

&gt; Customer Success Story

## European Court of Human Rights Opens Up to the World with Hummingbird Enterprise™

“Hummingbird has helped us revolutionize the external dissemination of court information and streamline our internal business processes. We’ve saved the Council of Europe over U.S. \$1 million a year in postage costs alone due to our online knowledge management system.”

— John Hunter, Head of IT, European Court of Human Rights.

### Business Profile

#### Industry

Public Sector

#### Organization

European Court of Human Rights

#### The Challenge

- > Meet internal and external demand for easy and efficient access to human rights documents
- > Reduce costs associated with delivery of document
- > Provide an intuitive and easy to use system for a wide range of clients — from lawyers and judges to the general public

#### Hummingbird Solution

- > Document Management and Knowledge Management

#### Key Benefits

- > Investment costs recovered in less than one year
- > Substantial return on investment
- > Streamlined internal business procedures
- > Web-interface allows remote access, enabling flexible work environment
- > Minimal training requirements, increased number of users
- > Easy access to information resulting in improved productivity and client service

Serving 44 member states with a total population of 800 million, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg processes thousands of documents every week and receives 800 letters and 500 phone calls every day. Applications increased significantly in 1998 when the court merged with the Commission of Human Rights, so it needed to find a way not only to streamline internal processes but also to improve accessibility and dissemination of its case-law and related human rights documents to the outside world.

Operating under the auspices of the Council of Europe which was set up in 1949 to promote democracy and human rights, the European Court of Human Rights is a judicial body which gives judgement on cases brought against a member state by individuals or organizations claiming to be victims of violation of the European Convention of Human Rights. The appointment of John Hunter to the new role of Head of IT Division in 1996 was the catalyst for several innovative IT projects and working practices, part of a long-term program of modernization within the Court.

### Applying for a Solution

Before 1997 the Court did not have a Web site and responded to requests for information and documents such as Court judgements by post and telephone. Access to this information by applicants, governments, lawyers, the media and the general public had to be greatly improved to meet the rising demand in line with the Court’s growing case-board. Hunter identified the need for a web-based knowledge management solution, not only to act as a central repository for all documents relating to court proceedings for external consumption but also to meet an internal goal of delivering a powerful, easy to use, search and publishing tool to lawyers and judges, enabling consultation of all previous jurisprudence of the Court.

After an international call for tenders evaluating all major vendors, the Court chose Hummingbird Enterprise™ for its superior knowledge and document management technologies to drive its ‘HUDOC’ web-based solution.

“Hummingbird had an impressive legal pedigree and the capability to handle the complex multilingual nature of our working environment dictated by our 44 member states,” explained John Hunter. “The system had to be powerful yet intuitive and easy to use by a wide range of clients — from the general public to the judges themselves — and Hummingbird exceeded expectations. Its solid reputation and R&D roadmap gave us the confidence to strike up a long-term relationship and the assurance we would remain at the forefront of future developments in information management.”

## Early Return on Investment

The open architecture and flexibility of Hummingbird software was another benefit the Court was looking to take advantage of due to the diverse range of applications which needed to be integrated such as Microsoft® Exchange and Office, SQL databases, plus workflow, scanning and publishing applications.

The first version of HUDOC, a web-based knowledge management system, went live towards the end of 1998. With the powerful linguistic tools in Hummingbird Enterprise, users could search across the collection along with related document navigation. After eight months, project costs were fully recovered and the savings made on Council of Europe mailing costs alone are estimated to be U.S. \$1 million a year.

In 2002, the site had 27 million hits. Since some member countries do not have widespread Internet use, a CD-ROM version of the collection is also available to avoid a 'digital divide.' All documents are available in HTML format and downloadable in their original formats.

## Managing Information Overload

John Hunter and his team also created CMIS (Court Management Information System) in 2001, representing another innovative phase in the IT strategy. A complex system driven by the knowledge management components of Hummingbird Enterprise, CMIS was also developed with Tikit, the London-based Legal IT solutions provider.

"CMIS was a natural progression following HUDOC," explained Hunter. "The Court needed an integrated case-file and DMS to handle the operations of the Court more efficiently and combat the increasing number of applications to the Court. In 1997 we had 14,000 applications and the total for 2002 will be around 35,000." As Paul Mahoney, Registrar of the Court stresses, "We could not survive without IT — it would just not be possible to process this volume of cases quickly."

CMIS manages the internal processes of the Court and all the applications that have to be registered and tracked whether they are deemed inadmissible — about 85% are rejected — or come before the Court. It features integration to the Court's document management system, event management, automation of tasks on case files, search screens, model letters, timetable generation and a reporting module. CMIS currently holds all case-file documentation since 1953 and has over 400 users within the Court that will eventually increase to 600.

"Training on CMIS only takes 2 hours maximum and HUDOC requires a fraction of this. That's the beauty of the Hummingbird

user environment — it's so intuitive. If you can use Microsoft Word you can use our systems," said Hunter.

After six months of planning, user group sessions and pilots, Hunter adopted the big-bang approach and migrated over 500,000 documents into CMIS in one weekend.

Over 2,000 forms and model letters were developed allowing staff to automate the majority of the case management processes and increase processing productivity by 60%. Any type of external document can be input either electronically or by scanning, while documents created internally automatically populate the CMIS document management database. "Without this system we have absolutely no chance of getting on top of the workload. In that context, it is absolutely critical," commented Judge John Hedigan.

## Staying Ahead of the Technological Curve

Hunter is preparing to launch the next major IT initiative — a portal that will integrate HUDOC and CMIS to create 'CMIS Knowledge Portal,' delivering the next level of information access and productivity efficiencies. "By combining both systems and opening up elements of CMIS for public consumption we will have an even more powerful streamlined system," said Hunter.

In addition to HUDOC data, applicants and related parties will be able to track progress on a case and access all information relating to it. Relevant documents — even judgements — which are currently internal to CMIS will be published automatically to the portal.

Further developments will also include the use of agent technologies to push material by e-mail to interested parties, a records management initiative leveraging the Hummingbird Enterprise™ RM component, and remote access to CMIS for Court employees to enable more flexible working practices.

"As a public organization we are accountable to our 800 million citizens and Hummingbird is helping us de-institutionalize access to the Court's information and keep up with the increasing case load," explained Hunter. "We have to be cost efficient but working with partners like Hummingbird means we can remain at the forefront of technological developments. IT is ever more crucial to the success of the Court — compounded by the fact that more countries are set to join the Council of Europe."

"Not only will CMIS Knowledge Portal be a major technical achievement, but also a significant development in international human rights protection whose influence will be felt well beyond the borders of Europe," commented Luzius Wildhaber, President of the Court.



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