on this task. The list of completed tasks could show beside the name of the person who worked on the task the date when the task has been fulfilled.

18. There was general agreement in the Working Group with the suggested approach. An expert from Germany had concerns relating to the “master task list”. He noted that the fact that the manager might view a caseworkers’ task list without this caseworker’s agreement, might cause problems in view of internal staff regulations and might need approval of the staff representing body. He therefore asked whether it might be possible for a Central Authority to “switch off” this function. Brigitte Voerman noted that it was of course up to States to use or not use certain functions iSupport would offer. The expert from Germany detailed that the German Central Authority might have to have this function disabled because already the possibility to use this function might cause problems. Juliane Hirsch noted that in many Central Authorities, which currently use electronic case management systems, managers have access to the general task list. She highlighted that this was, of course, known to all caseworkers and that the task list did not contain any personal messages. She highlighted that this was not to be compared with a manager being able to read a caseworker’s emails. The expert from Germany explained that the German Central Authority was still on the way to implementing a paperless administration and that it could not yet be foreseen whether the use of a “master task list” would be possible for Germany.

19. An expert from NCSEA noted that decisions on the functionality of the task list would to a great extent depend on what exact tasks would be listed. Knowing that caseworkers may have 400 cases to deal with, the task list needs to remain manageable. She noted that the example of a “task” given in the table in the Working Paper “Incoming application received through iSupport from requesting CA” was very wide and actions that would have to be taken could take a long time. As a consequence this task could show for a long time in the task list. With a view to not overloading the task list, she proposed to predefine clearer sub-tasks that can be ticked off one after the other in a shorter period of time.

20. Juliane Hirsch acknowledged the importance of keeping the task list “manageable”. She added that the new tool called “track my cases” that had been presented by experts from the United States of America at the Advisory Board meeting in December 2014 had been developed as an answer to the difficulties created by overloaded task lists. This very elaborate tool allows the caseworker a very focused prioritising of their tasks. Juliane Hirsch noted, however, that due to budget constraints iSupport would most likely have to stick to a classic task list. She added that all would be done to make the work with this task list as easy and clear as possible and that options for a simple and a clearly laid out prioritising of work could be made available.

When a task is completed

21. Since there were no further comments, Juliane Hirsch turned to the next subtopic listed in the Working Paper. She explained that when a task is completed it will have to be ticked off. She noted that this should be done in the case itself on the page where the open and completed tasks are listed. By contrast, ticking off the task in the task list itself might bear the risk of ticking off a task by accident missing the right line. She highlighted that certain predefined tasks administered by the system, such as the sending of the acknowledgement of receipt, should be ticked off automatically by the system upon completion. She further noted that should it happen that a caseworker has ticked off a task by accident, the list of completed tasks can be consulted and the task can be reactivated. She added that the iSupport team had discussed different options concerning the “reactivation” of a task. For record keeping reasons, the wrongly ticked off task may have to stay in the list, but it might be possible to have a copy of this task be created by the system.

22. There was general agreement in the Working Group with the suggested approach. An expert from NCSEA noted concerning the last topic that it would be preferable to not undo a task ticked off as completed and to instead address the problem with a manually created task. *I.e.*, if the caseworker realises he / she has ticked off a task by accident he / she can create a new individual caseworker task by simply copying the content of the task. The iSupport team welcomed this suggestions and Brigitte Voerman stated that this was a much better solution from the database protection point of view.

Prioritising tasks

23. Juliane Hirsch introduced the current ideas of the iSupport team concerning the tools of prioritisation in the task list. She stated that setting a caseworker deadline and allowing for the sorting of the task list by caseworker deadline would provide some initial prioritisation. She, however, noted that this might not be sufficient to support the daily work of the caseworkers. She therefore explained that the task list should ideally provide for the possibility of additional prioritisation. For example, there could be an option to give certain tasks a priority listing: 1, 2, 3. Or there could be a possibility to flag certain tasks as urgent. She asked the Working Group for comments and, in particular, whether the extra prioritisation would be considered a necessity or rather a helpful addition.

24. An expert from the United States of America considered the option for an additional prioritisation as a helpful extra. Similarly, an expert from Canada stated that this functionality would in his view rather be a “would have” than a “must have”. An expert from the public body in Finland reported that his authority’s system allowed to mark certain tasks as urgent. He stated that a task once identified as urgent stays on the top of the task list, which is very helpful. He added that the marking of the task as urgent cannot be

removed. It was noted that it would be good for iSupport to allow at least the flagging of certain tasks like court deadline related tasks whose timely fulfilment is crucial. Juliane Hirsch noted from the overall feedback that an additional option for prioritisation would be welcomed but was not considered a necessity.

Composition of the task list display

25. Juliane Hirsch explained that the task list would contain columns with the following items:

- the iSupport case number,
- abbreviation for relevant application,
- columns for our three types of deadlines:
 - Convention / Regulation deadline (maybe only listed in the case display),
 - target date,
 - caseworker deadline,
- a brief description of the task,
- the name of the caseworker identified as the one currently working in the task, and possibly
- a priority field.

26. Juliane Hirsch added each column would be sortable. Provided sufficient funding is available, the customisation of the task list allowing caseworkers to change the order of the columns could be considered. She asked the Working Group for any comments and, in particular, whether there are any additional items the experts would want to see in the task list.

27. An expert from the United States of America stated that it would be helpful to display the sub-unit in the task list. An expert from the NCSEA highlighted that in addition to the case number it would be very good to also list the names of the parties in the case since many caseworkers might have a clearer recollection of names than of numbers and an immediate identification of what case the task belongs to can be very useful. A number of further experts, including experts from Canada, Finland and the United States of America agreed. It was briefly discussed whose person's name should be included and thoughts were given to the fact that there will be limited space for items in the task list. It was agreed that at least the debtor's surname should be added. If there is sufficient space the surname of the person(s) for whom maintenance is sought could also be listed.

28. In response to a comment on the task description, Juliane Hirsch noted that certain auto-generated tasks would have a pre-set description. The caseworker could also create his / her own *ad hoc* task and enter a free text description.

Functionality of the task list

29. Juliane Hirsch stated that in the context of the task list some further preparatory work was needed. She highlighted that a precise definition of all pre-set tasks was necessary including those tasks for which the manager could set so called "target dates". She furthermore stated that it was still to be decided to whom new incoming applications would be assigned *i.e.*, in a situation where no responsible caseworker has yet been designated. She noted that the fact finding missions have shown that Central Authorities have different practices in this regard. In some Central Authorities, there is a registrar who fulfils this task, in other Central Authorities, there may be one or more caseworkers who look through the incoming mail and allocated cases. An expert from NCSEA proposed to create a registrar role. Philippe Lortie added that this would work both for Central Authorities where this function would be allocated to one person exclusively and also for Central Authorities where certain caseworkers fulfil these tasks alongside their casework. This latter option, however, assumes that either the "registrar role" can be combined with

other access rights or, if a combination of different profiles is not possible, that sufficient profiles exist to address every Central Authorities' needs.

Some task list items

30. For the remaining minutes of the meeting, Juliane Hirsch suggested taking a brief look at the task list contained in the Working Paper and collecting some initial feedback. She highlighted that the list was the result of an initial quick brainstorming and that it clearly had to be refined. She noted that the idea was to list certain main tasks in connection with Convention and Regulation deadlines, where applicable, and to make the link to existing Convention and Regulation forms.

31. An expert from NCSEA emphasised that the tasks need to be sharpened up. She further noted that it would be possible to include both simple notifications as well as tasks in the task list so that the caseworkers can take note of certain developments in the case. Once the caseworker has taken note, he / she can tick the task off and it would disappear from the task list. Concerning the last remark, Juliane Hirsch, noted that the ticking off might be problematic where several caseworkers are assigned to a case. If one caseworker marks the notification as read and it disappears there is no guarantee the other caseworkers have seen it. An expert from the United States of America proposed that one option would be to include notifications in form of alerts, which stay there for a day or two and then disappear from the task list. Once the notification disappears however, it would become part of the "notes" on the case. Some practical questions occurred as to where such alerts would appear and who would be able to see them. It was noted that the programmers could be asked to propose a solution.

4. Other Items for Discussion

32. Juliane Hirsch invited the experts to go through the table of "task list items" that was distributed prior to the meeting and share their thoughts and comments at the next Working Group meeting. She noted that the coming Working Group meeting will be the ninth and last meeting and reminded the experts that they could make suggestions for any remaining important topics they would like to discuss. She added that so far, the following matters were foreseen for discussion at the next(last) meeting: the refined definition of the status of the case, the profiles of access rights, the refining of the task list and if needed, some last comments on the Convention forms.

33. Juliane Hirsch thanked the experts for their contributions.

5. Next videoconference – 17 March 2015, 15h00 UTC (16h00 ETC)

34. Philippe Lortie reminded the experts that the next meeting will not take place on 16 but instead on 17 March at 15h00 UTC (16h00 ETC). He thanked all the experts for their very useful contributions and comments and closed the meeting at 17h30 ETC.