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EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW
(VENICE COMMISSION)



CODICES



User's Guide

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I. Introduction

1. The CODICES database presents the leading constitutional case-law of around 90 Constitutional Courts and Courts with equivalent jurisdiction (hereinafter, “the Courts”) to the public.
2. CODICES contains over 10.000 Court decisions (summaries, called Précis, in English and French as well as full texts of the decisions in 43 languages) together with Constitutions, laws on the Courts and court descriptions explaining their functioning.
3. The contributions, presented in CODICES, are prepared by liaison officers appointed by the Courts themselves. This is an essential guarantee for the quality of the information presented in CODICES.

CODICES – abbreviation of Digest of COnstitutional CasES

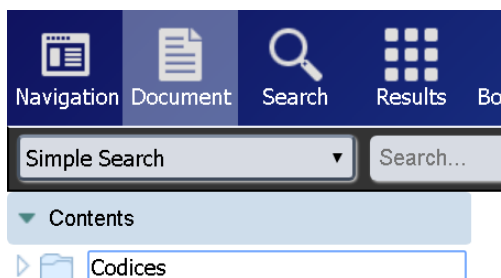
4. The [Venice Commission](http://www.venicecommission.eu) (European Commission for Democracy through Law) of the [Council of Europe](http://www.coe.int) hosts the database in Strasbourg and updates it regularly. The on-line version of CODICES is available at www.CODICES.CoE.int. Liaison officers, appointed by the participating Constitutional Courts and Courts with equivalent jurisdiction contribute to CODICES three times a year, each contribution covering a four-month period: January to April, May to August and September to December. However, not all contributions arrive at the same time. CODICES is updated, on average, every two weeks.

II. CODICES Quick start

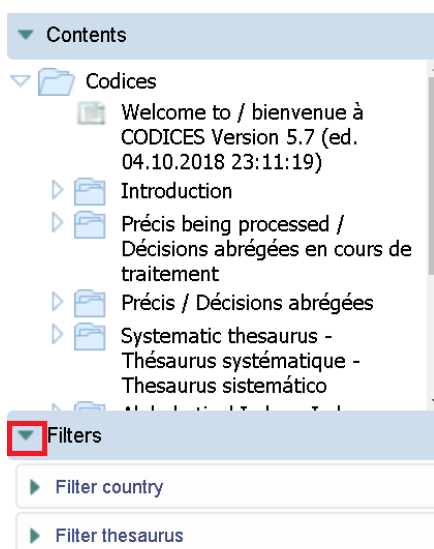
5. Start CODICES by typing www.codices.coe.int into your browser (Chrome, Firefox, Chrome, Internet Explorer, Safari, etc.). First, you will see CODICES’ welcome page:



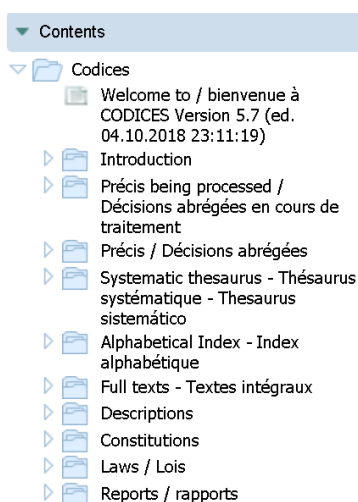
6. Expand the left menu by clicking on the ▶ sign to the left of the CODICES folder:



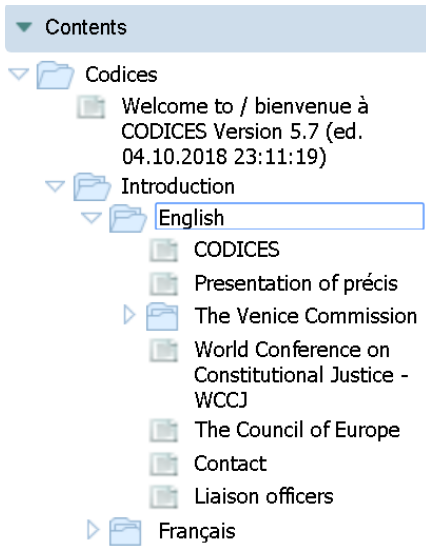
7. If you want to see more of the contents menu, you may reduce the size of the Filters menu by clicking on the small ▼ triangle:



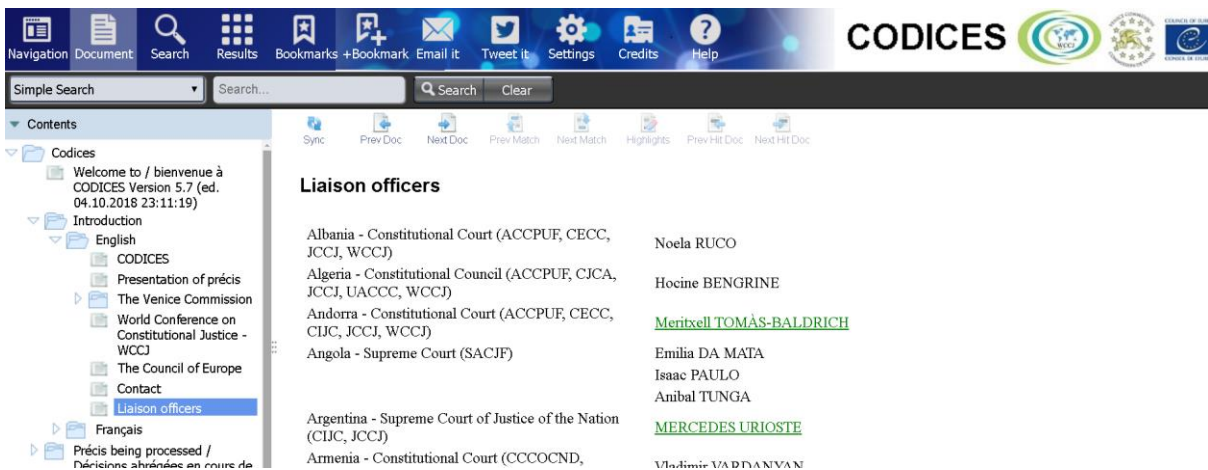
8. This will expand the menu and show you the main parts of CODICES. For a presentation of the main parts of CODICES, see Section IV below. Next to the “Welcome” title, you will also see the last date on which CODICES was updated, i.e. when new contributions were uploaded. This happens, on average, twice a month.



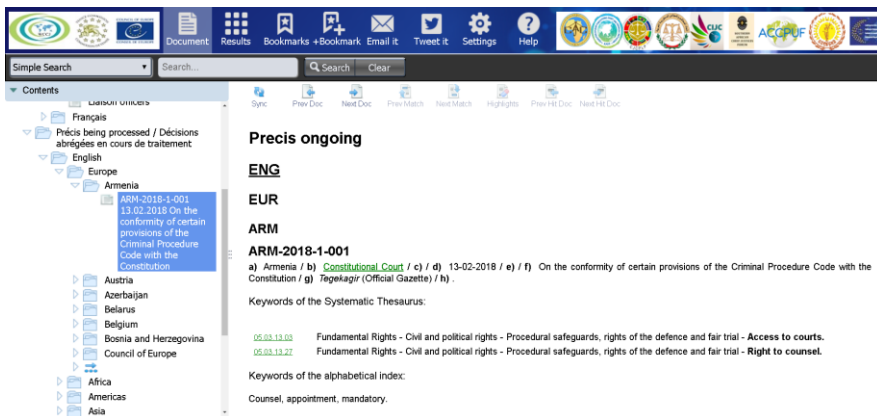
9. Developing further the menu items “Introduction” and “Liaison officers” you will see the current list of liaison offers who provide the contributions to CODICES.



10. Note: The abbreviations below the name of each Court indicate which [regional or linguistic groups](#) that Court is a member of (JCCJ refers to the [Joint Council on Constitutional Justice](#)).

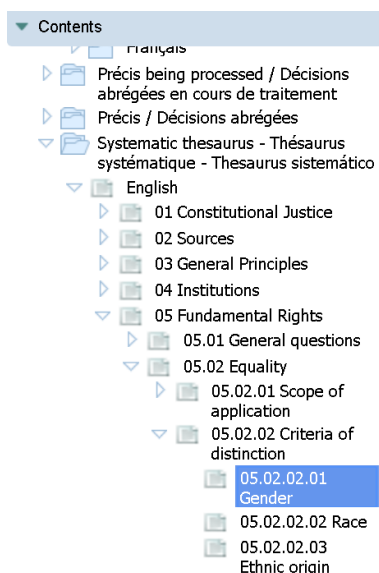


11. If you want to browse recent cases by country, for example from the Constitutional Court of Austria, expand the menu “Précis being processed”, “English”, “Europe”, “Armenia”:

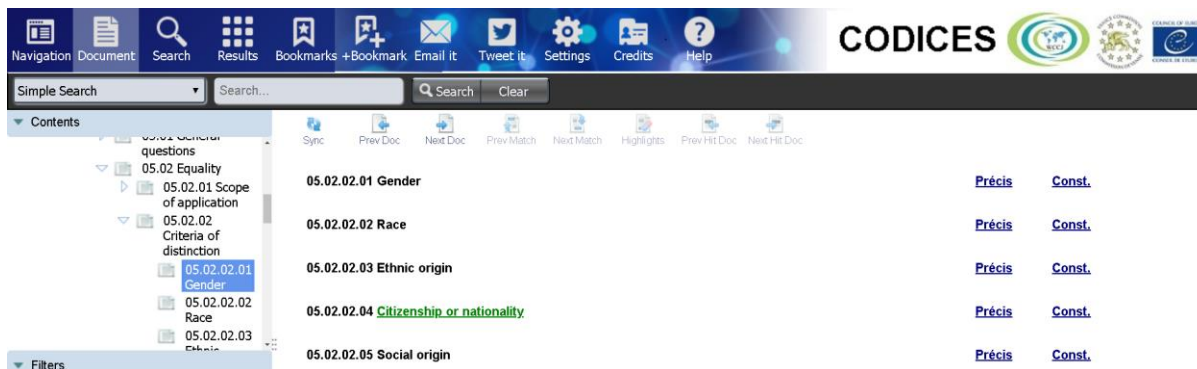


12. Please note that in the part of “Précis being processed” you will find contributions that are not yet completely edited and translated. Once this phase is completed, the précis moves to the “Précis” part of CODICES, i.e. in the example above the précis “ARM-2018-1-001” will no longer be in the “Précis being processed” part.

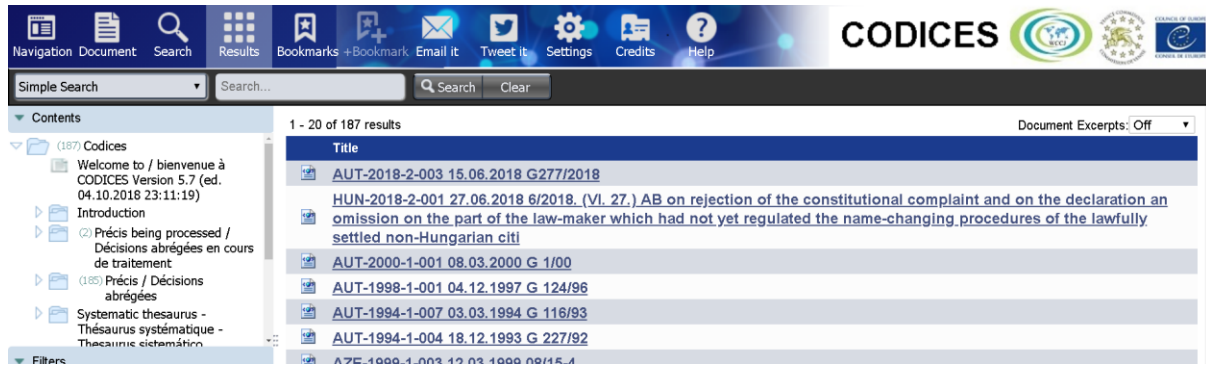
13. If you wish to do a search by topic, please use the Systematic Thesaurus. Expand the menu of the Systematic Thesaurus and look for the concept / category that you are interested in. Below, there is an example of a search for case-law on equality / discrimination by gender:



14. Click on the keyword “05.02.02.01 Gender” in the menu and a list of keywords appears in the main window. You may see links under the folders of “Précis” and “Const.” on the right side of the screen:



15. Click on the link “Précis”, which will start a search in the database for the topic equality / discrimination by gender, which already has more than 180 results. This means, that there are many decisions / judgments to be examined on this topic in CODICES:

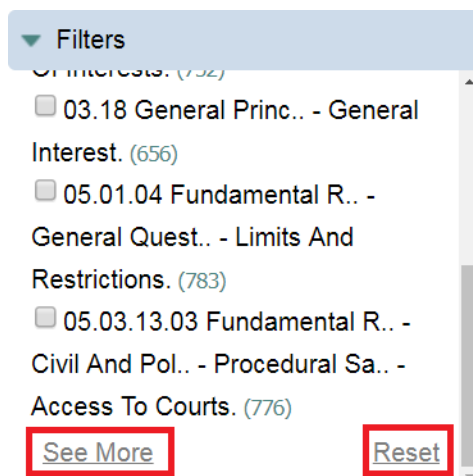


16. The results appear in alphabetical order by continent and by country or by international organisation / court. According to the order of the documents in the database, first come the results from the “Précis being processed”, followed by the final “Précis” categories.

17. If you want to consult these results, click on them in the main body, for instance by clicking on “AUT-2018-2-003” you will bring up the corresponding Précis:




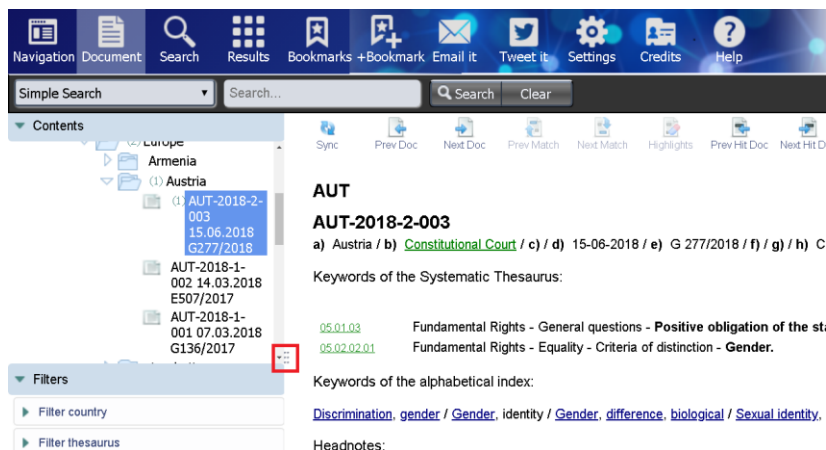
18. In order to search via the Systematic Thesaurus, you can also use a filter:



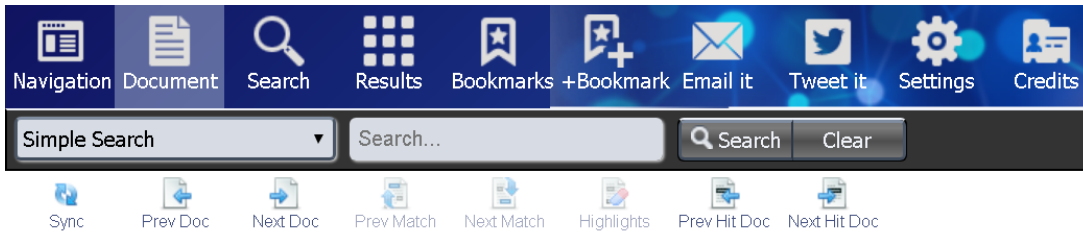
19. If you want to choose from a list of all keywords of the Systematic Thesaurus, click on “See More in the Filters box. If you want to remove previous Thesaurus filters, click on “Reset”:



20. Note: Sometimes the menu on the left side gets unwieldy and difficult to see when the cases have long titles. You may shift the line between the menu and the document by dragging the symbol  to the left or to the right:



21. You may also switch back to the view of a document with the button “Document” from the view of the list of results or a search mask. You can turn the view of the table of contents either on and off by clicking on the button “Navigation”:



AUT

AUT-2018-2-003

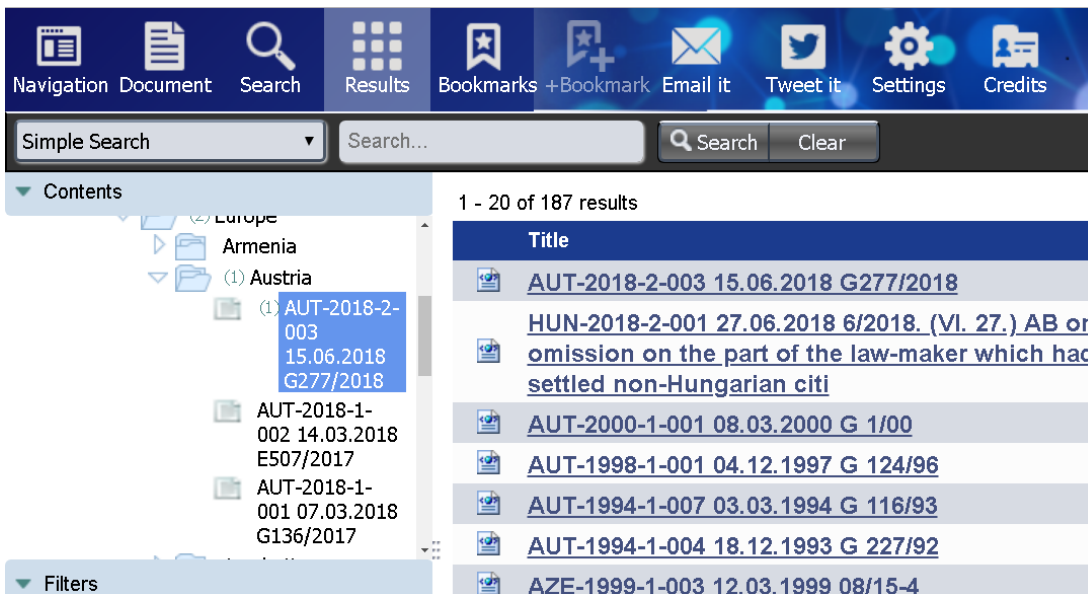
a) Austria / b) [Constitutional Court](#) / c) / d) 15-06-2018 / e) G 277/2018 / f) / g) / h) CODICES ([German](#)).

Keywords of the Systematic Thesaurus:

- [05.01.03](#) Fundamental Rights - General questions - **Positive obligation of the state.**
- [05.02.02.01](#) Fundamental Rights - Equality - Criteria of distinction - **Gender.**

Keywords of the alphabetical index:

22. In order to choose among the results, click on each of them in turn:



23. It is usually enough to take a quick look at the keywords (“Thesaurus” and “Alphabetical Index”) and to read the Headnotes to decide whether or not the Précis is relevant for your research. If it is, click on the folder named “+Bookmark” (add bookmark). When you get the message “Bookmark was added”, click on OK.

The screenshot shows the Rocket NXT software interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for Navigation, Document, Search, Results, Bookmarks, +Bookmark, and Email it. A search bar is located below the navigation bar. The main content area displays a search result for 'AUT-2018-2-003'. The result includes the following information:

- AUT**
- AUT-2018-2-003**
- a) Austria / b) [Constitutional Court](#) / c) / d) 15-06-2018 / e) G 277/2018 / f) / g) / h) C
- Keywords of the Systematic Thesaurus:
 - [05.01.03](#) Fundamental Rights - General questions - **Positive obligation of the st**
 - [05.02.02.01](#) Fundamental Rights - Equality - Criteria of distinction - **Gender.**

24. To return to the list of results, please click on “Results”:

The screenshot shows the Rocket NXT software interface with the search results list displayed. The navigation bar at the top includes icons for Navigation, Document, Search, Results, Bookmarks, +Bookmark, Email it, Tweet it, Settings, and Credits. The search bar is visible below the navigation bar. The main content area displays a list of search results, with the first result selected:

Title
AUT-2018-2-003 15.06.2018 G277/2018
HUN-2018-2-001 27.06.2018 6/2018. (VI. 27.) AB c
omission on the part of the law-maker which has
settled non-Hungarian citi
AUT-2000-1-001 08.03.2000 G 1/00
AUT-1998-1-001 04.12.1997 G 124/96
AUT-1994-1-007 03.03.1994 G 116/93
AUT-1994-1-004 18.12.1993 G 227/92
AZE-1999-1-003 12.03.1999 08/15-4

25. Consult the next Précis until you have seen all the results of your search:

26. In order to move to the next page at the end of the list of results, click on “Next” (see below).

III. Functions of the NXT software

27. CODICES uses the Rocket NXT software to present the data. In the button bar on top of the site, you can see the following buttons:



Navigation button hides or shows the Table of Contents area.



Document button opens the last displayed document.



Results button shows the search results.



Bookmarks button opens the bookmarks page that allows you to open, edit and remove bookmarks.



+Bookmark button allows you to add the current page to bookmarks.



Email it button allows you to share a link to the document within NXT site via email.



Tweet it button allows you to share a link to the document within NXT site via Twitter.



Settings button opens the settings page that allows you to customize NXT site for yourself to some extent.



Help button opens application help.

1. Working with Bookmarks

28. Bookmarks make the navigations and reference to your site more convenient. With the help of a new modern template you can add, remove, or edit the Bookmarks so that you can save any document pages. NXT 4 stores bookmarks as part of your user preferences.

29. To add a bookmark, open the necessary document page and click on the **+Bookmark**. The Bookmark will be added and saved.

30. To display the added bookmarks, click on the **Bookmarks** icon. The NXT 4 **Bookmarks** page opens and all added bookmarks are listed. On this page you can edit or delete the names of saved bookmarks.

2. Running a search

31. On the default site, there are many different ways in which you can run a search. You should start all searches by typing what you wish to search for into a search form. In short, a search form is a web page that contains one or more fields in which you can type words/terms you wish to search. The easiest and most readily accessible search form is the Search edit box, located at the top, middle-left of the default site.

32. This search form enables you to do a simple keyword search on the default site content. Try it now by typing the word coastal in the **Search** field. Notice that your search results automatically display on the **Results** page.

Alternatively, you can choose to perform a search using one of the search forms provided:

- CODICES English (searches Précis in English)
- CODICES français (searches Précis in French)

- Advanced Search (simplifies searches with operators “and”, “not”, “or”, “exact phrase” “proximity”)
- Boolean Search (simple search form with explanations on how to use search operators)
- Faceted Search (facilitates searches in the CODICES filters/facets Country and Thesaurus keyword)
- Folio Advanced Query Search (shows useful graphics on how components of a search influence the number of results)

3. Viewing the List of Search Results

33. When you run a search, the **Results** page is automatically selected and displays the search results list. The list contains all documents that contain a match to the specified search. The surrounding context information is also displayed for each result and is named **Document Excerpt**. The document excerpt can help you to determine whether a document matches your search.

The **Results** page provides you with information regarding your search.

The **Results** page indicates which batch of results you are currently viewing out of the total number of results NXT found (for example, 1-6 of 6 results).

Use the **Document Excerpts** list to turn document excerpts off or to modify the amount of context.

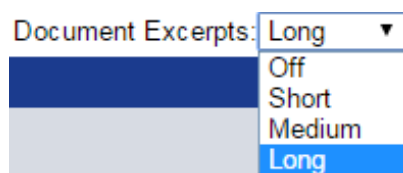


Figure 4. Choosing Document Excerpts Type




34. Select **Short**, **Medium**, or **Long** the number of words in the context to be displayed on each side of the match. Select **Off** to turn the document excerpts off.






4. Navigating Search Results or Documents

35. After selecting a document from the list of search results, you can manually scroll through that document to identify all the matches. You can also use the tools in the **Document** toolbar to navigate the search results and documents.



36. The tools in the **Document** toolbar are:

- **Sync** () expands or collapses the table of contents, as necessary, to show where the document is located in the site hierarchy and to view other documents in a similar context.
- **Prev Doc** () or **Next Doc** () moves from one document to another.

- **Prev Match** () or **Next Match** () Moves from one search match to the next within one document. Users see a notification message when they reach the top or the end of the document. The search for the match in the document is cyclical. If you use your system PDF viewer, use the navigation tools that are included in the interface of your system PDF viewer.
- **Highlights** () removes the highlights from the matches in the current document. To redisplay the highlights, click on the **Highlights** button again.
- **Prev Hit Doc** () or **Next Hit Doc** () moves from one document in your search results list to the next.

IV. Main parts of CODICES in addition to the case-law Précis

37. CODICES consists of ten parts called 'books':

Book Contents

- 1 Introduction
- 2 On-going Précis (summaries of decisions), most recent contributions in English or French, which are still in the process of final editing, but they are available to the public right after being sent to the Venice Commission
- 3 Précis (final, proof-read)
- 4 [Systematic Thesaurus, version 22](#) (in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese – click [here](#) for explanations on its content)
- 5 Alphabetical Index (the Alphabetical Index provides additional keywords, which are not included in the Systematic Thesaurus)
- 6 Full texts of decisions (in 43 languages)
- 7 Descriptions of the Courts (basic texts, composition, procedure and organisation, jurisdiction / powers, nature and effects of decisions)
- 8 Constitutions, including the European Convention on Human Rights and its protocols (ECHR) and other international treaties
- 9 Laws governing the work of the Courts
- 10 Reports presents various constitutional justice reports that are not available on the web site of the Venice Commission (www.venice.coe.int).

1. The Systematic Thesaurus

38. The Systematic Thesaurus has two functions in CODICES: it searches both the Précis for a decision which has been indexed according to a given keyword of the Systematic Thesaurus and the constitutions for articles which have been indexed accordingly.

39. Please note that indexing of the constitutions is an on-going project and not all constitutions contained in CODICES have been indexed yet. For some constitutions, the indexing of amendments needs to be updated. Please signal any incorrect indexing to venice@coe.int.

2. The Alphabetical Index

40. The Alphabetical Index is composed of a list of keywords that are complementary to the Systematic Thesaurus and cross-references, both within this list and towards the Systematic Thesaurus.

41. The keywords of the Alphabetical Index are arranged in alphabetical order. Underlined keywords are query links, which search for all the occurrences of these keywords in the Précis.

42. There are two types of cross-references: a keyword of the index may be a cross-reference to another keyword of the index (e.g. "AIDS see HIV (AIDS)") or to a keyword of the Systematic Thesaurus (e.g. "Equality see mainly 5.2"). The phrase "see mainly" serves as a reminder that Précis are principally indexed using the Systematic Thesaurus and that the Alphabetical Index is simply complementary to the thesaurus. Thus, the user's approach to CODICES should be to conduct searches using the Systematic Thesaurus, which includes the constitutional concepts in its legal context. The Alphabetical Index is used for indexing legal fields not just constitutional law (criminal law, civil law) or factual elements.

3. Full texts of decisions

43. CODICES contains around 10.000 full texts of decisions, in the original language or translated, that have been published as Précis in the Electronic Bulletin on Constitutional Justice (e-Bulletin). There is an identification number for these texts, which corresponds to the one used for the Précis. In the Précis, if there is a full text available it will include, in zone h) of the Identification section, the word "CODICES" followed (in brackets) by the list of languages in which the full text is available. The name of the language is a link to the full text of the decision in that language. (E.g. "h) CODICES (Czech, English)"; the word "Czech" is a link to the corresponding full text of the decision in Czech, and the "English", to the full text in English.)

44. Other full texts in CODICES, for which there is no Précis, have identification numbers containing an "X" (e.g. "SLO-1995-X-002"). Consequently, there are no links to a Précis and it cannot be found via a Systematic Thesaurus search, since the thesaurus is used to index the Précis but not the full texts. These "X" full texts do contain, however, the fields "T_Identification", "T_NUM" and "T_Date" (of the decision), which can be used to carry out field searches. As the "Full Texts" book includes texts not only in English and French but also in other languages, the relevant fields begin with the letter "T_".

4. Descriptions of participating courts

45. The Courts' descriptions include all or some of the following chapters: Introduction, Basic Texts, Composition and organisation, Powers, Nature and effects of judgments, Conclusion, Bibliography.

5. Constitutions including the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)

46. This part contains constitutions (or extracts concerning the constitutional court or court with equivalent jurisdiction) in English and/or in French.

47. In the "Précis" and "Précis being processed" parts, links lead from references to articles of the constitutions in the Précis to the corresponding text of the articles. In the "Constitutions" book, query links in the title of the article (e.g. "Article 17") search for all the Précis in which the Article has been cited. This function allows the case-law concerning a given article of a constitution to be found.

V. Fields allowing searches in specific parts of the Précis

48. The CODICES search mask carries out searches in specific parts of the Précis, but you may also directly refer to the fields in CODICES if you wish to accomplish complex searches that are not possible with the search mask. The following fields are available for searches (queries) in English:

1. "E_Identification" identification number of the Précis, (e.g. ITA-1998-1-003)
2. a) "E_Country"
3. b) "E_Court"
4. c) "E_Chamber"
5. d) "E_Date"
6. e) "E_Number" (decision number as opposed to identification number)
7. f) "E_Title"
8. g) "E_Publications" (official)
9. h) "E_Other-publications" (unofficial)
10. "E_(numbers of the Systematic Thesaurus)"
11. "E_Thesaurus-text"
12. "E_Alphabetical Index"
13. "E_Headnotes"
14. "E_Summary"
15. "E_Text" (contents of both "Headnotes" and "Summary")¹
16. "E_Supplementary information"
17. "E_Cross-references"
18. "E_Languages"

49. In zone "E_Alphabetical Index", many keywords are also links (blue and underlined). If you click on them, they will start a query for the main part of this keyword in all other Précis. The main part of a keyword is the part before the first comma, e.g. in the keyword "Time limit, extension", the main part is "Time limit". Therefore, the query link will find "Time limit, reduction" as well because the query searched for all the keywords of the index beginning with "Time limit".

50. You can use the NXT search syntax to search in these fields. For instance, to search for the Systematic Thesaurus keyword 05.03.21 and the word "censorship" in the Alphabetical Index you can use the following search in the Boolean Search mask:
[field e_thesaurus:05.03.21] [field E_Alphabetical Index:censorship]

Boolean Search

You can **search a subset** of the site by choosing sections in the table of contents (in the frame on the left).

Query terms:

[field e_thesaurus:05.03.21] [field E_AI] (found: 25)

¹ The field "Text" has been included, because older Bulletins (before 1995) did not separate the "Headnotes" and "Summary" zones. The field "Text" comprises these two zones. A query in field "Text" will activate simultaneous searches in "Headnotes" and "Summary".

51. The Folio Advanced Query Search mask shows you graphically how the result is constructed:

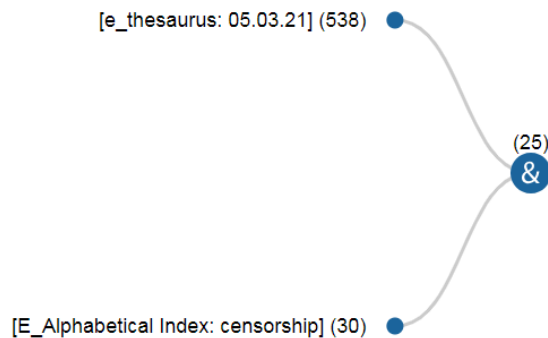
Folio Advanced Query

You can **search a subset** of the site by choosing sections in the table of contents (in the frame on the left).

[field e_thesaurus:05.03.21] [field E_Alphabetical]

VISUALIZE

WORDS

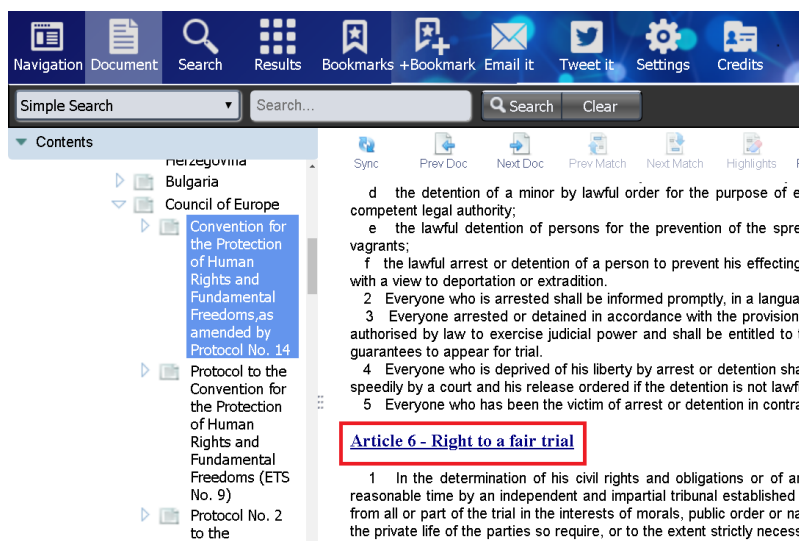


VI. The highlight of CODICES: case-law on a specific article of a constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights (and other treaties)

52. The Précis (case-law), the Constitutions and the Laws are searchable in full text, as well via the detailed [Systematic Thesaurus](#) of constitutional law.

53. The highlight of CODICES is the system of extensive links between the various parts of the database. Each reference to an article of a national constitution is linked to the text of the article. Conversely, a click on the articles of a constitution that brings up the pertinent case law of the Court. The European Convention on Human Rights and other international treaties are also included in the database. As a consequence, a click on an article of the Convention brings up not only the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, but more importantly, the case law of the national Court referring to that Article of the Convention.

54. For instance, when looking for case law on Article 6 ECHR, go to the part “Constitutions”, “English”, “Council of Europe” (for technical reasons, CODICES considers the Convention to be the constitution for the “country” Council of Europe), “Convention for the Protection ...” and scroll down to Article 6 ECHR:



55. Click on the link “Article 6” and you will obtain over 650 results.

56. While the case law of the European Court of Human Rights is easily available in HUDOC, with this search you also carry out a comparative analysis of national case law relating to an article of the Convention.