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iSupport

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

iSupport Technical Requirements Working Group - 29 January 2015 Meeting

Report of Meeting n° 1

List of Participants

Experts	iSupport Team
Mary BUTLER (United States of America) Natasha BUTLER (France) Enrico FRANCESCONI (ITTIG) Sven JENSEN (Estonia) Arnaldo JOSÉ ALVES SILVEIRA (Brazil) Hannah ROOTS (NCSEA) Thomas STEIMER (Switzerland)	Philippe LORTIE (Chair) Brigitte VOERMAN Marie VAUTRAVERS Juliane HIRSCH

I. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. Philippe Lortie, First Secretary, welcomed all experts to the Technical Requirements Working Group.
2. Philippe Lortie explained the role of the Technical Requirements Working group which is, taking into consideration the advice of the Advisory Board, analyse and take decisions on the technical issues relevant for the development of the iSupport electronic case management and secure communication system.
3. Philippe Lortie highlighted the work carried out by the Advisory Board, the Data Protection Working Group and the Secure Communication (e-CODEX) Working Group, which is reflected in the reports that have been circulated to the experts in advance of the meeting, and underlined the links between some of the technical issues that have already been discussed during these prior meetings of these Working Groups and the issues addressed by the Technical Requirements Working Group.

II. LOCALLY OR IN THE CLOUD

Application based locally or in the cloud

4. Philippe Lortie noted that this question was only related to the case management system itself. He stated that, although it had been noted that the implementation and maintenance of the application in the Cloud would be significantly less expensive, there was a strong

preference for a local implementation amongst the Advisory Board members and the Data Protection participants. The Cloud is not yet considered mature enough to possibly allow sensitive data to rest in the Cloud, even for a very short time.

Database based locally or in the cloud

5. Philippe Lortie mentioned that the Advisory Board members and the Data Protection experts had expressed their preference for an iSupport database that would not rest in the Cloud in the light of the very sensitive data contained therein. It was noted that the iSupport database should be based locally, despite the higher costs, to enable States to keep control over the data related to their citizens and their population.

6. Philippe Lortie also stated that if the application was implemented locally while the database would be in the Cloud or vice versa, the speed of information processing might be significantly affected.

7. In response to a question from an expert of the United States of America, Philippe Lortie recommended that any State choosing to implement iSupport (database or application) in the Cloud should seek approval from States providing them with data. This is because the database would contain data belonging to third country nationals.

User interface software (e.g., web-browsers)

8. Philippe Lortie first noted that the iSupport system will be implemented within the local IT infrastructure of each State and that access to the application on the local servers would be provided using an user interface included in the iSupport application or commonly available web-browsers.

9. It was noted however that many different web-browsers are being used around the world. Philippe Lortie recommended that, following the iSupport Advisory Board advice, the iSupport system should, if possible, operate on the latest two versions of the three most commonly used web-browsers (Internet Explorer, Google Chrome and Firefox). However, depending on the resources available, access could possibly be limited to only two different web-browsers. A first Questionnaire has provided valuable guidance on this matter but was limited to 26 Countries. Continued collection of information about web-browsers used by other States will probably be necessary.

10. Philippe Lortie suggested that the call for tender for development and maintenance of the system should require tenderers to provide costs estimates based on the number of browsers they could support.

11. Philippe Lortie suggested an alternative that would be to develop a specific browser for iSupport. He however underlined the higher cost of deployment within each State. He added that external access to iSupport was envisaged to be provided to external parties such as judges or enforcement officers. He observed that this access would be significantly complicated by the need to install this specific new web-browser on those third parties desktops. He also expressed concern about the risk of States eventually refusing this iSupport specific web-browser due to local regulations or security restrictions. He therefore recommended the use of commonly used web-browsers which are tested and accepted by States.

12. An expert from Switzerland expressed in principle support but cautioned that the owner of iSupport should ensure that the iSupport system is updated so that it is always operational on the latest two versions of the web-browsers.

13. Philippe Lortie noted in this respect that the task of monitoring the evolution of web-browsers and informing the Governing Body would be assigned to the service provider. He explained that Central Authorities would be advised in advance of the need to update their web-browser(s).

14. An expert from France specified that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was using exclusively Firefox due to sustainability reasons.

15. In response to a question from an expert, Brigitte Voerman, iSupport Project Director, noted that, in the light of the Survey results, Safari was barely used by Central Authorities.

III. TECHNICAL ENVIRONMENT

Database (including format issues: database scheme only or “empty” turn-key database)

16. Philippe Lortie explained that the **first option** envisaged would involve a database scheme that would possibly be implemented on any database system (Oracle, SQL). This would provide flexibility, but would require more work for the Central Authority or the integrator to implement. He described the **second option** as an empty turn-key database and remarked that it would reduce the risk of errors at the implementation stage.

17. Brigitte Voerman referred participants to the Advisory Board discussions, and observed that States were currently using many different database systems. She stated that this diversity of databases made it rather difficult to choose one specific format. She underlined however that a turn-key database would benefit States experiencing a lack of qualified staff.

18. An expert from Estonia opined that a database scheme was the most appropriate option. He explained that providing States with a data scheme would allow them to choose for their own format without restrictions. He added that his State had enough resources and expertise to develop the database once the scheme was provided.

19. An expert from the United States of America also expressed her preference for a database scheme but pointed out, however, that if a state within the United States of America lacked qualified staff, the turn-key database would be necessary.

20. An expert from Switzerland agreed that the database scheme solution would be preferable. He observed that his country already had the proper tools. He explained that providing a database scheme would avoid further expenses on their side with regard to license fees or staff costs.

21. An expert from Brazil also expressed support for the first option, especially in the case of internal restrictions. He stated however that a turn-key data base would be more swiftly implemented.

21. Philippe Lortie therefore recommended requesting tenderers to provide a database scheme, and depending on resources available, possibly also a turn-key database.

Operating system (server)

22. Brigitte Voerman explained that the answers collected through the survey had failed to identify clearly the server operating systems used by States.

23. A discussion developed where all participants described their national operating systems. An expert from Estonia stated that the 2008 and 2012 versions of Microsoft Windows Server were mostly used. An expert from Switzerland explained that UNIX servers were used in the areas involving the highest level of safety, whereas Microsoft servers were used in the less security-demanding areas. With regard to iSupport average security requirements, he suggested to use Microsoft. An expert from the United States of America stated that LINUX SUSE 11.3 was currently in use. Two experts from France and Brazil explained that their national servers were running on both LINUX and Microsoft (2012).

Authorisation (e.g., maintenance of user profiles, forgotten passwords)

24. Philippe Lortie pointed out that most Central Authorities would have at their disposal a system administrator in charge of authorisations. He asked the experts whether forgotten or lost passwords were attributed manually by an administrator or sent by the system to their email address after responding to a set of secret questions.

25. An expert from the United States of America answered that five security pre-set questions were asked to the user, who was then enabled to change his password in the application.

26. An expert from Estonia explained that usernames and passwords were generated by Active Directory and that new passwords were allocated by the application administrator. He envisaged the possibility for iSupport to be connected to the Active Directory.

27. An expert from Brazil advised to use questions known by the user only and to avoid generic questions with regard to the risk of interception of those data by third parties. He suggested to link the allocation of a new password to an email sent to the professional email address of the user.

IV. INTEGRATION AND INTERFACES

Integration with existing national systems / interfaces with other internal systems and with external systems / the use of web-services

28. An expert from ITTIG explained that e-CODEX would enable States to share the data delivered by the platform using XML standards. He described the e-CODEX infrastructure as follows: Each iSupport system uses an e-CODEX gateway to enter the e-delivery platform. The platform exchanges messages (like forms and data) from and to other iSupport systems. Behind the e-CODEX gateway in the countries, a specific connector should be implemented for each specific country and would translate the generic e-CODEX format in the national specific format. He stressed the importance of the database scheme and the e-CODEX platform. He pointed out the need to address security issues and noted that e-CODEX was relying on an HTTPS protocol.

29. An expert from Brazil observed that web services were usually use Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) to allow systems to communicate with each other. He expressed his hope to be able to use e-CODEX and noted that this option was currently being assessed.

30. An expert from Switzerland also mentioned the current assessment of the possible connection to e-CODEX to the Swiss governmental secure environment. He expressed his support for an XML format for internal use.

E-CODEX

31. Philippe Lortie referred the experts to the report of the Secure Communication (e-CODEX) Working Group first meeting available on the iSupport specialised section of the HCCH website. He explained that States had been invited to circulate their queries and to inform the Working Group of their decision by mid-February.

Access to external websites

32. Philippe Lortie stated that this issue had already been addressed by the Data Protection Working Group. He presented one key result of the Survey relating to this topic. In some governments access to the web is restricted or even prohibited, mostly to avoid external intrusion. He stressed that some very useful information is available on the Internet, and that amongst other possibilities, iSupport could provide for useful documents to be available directly in the application in a PDF format, or iSupport could give access to specific designated websites. Philippe Lortie recommended further investigation to determine the most convenient and cheapest solution.

V. APPLICATIONS AND SIZING

Logging of changes and views / “time-stamp” / “audit trail” (database size, performance system)

33. Philippe Lortie briefly presented the conclusions of the Data Protection Working Group. He observed that States had different requirements as regards logging of *views*. Some States would keep track of the views for 2, 3, 4 or 5 years. It was therefore recommended enabling the administrator to choose a certain duration for data retention for the back end of the application. It was noted that the longer this duration, the bigger the database would need to be. He explained that logging of *changes* were mostly kept for the same duration as the data itself.

34. An expert from Switzerland suggested giving detailed recommendations about the size of the database after the piloting phase.

Open source

35. Philippe Lortie highlighted the strong recommendation of the Advisory Board to develop an open source system as opposed to an “off the shelf” product. He stated that even though developing an open source system would certainly be more costly, it would avoid future license fees, and would be more consistent with the collaborative approach of the Hague Conference and of the iSupport project. In that respect, he emphasized the opportunity for all States to benefit from any individual upgrades and improvements.

36. Philippe Lortie mentioned the governance issues addressed by the Tender, Governance and Maintenance Working Group. He explained that any change of source code by a State would have to be reported to the Permanent Bureau and the service provider, with a view to properly transferring that knowledge and information. Modifications to source codes that could

affect the global operation of iSupport would have to be approved by a Governing Body. However, he stated that source code changes that did not affect the operation of iSupport globally could be changed without any prior approval (modification of an internal template for instance) but it was still important to document and report those changes to the Permanent Bureau and the service provider.

36. Philippe Lortie stated the Secretary General of the Hague Conference had expressed a favourable opinion as regards the development of an open source system, and his wish to seek additional funding to secure this development. In response to a question of an expert from France, he specified that possible sources of funding were not identified yet, and could be provided by Member States, foundations, companies and maybe the developer in the event that the developer wished to sponsor iSupport.

37. Philippe Lortie noted that the Working Group unanimously favoured the development of an open source system.

Document types (PDF, Word, other); Use of applications (Java, etc.); Other items for discussion

38. Brigitte Voerman invited the participants to send a list of the different document formats (such as like PDF and Word), and of the applications (such as Java) possibly used by Central Authorities. She welcomed any further contributions with regard to non-addressed issues.

39. Philippe Lortie suggested rescheduling the meeting that was initially planned for 19 March 2015 to 12 March 2015. The experts agreed on the new date.

40. An expert from Estonia suggested adding the ODT format (LibreOffice, OpenOffice). He also recommended restricting the use of application, with a view to ensure security and data protection. He eventually suggested using some guidelines gathered by the Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP - https://www.owasp.org/index.php/Cheat_Sheets), in particular SQL Injection Prevention or Cross Site Scripting Prevention.