

MONTREAL DECLARATION ON "FREE ACCESS TO LAW"

Legal information institutes of the world, meeting in Montreal, declare that:

- Public legal information from all countries and international institutions is part of the common heritage of humanity. Maximising access to this information promotes justice and the rule of law;
- Public legal information is digital common property and should be accessible to all on a non-profit basis and free of charge;
- Organisations such as legal information institutes have the right to publish public legal information and the government bodies that create or control that information should provide access to it so that it can be published by other parties.

Public legal information means legal information produced by public bodies that have a duty to produce law and make it public. It includes primary sources of law, such as legislation, case law and treaties, as well as various secondary (interpretative) public sources, such as reports on preparatory work and law reform, and resulting from boards of inquiry. It also includes legal documents created as a result of public funding.

Publicly funded secondary (interpretative) legal materials should be accessible for free but permission to republish is not always appropriate or possible. In particular free access to legal scholarship may be provided by legal scholarship repositories, legal information institutes or other means.

Legal information institutes:

- Publish via the internet public legal information originating from more than one public body;
- Provide free and anonymous public access to that information;
- Do not impede others from obtaining public legal information from its sources and publishing it; and
- Support the objectives set out in this Declaration.

All legal information institutes are encouraged to participate in regional or global free access to law networks.

Therefore, the legal information institutes agree:

- To promote and support free access to public legal information throughout the world, principally via the Internet;
- To recognise the primary role of local initiatives in free access publishing of their own national legal information;
- To cooperate in order to achieve these goals and, in particular, to assist organisations in developing countries to achieve these goals, recognising the reciprocal advantages that all obtain from access to each other's law;
- To help each other and to support, within their means, other organisations that share these goals with respect to:
 - Promotion, to governments and other organisations, of public policy conducive to the accessibility of public legal information;
 - Technical assistance, advice and training;
 - Development of open technical standards;
 - Academic exchange of research results.

- To meet at least annually, and to invite other organisations who are legal information institutes to subscribe to this declaration and join those meetings, according to procedures to be established by the parties to this Declaration;
- To provide to the end users of public legal information clear information concerning any conditions of re-use of that information, where this is feasible;

This declaration was made by legal information institutes meeting in Montreal in 2002, as amended at meetings in Sydney (2003), Paris (2004) and Montreal (2007).