

Foreword

Past, present and future: the year gone by has seen the Court of Justice look back over its history and reflect on its future, whilst, in its daily work, continuing to perform its task of ensuring that the law is observed in the application and interpretation of the Treaty.

The Court's 50th anniversary celebrations provided the opportunity to take stock of half a century of judicial activity, and to recognise how, by its judgments over the years, the Community judicature has brought to light the fundamental principles which were implicit in the wording and the structure of the founding treaties and, by giving judicial expression to those principles, has defined the characteristic features of the Community legal order. The celebrations also provided the ideal opportunity to pay tribute to all those who, since 1952, have assisted in the performance of those tasks. The conference and formal sitting which took place on 3 and 4 December 2002 in Luxembourg were a resounding success, thanks to the number and the exceptional abilities of the participants.

The celebrations did not prevent the Court of Justice from paying close attention to the work carried out throughout the year by those involved in the Convention on the Future of Europe. The fundamental approaches already emerging from that work justify the great interest with which it has been followed by the Court. While taking care to exercise the reserve appropriate to its role in the Community, the Court has, when asked, willingly assisted the various Convention working groups concerning, in particular, the principle of subsidiarity, fundamental rights, and the question of the legal personality of the Union.

As in preceding annual reports, the main judicial activity of the Court of Justice and the Court of First Instance is summarised in the pages which follow, albeit in a somewhat reorganised form.

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It should be noted that in 2002 (using gross figures, before any joinder of cases) the Court of Justice brought 513 cases to a close (434 in 2001), and 477 new cases were registered (504 in 2001). For its part, the Court of First Instance settled 331 cases (340 in 2001) and recorded 411 new cases (345 in 2001). Those figures illustrate the high level of Community judicial activity on the eve of two very important changes: the entry into force of the Treaty of Nice with its consequences for the Community judicial system, and enlargement, for which the Court is industriously preparing, as it must given the importance of that development for the future of Europe and the European Union.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'G. C. Rodríguez Iglesias', with a large, stylized flourish extending downwards and to the left.

G. C. Rodríguez Iglesias
President of the Court of Justice