

## Steering Committee for the Feasibility Study on the Creation of a European Research Network\*

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UNIDROIT, of course, over the years has prepared a considerable number of international instruments, whether Conventions, model laws, guides or sets of principles. It has in addition prepared a great number of studies and drafts that have led to the conclusion of international instruments within the framework of other intergovernmental Organisations, such as the United Nations.

It has at all times seen the dissemination of information concerning these studies and instruments as a vital complementary activity to its work on the drafting of such studies and instruments.

For many years, the principal means whereby the Institute dispensed such information was through its *Uniform Law Review*, which has appeared, under different names, virtually ever since the Institute was refounded in 1940. At first, it appeared as *Unification of Law*. This system continued until the mid 1950's. Then from 1956 to 1971 it was divided into a *UNIDROIT Yearbook* and a selection of case-law involving the application and interpretation of international uniform law instruments called *Uniform Law Cases*. From 1973 the two publications were merged into a new *Uniform Law Review*, which from 1973 to 1995 appeared biannually. From 1996 onwards the *Uniform Law Review* has been entirely revamped, appearing four times a year. It seeks to provide not only news of the work being carried out by UNIDROIT but also articles by leading experts in the field of the unification of law, practical information on the work underway in other international Organisations, the texts of new instruments adopted in the field of uniform law, a regular updating of the status of implementation of all international uniform law instruments, a summary of case-law involving the application and interpretation of international uniform law instruments and a bibliography of uniform law.

Recognising the importance nowadays of making information regarding international uniform law available on line, the Institute is also in the process of setting up a uniform law data base, called UNILAW. This is at present limited to materials on the 1956 Geneva Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (C.M.R.), the draft of which was prepared by UNIDROIT. The materials available on this data base at present are limited to the text of C.M.R., case-law concerning the application and interpretation of that Convention and a bibliography concerning C.M.R. It is the intention to expand this data base next to materials concerning the 2001 Cape Town Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment and the 2001 Cape Town Protocol to that Convention on Matters specific to Aircraft Equipment.

At the same time, the Secretariat is working on putting its entire library catalogue on line too. At the moment, this service is only available within the Secretariat but the intention is to make it generally available on line too just as soon as possible.

The Institute hosts another data base, which was developed through generous donations from the Italian Government, providing information on line concerning the 1980 Vienna United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods and the UNIDROIT Principles of International Commercial Contracts. This data base, the name of which is UNILEX and the address of which is unilex.info, carries international case-law and a bibliography on both the Vienna Convention and the Principles. Currently some 700 cases on the Vienna Convention and some 95 on the Principles are available on UNILEX.

Another major means whereby UNIDROIT seeks to take stock of developments in the process of uniform law in practice and to contribute to the same is through the organisation of congresses on topics relating to the unification of law. Over the years four such congresses have been held, one in 1950, one in 1976, another in 1987 – this one specifically devoted to the topic *Uniform Law in Practice* – and the most recent in 2002. The Institute edits and publishes the Acts and Proceedings of these congresses.

The Institute also edits and publishes the *travaux préparatoires* of the various international instruments brought to signature under its auspices. It has edited and published the Acts and Proceedings of the diplomatic Conferences that saw the adoption of the UNIDROIT Conventions on International Financial Leasing and International Factoring in Ottawa in 1988 and the adoption of the UNIDROIT Convention on the International Return of Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects in Rome in 1995. It is currently editing the Acts and Proceedings of the diplomatic Conference that saw the adoption of the Cape Town Convention and the Cape Town Protocol in 2001.

Another important way in which the Institute seeks to enhance information concerning the unification of law process is through its publication of the *Digest of Legal Activities of International Organisations and other Institutions*. This is a loose-leaf publication, which is edited by the Secretariat and published by Oceana Publications. It provides information on the work currently underway within 28 international Organisations and other institutions. It is regularly updated. The first edition goes back to the late 1960's. The most recent edition, the 12<sup>th</sup>, was published in 2000.

UNIDROIT also publishes the *Proceedings and Papers of UNIDROIT*, an annual compilation of all the Secretariat documents covering the Governing Council and General Assembly of the Institute as well as the work of its study groups and committees of governmental experts. This publication is

\* Welcome and opening address on the contribution of UNIDROIT to the dissemination of information on uniform law, Rome (IT), 23-24 April 2005.

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transmitted, free of charge, to each UNIDROIT depositary library. All member States are invited to designate a depositary library on their territory.

Finally, I should mention the special publications of the Institute. Two of these concern the two major soft law projects undertaken to date by the Institute, one the *UNIDROIT Principles of International Commercial Contracts*, the other the *UNIDROIT Guide to International Franchise Arrangements*. The other is the *Official Commentary on the Cape Town Convention and the Aircraft Protocol*, prepared by Professor Sir Roy Goode, at the invitation of the Cape Town diplomatic Conference.