



EUROPEAN
CASE LAW IDENTIFIER



BO-ECLI: IMPROVING ACCESS TO CASE LAW



This project is co-funded by
the European Union

2015-2017

What Is ECLI All About



Access to case law is of fundamental importance for the Rule of Law: it facilitates the scrutiny of justice, contributes to the transparency of the judiciary and informs the public about the continuous development of the law. Apart from access to national case law, the integration of Europe also necessitates for easy and cross border access to case law of the European courts and other Member States of the European Union.

The European Case Law Identifier (ECLI) is a human readable and computer process-able code that can –in principle– be assigned to every judicial decision from every national or European court. Its aim is to facilitate unequivocal citation of judgments and to improve cross-border accessibility of case law.

The introduction of ECLI was a result of political demand for an improved cross-border accessibility of national case law. The decision on the (voluntary by each Member State) implementation of the ECLI has been taken by the Council of the European Union in December 2010.

Within these 'Council Conclusions' also a set of fifteen metadata has been decided upon to improve searchability of published judicial decisions. To complete the ECLI infrastructure the European Commission has developed a search engine that can index all judgments with an ECLI assigned, from whatever data provider.

Example:

ECLI:NL:HR:2015:472

ECLI label	country code	abbreviation of court	year of judgment	some serial number
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European Legal Information Online

The European e-Justice portal, maintained by the European Commission, aims to be the one-stop-shop for legal information and online cross border procedures within the EU.

Through the ECLI pages within this e-Justice portal one can find, in all official languages of the EU, general information on ECLI, whilst through the ECLI search engine one can search all judicial decisions from any country or court and from any data provider, as long as they have an ECLI assigned.

The ECLI search engine can be found on:

https://e-justice.europa.eu/content_ecli_search_engine-430-en.do



Who Is ECLI for

For legal professionals:

- The European Case Law Identifier has a fixed format, and is assigned to individual judgments. It is easy to recognize and easy to read:
- ECLI will easily be found by search engines, and facilitates automated linking of judgments to each other, to other legal sources or to academic writings.

ECLI : country code : abbreviation of court : year of judgment : some serial number.



For Court Administrations:

- Assigning ECLI improves the searchability, findability and citability of your court decisions.
- When you connect to the ECLI Search Engine your decisions will be more easy to come across by people abroad; interesting or important cases might render more international attention.



- Full translations, (translated) summaries and other metadata will be displayed alongside the original version, resulting in additional international exposure. Your case law can thus be taken into account in comparative law research studies.

For Database Administrators:

- Every case law database containing judgments that have an ECLI assigned can be indexed by the ECLI Search Engine. Also republishers can have their case law documents indexed. This is especially of value if you add specific metadata (e.g. in other languages).
- A technical interface was defined to connect to the ECLI Search Engine, based on XML and the Sitemap protocol. An open source software package was developed to support easy and quick connection.



How Can ECLI Help Justice



- Case law of national, European or foreign courts will be easily citable. All legal professionals, academics included, will profit by spending less time on studying citation style guides and searching for the right identifiers.
- By having a unique identifier, case law search is drastically improved.
- When an ECLI is used for citation, the reader will just have to go to the European e-Justice Portal, enter the ECLI and discover immediately the repositories and the languages in which the judgment is available.
- The national judge will be substantially facilitated in applying and implementing EU law by being able to find relevant case law from other Member States more easily.
- It facilitates comparative law studies and therefore contributes to an improved understanding of the similarities and differences between the legal and judicial cultures of the EU Member States.
- In light of article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights, accessibility of case law is necessary to ensure scrutiny of the judiciary by the public. By improving accessibility of court decisions, both in qualitative and quantitative sense, transparency of the judiciary will be reinforced and the rule of law is strengthened.

Countries Implementing ECLI

Many EU Member States have already implemented ECLI in (part of) their public case law data bases. Other Member States are in the process of implementing.

To see the state of play in your country, and in other countries, please visit our website:

www.bo-ecli.eu/ecli/current-implementation








Building On ECLI (BO-ECLI)

A project co-funded by the Justice Programme of the European Union.

Sixteen partners from ten Member States (Italy, Greece, Croatia, Estonia, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, the Czech Republic, Spain and Romania) cooperate to broaden the use of ECLI and to further improve the accessibility of court decisions on the internet. Having started on October 1st, 2015 the project is planned to be concluded within 18 months, at a maximum duration of 24 months.



Objectives

-  To (further) introduce ECLI into the case law repositories of Belgium, Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia and Croatia and to connect them to the ECLI Search Engine of the European e-Justice portal ('ESE-EEJP').
-  To improve the accessibility of case law documents by making the legal references therein computer readable.
-  To assess whether the current ECLI standards needs improvement to guarantee its compatibility with other semantic web standards and to develop 'ECLI 2.0' which should both be future-proof as well as fully backwards compatible with the current 'ECLI 1.0'.
-  To assess quantitative and qualitative aspects of the publication of judicial decisions within the Member States of the European Union and to develop policy guidelines thereon.
-  To spread the word on its benefits amongst legal professionals, press, academics, legal publishers and legal informaticians.



Consortium Members:

Coordinator:

Publications Office of the Netherlands (UBR|KOOP)

Partners:

Italy:

- Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna
- Institute of Legal Information Theory and Techniques
- University of Torino

Spain:

- Documentary Centre for the Spanish Judiciary

Croatia:

- Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Croatia
- Supreme Court of the Republic of Croatia

Estonia:

- Centre of Registers and Information Systems

Romania:

- Ministry of Justice of Romania

The Netherlands:

- Council of State of the Netherlands

Belgium:

- Federal Public Service Justice

Germany:

- Federal Office of Justice of Germany
- Federal Administrative Court of Germany

Czech Republic:

- Supreme Court of the Czech Republic

Greece:

- Hellenic Council of State
- European Public Law Organization (EPLO)



Better
Access to
Case Law

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