

IT Applications in the Austrian Justice System

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1. The Austrian Justice System at a Glance

As a modern and innovative organisation the Austrian justice system provides an indispensable service for society. It generates annual revenues of EUR 1.8 billion and employs 12,249 staff.

A glance at the income figures reveals that the justice system is managed efficiently: approximately 86 per cent of its expenses are covered by income. In this context it has to be kept in mind that the justice system's responsibilities include duties (e.g. in the area of prison administration and the data protection authority) from which obviously no significant income can be generated.

Key figures for 2022:

- Expenditure EUR 1,872.2 million
- Income EUR 1,601.7 million
- IT budget EUR 51.8 million
- Staff employed by the justice system: 12,249

2. Strategic Justiz 3.0 Initiative

The Strategic Justiz 3.0 Initiative essentially focuses on the question of how to provide the best possible IT support for the various user groups while, at the same time, taking a holistic look at the operations of the justice system. In this context small improvement potentials as well as completely digital file management and fully electronic handling of cases have been defined as measures to be taken in the light of current technological trends and options.

Together with justice system staff from a large number of user groups and areas such as "Incoming and Compilation of Files", "Decisions and Orders" or "Workplace of the Deciding Officer" were analysed in detail, with the most important business processes of the justice system being analysed and/or designed as "Actual" or "Target".

In addition to and based on the results formulated in the working groups the future architectures of information systems and technologies were designed.

Based on an overall report published mid-2014 the implementation of Justiz 3.0 was started, with several parallel projects initiated to establish the bases of digital file management. Among other things, the prerequisites for a viable Austria-wide digitisation process, automatic text recognition, as well as a file and document management and a workflow system that can be used across divisions were created. Since then the systems have been gradually enhanced, adapted to case specifics to the necessary extent, and gradually expanded to other areas such as decision-making support and register-keeping.

3. Digital Judicial Workplace

The Digital Judicial Workplace (DJAP) was created for integrated working with different justice system applications as a result of the Strategic Justiz 3.0 Initiative. The DJAP communicates with specific justice applications in the background and ensures that messages are forwarded internally. This allows the staff to automatically work in all applications in the same context (file number). It enables ergonomic interaction between specific components which are required for digital file management:

- Tasks to be completed including submissions via the Electronic Legal Communication system (ERV) and scans arrive in Task Management and may be taken and processed from the same.
- Taking on ERV submissions is made easier by the DJAP. When the data required for creating a case is available, the case can be created fully automatically in the submissions system of the Case Automation in the Justice System (Verfahrensautomation Justiz/VJ) application by clicking on "Neuen Fall anlegen" [Create new case] (without the user having to do anything more); entering file numbers, categories or court sections for taking on the ERV submission is no longer necessary.
- Once a file number has been opened it no longer needs to be entered again when additional applications need to be opened for that file reference number.

For that purpose the following justice applications may be used by way of the DJAP:

- Justice filing system (AS),
- Task management system (TMS),
- Submissions system (ES),
- Case Automation in the Justice System (VJ),
- Electronic integrated assistance for the public prosecutors (EliAs),
- Justice text processing / LibreOffice,
- Electronic signature,
- Microsoft Word,
- Microsoft Excel,
- Microsoft Outlook and
- HCL Notes.

At the end of 2016 a pilot project using the Digital Judicial Workplace (formerly electronic integration portal) for completely digital file management in civil proceedings was started at four Regional Courts, which provided the basis for more upgrading and enhancement steps. During 2017 a closer focus was placed on stability, performance and expert support, also in the light of budget cuts. In 2018

Commercial Court Vienna was included as another pilot site with a special focus on supporting comprehensive files. From 2019 an Austria-wide rollout to all courts dealing with civil cases took place, which was successfully concluded in June 2023. With the expansion to cover criminal cases, which was initiated concurrently, the rollout to all 17 public prosecutors' offices and four senior public prosecutors' offices was concluded in 2022, and to all Regional Criminal Courts in June 2023.

While the focus for the second half of 2023 will be on the rollout to the criminal and civil appellate cases of the Higher Regional Courts, as well as on a pilot run of digital case management in enforcement cases, all other types of court cases (in particular insolvency and non-litigious cases) are intended to be fully digitised by the end of 2025.

Key figures June 2023:

- 157 offices of the justice system making use of digital file management in civil, criminal and justice administration matters
- More than 4,000 users
- 1.1 million cases managed digitally
- more than 310,000 hearings held in those cases

4. Case Automation in the Justice System

The Case Automation in the Justice System (VJ) application supports all courts and public prosecutors' offices in keeping the registers of 67 different types of cases. Some types of cases (e.g. the order for payment procedure) are fully automated; court decisions are issued automatically and dispatched via a centralised Mailing Line, the Electronic Legal Communication system (ERV) or eDelivery. Submissions are transmitted via ERV or JustizOnline and court fees are collected as cashless payments. Via JustizOnline and the electronic file inspection (eAe) applications authorised parties are able to obtain access to their cases.

Since 2015 the "My Office Template Editor" (MOVE) has been available to all staff of the justice system; MOVE transfers data from justice applications to a central form after the file reference number has been entered or allows for new forms to be created.

Tasks:

- Case management including internal access control and logging of access
- Management of organisational data (courts, departments; users, etc.)
- Automated Mailing Line in Bundesrechenzentrum GmbH [Federal Computing Centre/BRZ]
- Statistics (key performance indicators)
- Administration and collection of court fees
- Austria-wide name search
- Scheduling and administration functions
- Integrated text processing (text module system)
- Social security search (in particular, identifying the third-party debtor/employer in connection with an attachment of earnings)
- Connection to the Electronic Legal Communication system (ERV in civil and criminal proceedings, Central Register of Civil Status [*Zentrales Personenstandsregister/ZPR*], Criminal Records Authority [*Strafregisteramt*]) and eDelivery (Section 28 *et seq.* of the Austrian Statute on Service of Process)
- Data delivery for numerous applications such as Official Publications [*Ediktsdatei*], JustizOnline, Mobile Enforcement Application [*mobile Gerichtsvollzieheranwendung (MOVO)*], Justice Receivables Management [*Justiz-Forderungsmangement (JFM)*], Justice Collection Centre [*Einbringungsstelle-Justiz (ET)*], Justice DataWarehouse [*DataWarehouse-Justiz (DWH)*], etc.
- External electronic inspection of files

- Online help and
- Integration with filing system and Task Management in the digital judicial workplace (DJAP)

Key figures for 2022:

- some 8,900 users within the justice system (thereof some 2,300 judges and public prosecutors)
- over 120 million cases/proceedings available online at any time
- 9.6 million documents served electronically (ERV, eDelivery, internal delivery within the justice system)
- 6.6 million documents served by post

5. Electronically Integrated Assistance for Public Prosecutors

The electronically integrated assistance for public prosecutors IT solution (EliAs) facilitates file management in preliminary criminal investigations. Police reports received via ERV are automatically classified and, after allocation by a file distribution system, which is also electronic, presented directly to the competent district prosecutor or public prosecutor as an EliAs file.

Currently cases against unknown offenders can be closed via EliAs by discontinuation pursuant to Section 197 of the Austrian Code of Criminal Procedure [*StPO*]. In addition cases may be discontinued pursuant to Section 190 *et seq. StPO* or Section 4 and 6 of the Juvenile Court Act [*JGG*] and accused persons, defence counsel and legal guardians of accused young persons or victims, victim representatives and other public authorities may be informed thereof. For offences pursuant to the Narcotic Drugs Act [*SMG*] prosecution may be abstained from temporarily or for good pursuant to Section 35(9) and/or Section 38 *SMG*. For more investigations to take place before a decision is made the option to send simple investigation orders to the criminal police is available.

Parties involved in proceedings may file submissions regarding EliAs files on paper (they will be scanned for inclusion in the EliAs file) or via ERV or JustizOnline. Decision-making officers deal with petitions for being sent a copy of the file or for being allowed to inspect the file, give reasons for a discontinuation or information about the status of the proceedings in EliAs, and the relevant return correspondence to the parties involved is sent by post or ERV as well.

Since its introduction in 2011 some 2.6 million preliminary investigations have been concluded exclusively electronically by way of EliAs, which has been constantly enhanced since then.

Key figures for 2022:

- 216,965 cases closed that arose in that year
- 51,362 documents received for pre-existing EliAs files
- 202,232 documents served (by post or electronically)

6. IT in Prison Administration

Integrated Prison Administration (IVV):

The IVV application, which has been in use since early 2000, includes inmates' records and the core area of prison administration and term calculation. In the last few years nearly the entire inmate management has been replaced by electronic management through module upgrades, and most recently the focus has been on care of the inmates (e.g. social and medical service). For transmission of documents to the courts internal electronic communication has become part of IVV.

Electronic Prison Management (eVM)

Taking into account the Strategic Justiz 3.0 Initiative an initial module of the successor application eVM was developed in 2016. Apart from replacing IVV, the objective of eVM is to realise the electronic inmate file. Currently the components for a petition for electronic surveillance of inmates and the complaints register have been realised. Since 2019 the IVV modules "social service", "psychological service" and "classification" have been available to users in eVM. The complaints procedure was realised in 2022 and the change of prison and the electronic petitioning procedure for electronically monitored house arrest (EÜH) were realised in 2023.

Integrated Business Administration (IWV)

IWV has been developed to support the processes in the prison's business operations. In addition to some accounting tasks it comprises warehouse management of the business products as a central component. This functionality has also been used in the management of drugs. Finally, the IWV has been upgraded by functions in the security area through the administration of arms and locks & keys. Furthermore, numerous IT applications (e.g. eLearning, electronic admissions procedures, video interpreting, duty roster and working time accounting) are used in the area of prison administration. In addition, there is a possibility to use video conferencing technology to question inmates, by which transfers have been considerably reduced.

Key figures for 2022:

- 9,405 new prisoners (remand custody, serving a sentence, administrative custody, etc.)
- Average daily number of inmates: 8,707
- Average daily number of inmates in electronically monitored house arrest: 358
- EUR 161 expenses per prison day
- Approx. 7,500 users from the areas of responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Justice and of the Federal Ministry of the Interior

7. Electronic Legal Communication

Electronic Legal Communication (ERV) with the courts was introduced as early as in 1990 as a means of communication with the parties and their counsel that would be equivalent to submissions in hard copy. In introducing this system, Austria was the first country in the world to establish Electronic Legal Communication.

ERV offers registered users electronic transfer of submissions and automated transfer of the details of the case to the IT applications of the justice system, for instance by way of a transfer point, direct communication or from JustizOnline. In 1999 also the opposite lane on the "justice system's data highway" was opened, which enables electronic service of process documents in the so-called "*Rückverkehr*" [return communication]. While decisions were only transferred in a simple text format until 2009, the courts and public prosecutors' offices have been able to serve judgments, transcripts and other documents on the recipients in pdf/A format since then. Annual savings on postage of more than EUR 12 million are made in this way.

In 2007 the ERV was migrated to contemporary service technology and supports streaming-based data transfer. ERV, which is secured via the justice portal, is accessible via several transfer points, which are regularly advertised publicly. In this context, for example, attachments in pdf/A format and also other data formats such as video and audio files in briefs can be included in the form of an XML file by means of the Justiz Box. Lawyers, notaries, banks, insurance companies, social security funds, pension funds, the umbrella organisation of the social security funds, the Office of the State Attorneys, the Austrian Bars and the court-certified experts and interpreters must subscribe to ERV. Currently ERV has more than 10,000 subscribers accounting for a total volume of over 15 million messages.

As one of the outstanding e-government applications in Europe, ERV was awarded the EU e-government label in 2001. Since 2016 all ERV subscribers may communicate with each other via ERV.

Key figures for 2022:

- 5.0 million submissions
- 8.4 million documents served
- 2.2 million file number responses
- A total of 15.6 transmissions

8. JustizOnline

Since November 2020 JustizOnline, the digital information and service portal of the Austrian courts and public prosecutors' offices, has been available to all citizens, business entities and local authorities via justizonline.gv.at. JustizOnline is a digital lighthouse project and, using synergies with other eGovernment portals, offers a digital access channel to proceedings and services. As a result, selected errands to offices of the justice system can be run online via a desktop computer or smartphone 24/7 and from anywhere. With JustizOnline, the services provided by the independent courts and public prosecutors' offices for citizens, business entities and public-law corporations are expanded to include digital services. This will notably reduce the workload of the judicial service centres and provide benefits to clients of the justice system in terms of costs, time and quality.

In the current upgrading stage for citizens, business enterprises and public-law corporations JustizOnline includes the option of easy electronic submission and electronic file access in proceedings, including a case status query, subject to the relevant access rights. In addition, JustizOnline is also available to expert witnesses and court interpreters. Experts and court interpreters may transmit expert opinions and translations, including supporting documents and other submissions, to the offices of the justice system in a secure, electronic way. Moreover, these occupational groups may edit their list entries, which are publicly accessible via JustizOnline. Other services offered by JustizOnline include the possibility to obtain excerpts and documents from the Business Register or the Land Register directly and to pay for them electronically.

With the development of more features and the migration and integration of services and information previously offered separately the platform will become the face of the justice system and the central point of entry to all digital services of the justice system.

Key figures for 2022:

- Some 3,800,000 service accesses
- 235,000 accesses to the electronic file inspection application
- 26,500 purchases in the Business Register and the Land Register

9. Land Register

In the early 1980s the land database was set up at the Federal Computing Centre in cooperation with the Federal Ministry for Buildings and Technology, as it was called at that time, which has enabled automated keeping of the Land Register by the courts and automated keeping of the cadastre by the surveying offices. As early as in 1986 the migrated Land Registers could be searched by external offices. Since mid- 1999 the Austrian Land Register can be viewed via the internet from all over the world. For external searches of the Land Register database so-called clearing offices [*Verrechnungsstellen*] were established.

In order to take account of the technological development of this application and to meet, in the best possible way, the constantly increasing requirements of the economic sector and public administration as well as those of the justice system itself, a project aiming at fundamental technological reformation of the Land Register database in all of its applications was initiated. In a first step towards realisation of the New Land Register the electronic collection of documents was set up in 2006. By now, more than 90 per cent of all documents are submitted electronically. Since 2006, all documents have been available for inspection on the internet via the clearing offices. Following other milestones, such as connecting the Land Register to the Electronic Legal Communication system, processing of court fees in the Land Register and automated issuing of decisions, a technologically updated version of the application including new features was made available in May 2012. Since mid-2013 partitioning plans have been registered in the Land Register automatically in cross-departmental cooperation with the surveying offices. Since 2016 structured processing of titles and liens has been possible. Since October 2017 condominium ownership rights have been registered systematically and automatically as well.

Since October 2021 Land Register excerpts and documents have been retrievable from JustizOnline by means of a citizen card/mobile phone signature and/or eID.

Key figures for 2022:

- 3.4 million valid Land Register folios (= registration unit in the Land Register)
- 10.2 million properties in the main register)
- 676,000 applications (thereof 466,000 (= 69 per cent) by way of ERV)
- 1.4 million documents archived in the electronic documents archive (year-on-year increase)

10. Business Register

The change from commercial register law to the Business Register Statute (*FBG*) in 1991 laid the foundation for the central electronic Business Register. The Business Register contains data of all Austrian business entities, registration of which is compulsory (main register). Those documents which are relevant to registration are stored in the electronic archive of documents of the justice system (collection of documents – *Urkundensammlung*).

The Business Register is constantly upgraded and technologically adapted to recent developments and European conditions. Applications may be filed by means of several electronic channels or as a hard copy, as was previously the case. Business Register documents are served via ERV or via a central dispatch office ("Mailing Line") by post. Notifications by the Business Register courts are done fully automatically in the database of official publications/edicts. The 16 Business Register courts create their decisions and fee calculations electronically via a central register.

Electronic submission of annual financial statements to the Business Register was introduced in 2001. Since mid-2005 applications and documents received by the Business Register courts, and since 2009, decisions, have been recorded and stored electronically. Thus, all relevant Business Register documents are available electronically, which allows complete digital file management in Business Register proceedings. This has been supported by an electronic workflow since 2021.

Business Register data may be retrieved by anybody through clearing offices via the internet and may also be obtained by licence holders in machine-readable form. Public authorities may access the Business Register via the portal of the Federal Computing Centre; Member States of the European Union may do so via the European Business Register (EBR). Access to the Business Register search is also available by means of a citizen card/mobile phone signature or eID via JustizOnline at any time.

Since mid-2017 the Business Register has been linked with a number of other European registers via the Business Registers Interconnection System (BRIS).

Key figures for 2022:

- 310,611 validly registered legal entities
- 345,445 transactions
- 11.5 million external Business Register excerpts via clearing offices
- 24.5 million search products (retrieved internally by the courts or externally via clearing offices), including excerpts, searches, documents, etc.

11. Database of Official Publications/ Edicts

Initially, the database of official publications (edikte.justiz.gv.at) was limited to publications from the area of insolvency but every year more matters were included.

Since early 2000 insolvencies (bankruptcies, compositions, debt settlements) have been exclusively published on the internet and are legally binding as such. This has led to a reduction in publication costs of 95 per cent. Via the internet every internet user can view the current status free of charge. "At the touch of a button" data is transferred automatically from the insolvency register of the Case Automation in the Justice System application to the Insolvency Database. As of the next day the opening of insolvency proceedings becomes legally effective.

Since 2002 official publications of auctions of real property and announcements by the Business Register Courts may also be retrieved from the database. At the beginning of 2003 the database of official publications was expanded to include auction publications regarding movable items and the option to search for property owners in criminal cases. Since 2005 all publications prescribed for legal proceedings have exclusively been made in the database of official publications. Examples worth mentioning are publications in probate proceedings, invalidation proceedings, proceedings for declaring a person dead, and appointment of curator proceedings. Following that, notaries were provided with the option to publish voluntary offers for sale. Notaries and lawyers may publish notifications regarding merger agreements and spin-off plans.

The database of official publications was presented with the Ökomanager Award 2000 of the Austrian Economic Chamber, the Justitia 2000 award and, at the European level, with the e-Government Label for Good Practice 2005 as well as with the Crystal Scales of Justice Prize 2006.

Key figures for 2022:

- 124.7 million searches of the insolvency database
- 6.8 million searches for judicial real property auctions

12. Enforcement Data Search

Since the beginning of 2019 creditors may view specific data on enforcement proceedings against their debtors for monetary claims to decide whether to instigate or continue a legal dispute or enforcement proceedings, provided that they can prove a claim and their legitimate doubts about the creditworthiness of the debtors. To this end the enforcement data search (EXDA) is available on the internet.

As representatives of creditors lawyers and notaries, and authorities and social security funds as creditors are authorised to search for enforcement data.

The EXDA search is not carried out by the courts but by the clearing offices or the Portal Network. For every search (including those without a result), a fee of EUR 10.70 is charged.

In order to ensure that searches are only carried out if the statutory requirements are fulfilled, appropriate measures (e.g. regular spot checks) are taken by the Federal Ministry of Justice, the Austrian Chamber of Bars, the Austrian Chamber of Notaries and other public-law corporations.

To prevent abuse, searches of enforcement data are recorded without exception. Everyone must be given information about search logs relating to themselves at the district court of their place of residence or habitual abode.

Key figures for 2022:

- 24,647 searches

13. Justiz-Auktion

Since March 2015, Austrian bailiffs have been provided with the possibility to auction moveable items on the internet auction platform of the justice system: justiz-auktion.at in accordance with the provisions of the Austrian Enforcement Code [*Exekutionsordnung/EO*]. In this way items that have been attached in enforcement proceedings, as well as seized items, confiscated or forfeited items may be auctioned. The bailiff is responsible for choosing the place of the auction. The major advantages of internet auctions compared to on-site auctions include a much larger group of bidders, no (prohibited) price-fixing agreements on site, higher gains, a higher auctioning rate and an individual length of the different auctions.

As with other online auctioning platforms, Justiz-Auktion also offers the option of "immediate purchase". This means that an item can be purchased at a price that is 25 per cent higher than the estimated value before the first bid is made, with no auction being conducted.

The Competence Centre at Higher Regional Court (Oberlandesgericht) Innsbruck, which was especially established for this purpose, technically processes the auctions for the whole of Austria.

Items that are regularly auctioned include motor vehicles, (home) electronics, jewellery or sports articles and even a rough cutting mower and shares found a new home once.

Since 2019, liquidators have the opportunity to auction fixed and current assets of insolvency proceedings on the auction platform. In comparison to commercial auction platforms, the auction proceeds are not decreased by sales commissions or similar fees.

Regarding Justiz-Auktion the Austrian justice system has worked together with the online auction platform justiz-auktion.de, which has been successfully operated by the German justice system for many years.

Key figures for 2022:

- 2,978 auctions
- 2,680 sales (90 per cent sales ratio)
- EUR 890,000 revenue

14. Advances on Maintenance

This IT solution supports the Higher Regional Courts in processing disbursement and collection of advances on maintenance as defined in the Statute on Advances on Maintenance [*Unterhaltsvorschussgesetz*].

The IT process includes the following transactions:

- Recording and processing of court decisions/orders
- Monthly payment orders
- Processing of electronically transmitted refunds
- Correspondence with parties involved in the proceedings and with public authorities
- Electronic migration of data from other proceedings in the justice system (court decisions, curatorship register, insolvency register and probate register; collection office, etc.)
- Entering items into the federal budget accounting system
- Settlement of accounts with the Family Burden Equalisation Fund [*Familienlastenausgleichsfond*]
- Keeping a business calendar
- Statistics and analyses
- Data warehouse statistics and checklists and
- JUTA web service (master data search by the youth welfare offices)

The advances on maintenance process was the first IT application in the justice department (in 1976). The process is being constantly developed further with a special focus on integration of manual work processes and implementation of electronic interfaces with other proceedings. In 2009 an electronic search option for the youth welfare offices was implemented. In the medium term the application will be integrated into *Justiz 3.0*.

Key figures for 2022:

- 58 users
- Total master data sets: approx. 287,000
- Current master data sets: approx. 42,000
- Disbursements: EUR 130 million
- Repayments: EUR 87.5 million
- Collection ration of 67 per cent

15. The Collection Office

This IT process supports the Collection Office [*Einbringungsstelle/EBSt*] in Austria-wide collection of court fees, costs, fines of all kinds, advances on maintenance and in the granting of easier payment terms as defined in the Statute on Collection by Court [*Gerichtliches Einbringungsgesetz*] 1962. The main purpose of the *EBSt* is effective collection of outstanding receivables of the justice system by identifying the best collection method. The IT process includes the following transactions:

- Transmission of all enforceable payment orders in an electronic, structured form from the applications VJ, Advances on Maintenance, and Land Register to the Collection Office
- Collection in the best possible way: request for payment, easier payment terms, lodging of claims in insolvency or probate proceedings, petition for enforcement
- Search in the Central Register or Residents (ZMR), the Land Register or prison administration search
- Automatic search for third-party debtors with the Main Association of Social Security Institutions [*Hauptverband der Sozialversicherungsträger*]
- Automatic data reconciliation in the Insolvency Register [*Insolvenzregister*] and the Probate Register [*Verlassenschaftsregister*]
- Entering of payments received
- Automated business calendar and
- Preparation of reports and statistics

This IT process is being constantly developed further by integrating manual work processes and the creation of electronic interfaces with other proceedings.

Key figures for 2022:

- 50 users
- New enforcement cases: 58,168
- New advances on maintenance cases: 4,531
- Outstanding accounts receivable: EUR 1,078.7 million.

16. Family and Youth Court Support Register

This recording application for statistical key figures at the offices of the Family Court Support Service [*Familiengerichtshilfe/FGH*], which was introduced in 2014, was upgraded to a single nationwide register application (Family Court Support Register).

At the end of 2015, the Family Court Support Register was expanded by functionalities for the Youth Court Support Service so that the register is now called Family and Youth Court Support Register.

Since then the application has been recording relevant key figures and order data on the orders placed by all offices of the Family and Youth Court Support Service [*Familien- und Jugendgerichtshilfe/FJGH*] and of the Vienna Youth Court Support Service. Clear search and filtering functions allow the displaying of orders according to various criteria (person concerned, subject matter of the order, court/public prosecutors' office placing the order, etc.) and office-specific criteria.

In addition, in office-based reporting and staff controlling, team leaders are supported by a separate controlling functionality.

The key figures on the Family and Youth Court Support Register are available in the periodical statistics of the data warehouse (DWH) of the justice system.

17. Electronic Certification Register

In line with the requirements of the Austrian Act Amending Professional Rules and Regulations [BRÄG] of 2010 this project migrated the Certification Register of the justice system, which had been kept in writing and on a non-central basis till then, to an automated data processing system. This system enables court staff to electronically record and manage data of parties and documents in certification proceedings. Transcripts, which are required for the transaction process can be archived electronically and documents to be certified may be entered into the Documents Archive of the justice system.

Key figures for 2022:

- 12,735 certifications of signatures
- 4,945 certifications of copies
- 13,315 documents entered into the Documents Archive of the justice system by the Certification Register

18. Various Lists; The Lobbying and Interest Group Register

These databases (lists of expert witnesses, interpreters, mediators, insolvency administrators and official receivers) contain those persons in their relevant capacity, including their special qualifications. They are primarily available to the courts for selection purposes for legal proceedings but may also be searched by the public via the internet.

Since the beginning of 2004, the lists of expert witnesses and court interpreters have been provided on the internet. At the end of 2021 the application was relaunched as part of JustizOnline. Expert witnesses, interpreters are (and in future insolvency administrators in enforcement cases will be) able to update certain details in the lists (address, phone number, email address, etc.) themselves using a citizen card/mobile phone signature and/or eID and to publish a presentation of their firm or submit applications for (re)certification.

The ID cards for expert witnesses and interpreters, which have been issued since 2005, will gradually be replaced by card IDs without a certificate due to an amendment to the Austrian Act on Court-appointed and Certified Experts and Interpreters.

Mediators in civil proceedings may be retrieved from mediatorenliste.justiz.gv.at

Since 1 January 2013 searching for lobbying enterprises, including the areas of their activities, for entities that employ business lobbyists, self-governing bodies and interest groups may be retrieved from lobbyreg.justiz.gv.at.

Key figures for July 2022:

- 1,262,935 million searches in the list of court-appointed and certified expert witnesses and interpreters
- 276,011 searches in the list of insolvency administrators and official receivers
- 128,275 searches in the Lobbying and Interest Group Representatives Register

19. Electronic Documents Archive

At the time of the migration of the Land Register and the Business Register to IT-based systems, those responsible decided against migrating the collections of documents of those court registers to electronic storage and documentation. However, the technology for archiving documents has made considerable progress in the meantime; voices from among those practising law have shown the necessity of modernising the court system with the assistance of information technology also in this area.

A central archive of documents has emerged, which can be used for all types of applications, proceedings and procedures. There will be a possibility to archive documents (e.g. electronically signed contracts) from the court in a database in any application and in any type of proceedings, and to establish a link to the same. In this way a document once stored in the archive can be used in various legal proceedings in future.

Since 2005 the collections of documents of all Business Register courts have been kept exclusively electronically; since 2006 the same has been true for the Land Register. The data content stored in the electronic documents archive is deemed the original of the document (fictitious original) until the contrary is proved.

The electronic documents archive was awarded the first prize in the "*Amtsmanager Wettbewerb*" – the Public Office Manager Competition of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber in 2006 and the Good Practice Label of the EU in 2007. In this way, another step towards optimised and service-oriented legal proceedings was implemented as planned.

Key figures for 2022:

- 4.5 million documents retrieved from the Collection of Documents of the Business Register
- 1.3 million documents retrieved from the Collection of Documents of the Land Register
- 12.1 million Business Register documents and 21.3 million Land Register documents stored

20. Electronic Signature

Electronic Legal Communication with the courts has proved to be working well since it was introduced in 1989. However, electronic transmission of original documents and exhibits of petitions or applications to the courts by way of ERV was not possible in the beginning. To promote Electronic Legal Communication notaries, civil engineers and lawyers were provided with the option to draw up (public) electronic documents by the Statute Amending the Professional Rules and Regulations [*Berufsrechts-Änderungsgesetz/BRÄG*] 2006 and through the setting-up of an electronic documents archive of the justice system plus an authorisation of public-law corporations to keep such archives. For this purpose an electronic "professional signature" [*Berufssignatur*] was introduced for those persons. In this way they are enabled in connection with their job-related activities to sign documents electronically with the legal effects of a personal signature. In addition, notaries and civil engineers possess an electronic "certification signature" [*Beurkundungssignatur*], which allows them to use an electronic signature also when they act in the sovereign area of their occupation.

The *BRÄG 2006* also introduced the electronic signature of the justice system, by which the court decisions that will be sent via ERV will be signed in future. The practical application of the electronic signature of the justice system has been in use since 2007. Since then the electronic signature of the justice system has been certifying that Business Register excerpts and documents from the Land Register's and the Business Register's electronic Collections of Documents are in conformity with the data stored in the database. Since early 2010 also certifications by the courts have been done using the electronic signature of the justice system. In accordance with the provisions of the Amendment to the Austrian Civil Procedure of 2022 all decisions of judicial authorities in civil cases must be signed digitally from 1 July 2023.

In addition, electronic signatures have been in use in the justice system for ID cards of expert witnesses and court interpreters since 2005.

Since November 2009, forms may be submitted using a citizen card/mobile phone signature and/or eID upon prior registration. Since October 2019, as part of the introduction of digital file management, the staff of the justice system in charge have had the opportunity to sign documents digitally by means of their staff ID cards (QES).

21. Receivables Management of the Justice System

In April 2022 the first release of the IT application Receivables Management of the Justice System (JFM) was put into operation. This IT application provides a central interface between all applications of the justice system managing fees and the federal budget accounting system (HV-SAP). The aim of the new application is to display the daily updated receivables of the justice system (especially court fees), on the one hand, and to give the staff in charge of the fee processes an overview of outstanding receivables, payments received and clearing cases, if any.

JFM is a software tailored to the specific needs of the justice system that has been developed together with practitioners and currently

- provides an interface with the VJ application and the Business Register and generates unique identification numbers on receivables and payments related to court fees to ensure end-to-end traceability,
- provides a connection to the "payment transactions" application in order to receive payment information in a structured form,
- provides a graphical user interface to view consolidated payments and receivables and to process any cases that need to be cleared up,
- enables transparent traceability of receivables and their current status, and
- provides an interface with the federal HV-SAP system in order to be able to transmit consolidated information on a daily basis to automatically trigger the relevant entries in HV-SAP.

In future enhancement steps interfaces with the other fee-related applications of the justice system (e.g. Land Register, collection agent), as well as with the application for mobile law enforcement, which is also under development, will be created.

22. Statistics/Data Warehouse

The manifold IT applications cover the entire area of responsibilities of the justice system. This has led to a comprehensive nationwide database, which has turned out to offer an enormous advantage, in particular when preparing statistics, which are required for many different purposes. The justice system's statistics products may be roughly categorised as follows:

- Workload statistics, which show the cases processed by the justice system
- Statistics to control the staff employed
- Statistics to support staff supervision
- Statistics to document procedural facts (e.g. length of proceedings, alternative measures imposed instead of punishment)
- Management dashboards by means of self-service business intelligence tools (Power BI)
- Analyses, including, without limitation, those requested by parliament or scholars and
- Statistics to plan the use of IT

The said analyses are carried out by means of data warehouse technology. This technology allows analyses to be done in a more flexible, cost-efficient way with no interference with ongoing operation of the underlying applications. In addition, it offers the option of providing certain users with selected analyses. Most analyses are published in the statistics database on the intranet of the justice system.

Since mid-2013 three data cubes (incoming files, decisions and parties) have been in use to prepare special analyses in the criminal section of the justice system. Since 2019, there is a data cube for the Federal Administrative Court [*Bundesverwaltungsgericht/BVwG*] and a data cube checklist.

In 2019, the efforts regarding Self-Service BI have been intensified. Apart from participation regarding the development of the Justizanstaltscockpit of the prison administration, a Justiz 3.0 Cockpit has been established, which looks at the areas of file intake, court section offices, electronic inspection of files, and court hearings with a view to digitisation. Currently, dashboards are offered which, in some cases, include several area tabs according to different access rights. Allocation of access rights is done via a central office administration application (Diva).

Key figures for 2022:

- 80,000 identified key indicators
- 324 million calculated figures for the brief monthly statistics
- 440,000 pdf and 323,000 MS Excel files in the statistics database

23. Mailing Line

The Mailing Line [*Poststrassenservice/PSS*] serves as the justice system's central service for processing letters that are sent by post and for providing them to the Output Competence Centre of the Federal Computing Centre (BRZ) for printing and physical dispatch. Both the master document and any number of supplementary documents are delivered by the application as pdf files. All other functions are controlled via XML meta data. All return mails are sent electronically in XML or pdf format. The major functionalities of the service include:

- Putting into and dispatch of (standard) window envelopes
- Putting into and dispatch of hybrid return receipt envelopes (Hybrid RSa and RSb)
- Producing cover sheets for local dispatch of hybrid return receipt letter (Hybrid RSa and RSb)
- Putting into and dispatch of international return receipt letters (IntRS)
- Printing at a (future) time that may be selected
- Dispatch and service in Austria, the EU or third countries
- Enclosing any number of written documents in pdf format
- Enclosing any number of money transfer forms (including "pay per code")
- Regular reports
- Provision of hybrid return receipt letter cover sheets for local dispatch of hybrid letters
- Provision of processing and dispatch information
- Provision of status information and digital proof of service
- Automated notification in the case of automatically identified defects in service of process
- Bundling of several service of process deliveries to one addressee (bundle)

The Mailing Line was put into operation in 2007. Since then numerous upgrades have been implemented and performance of the service has been optimised. Upgrades include the processing of hybrid return receipt letters, international return receipt letters and producing of cover sheets for dispatch via local HRSB.

Key figures for 2022:

- 8.1 million decisions processed in 7.1 million mails
- 3.4 million window envelopes, 0.2 million RSa letters; 3.4 million RSb letters and 0.1 million international return receipt letters
- 0.2 million cover letters for local RSa and RSb letters

24. Electronic Paperwork Management

Due to the staff cuts resolved by the Federal Government the justice department had to lay off 246 public officials [*Beamte*] and employees [*Vertragsbedienstete*] in 2006. In order to cope with the massive impact on the special typing services, staff on parental leave possessing a computer plus internet access were offered the opportunity, on a volunteering basis, to do typing work for the justice department within the additional income thresholds applying while on parental leave.

For this purpose an HCL Domino-based database was programmed, which allows secure transmission of digitally dictated texts and automatic return of the typed texts and optimal use of the typing capacities available at the same time. Clearing offices were set up at the Higher Regional Courts [*Oberlandesgericht*], which are in charge of supervising the Electronic Paperwork Management application and of registration and supervision of the typists being part of the project. Dictated texts that cannot be typed at a District Court [*Bezirksgericht*] within a reasonable period of time will be put into a database and automatically transmitted to the pool of the special typing service set up at the superior Regional Court [*Landesgericht*]. If dictated texts cannot be typed within 48 hours they will automatically be forwarded from there to the pool of the relevant clearing office. Typists on parental leave may access the pool of their clearing office via the internet and download dictated texts onto their home computer. Electronically dictated texts may also be assigned to certain typists by the clearing offices.

Once the text file has been transmitted to the database by the typist, the person who entered the dictated text into the database will be informed via email and can then download the text file from the database. At the same time the clearing office will receive the information required for billing the typing fee and will then be able to do the billing by way of automation.

Due to the high demand also full-time and (temporarily) part-time staff of the justice system as well as retired persons have been offered the opportunity to do typing work for the justice system from home.

Key figures for 2022:

- 205 staff doing typing work from home (of whom 17 are on maternity leave and 48 are retired persons)
- 46,600 dictated texts typed

25. Speech Recognition

Since 1997 the Austrian justice system has been testing speech recognition systems. Back then a group of ten volunteer judges and public prosecutors were equipped with speech recognition systems, which consisted of a notebook including headset and the Voice Type Simply Speaking Gold IBM software. Since then technology has rapidly developed both in the area of hardware and in that of software. For example, since 2005 the standard equipment at a workplace in the justice department has been so powerful that speech recognition programs can be used at the workplace and no additional hardware needs to be bought.

Out of all tested programs the best result was obtained by Dragon Naturally Speaking. Currently around 700 staff (judges, public prosecutors, *Rechtspfleger* [paralegals/senior court officers], office staff/clerks, etc.) have access to Version No. 15 of that software at their workplace, which has turned out to be a quantum leap with respect to the recognition rate. For use within the justice system a specific glossary has been integrated into Dragon Naturally Speaking, which includes the RIS documents as at 26 January 2001, the rulings of the Austrian Supreme Court [*Oberster Gerichtshof*] of 2004 and around 16,000 transcripts and decisions of Regional Court [*Landesgericht*] Eisenstadt. In addition, users feed additional vocabulary into the overall glossary on a regular basis in order to constantly optimise the recognition rate. Presently we are working on updating the glossary of the justice system.

In the last few years use of the speech recognition tool has also been included in the training programme for trainee judges, which has resulted in an increased interest among judges. Since 2016 training in speech recognition software has become a fixed part of the training schedule of trainee judges.

26. Video Conferencing

Since 2005 the procedural law requirements have been fulfilled for use of video conferencing equipment in examinations of witnesses and defendants in preliminary criminal proceedings, of witnesses at trials, and of witnesses, parties, interpreters and expert witnesses in civil proceedings.

Video conferencing technology offers the judges a possibility to summon persons who would otherwise have to be examined by a different court by way of judicial assistance to the court equipped with a video conferencing system which is the closest to their home and to directly examine them via video conferencing. This means much less time and costs for the persons being examined due to the fact that the distance they have to travel is much shorter. Moreover, the length of the proceedings can be cut significantly short because there is no need for judicial assistance proceedings.

For fixing examinations via video conferencing the judges have been provided with a room reservation system via the intranet of the justice system. This allows user-friendly booking of all courtrooms required in one step, with all persons involved automatically receiving a reservation confirmation including all relevant information via e-mail.

Since 2011 all courts, public prosecutors' offices and prisons have been equipped with video conferencing systems. In 2022 a total of around 6,200 video conferences were held Austria-wide, of which four per cent were cross-border ones.

Expansion of the area of application of video conferencing technology in court hearings (e.g. to counsel) is presently being considered in view of the current law-making and infrastructural conditions.

27. Internet Presence of the Justice System

The website of the justice system (justiz.gv.at) was completely revised in 2009 to offer information on the Ministry and on the services provided by the justice department in a neat design with the best possible accessibility. Since 2013 the website is being regularly enhanced and expanded. Today every court, every public prosecutors' office and prison has its own site and, thus, virtually its own internet presence. In 2020 the website was tweaked and set to "responsive", so that it can optimally interact with every terminal device.

Both the courts and the public prosecutors' offices offer material information about their organisation in a standard form. The relevant homepage shows a picture of the court or office and provides information on opening hours, contact details plus information about specific features, such as accessibility to listed buildings, public transport or car parks. The page also says whether a video conferencing system is available. Other pages contain details about local jurisdiction and subject-matter jurisdiction and about the head of the court or office. Details about the media office and special offers such as an ombudsperson, service centre, etc. complete the information.

Every prison in Austria has its own webpage. In addition to general information, you will also find visitor information for every prison and details about products and services offered by the same. For buying these products and/or services a specially designed webshop has been available since 2017, which can be accessed at jailshop.at.

In 2021 a separate section was set up as a career portal, in which the different job groups of the justice department are presented in detail. Current job vacancies in each job group can be found here. The career portal can be accessed directly via karriere.justiz.gv.at.

Key figures for 2022:

- 4.4 million page retrievals in total
- 140,000 homepage retrievals
- 84,000 retrievals of the court search page
- 55,000 retrievals of the careers section

28. Intranet of the Justice System

The intranet of the justice system is the internal information portal for all staff of the department and an important work tool. The intranet is based on the same concepts and technologies as the internet; however, the content is only available within the department. Thus, the intranet is a central access point to all internal and to selected external web applications and information for the staff of the justice system. Internal and external applications such as the Integrated Prison Administration, webmail, the Collection of Forms, the Collection of Ministerial Orders, international judicial assistance or maintenance of the Database of Official Publications [*Ediktsdatei*] and also the Federal Law Information System (RIS), the Land Register, the Business Register or the Central Register of Residents, may be retrieved quickly, easily and in a structured manner.

Some of the information is collected and managed in a content management system. However, the system also prepares content which has come from databases that have existed before or have been specifically created for that purpose. Overall management is done in a content management system, which organises the content and processes it for presentation on the website. Structuring makes it easier to edit and allows users faster and more targeted access.

The information is categorised according to organisational areas and is specifically available to the same. Every court, office or prison belongs to an organisational area and possesses its own homepage. The homepage is divided into an information block, a headline block and a navigation block. From the information block direct access to current VJ [Case Automation System] information, to ministerial orders and decrees is available. The navigation block is divided into the four central areas: "*Justizverwaltung* - Administration of the Justice System", "*Rechtspflege* – Administration of Justice", "*Erlässe, Verfügungen* – Orders, Decrees" and "*Schulung & Wissen* – Training and Knowledge".

Key figures for 2022:

- 115 million hits in total
- 9,200 documents and 14,800 news items held in the content management system

29. Federal Law Information System

The Federal Law Information System [*Rechtsinformationssystem – RIS*] operated by the Federal Chancellery has become indispensable in daily court work as a medium for fast searches for court decisions, mainly in the *Judikaturdokumentation Justiz* database, and also for finding sources of law and academic writing. This tool is available to the staff of the justice system at all workplaces.

The new RIS, which is based on internet technology, allows for an efficient search for desired information and, therefore, for a fast decision-making process. Important parts of the RIS system, such as, e.g., statutory provisions or the rulings of the Constitutional Court [*Verfassungsgerichtshof*], the Supreme Administrative Court [*Verwaltungsgerichtshof*] and those of the ordinary courts of law are available to the general public free of charge on the internet via ris.bka.gv.at.

30. Third-Party Applications

Apart from the IT solutions developed by the Austrian justice system itself, we also use applications of other software providers, in particular for matters concerning several ministries/departments, including the following:

- As the standard file management and workflow solution of the federal government *ELAK im Bund*, which is based on Fabasoft Components and is operated by the Federal Computing Centre BRZ), supports fully electronic management of files in the Federal Ministry of Justice.
- For the area of budget accounting and HR management the Ministry uses the HV-SAP and PM-SAP applications, which are also operated by the BRZ.
- In some areas of the justice system the search functions of databases of other departments which are principally not freely accessible are being used, such as the Central Register of Residents (ZMR) and the Electronic Information System of the Police (EKIS).

31. The Justiz Network

At the beginning of the 1980s the Austrian justice system started to build a comprehensive IT network. This network (Corporate Network Austria/CNA) supports Austria-wide use of information technology by all courts, public prosecutors' offices, prisons and by the Federal Ministry of Justice via a dual-node called the Federal Computing Centre [*Bundesrechenzentrum/BRZ*], where all major applications of the justice system run. Communication with the other ministries, government agencies outside the justice system and, ultimately, the citizens is also effected by the BRZ.

Currently every office belonging to the justice department is connected to the BRZ at least by a 12-megabit line enabling Voice over IP and telephone calls, as well as video conferences. The network is the basis for the email system of the justice department (using LotusNotes and Outlook Exchange) and for access of all staff of the justice system to the internet.

Currently the Justiz Network comprises 150 routers, 400 servers, 9,500 computers, 180 video conferencing systems, more than 13,000 VoIP telephone connections and 8,000 notebooks. As early as in 2001 every member of the justice system's staff was equipped with a computer workstation. The standard operating system of the justice system is Windows 10. LibreOffice is used widely for text processing and spreadsheets.

Since the beginning of 2007 all bailiffs have been integrated into a virtual private network (VPN) via laptops including mobile internet cards. The mobile VPN allows online access to the applications running in the BRZ, independent of the location of the bailiff.

Since mid-2012 all workplaces have been gradually equipped with card reading devices, which means that most staff members of the justice system can log into the Justiz Network by means of their electronic staff ID.

32. Justizportal, Central User Management

The Federal Ministry of Justice provides access to web applications via the Justizportal and has been using a standard comprehensive user management system for almost all applications, including roles and authorisations, for quite some time. The system allows management and linking of the staff of the justice system and their access authorisations with both internal applications of the Austrian justice system and external applications belonging to the Portal Network (*Portalverbund*). The Portal Network is a combination of management portals for joint use of available infrastructure and applications, which ensures that multiple administration of individuals is avoided. Today most applications of the justice department also support single sign-on by means of an ID card in the form of a smartcard.

Through the introduction of this central user management system relevant data of all staff of the justice department is replicated by the Staff Management System [*Personalverwaltungssystem/PM-SAP*] into the Justizportal on a daily basis. This ensures that changes that occur in the human resources of the justice department are entered in the Justizportal on a daily basis.

The Justizportal and the central user management system do the following:

- Work as a central register for managing all staff of the justice system
- Synchronise personal data from existing registers or lists with the overall register
- Ensure role-based access authorisation for internal and external applications within the Portal Network
- Delegate the management of access authorisations to non-central agencies of the justice department
- Ensure Enterprise/Legacy/Web access (to internal and external applications via the Justizportal) and
- Single sign-on (SSO) for internal and external applications within the Portal Network.

33. IT Application for the European Order for Payment Procedure

The Regulation on a European order for payment procedure, which entered into force in December 2008, has created a single rapid and efficient mechanism for the collection of cross-border pecuniary claims. In Austria the District Court for Commercial Matters Vienna [*Bezirksgericht für Handelssachen Wien*] is responsible for all claims (applications) in the European order for payment procedure. The cases are processed by means of standard forms that are available in all EU languages. An unopposed order for payment is directly enforceable in all EU Member States with the exception of Denmark. Austria and Germany have jointly developed an IT application sponsored by the EU for electronic processing, which uses large parts of the Case Automation (VJ) application and possesses the following functions:

- easy processing of applications by taking over data from the application form (Form A) and creation of other forms and procedural steps in the system,
- important data of the procedure is available in the form of a spreadsheet at any time,
- all procedural steps are shown in a register in a structured manner. All other work steps, like letters or notes/memoranda, are made out of the register and
- text modules may be freely created and stored for any and all purposes.

Standard forms and court documents may either be printed and sent by post or served electronically via ERV. The IT application has been developed in a form that can essentially be used in all EU Member States and in the EU e-Justice Portal. The IT project was awarded the e-Government Award 2009 in the "e-Government supporting the Single Market" category from among 259 submissions.

The EU order for payment procedure is one of the pilot procedures of the e-CODEX project. Since 2017 the EU order for payment procedure has been operated, maintained and enhanced for Austria and Germany by the Austrian Federal Computing Centre [*BRZ*].

Key figures for 2022:

- 9,869 applications in Austria; thereof 93 per cent filed electronically
- 33 per cent opposition rate

34. European Business Register; Business Register Interconnection System

European Business Register

Since April 1999 the European Business Register (EBR), as a European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG), has been offering the possibility of accessing official business register data of Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Guernsey, Jersey, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Sweden, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine and Austria via the national providers (in Austria: Manz'sche Verlags- und Universitätsbuchhandlung GmbH). More than 20 million business entities can be searched for via the EBR online. In order to pool resources the EBR was merged with the European Commerce Register Forum to form the European Business Register Association in 2019.

Business Register Interconnection System

In parallel, a second system for a Europe-wide connection of business entities has been existing since June 2017. The Business Register Interconnection System (BRIS) has been initiated by the European Commission and provides a search for companies and the opportunity to receive free business register excerpts and documents. In addition, the registers automatically notify each other of changes regarding the parent companies.

35. (M)e-Codex

e-CODEX (eJustice Communication via Online Data Exchange) was an ambitious and trend-setting project supposed to enable citizens and business entities in all of Europe to electronically communicate with the courts of other EU Member States in a secure and easy way in cross-border cases. In addition, it was supposed to enable electronic communication among judicial authorities of the EU Member States. The project was funded by the EU and had a volume of around EUR 25 million.

Living up to its pioneering role in the area of e-justice Austria intensively contributed to the work on e-CODEX. As a consortium partner, the Federal Ministry of Justice headed one of the seven working groups. As the e-CODEX project ended in May 2016, sustainability of e-CODEX (ongoing operation and maintenance also beyond the project term) was of major importance and was to be warranted by way of a European agency solution. Until the project will be operated and maintained by the European agency eu-LISA from the end of 2023, the duties are being fulfilled by the bridging projects Me-CODEX, Me-CODEX II and Me-CODEX III, where "M" stands for "Maintenance" in each case.

The EU order for payment procedure, which is of special importance to Austria, has been successfully set up as a pilot project for e-CODEX in Germany, Estonia, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and in the Czech Republic. The European small claims procedure, transmissions in the area of the commercial or business registers, administrative penalties, cross-border exchange of sensitive data regarding conventions on mutual judicial assistance and the European arrest warrant are other pilot projects currently running. Since 2022 e-Codex has been supporting electronic communication with other EU Member States as part of the European Investigation Order. One of the special aspects of e-CODEX is, therefore, that of electronic communication among the courts and public authorities.

In Austria submissions may be made via the ERV application and, in future, also via the e-Justice Portal (e-justice.europa.eu).

In the coming years e-Codex will be intensively used to carry out numerous other cross-border judicial proceedings on the basis of secure electronic communication.

36. Forensic IT Centre and Support by IT Experts

Due to the progress of digitisation in all areas support tools are increasingly required for efficient analysis, evaluation and processing of data in criminal cases. In addition, more and more often the investigating authorities need supplementary support from highly specialised staff to process cases efficiently.

The Austrian department of justice has responded to this development at a very early stage and, apart from calling in external experts, has employed its own IT experts and assigned them to the Central Office of Public Prosecutors for Prosecution of Business Offences and Corruption [*Wirtschafts- und Korruptionsstaatsanwaltschaft/WKStA*]. Due to the positive experiences made it was decided to expand this model. Since 2017 the internal IT experts of the justice system may now be assigned also to other public prosecutors' offices and criminal courts, where necessary.

Thanks to its own compartmentalized IT forensics data centre environment the justice system now also possesses an exclusive server infrastructure to process cases involving a large volume of data, for which selected investigators of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and expert witnesses may be granted access rights. The software and hardware used has been configured to warrant not only that as many cases as possible may be processed in short computing times but also to ensure the handling of complex special requirements (e.g. decryption). The software programs "Intella" and "m2N Analytics" are the decisive analysis tools used on this platform. At the same time very high security standards ensure data protection and prevent unauthorised access.

In order to structure and process large files efficiently courts and public prosecutors' offices may, in addition to the tools that are made available to them in the digital file, also access the "*Normfall Manager*" [standard case manager] software locally, which is intended to facilitate the structuring of content of complex facts and circumstances (keeping an overview, establishing and identifying links, compiling information on a topic, etc.). The justice system also uses various other supplementary "in-depth" analysis and evaluation tools. Due to the increasing options offered by the use of artificial intelligence (AI) the justice system intensely focuses on evaluating and testing the products offered in this area as well. Close coordination with the software manufacturers and exchanging experiences with other organisations combating fraud and crimes in Austria and abroad is intended to further enhance potential areas of application in the years to come.

37. Electronic Case Management

Electronic case management (eVA) is an IT application that is tailored to the requirements of the administrative courts and supports the entire lifecycle of proceedings of the Federal Administrative Court (BVwG), for example by complying with the following procedures:

- File and case management in different types of cases (e.g. asylum, social-law or public procurement proceedings)
- Free configurability of types of cases or proceedings and their master data
- Fully automated file assignment in accordance with the schedule of responsibilities
- Deadline management
- Form management
- Document management
- Case law research
- Subject management
- Courtroom reservation
- Statistics and analyses
- DWH statistics and checklists
- Incoming mail management, e.g. via ERV
- Service of process via ERV, e-delivery or hybrid return receipt letter and
- Electronic exchange of files with other authorities via EdiDoc

In 2019 eVA was also implemented by the Supreme Administrative Court (*VwGH*). Since then enhancements have been coordinated together with the Federal Administrative Court.

Key figures for 2022 (Federal Administrative Court):

- Approx. 700 users at four locations
- 368,000 cases managed
- 136,000 subjects managed
- 21,000 incoming and 85,000 outgoing electronic mails

38. Justice System Expert Management and Booking Tool

At the end of 2021 the internal management of and search for court-appointed and certified experts and interpreters and the relevant address codes were modernised with the help of the Justice System Expert Management (JEV) system. This involved converting the tool to the established technology standard of Justice 3.0 to ensure consistency in terms of user management and to offer a modern and contemporary interface.

In 2022 the JEV system was enhanced to include a booking tool that enables staff of the justice department to send booking requests to court-appointed and certified interpreters and to book them directly via the system.

During 2023 management of insolvency administrators, restructuring officers and administrators in enforcement matters were included in the Justice System Expert Management tool, the data sets of which are thus published via the publication interfaces provided for that purpose on JustizOnline as well.

39. Mobile Enforcement App

The Mobile Enforcement App (MoVo) was introduced as part of a pilot project in 2022 to support bailiffs in carrying out their enforcement tasks by means of a modern tool. Since then the number of MoVo users has been gradually enlarged as part of the rollout so that all of the approx. As many as 330 bailiffs will be able to use the system for their work from the beginning of 2024.

For that purpose, in addition to a web application, MoVo offers a mobile app capable of working offline, which can be used on a smartphone when connected to a mobile receipt printer and, in future, to a mobile payment function.

Thus, MoVo offers bailiffs features in three phases of their work:

- in preparing enforcement measures by perusing different register systems (e.g. the motor vehicle register), summarising file reference numbers per obligated party, as well as a feature for planning routes,
- when carrying out enforcement measures by displaying all data relevant to the obligated party, as well as documenting relevant data on all enforcement measures for the bailiff's report (e.g. attachment or cash payment), and
- following up on enforcement measures taken and preparing the bailiff's report.

All data on relevant proceedings and parties involved in the proceedings are transferred to MoVo from the case automation system and are available to bailiffs there. In a final step the bailiff's reports to be finalised are filed in the enforcement file (and thus in the case automation system application) via an interface.

40. Decision Search and Decision Anonymisation

To help ensure that more decisions will be published in the Law Information System RIS anonymisations are done completely automatically. The necessary pre-processing of the underlying text files is done with the help of AI. Thus, on the one hand, the manual work in anonymising the decisions is no longer necessary and, on the other hand, the search of decision documentation can be made available also outside of the panel of judges or court section conducting the proceedings. For the purpose of safeguarding the personal rights of the individuals involved in the proceedings and of meeting data protection law requirements names, addresses and, if necessary, other personal data as well as names of places that could allow conclusions to be drawn regarding the case or individuals contained in decision documentation are anonymised by means of tokens and asterisks in such a way that the decision itself remains comprehensible.

Based on professional requirements, the (partially) personal information that is usually not anonymised includes:

- Judges, lay judges and secretaries (except in the case of challenges),
- Selected public institutions (courts, public prosecutors' offices, federal ministries, European institutions),
- professional representatives/counsel including their address,
- names of places (e.g. states, countries, continents) and
- laws, reference books, deadlines, etc.

In addition, academic titles and suffixes such as junior or senior are not anonymised to ensure better comprehensibility of the decision after anonymisation. The same applies to legal form suffixes of legal entities (e.g. AG, GmbH) and for endings of place names, such as road, street or square, that are also de-anonymised.

41. Digitisation and Artificial Intelligence

Due to the increasing use of IT for business processes, the requirements of the different professional groups and interest groups continue to grow. Accordingly, the demands on information technology are growing constantly.

Avoiding and/or targeted elimination of media discontinuities leads to significant efficiency growth in the handling of cases. Digitisation of procedures is ensured through a holistic approach with a special focus on the specific requirements of the case and digital inclusion of the parties involved in the proceedings.

Digital assistants and artificial intelligence (AI) ease the routine workload of the staff and create leeway for knowledge work. Under the heading of Legal Tech digitisation of legal services has been intensively discussed. Here, the tools to be subsumed under the umbrella term AI constitute key technologies that increasingly influence the development of ICT solutions.

Currently AI is used in different areas with, above all, algorithms from the areas of Machine Learning or Deep Learning as well as Natural Language Processing (NLP) being used. The experiences gained so far show significant automation potential by the use of AI:

- Analysing of files to facilitate editing (identifying of files, extraction of meta data; planned: generation of suggestions for entries, identifying jurisdictions, decision-making support through contextual legal research).
- Support in anonymisation of court decisions to enhance transparency by a broad range of publication options in the future.
- Analysing enormous sets of data in preliminary investigations done by public prosecutors in cooperation with the police and in extensive legal proceedings for structured preparation of the facts
- Supporting the citizens at “JustizOnline” with direct assistance by a ChatBot and
- Automated speech recognition as part of the preparation of transcripts and judgments.

In this context, as with all technologies, it is important to reasonably address the risks associated with the use of AI, especially in the case of self-learning and generative AI models. Regulatory attempts, such as the current proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down harmonized rules for AI, which was presented in spring 2020 and is being discussed, must by all means follow a balanced and risk-based approach in order to not be

deprived of any future potential. As staff of the justice system will come into contact with AI outside of the justice system at the very latest upon the market launch of "chatGPT", which is also free-of-charge and has been developed by OpenAI, training of and creating awareness among all staff of the justice system in careful and security conscious handling of AI is imperative.

42. eJustice Strategy

Digitisation increasingly accelerates the process of change in the highly developed ICT landscape and requires guidelines and strategies for a controlled transformation. Since 2006 we have been in a process of summarising the goals and principles of this transformation in an IT strategy, which can be retrieved from the website justiz.gv.at. The keynotes are as follows:

IT Mission: The IT justice as a central and competent partner sees itself as the lever for modernisation of the justice system and as a modern and internationally recognised service provider and as such continues its development to increase the value of IT through the use of innovative solutions and technologies.

IT Vision: The IT justice uses digitisation to accelerate and simplify procedures and to provide modern services and access channels while at the same time ensuring an optimised cost-benefit-ratio. For that purpose highly specialised and motivated IT staff ensure fast fulfilment of requirements of the necessary quality and in compliance with the business architecture.

Strategic Goals

- Modern services for justice system staff, citizens and counsel
- Acceleration and simplification of procedures through digitisation
- Enhancement of efficiency and effectiveness
- Co-designing the EU eJustice strategy and the Austrian eGovernment
- Implementation of IT projects of the necessary quality according to plan
- Security and other qualitative requirements of IT solutions
- Innovative and competent partner of the departments and
- a positive image of the justice system

IT Guidelines

- Ensuring an autonomous IT system ("interoperability")
- Not replacing court decisions or official decisions but supporting them ("cognitive assistance")
- Maximising benefit for the entire justice system ("holisticity")
- Long-term planning when defining goals and drafting solutions ("sustainability")
- Including new groups without putting others at a disadvantage ("digital by default") and
- Recording case data "only once" and expanding interfaces