

FOREWORD

by Mr G.C. Rodríguez Iglesias, President of the Court of Justice

This annual report contains, as is customary, figures showing the scale of the activity of both courts and an analysis of their decisions which brings to light the wide range of issues dealt with.

The mere number of the cases decided over the past year cannot provide an accurate measure of the level of judicial activity since those cases, and their degree of complexity, differed so much; each case had to be dealt with in an appropriate manner, at greater or lesser length and in varying depth. None the less, that figure is deserving of the closest attention, inasmuch as a comparison with the number of cases brought makes it possible to measure the impact which the year gone by has had on the number of pending cases and, therefore, on the duration of proceedings.

The statistics set out at the end of the report show that the level of activity of both courts was consistently high in 2001, substantially comparable to that of the previous year. The number of cases brought to a close was 434 at the Court of Justice and 340 at the Court of First Instance, while new cases brought numbered 504 and 345 respectively. The average duration of proceedings was broadly constant for the two years.

Apart from figures, this report contains a summary of the most important developments in the case-law, demonstrating the range of matters dealt with in the various fields of Community law.

With regard to its administrative functioning, the Court of Justice has, in particular, been mindful of matters relating to its translation service, which must work smoothly if proceedings are to be conducted at a reasonable speed and case-law is to be rapidly available to the public. The Court has thus considered the consequences for translation of the forthcoming enlargement and the difficulties which will arise from the increase in language combinations and the foreseeable growth in the number of cases. Those concerns have led the Court to embark upon a vast computer project designed to put in place a multilingual tool, adapted to judicial work, integrating all the stages in the life of documents, from inception to publication. This ambitious project, a prototype of which has already been developed to the satisfaction of users, should be brought to a conclusion in 2002.

In addition, the Court, mindful of the institutional framework within which it works, began in 2001, in conjunction with the Court of First Instance, to address the future entry into force of the Treaty of Nice. Their reflections have related in particular to the sharing between them of jurisdiction over direct actions and to the setting up of a judicial panel for cases brought by European Union officials.

It is in that context, looking towards the future, that the Court embarks on the year of its 50th anniversary.