EUCases’ first expert workshop took place at Turin University on 16 June, 2014. It brought together the project’s Advisory Board of Experts and a number of highly esteemed experts who contributed with their view on online legal information services. The workshop’s main objective was to obtain critical external views, in particular, on user requirements of the project’s main target audience, i.e. legal professionals who need access to case law from other Member States. The workshop was also a forum for discussing the state-of-the-art in Legal XML, the basis for linked open data in the legal domain.

Empowering legal professionals with linked open data
The workshop made it abundantly clear that the time is ripe for powerful tools & services to give full online access to legal information – across the boundaries inside of the EU and tailored to the needs of users. Major drivers include the fact that comparative approaches to law are becoming more and more important for legal practice; trends go in the direction of smarter access to EU regulation and case law across Europe; policy at both European and national level pushes for much improved access to public legal information (PLI), as reflected in...
The Workshop | Towards Linked Legal Open Data in Europe

Recent research indicates that linked open data has a huge potential to enable the generation of new business models and service offers, endangering the role of established data providers but offering plentiful new opportunities for market innovation. Because legal information markets have traditionally been near-monopolies across most of the EU, providers have felt little pressure to exploit advances in technology for making services more effective and user-friendly. Promulgation of law has been treated as public task with little attention being paid to user needs. Publication e.g. in the state gazette has been considered sufficient, and hardly any attempts have been made at least to ensure consolidation. This is bound to change with the advent of open legal data – which is one reason why traditional data holders in the legal domain appear to resist opening up their data. The products being developed by EUCases exemplify how open legal data can be exploited to overcome some of the most obvious limitations of established sources of cross-border legal data, and thereby to better serve the needs of legal professionals who require access to such information.

The Workshop

The workshop participants were cordially welcomed to the University of Turin by Prof Germano Paini, the Rector’s Delegate for Innovation, before being introduced to the project by Prof Guido Boella, EUCases’ Scientific Coordinator. Hristo Konstantinov, EUCases’ Industrial Coordinator, gave a quick overview of the state of the art and user needs regarding legal open data as well as an outlook on the ConsumerCases and EULinksChecker interface design. There is nobody who knows the world of Legal XML better than Prof Monica Palmirani from CIRSFID at the University of Bologna. She described the current use of Legal XML standards for legislative modelling in a harmonised structure the various legislative and judicial documents from open data portals across Europe.

DISRUPTIVE DEVELOPMENTS TRANSFORM THE LEGAL INFORMATION MARKET

Marc van Opjinen

Marc van Opjinen product manager for information services at Expert Center for Official Governmental Publications in The Hague, gave an overview of recent e-law developments at EU level.

Clemens Wass

Clemens Wass is lecturer at the Vienna University of Economics and Business, presented the highly innovative openlaws project.

Michael Kienzler

Michael Kienzler is senior project manager and research platforms designer at Haufe-Lexware, one of the leading providers of online legal information services in Europe.

Reinhard Sander

Reinhard Sander is lecturer of publishing management at Macromedia HfMK, Munich. His track record in the publishing industry included stints as managing director in several major publishing groups.

Paolo Davide Farah

Paolo Davide Farah is Assistant Professor of International Law at the West Virginia University, USA. His research interests include public international, international economic, European and Intellectual Property law.

Panels

Panel discussion with Reinhard Sander and Michael Kienzler on user requirements and their implications for the project.

The Paradigm of the Modern Era

- Law
- Freely accessible
- Understandable
- Use
- Re-use
- Good legislation
- Improved presentation

THE WORKSHOP

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New EUCases results on our website

- **Software project documentation** – outlines the functional requirements of the EUCases target group, i.e. lawyers, judges, in-house legal councils, legal researchers & other legal professionals, paralegals, auditors and accountants insofar as they work frequently with cross-border legal information or at least with EU legal resources. Based on these requirements, the document describes the functional specifications of the systems to be developed.

- **ConsumerCases and EULinksChecker interface design** – ConsumerCases web application and EULinksChecker add-in are the most visible outcomes of the EUCases project. The report presents early prototypes of both, illustrating basic functionalities and interface features of the end-user applications to be developed within EUCases.

- **Report on crawler tools** – To ensure compatibility and centralised data storage, EUCases has established a common crawler framework. It integrates both crawlers and crawler web services. For sourcing raw legal data, EUCases exploits more than 40 public web portals and sites of open access journals in the legal domain.

- **NLP toolkit report** – presents the components of the natural language processing (NLP) toolkit for text mining, analytics and search technology features of EUCases.

- **External dissemination plan** – presents the plan for external dissemination activities in EUCases. The report lists relevant third party events such as European conferences of relevance to the project.

- **Legal Text to XML Tools Report** – summarises the work on the development of software tools for the conversion of the raw legal open data downloaded within the EUCases project implementation into a homogeneous legal XML format.

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**Coming up:** Business Model Workshop in Sofia, Bulgaria

In order to elaborate a business model (possibly business models), a workshop will be organised in Sofia on October 2nd 2014. Group meetings and conference sessions are scheduled at regular occurrences in order to have partners discussing all stages of the project.

*If you are interested in attending the workshop, please get in touch with Hristo Konstantinov (ico@apis.bg). The workshop will be held in Bulgarian language.*
Legal XML | Akoma Ntoso

Prof Monica Palmirani from the Interdepartmental Research Centre in Legal History, Legal Philosophy and Sociology and Computer Science and Law at the University of Bologna is an authority in Legal XML. When asked about the reasons which make Legal XML standards such a central component of the linked open data paradigm, she lists the following features. Legal XML is:

• *Document oriented* – document is the central

• *Self-contained* – document is autonomous

• *Descriptive* – document is well described also in odd structure

• *Prescriptive* – document is checked in quality

• *Separation of concerns* - content, metadata, presentation are separated

• *Ontology-oriented* – the ontology level is external of the document

• *Technology Natural* – independent from technology

• *Persistent over time* – long term preservation for archiving

• *Workflow-oriented* – document is part of a legislative process

Akoma Ntoso, an open XML standard for any legal document used in parliamentary processes and judiciary systems, is on its way to become the leading standard for Legal XML: Akoma Ntoso is increasingly adopted by parliaments, among which the European Parliament and the Italian Senate. In addition to this European Commission and the EU Council aim to adopt Akoma Ntoso for document management in order to favour the interoperability with EU Parliament.

By the end of 2014 it will become official standard of OASIS, the non-profit consortium that drives the development, convergence and adoption of open standards for the global information society.

The EUCases project has the honour to be the first that will apply this standard on a large scale in the EU, i.e. to for structuring, processing and managing German, French, Italian, Austrian, Bulgarian and UK legislation and case law.

Its implementation allows for:

• Uniformity of representation, access to structural elements such as section, article, paragraph, using XPATH and representation of references and metadata as XML tags in the text.

• Publication in different formats: html, pdf, formats for smartphones and tablets, using XSLT and other transformations and distribution of legal texts via web as legal linked open data.

Moreover, Akomo Ntoso is fully compliant with the latest EU ELI and ECLI initiatives in the field of legal open data and legal semantic web.