

Foreword

For the Court of Justice, 2008 was a symbolic year: it took possession of its new complex of buildings. The Court now has a centralised infrastructure commensurate with its own expansion, the continuously increasing volume of litigation before it, the introduction of new procedures and the recent enlargements of the European Union; an optimal situation even in the era of electronic communication.

The historical importance of the inauguration of the Court's new complex of buildings, an occasion marked by the presence of distinguished guests, should not push other events of the past year into the background. The implementation of the new urgent preliminary ruling procedure was equally important, enabling the Court to deal within a very short time frame with the first cases, falling within the scope of the area of freedom, security and justice, to which the procedure was applied.

The past year will also be remembered for the efficiency and unflagging rate of the performance of the institution's judicial tasks. In this connection, the overall decrease in the duration of proceedings may be noted, the decrease being very significant especially in preliminary ruling proceedings, while the Court of First Instance had one of the most productive years in its history.

Finally, in the past year a total of 1 332 cases were brought before the three courts comprising the Court of Justice; the figure is the highest in the institution's history for the second year in succession and demonstrates the constant increase in the amount of Community litigation.

The Annual Report provides its readers with an account of changes affecting the three courts comprising the institution, namely the Court of Justice, the Court of First Instance and the Civil Service Tribunal, and of the most important aspects of their work. Separate statistics for each court supplement and illustrate the analysis of the past year's judicial activity.



V. Skouris
President of the Court of Justice