IV

(Notices)

NOTICES FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES AND AGENCIES

COUNCIL

Council conclusions inviting the introduction of the European Legislation Identifier (ELI)

(2012/C 325/02)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Article 67(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provides for the constitution of an area of freedom, security and justice with respect for fundamental rights and the different legal systems and traditions of the Member States.

2. A European area of freedom, security and justice in which judicial cooperation can take place requires not only knowledge of European law, but in particular mutual knowledge of the legal systems of other Member States, including national legislation.

3. The e-Law formation of the Working Party on e-Law is competent in matters of developments regarding the legal databases and information systems managed by the Publications Office of the European Union (¹).

II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE NEEDS

4. The EUR-Lex and N-Lex portals should fulfil the objective of providing access to information about the EU and Member States' legal systems and should serve as a useful tool for citizens, legal professionals as well as Member States' authorities.

5. Knowledge on the substance and application of European Union law cannot be solely acquired from EU legal sources, but also from national sources, in particular from national legislation implementing European Union law.

6. The process of cooperation within the European Union has increased the need to identify and exchange legal information originating from regional and national authorities at the European level. This need is partially met by digitally available legal information and the widespread use of the internet. However, the exchange of legal information is greatly limited by the differences that exist in the various national legal systems, as well as the differences in their technical systems used to store and display legislation through their respective websites. This hampers the interoperability between the information systems of national and European institutions, despite the increased availability of documents in electronic format.

7. The use of ELI could help overcoming these problems. Using unique identifiers and structured metadata in referencing national legislation in Official Journals and Legal Gazettes, if Member States so decide, would allow effective, user-friendly and faster search and exchange of information, as well as efficient search mechanisms for legislators, judges, legal professionals and citizens.

III. IDENTIFICATION OF SOLUTIONS

8. In line with the principle of proportionality and the principle of decentralisation, each Member State should continue to operate its own national Official Journals and Legal Gazettes in the way they prefer.

9. However, in order to facilitate the further development of interlinked national legislations and to serve legal professionals and citizens in their use of these databases, a common system for the identification of legislation and its metadata is regarded as useful. Such a common standard is compatible with the principles outlined in the previous paragraph.

10. For the identification of legislation, a unique identifier should be used which is recognizable, readable and understandable by both humans and computers, and which is compatible with existing technological standards. In addition, ELI proposes a set of metadata elements to describe legislation in compliance with a recommended ontology. The European Legislation Identifier (ELI) should guarantee a cost-effective public access to reliable and

(¹) See 16113/10.

up-to-date legislation. Benefiting from the emerging architecture of the semantic web, which enables information to be directly processed by computers and humans alike, ELI would allow a greater and faster exchange of data by enabling an automatic and efficient exchange of information.

11. ELI should give the Member States and the European Union a flexible, self-documenting, consistent and unique way to reference legislation across different legal systems. ELI URIs uniquely identify in a stable way each legislative act across the European Union, while at the same time taking into account the specificities of national legal systems.

12. ELI takes into account not only the complexity and specificity of regional, national and European legislative systems, but also changes in legal resources (e.g. consolidations, repealed acts etc.). It is designed to work seamlessly on top of existing systems using structured data and can be taken forward by Member States at their own pace.

13. The European Case Law Identifier (ECLI) (¹), applicable on a voluntary basis, already provides a European system for the identification of case-law. ELI identifies legislative texts which have different and more complex characteristics, and the two systems are complementary.

IV. **CONCLUSION**

14. The Council welcomes the initiative of a number of Member States to develop, on a voluntary basis at the national level, the European Legislation Identifier (hereinafter referred to as ELI).

15. Noting that each element of ELI (i.e. unique identifiers, metadata and ontology) as set out in the Annex is subject to voluntary, gradual and optional introduction, the Council invites the Member States who decide to introduce ELI, and on a voluntary basis, to:

  (a) Apply ELI to pieces of national legislation which can be found in national Official Journals, Legal Gazettes or databases operated by Member States;

  (b) the way they see technically most feasible, provide pieces of national legislation, which are published in national Official Journals, Legal Gazettes or made available in their databases, with:

    (a) a unique identifier, based on a template using some or all of the components set out in paragraph 1 of the Annex;

    (b) some of the metadata and ontology as set out in paragraph 2 of the Annex;

  (c) appoint a national ELI coordinator as described in paragraph 3.1 of the Annex;

  (d) share and disseminate information on ELI;

  (e) discuss each year in the Council Working Party on the progress made with the introduction of ELI and metadata for national legislation.

16. Noting that each element of ELI (i.e. unique identifiers, metadata and ontology) as set out in the Annex is subject to voluntary, gradual and optional introduction, the following recommendations would apply:

  (a) ELI should be applied to European Union legislation which can be found in the *Official Journal of the European Union* and the EUR-Lex portal operated by the Publications Office of the European Union;

  (b) Therefore, the Publications Office of the European Union should, acting in accordance with Decision 2009/496/EC (²), integrate ELI as a part of the EUR-Lex portal, as described in paragraph 4 of the Annex;

  (c) The Publications Office of the European Union could host and maintain on its EUR-Lex portal the register of formal descriptions of Member States' URI schemes, the referenced authority tables together with the ELI ontology, as well as useful information.

17. Apart from Member States, candidate countries and Lugano States (³) and others are encouraged to use the ELI-system.

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(¹) The Council invited the introduction of the European Case Law Identifier and a minimum set of uniform metadata for case-law by way of conclusions (OJ C 127, 29.4.2011, p. 1).

(²) OJ L 168, 30.6.2009, p. 41.
(³) Iceland, Norway and Switzerland.

ANNEX

ELEMENTS OF ELI

The following elements of ELI address these requirements on a technical basis. These components can be implemented independently of each other, but the combination of all of them will give the full benefits of ELI.

1. **Identification of legislation — Ways to uniquely identify, name and access national and European legislation**

   ELI uses 'HTTP URIs' to specifically identify all online legal information officially published across Europe. These URIs are formally described by machine-readable URI templates (IETF RFC 6570), using components that carry semantics both from a legal and an end-user point of view. Each Member State will build its own, self-describing URIs using the described components as well as taking into account their specific language requirements.

   All the components are optional and can be selected based on national requirements and do not have a pre-defined order. To enable the exchange of information the chosen URI template must be documented using the URI template mechanism, see example below:

   > /eli/{jurisdiction}/{agent}/{sub-agent}/{year}/{month}/{day}/{type}/{natural identifier}/{level 1…}/{point in time}/
   > {version}/{language}

ELI template components

	Name	Comments
	eli	
Jurisdiction	Jurisdiction	Use of DCTERMS.ISO3166: 2 alpha country codes, e.g. 'LU' For international organisations, the registered domain name can be used: e.g. 'EU' or 'WTO'
	Agent	Administrative hierarchical structure, e.g. federal States, constitutional court, parliament, etc.
	Subagent	Administrative hierarchical substructure, e.g. the responsible ministry
Reference	Year	YYYY Various interpretations allowed depending on countries' requirements, e.g. date of signature or date of publication, etc.
	Month	MM
	Day	DD
	Type	Nature of the act (law, decree, draft bill, etc.) Various interpretations depending on countries' requirements
	Subtype	Subcategory of an act depending on countries' requirements (e.g. corrigendum)
	Domain	Can be used if acts are classified by themes, e.g. codes
	Natural identifier	Reference or number to distinguish an act of same nature signed or published on the same day
Subdivision	Level 1	Reference to a subdivision of an act, e.g. Article 15
	Level 2	Reference to a smaller subdivision than level 1, e.g. Article 15.2
	Level 3	Reference to a smaller subdivision than level 2
	Level n	Reference to a smaller subdivision
Point in time	Point in time	YYYYMMDD Version of the act as valid at a given date
Version	Version	To distinguish between original act or consolidated version
Language	Language	To differ different official expressions of the same act Use of DCTERMS.ISO3166: 3 alpha

2. **Properties describing each legislative act**

While a structured URI can already identify acts using a set of defined components, the attribution of additional metadata established in the framework of a shared syntax will set the basis to promote interchange and enhance interoperability between legal information systems. By identifying the metadata describing the essential characteristics of a resource, Member States will be able to reuse relevant information processed by others for their own needs, without having to put into place additional information systems.

Therefore, while Member States are free to use their own metadata schema, they are encouraged to follow and use the ELI metadata standards with shared but extensible authority tables, which permit to meet specific requirements. The ELI metadata schema is intended to be used in combination with customised metadata schemas.

For the data exchange to become more efficient, ELI metadata elements may be serialised in compliance with the W3C Recommendation 'RDFa in XHTML: Syntax and Processing'.

(a) *Metadata*

European Legislation Identifier (ELI)

Field name	Description	Field identifier	Cardinality	Data type	Comments
		Legal resource (language independent)			
		Any type of legal resource published in an Official Journal at the work level			
Unique identifier	The number or string used to uniquely identify the resource ELI URI schema	id_document	1…*	String	See URI proposal
URI schema	Reference to the URI schema used	uri_schema	1	String	URI of the URI template schema
Local identifier	Local identifier: the unique identifier used in a local reference system	id_local	0…*	String	Act's reference in the EU's, country's or region's own terminology, e.g. CELEX id, national id
Type of legislation	The type of a legal resource (e.g. directive, règlement grand ducal, law, règlement ministeriel, draft proposition, Parliamentary act, etc.)	type_document	0…1	Authority table resource types	For European law based on authority table: Resource types = class names in the OP's common data model (CDM). For national and regional laws specified on the appropriate level. Types of legislation are specific for each jurisdiction
Territorial application	Geographical scope of applicability of the resource (e.g. EU, country/Member State, region, etc.)	relevant_for	0…*	Authority table	Individual administrative units, taxonomy of possible values to be defined (NUTS taxonomy, two or more levels)
Agent/authority	Organisation(s) responsible for the resource. The European institution, other bodies or Member State or regional bodies, who initiated/ adopted the legal resource (e.g. European Parliament, Luxembourg Government, Rheinland-Pfalz Parliament, etc.)	agent_document	0…*	Authority table corporate body	Based on authority tables: Corporate bodies/countries, if necessary extended to cover regional agents. Record project
Subagent/subauthority	Person or suborganisation primarily responsible for the resource (e.g. name of ministry if applicable)	Service	0…*	String	Text indicating responsible ministries, DGs, etc.
Subject	The subject of this legal resource	is_about	0…*	Reference to Eurovoc (concept_eurovoc)	Eurovoc, national and regional extensions might be needed for areas not currently covered
Date of document	The official adoption or signature date of the document	date_document	0…1	Date	Format: YYYY-MM-DD

Field name	Description	Field identifier	Cardinality	Data type	Comments
Date of publication	Date in which this legal resource was officially published/ratified	date_publication	0…1	Date	Format: YYYY-MM-DD Depending on the Member State, the date of publication or ratification (signature of the responsible organisation)
Date entering in force	Applicable date for the resource, if known and unique. Otherwise use controlled vocabulary such as 'multiple', 'unspecified-future', etc.	date_entry-in-force	0…*	Date or string	Format: YYYY-MM-DD or string 'unspecified'
Date no longer in force	Applicable date starting from which the resource is not in force anymore	date_no-longer-in force	0…*	Date or string	Format: YYYY-MM-DD or string 'unspecified'
Status	Status of the legal resource (in force, not in force, partially applicable, implicitly revoked, explicitly revoked, repealed, expired, suspended, etc.)	Status	0…*	String	Free text
Related to	Reference to draft bills, judgments, press release, etc.	related_to	0…*	URI identifier to other legal resource(s)	
Changed by	Legal resource changed (amended or replaced) by another legal resource (typically a newer version, replacement can be completely or partially)	changed_by	0…*	URI identifier to other legal resource(s)	
Basis for	Legal resource (enabling act) enables another one (secondary legislation)	basis_for	0…*	URI identifier to other legal resource(s)	Enabling act/empowering act
Based on	Legal resource is based on another legal resource (e.g. a Treaty article, a provision in the constitution, framework legislation, enabling act, etc.)	based_on	0…*	URI identifier to other legal resource(s)	
Cites	References to other legal resources mentioned in the resource	Cites	0…*	URI identifier to other legal resource(s)	
Consolidates	Reference to the consolidated version(s) of the resource	consolidates	0…1	URI identifier to other legal resource(s)	
Transposes	References to other legal resources that allow Member States to adopt relevant legislation	transposes	0…*	URI identifier to other legal resource(s)	
Transposed by	References to other legal resources that have been adopted to comply with a framework legislation	transposed_by	0…*	URI identifier to other legal resource(s)	

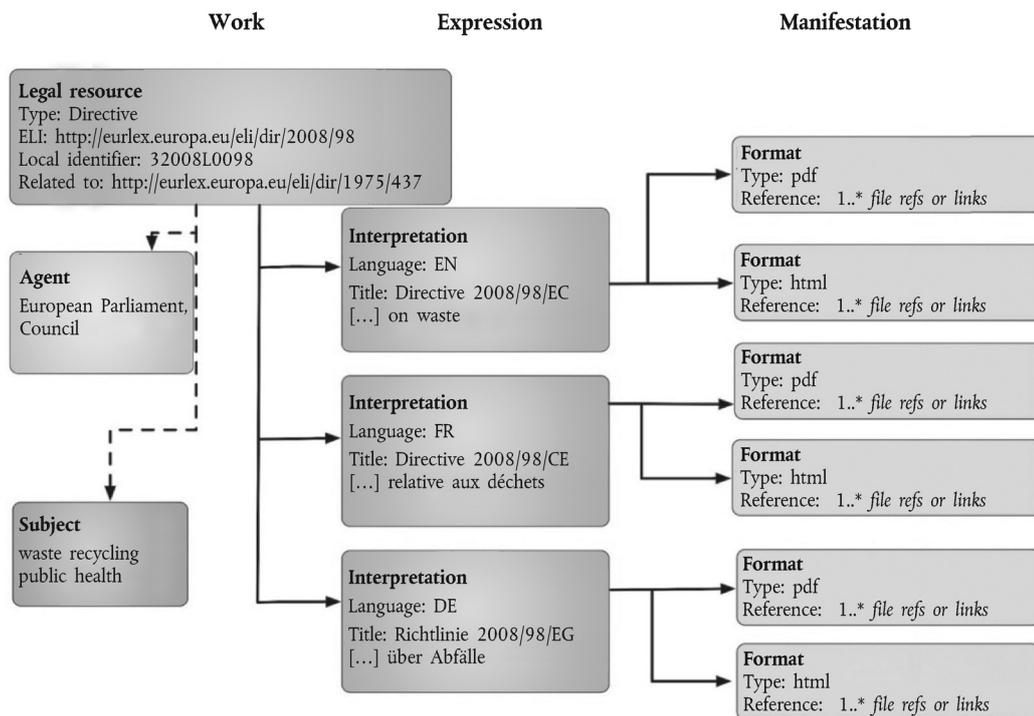| Field name	Description	Field identifier	Cardinality	Data type	Comments
Interpretation (expression)					
Expression belongs to a work	Association of the expression with its work	belongs_to	1	URI of work	
Language	Language version of the expression	language_expression	1	String	Based on authority table: Languages. Record project
Title	Title of the expression	title_expression	1	String	The name given to the resource, usually by the creator or publisher
Short title	Established short title of the expression (if any)	short_title_expression	0…1	String	
Alias	Alternative title of the expression (if any)	title_alternative	0…1	String	
Publication reference	Reference to the Official Journal or other publication in which the legal resource is published, identified by a suitable mechanism	published_in	0…*	String	
Description of the act	A suitable free text description of the legal resource in the expression's language (e.g. using the abstract)	description	0…1	String	
Format (manifestation) link or description to the physical object					
Manifestation belongs to an expression	Association of the manifestation with its expression	manifests	0…1	URI of expression	If a link to a file is given, then the manifests element must be present
Link to file	Link to the concrete file (can be a local link)	link_manifestation	0…*	Any URI	
Publisher	The entity (e.g. agency including unit/branch/section) responsible for making the resource available in its present form, such as a publishing house, a university department, or a corporate entity	publisher	0…*	String	In a given country often a constant

Bold and underlined: mandatory field.
Bold: recommended.

(b) *Ontology*

Ontology is an 'explicit, formal specification of a shared conceptualisation' and represents a formal description of a set of concepts and the relationships in a given domain. By describing the properties of legislation and their relationships between different concepts, a shared understanding is made possible and ambiguities between terms can be avoided. Being a formal specification, it is directly machine-processable.

ELI itself builds on the well-established model for 'Functional requirements for bibliographic records' (FRBR, http://archive.ifla.org/VII/s13/frbr/), aligned with other current standardisation initiatives in the field. FRBR distinguishes between the concepts of 'work' (distinct intellectual or artistic creation), 'expression' (the intellectual or artistic realisation of a work) and the 'manifestation' (the physical embodiment of an expression).

ELI describes legal resources following the same abstraction:

Work	Expression	Manifestation

Legal resource
Type: Directive
ELI: http://eurlex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2008/98
Local identifier: 32008L0098
Related to: http://eurlex.europa.eu/eli/dir/1975/437

Agent
European Parliament, Council

Subject
waste recycling
public health

Interpretation
Language: EN
Title: Directive 2008/98/EC
[...] on waste

Interpretation
Language: FR
Title: Directive 2008/98/CE
[...] relative aux déchets

Interpretation
Language: DE
Title: Richtlinie 2008/98/EG
[...] über Abfälle

Format
Type: pdf
Reference: 1..* *file refs or links*

Format
Type: html
Reference: 1..* *file refs or links*

Format
Type: pdf
Reference: 1..* *file refs or links*

Format
Type: html
Reference: 1..* *file refs or links*

Format
Type: pdf
Reference: 1..* *file refs or links*

Format
Type: html
Reference: 1..* *file refs or links*

3. On national implementation

3.1. *The national ELI coordinator*

1. Each Member State using the ELI must appoint a national ELI coordinator. One country must not have more than one ELI coordinator.

2. The national ELI coordinator is responsible for:

   (a) reporting on the progress of the ELI implementation;

   (b) defining the applicable URI template(s) and communicating them to the Publications Office of the European Union;

   (c) documenting available metadata and its relationship to the ELI metadata schema (if applicable);

   (d) sharing and disseminating information on ELI.

3. The national ELI coordinator should provide information to be published on the ELI website, as defined in paragraph 4, information describing the way the ordinal number is composed.

3.2. *Implementation*

    1. ELI's implementation is of national responsibility.

    2. ELI may optionally also be used within physical manifestation of the legislative act itself, to facilitate easy referral.

4. **The ELI website**

    1. An ELI website should be established; this website should be part of the EUR-Lex portal.

    2. The website should contain:

        (a) information on the format and use of ELI. Regarding the format it should contain:

            (i) the formatting rules as described in paragraph 1;

            (ii) (a reference to) the list with abbreviations of participating countries;

            (iii) technical information;

        (b) information on the availability of metadata and ontology, as set out in paragraph 2;

        (c) information on the national ELI coordinators: their role and responsibilities, but also contact information per country.

5. **ELI within the EU**

    1. The ELI coordinator for the EU is the Publications Office of the European Union.

    2. Where appropriate in the Annex 'country' or 'Member State' should be read 'EU.'