Networking of Legal Information Websites in Europe - experiences and challenges

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La mise en réseau des sites juridiques européens - expériences et défis

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Legal Information Network in Europe?

* The paradox: Global Internet community of local networks connected to each other <->
* Very few services available in the networking of European legal information sources
* What kind of legal information networking exists?
* Why are there no well-known ”Pan-European legal information services”
* What kind of prospects are there in this sector?

Recent EU experiences in legal networking

EULEGIS - European Legal Information in a Structured Form research project 1999-2001

EULEX - project on the texts of measures for the national transposition of Directives (IDA, Interchange of Data between Administrations)

Nat-Lex - project on a common user interface for the national legislation databases of EU member states

Purpose of the EULEGIS Project:

EULEGIS was a Research and Development Project aiming to provide a unique application and an interface between all data systems providing legislative information in the European Union.

* *Participants from Portugal, Spain, France, U.K., Sweden and Finland*

EULEGIS User Interface:

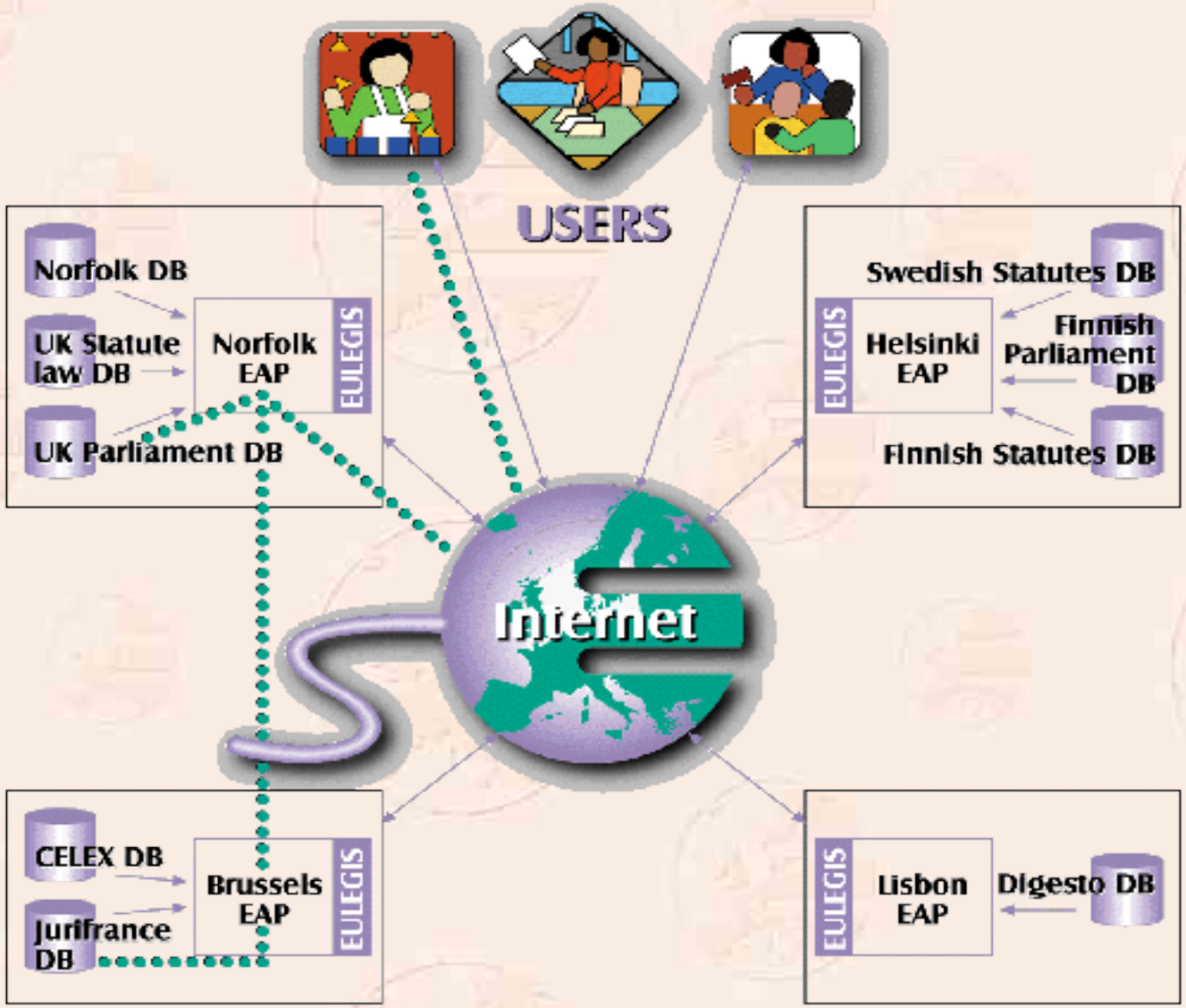
A Single Point of Access - the users do not have to know all the different interfaces to the legislative data sources.

The EULEGIS interface was built on the legal database provider's interface to give the user ***a standard interface****.*

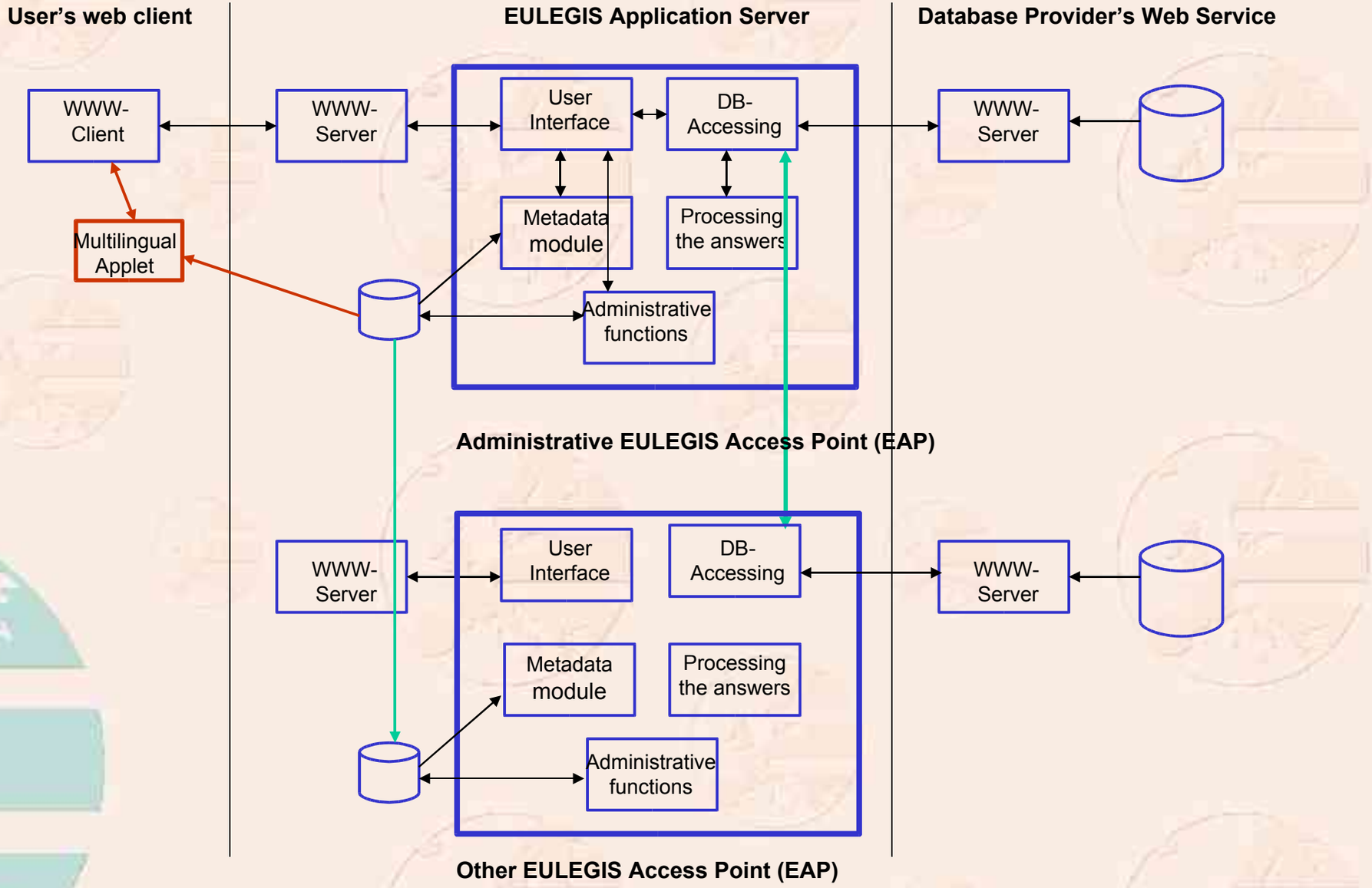
* ***The result*** *of the query was shown* ***in a harmonised way***
* ***The technologies: distributed middleware techniques, XML,***

  Java/RMI, servlets

EULEGIS DEMONSTRATOR STRUCTURE

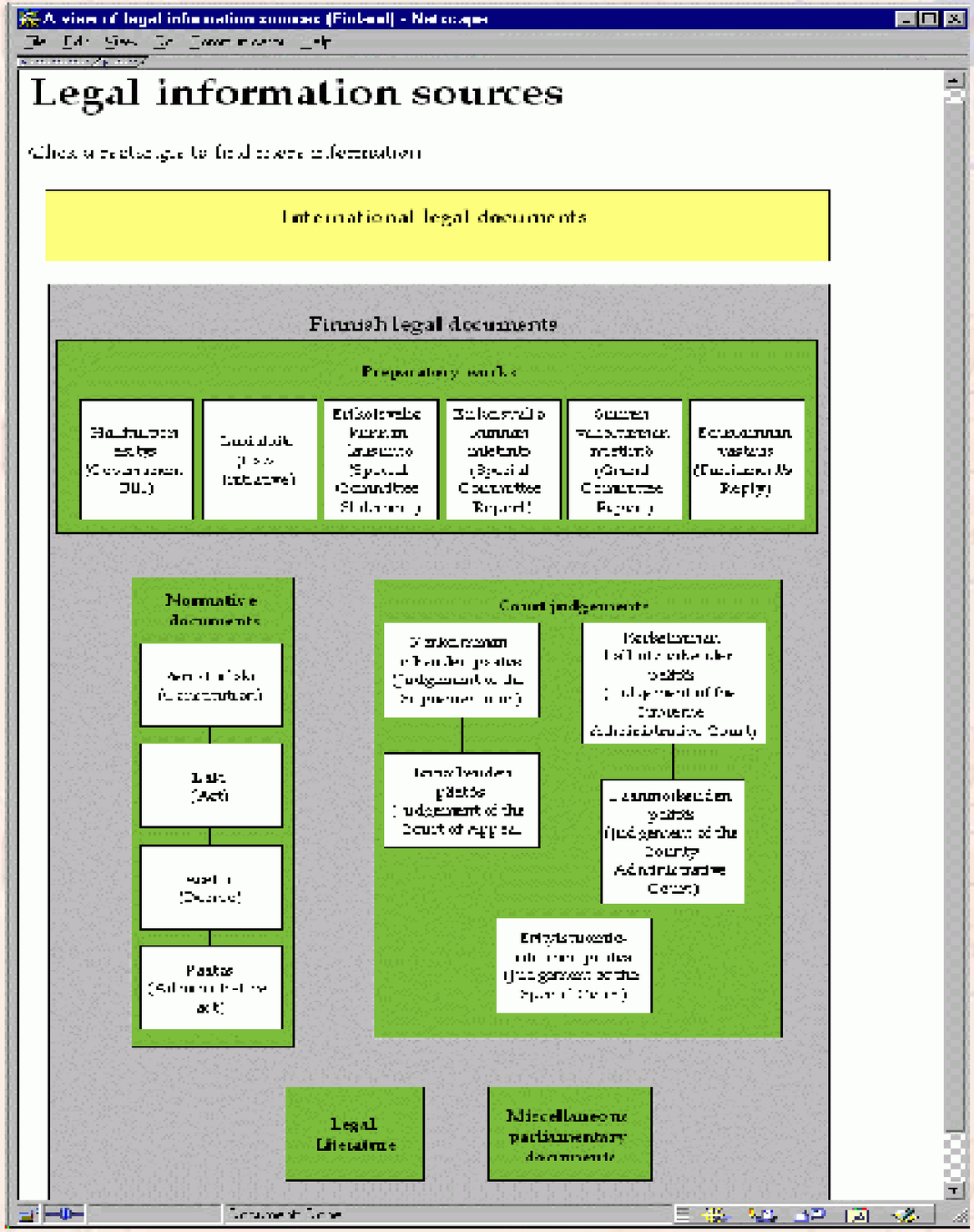


EULEGIS TECHNICAL ARCHITECTURE

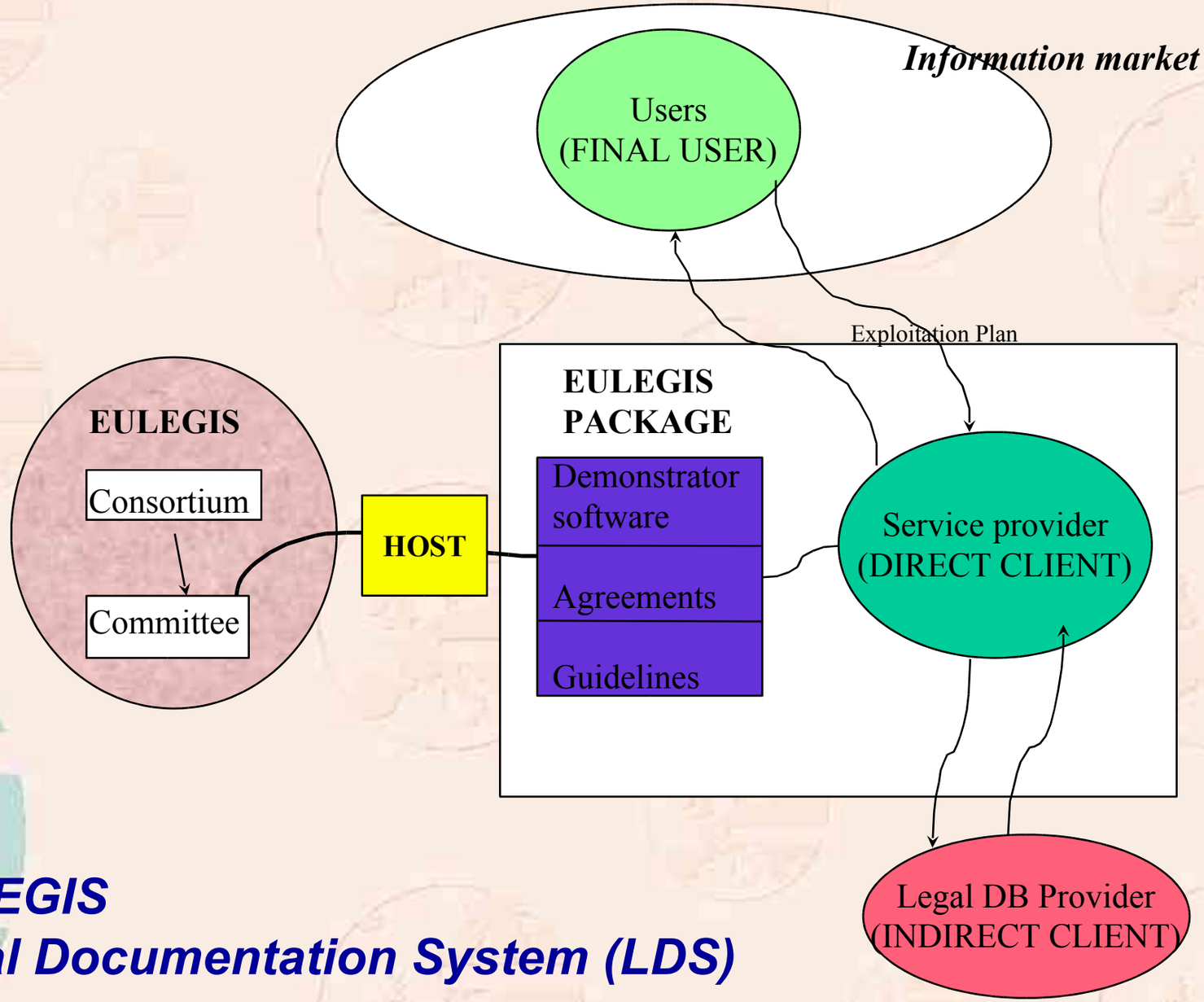


Different views to legislation

- *Process view: the stages in the law-making (EU level or national decision-making)*
- *Actor view: different actors in the law-making process*
- *Source view: different information sources on law-making and the documents*
- *graphical and textual overviews and guides to help users*
- *Technical aspects:*
- *Accessing structured databases (with database descriptions)*
- *Multilingualism*
- *Processing of the search results*


Legal information sources
International legal documents
Finnish legal documents
Preparatory works
Normative documents
Court judgements
Legal literature
Miscellaneous parliamentary documents

Exploitation idea



EULEGIS
Legal Documentation System (LDS)

The Challenges of Implementation

- *There has been no commercial utilization of the results of the EULEGIS project (in part they are used in the EU projects EULEX and Nat-Lex)*
- *The European principle of "user-friendly and free access to legal information" is not commercially feasible*
- *The costs of any multilingual service are high*
- *The filters used in the presentation of search results can make the service slow*
- *The current need for standards - XML, Legal XML*

EULEX 3

- A European access service for national implementing measures of EU law
- Based on an online catalogue of EU directives, containing references of CELEX/EUR-Lex Sector 7
- Can be used to obtain the full text of any implementing measure from the appropriate national legal database.
- EULEX provides links to all the national databases and to CELEX/EUR-Lex
- Currently only old EU member states

EULEX 3

- Each of the national legal database services will have its own interface, search engine and network protocol.
- EULEX will have to provide a methodology for the end user which will simplify the access to these different services. Some form of common interface and common network protocol will be required
- Practical questions: commercial databases with user fees, the integration of new EU Member States into EULEX

Nat-Lex: The aim is to develop a single point of access (with a standard search interface) to legal online information services in EU Member States

* Multilingual search interface
* Started with EULEX 2 -project (IDA)
* The first version available on EU website

Challenges in networking

- The need of a Legal Information Network in Europe, utilizing the best practices of EULEGIS, EULEX and Nat-Lex
- the Next Generation of EUR-Lex?
- Standardization of national legal databases with Legal XML / LexML etc.
- Multilingualism (Eurovoc is not sufficient as a legal thesaurus)

Challenges in networking

- The lack of **Nat-Curia** - Network or Access to Case-law of Courts in EU Member States
- especially the interpretation of EU law at the national courts
- There is exchange of information between administrative courts in the sector of EU law

Minimum level of networking ?

- National legislation: the linking of national laws to the EU directives and regulations
- National case-law: the linking of judgments to the EC Court of Justice Case-Law and EU directives and regulations (available in EUR-Lex)
- Legal literature? The linking of national commentaries to the Case-law of the EC Court of Justice (example from Finland: Finlex)