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**iSupport**

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

## **iSupport Functional Requirements Working Group (1) - 19 January 2015 Meeting**

### **Report of Meeting n° 1**

#### **List of Participants**

<b>Experts</b>	<b>iSupport Team</b>
Natasha BUTLER (France) Cameron COWPER (Canada) Daphne De WIT (The Netherland) Alisha GRIFFIN (United States of America) Arnaldo JOSÉ ALVES SILVEIRA (Brazil) Haldi KOIT (Estonia) Marketa NOVAKOVA (Czech Republic) Inese PLONE (Latvia) Tobias PLUM (Germany) Marielle RICHERT (France) Siri RISNES (Norway) Hannah ROOTS (NCSEA)	Philippe LORTIE Brigitte VOERMAN Juliane HIRSCH (Chair) Marie VAUTRAVERS

#### **I. OPENING OF THE MEETING**

##### **Introduction**

1. Philippe Lortie, First Secretary, welcomed all participants to the Functional Requirements Working Group Meeting.
2. Philippe Lortie further explained the role of the Functional Requirements Working Group, which is to take into consideration the advice of the Advisory Board, analyse and take decisions on the functionality issues of the iSupport electronic case management and secure communication system. He mentioned the relevance of the Advisory Board Meeting Report with regard to functionality issues, and offered a short overview of the work performed by the Secure Communication (e-CODEX) and Data Protection Working Group.
3. The participants briefly introduced themselves.
4. Juliane Hirsch, Legal Consultant to the iSupport Project, explained that in the envisaged nine Working Group meetings, the central functionalities of the iSupport system would be discussed. The first meetings would concentrate on functionalities that relate to the general architecture of iSupport. She stated that the objective of the Working Group meetings would be on the one hand to approve the functionalities and on the other hand to rate their overall priority. She explained that prioritisation would be done with the help of the "MoSCoW" method using the following categories:

Letter	Meaning	Description
<b>M</b>	MUST	A requirement that must be satisfied in the final solution for the solution to be considered a success.
<b>S</b>	SHOULD	A high-priority item that should be included in the solution if possible. It can be a critical requirement but one which might be satisfied in other ways.
<b>C</b>	COULD	A requirement, which is considered desirable but not necessary. It will be included if time and resources permit.
<b>W</b>	WON'T	Represents a requirement that stakeholders have agreed will not be implemented in the first release, but may be considered for the future.

## II. FUNCTIONALITY RELATED TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

### 1. Coverage of iSupport: 2009 Regulation case (first part of the project), 2007 Convention cases (second part of the project) & other international maintenance cases : homogeneous terminology

5. Juliane Hirsch recalled that iSupport is being set up with a focus on 2009 Regulation and 2007 Convention cases. She noted that, to the extent appropriate, the case management system component of iSupport would also be usable by States to manage other international maintenance cases, which would fall outside the scope of the 2007 Convention or 2009 Regulation. She explained that the fact-finding missions had indicated that it would not be economical for States to run iSupport for Convention and Regulation cases only and to continue using an expensive "stand alone" solution for other international cases. Hence, not including the case management of other international cases in iSupport might be an impediment to iSupport's wide implementation. She noted that inclusion of other international maintenance cases is therefore considered a "Must" for iSupport in line with the "MoSCoW" prioritisation. She specified however that there would be no extra forms created for this category of cases since other international maintenance cases are not within the core scope of the project.

6. Juliane Hirsch explained the need to use homogeneous terminology in iSupport, *i.e.* to try, to the extent possible, to create case management screens which are compatible with the Regulation, Convention and other international maintenance cases. She noted that if the different terms used by the Regulation and Convention could not be consolidated, both terms could be simultaneously used (for instance the title of a field could be "defendant/respondent" where the Regulation forms relates to "defendant" and the Convention to "respondent").

7. Juliane Hirsch highlighted that iSupport should be usable regardless of whether the other Contracting or Regulation country concerned by the application uses iSupport or not. She specified that instead of sending applications and documents electronically to the other State via secure iSupport communication, those documents would be printed out and sent by mail. This function is considered a "Must" for iSupport.

8. The Working Group supported this approach.

9. An expert from Germany asked how the caseworker will distinguish a Convention case from a Regulation case in iSupport.

10. Juliane Hirsch answered that the difference between Regulation and Convention cases would be clearly marked and highlighted so that the identification of a case as Regulation or Convention case would have consequences on the functionalities of the case management. She explained however that the selection of the case as Regulation,

Convention or other international maintenance case would be addressed in the second Working Group meeting.

**2. External access – data exchange between Central Authority and authorities assisting the applicant in filling in the Regulation forms, authorities competent for the establishment of maintenance and enforcement authorities**

11. Juliane Hirsch pointed to the large number of authorities outside of the Central Authority who have competency for part of the processes of handling of international maintenance cases and whose direct access to the iSupport case management system might be recommendable or in some States even considered necessary. She however noted that the process was differently organised in each State. She also noted that some of these external competent authorities are transmitting information to the Central Authority, whereas other competent authorities are transmitting and receiving information. As an example for the first group of external authorities she referred to courts of origin of a decision providing the extract of the decision in the Regulation or Convention forms. As an example for the second group of authorities she referred to the authorities competent for the enforcement, which would need updates on enforcement related information, such as the latest statement of arrears. She mentioned that in some States part or all of the mentioned competent authorities are all part of the body designated as Central Authority (for example Norway), thus they are not considered “external” authorities. For these States the question of external access of competent authorities would not play a role. She stated that, for the time being, the ability of iSupport to allow for direct access of external competent authorities would be considered a “Could” or even “Won’t”. This function might be left to a future release of iSupport.

12. Juliane Hirsch asked the experts about their views on the need of granting competent external authorities direct access to iSupport.

13. Philippe Lortie emphasised the necessity to categorise and prioritise Central Authorities needs given the limited resource of the iSupport project.

14. A number of experts stressed the importance of iSupport offering the possibility to States to grant external competent authorities access to the system. Some experts, such as experts from Brazil, Estonia and Germany stressed that they would consider this a crucial functionality of iSupport. An expert stressed that in Estonia there is a widespread use of electronic files in courts and highlighted the importance for Estonian courts to be able to send data electronically using the electronic signature. An expert stated that in Germany it would be important to give the concentrated jurisdiction courts access to iSupport. He explained that these courts have in accordance with the German law the responsibility to fill in Part B of the EU Regulation forms Annex VI and Annex VII. He also mentioned the involvement of the German Youth Welfare Offices as possible candidates for external access and highlighted that as concerns transfers the Bank “Bundeskasse” should also have access to the system.

15. Experts from Norway and Czech Republic highlighted that for their legal system, granting external access to competent authorities would not be needed.

16. Some experts raised concerns as to the languages in which the system will be available and highlighted that granting competent authorities external access to the system would only make sense if the data entry in their State’s official language would be possible.

17. Philippe Lortie pointed out that iSupport service provider would offer the possibility of a translation, but the cost of such translations would be in responsibility of each State. He recalled that the Regulation forms were already existing in all the languages of the European Union.

18. Juliane Hirsch noted that external access was in most cases necessary to feed in information in the system and not to retrieve information from the system. She explained that a number of different options had been discussed by the iSupport team to address

States' needs with regard to the exchange of electronic data between the Central Authority and competent authorities. She stated that for "feeding information into the system" one of the alternative to granting the author direct access to the system would be if the data would be fed in through electronic forms and she mentioned the possibility of providing States with a "plug-in" to import electronic forms in iSupport.

19. Philippe Lortie highlighted that this "plug-in" would however require that each State build its own portal or provides a specifically designed scanner, and reminded all participants that such a solution would be rather expensive for States.

20. The iSupport team noted the different needs of States to allow external access of competent authorities to iSupport.

### **3. iSupport providing guidance to caseworker**

21. Juliane Hirsch referred to the wishes expressed by caseworkers in the course of the fact-finding missions with regard to the guidance they would expect from iSupport. She reported that many caseworkers had highlighted that the system should, as a general principle, offer assistance but not impose assistance. iSupport should be a flexible system that would simplify the caseworker's work by providing necessary information without prescribing any order of handling matters or interfering with their discretion. She highlighted that experienced caseworkers would not need the same guidance as less experienced caseworkers. Assistance in iSupport should be an option the caseworkers could access when needed. Only exceptionally, in some clearly defined situations should the caseworker be actually prevented from proceeding. This could for example be the case if a caseworker tries to send an EU Regulation form, which does not yet contain all the mandatory required information. Juliane Hirsch stated that these situations would be discussed in detail when discussing screens.

22. The Working Group welcomed the suggested approach. An expert from Brazil suggested the implementation of a help function that the caseworker could decide to activate or deactivate, in order to avoid constant notifications.

23. Juliane Hirsch added that a number of documents assisting the caseworker in the management of cases would be made directly available in iSupport, including the Caseworkers Handbook (Convention), the practical Handbook – Romania (Regulation / Convention), and an updated version of Country profiles. She also mentioned other dedicated resource such as the Explanatory Report and explained that there will be a space where States can upload their own individual training materials.

24. Juliane Hirsch described several options in which assistance can be provided to the caseworker, including help screens and checklists on demand. There could be a help icon on the case summary page where one could choose the help list for each type of application ("recognition and enforcement" or "establishment") or the help text available could automatically be linked to the type of application or the help window could contain a list of steps with tick boxes for the caseworker to tick off (checklist – flowchart out of caseworkers handbook). The details can be discussed in connection with the discussions of the iSupport screens.

25. The Working Group welcomed the suggested approach.

### **4. Customisability of the iSupport case management system – countries' needs**

#### **Customisability of templates**

26. Juliane Hirsch stressed the general use of templates which facilitate the daily work of caseworkers. She reported that all electronic case management systems analysed during the fact-finding missions are able to auto generate a number of pre-formulated standard

letters addressed to the parties or to the stakeholders involved. She noted that the ability of iSupport to auto generate templates was considered a "Must".

27. She stated that, at a minimum, iSupport will offer a general "skeleton" template with the address of a given person or body involved in the case and the case reference number. The actual text would have to be filled in by the caseworker him/herself. The text editing could be done using "Word", which would be opened by iSupport, provided that Word is installed on the computers of the Central Authority. This would allow using the Word spell check in the relevant language.

28. Juliane Hirsch suggested that, in addition, iSupport should include a second category of templates with pre-set texts in English and French. These would contain fields that are auto populated by the system. The administrator would be able to replace the initial French or English text part of these letters by text in the language of the Central Authority and to some extent adapt the text to the national context. The caseworker would then choose his/her template from a list available in the system. The fields that will be auto populated by the system will be language neutral fields such as the name of a person, a date, court reference number of a decision etc. iSupport could contain 10-20 of these templates.

29. Juliane Hirsch asked the Working Group for assistance in identifying the most important standard templates and asked each participant to provide the iSupport team, where feasible, with their mostly used maximum 20 templates in English or French before 2 February 2015.

30. In response to a participant, Juliane Hirsch clarified that both, templates for communication with national authorities and pre-set letters to foreign addressees including the foreign Central Authority would be of interest. It was further clarified that these templates should be chosen with a view to be usable for Regulation or Convention cases. In the event that Central Authorities would not have any template in English or French, it was suggested to send a list of topics covered by the mostly used templates.

31. There was overall agreement in the Working Group with the suggested approach. An expert recalled that with regard to the calculation of arrears a new European form has been finalised.

#### **Customisability of help texts**

32. Juliane Hirsch explained that the iSupport default help texts would be rather general and could not take into consideration the organisation of processes and requirements of case handling in different States. She stated that iSupport should therefore offer Central Authorities the possibility to adapt help texts to their local context. She noted that this functionality would be considered a "Must".

33. Juliane Hirsch stressed the importance of customisability when it comes to help texts indicating a certain process or certain steps to be taken. A default good practice concerning the order of steps to be taken by the caseworker could be in conflict with the best practices for the individual country. For instance, when receiving an application for recognition and enforcement, in many States the caseworker of the requested Central Authority might quickly get a confirmation of the debtor's address and contact the debtor for information and trying to bring about a voluntary payment. In a State where getting an address confirmation is very cumbersome and can take months for the Central Authority, the local good practice may be for the caseworker to immediately hand over the case to the enforcement body, who has other means to get an address confirmation and to get in touch with the debtor.

34. The Working Group welcomed the suggestions.

### **Setting deadlines and target dates**

35. Juliane Hirsch recalled that both the Regulation and the Convention set out a number of deadlines for the fulfilment of certain tasks by the Central Authority. She noted that the time periods mentioned are, unfortunately, not identical. She stated that both the Convention and Regulation deadlines would be included in the system and would apply respectively to cases identified as Convention or Regulation cases. As a consequence of a deadline being overdue, the system would show the dates in red. Furthermore, the overdue task would get a higher priority in the “workflow”; for example, by moving up to the top. She noted that details of the “workflow” (or “task-list”) functionality will be discussed at a later meeting. iSupport would not impose prioritisation of overdue tasks and block the caseworker from proceeding with other actions.

36. Juliane Hirsch explained that iSupport would provide the CA manager with a tool of setting target dates for a list of pre-defined items. She explained that the target dates would concern all cases and that any change would equally affect all cases. She noted that in the situations where the Regulation or Convention set a deadline, the target date could not go beyond this deadline. However, it would be in the discretion of the manager to set a shorter target date.

37. Juliane Hirsch further explained that each caseworker will be provided with a tool to set a case-specific or individual task related deadlines without any restrictions. This deadline could also go beyond the Convention/Regulation deadline and /or the target date if needed.

38. The Working Group supported the suggested approach.

### **Other tools for the Central Authority manager, including the choice of a key for the allocation of new cases to caseworkers**

39. Juliane Hirsch stated that the fact-finding missions had shown that a large amount of different keys were used by the Central Authorities concerning the allocation of new cases to caseworkers. Among others, cases are allocated in accordance with the requesting /requested State, the surname of the debtor, the last digit of the auto generated case reference or the workload of caseworkers. She noted that it would be difficult for iSupport to include all the currently used keys and suggested that iSupport could provide an optional default key based on the workload of the caseworker. She observed that even if a Central Authority might opt not to use this default key, the tool could be a helpful feature for the manager to keep updated on the caseworkers’ workload. Where a Central Authority does not use the default key, the case allocation could be done manually by either the manager or another person with relevant authorisation.

40. Being asked on the usefulness of the suggested default key a number of experts, such as experts from Czech Republic and Germany considered that the default key would not be applicable in their Central Authority. Experts from Czech Republic and Estonia mentioned that the Central Authority members would not only deal with international maintenance cases but also with other international family matters, such as child abduction. A workload allocation geared by maintenance cases related workload only, would not work. An expert from Germany clarified that the suggested key would conflict with the current mode of case allocation in his Central Authority. An expert from France noted that a work load related key would have to be able to also take into consideration the workload related to non-Regulation and non-Convention cases, in particular the New York Convention cases. Some experts were open to the prospect of using the proposed default key in iSupport. An expert from the Netherlands remarked, however, that this kind of key was currently already used and that, when continuing to use their system alongside iSupport, they might not need to have this default key in iSupport.

41. Juliane Hirsch explained that a further important tool for the Central Authority manager would be the possibility to generate the required statistics for Regulation and

Convention purposes. This function is considered a “Must”. She also mentioned that, provided there are sufficient resources, iSupport could offer a tool for internal statistics on work performance etc.

42. The Working Group agreed with the prioritisation of the functionality to create the Regulation and Convention statistics. Some experts stated that an additional option to create individual statistics, such as statistics on the total amount of cases including non-Convention and non-Regulation cases as well as statistics per country, types of application and duration of the proceedings would be extremely valuable.

43. When being asked on further useful tools the manager should have access to in iSupport, an expert from Germany made reference to an internal policy in their Central Authority which required the manager to assess any incoming mail prior to it being forwarded to the relevant caseworkers. He said that it might be helpful if the electronic case management system could facilitate this procedure.

44. Juliane Hirsch noted that a solution could be offered by the workflow functionality of iSupport, which could allow the Central Authority to determine that all incoming mail was brought to the attention of the manager at the same time or prior to the caseworker. She suggested to discuss this question when addressing the “workflow” functionality.

## **5. Logging of changes and views**

45. Juliane Hirsch noted that the topic had already been discussed by the Advisory Board and reported that there had been a general agreement that any change, view or search should be recorded for audit purposes but with the understanding that States could scale down the amount of information recorded. Therefore, iSupport should provide for a default “Time-stamp” / “audit trail” which could be scaled down in accordance with an individual State’s requirements.

46. For the recording of modifications, Juliane Hirsch explained that in the interest of collecting not too much detailed data, and thereby risking to slow down the system, iSupport would store information on modifications screen wise only *i.e.*, not per field on the screen. The information recorded would be: which screen has been changed, what is the new field value, who changed it (username), and when was it changed. She, however, noted that a more detailed record would be made of any change to address or bank account information, giving their sensitive nature. These changes would be recorded on a field basis.

47. For the recording of views, Juliane Hirsch mentioned that the iSupport team would consider sufficient to record who (*i.e.* username) viewed a case and when but not which information exactly was viewed in the case.

48. The described settings are considered a “Must”.

49. Juliane Hirsch further explained what was currently envisaged concerning the accessibility of the history of changes and views. With some limited exceptions, all recorded views and changes would only be available in the back-end. Thus only technical staff would be able to access this information, when needed. This could be the case if an inquiry for fraud or negligence would have to be made. The changes of certain data, however, will be made visible in the case management system. For addresses, a complete address history will be saved and visible together with the information on when the address has been removed and by whom. Similarly the history of changes to the bank account data could be made visible in the system.

50. On an inquiry by a participant, Juliane Hirsch explained that changes to the address or account information triggered by information from an external source would not update the system without prior validation by the caseworker.

51. Juliane Hirsch made reference to the recent Data Protection Working Group meeting at which it had been recommended that the “modification” audit trail should be kept in the

system for the same duration of time as the data itself. As concerns the “viewing” audit trail it was noted by the Data Protection Working Group that it might not be necessary to keep it for the same number of years as the “modification” audit trail.

52. The Working Group supported the suggested approach with regard to the logging of changes and views.

## **6. Electronic file requirements – countries’ needs**

53. Juliane Hirsch highlighted that iSupport should offer caseworkers the option to work with electronic files only and to get rid of paper files. As a first condition, iSupport would have to fulfil certain “work comfort” related functionalities. She noted, in particular, that the caseworker should be able to open several documents at the same time in different windows, for example, it should be possible to open a PDF of the decision in a window beside the case management screen on which data has to be entered. In addition, the opening of several cases at the same time should be possible. She reported that following internal discussions, the iSupport team would suggest that iSupport should allow the opening of a maximum of 5 cases at a time. There should be no limitations as concerns the amount of opened documents per case at a time. She however observed that restrictions might come from the operating system and hardware capacity.

54. Juliane Hirsch noted furthermore that another very important condition for the work with electronic files would be the compatibility of the iSupport case management system with the relevant local requirements for electronic files. She asked the Working Group for assistance with identifying any currently existing local requirements for electronic files and to provide the iSupport team, where feasible, with that information by 2 February 2015.

55. The Working Group agreed with the suggestions. A number of experts noted that the functionality of opening several cases at the same time was crucial in the daily work of a caseworker, since phone calls and urgent emails have to be dealt with alongside the regular casework. They agreed that opening 5 cases at a time should be sufficient.

56. Juliane Hirsch concluded by recalling that the next conference call was scheduled for 22.1.2015 and encouraging participants to inform the iSupport team about any issues they would like to see on the agenda of the Functional Requirements Working Group meetings. She further stated that any additional comments on topics treated, should internal discussions bring about new aspects, would be welcome.

57. In closing, Philippe Lortie welcomed any further contribution with regards to non-addressed issues before the next meeting and observed that, with that view, a draft report would be distributed before the next meeting.