

IX International Conference  
**Law Via The Internet**

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**Free Access to Legal Information in Finland: Principles and Practice**

The presentation analyses the principle of free access to legal information in Finland. In Finland there is a long tradition of free access to government files, actually already from the Access to Public Records Act in 1766, applied to Finland during the Swedish rule. Free access to legal information became a new issue with the use of Internet in the mid-1990s. In 1996 a governmental committee on access to legislation recommended that legal information (i.a. legislation, treaties and court judgments) should be made available on the Internet, free of charge. The new Finlex website was opened in October 1997.

In the presentation, the different aspects of free access are discussed, including the implementation of the PSI Directive on the re-use of public sector information and the role of commercial services of legal information. In Finland the key institutions of the government have been active in providing free access to government files. In addition to the parliamentary website and Finlex, there is free access to several governmental databases and services, e.g. to the databases of legislative projects, the Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Chancellor of Justice.