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ICT and Quality of Legal Information

ICT is not just a technical tool. ICT represents a cultural change of the society as a whole, including a re-constitution of the law in this context. So far there have been two evolutionary steps of legal culture: customary law and written law. ICT causes the third step, by giving a role to the electronic medium. This role may develop e.g. to an entity which might be called an "e-person".

Legal information comes in different forms: (1) Traditional authentic versions are legal acts like constitution, laws, court decisions on paper. (2) Electronic versions map these documents to the electronic media, stored e.g. in legal information systems. (3) Juridical scientific information adding value to the original legal content, allowing for its redesign by the means of ICT supported juridical comments, visualisations of juridical semantics, and other forms of legal knowledge engineering.

Quality is one of the categories of Aristoteles. In our terms it may be interpreted as an attribute related to functionality. Therefore quality can be defined differently, depending from the different forms of legal information, and different from the addressees for this information: (1) The genuine addressees are the citizens, requiring a quality of understandability. (2) Traditionally, legal information is addressed to professional users, requiring a quality of clarity and consistency. (3) Accessibility is a generic form of quality. ICT opens a new dimension in this respect. (4) Processability represents an other dimension for ICT. (5) Persistence gets a new ICT dimension as well: Hammurabi was very persistent as not processable and cast to stone.

ICT documents are easy to change allowing for a permanent change of culture.