

THE DANISH DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL AFFAIRS LEGAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

Integrated legal information system converts and publishes Danish legislation quickly and easily

From 1871 until 2007, the Danish government promulgated (published) all primary and secondary legislation in an official journal. Called Lovtidende, this journal went online as lovtidende.dk on 1 January 2008.

A committee set up by the Ministry of Justice in 2004 recommended that all Danish legislation be processed and promulgated electronically as soon as it is passed by parliament – and this meant that the existing legislation process system and website needed a complete overhaul.

The Department of Civil Affairs, part of the Ministry of Justice, is responsible for promulgating. In November 2006, they asked NNIT to re-engineer the entire production system, so that all laws passed after 1 January 2008 could be processed electronically and promulgated online.

THE CHALLENGE

Although the legal field was new to NNIT, the company had successfully completed projects for other Danish ministries, so the Department of Civil Affairs was confident NNIT could handle the job. For the 20-strong team, it was a steep learning curve and they had to cover a lot of ground in a short time. As the NNIT Project Leader

Henrik Christian Larsen says, “There were a lot of new words to learn, fast.”

One of the biggest challenges facing the team was to make the system future proof: the laws have to be published in a format that will remain readable for many years to come, but some documents and older laws were still in Word format and had to be converted.

The NNIT team was also on a tight deadline. The Department of Civil Affairs wanted to go live on 1 January 2008. If the deadline was missed, go live would be delayed an entire year. The reason: each year, all the legislation promulgated during the previous 12 months is published in an annual, and the annual has to be published in one format, either on paper or online.

THE SOLUTION

NNIT chose to divide the system architecture into two parts. The first is an internal production system for Parliament and the Danish ministries, including employees at the Department of Civil Affairs. A Windows-based workflow and production system, it holds all the data for publication. Employees can then prepare and review laws, check for consistency between them and ensure that they're legally binding.

The second part was a converter program, developed to convert Word documents, which can range from 2 to 1500 pages, into a new Lex Dania XML format. A publication engine then promulgates the laws on three websites – the external end user system.

All three websites are based on the Lex Dania system, which controls the drafting environment and workflow, including the



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**SØREN BROBERG, HEAD OF DIVISION,
DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL AFFAIRS.**

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promulgation process, the metadata, and all the rules and logic built into the backend. Each site has its own purpose, but draws on the same data. The lovtidende.dk and ministerialtidende.dk websites have limited functionality, but a specific legal purpose. Retisinformation.dk is the national legal information system, with a comprehensive search engine and deep links to Danish Parliament's websites and EUR-lex, the European Union's online legal text service.

THE RESULT

The Lex Dania system and retssinformation.dk went live on 24 September 2007, and lovtidende.dk and Ministerialtidende.dk on 1 January 2008 – in time to hit the deadline.

The feedback from end users, employees and civil servants has been very positive. End users find the user interface more intuitive, and for employees, the production time has been cut down from one week to one day. And with no printing and postage expenses, administration costs are lower as well.

Søren Broberg Nielsen, Head of Division, Department of Civil Affairs, explains how useful the system is: "If legislation has to be promulgated quickly, we can do it. On two occasions we've taken advantage of the system's speed. In June 2008, avian flu was discovered on the Danish island of Funen. Just before noon, the Ministry of Agriculture asked the Department of Civil Affairs to promulgate a no go zone in a five-kilometre radius around the site. The Statutory Order was promulgated at 12.10 pm and came into force at 1pm."

NNIT now has an ongoing contract to maintain the system – and the team is already developing an advanced search function to meet the needs of expert users.

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL AFFAIRS

The Department of Civil Affairs is responsible for promulgating laws passed by the Danish parliament. The Department is under the jurisdiction of the Danish Ministry of Justice and employs approximately 55 staff in four divisions.

ABOUT THE LOVTIDENDE SOLUTION

- Includes the websites lovtidende.dk, ministerialtidende.dk and retsinformation.dk
- Captures and processes existing legal information
- Updates texts to make them compatible with Microsoft Word 2003
- NNIT operates and maintains the entire solution

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please contact us at nnitcontact@nnit.com to learn more about the case or our services.

ABOUT NNIT

NNIT is an international IT service provider offering IT consulting and the development, implementation and outsourcing of IT services for regulated industries. We create value for our clients by treating their IT as if it were our own. We use IT to support our clients' daily operations and help them achieve their business goals. Owned by Novo Nordisk, NNIT employs nearly 1,300 people. In 2008, our turnover exceeded €185 million.