USE OF MEANS OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION IN ADMINSTRATION OD JUSTICE IN EUROPEAN UNION AND POLAND

THE AUDIO / VIDEO RECORDING IN ITALIAN COURTS

FILIPPO CUNSOLO

PROJECT AUTOMATION S.P.A.

APPLICATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Starting from 1989, Project Automation begun one of the most successful relationship with an Institutional Body as the Italian Department of Justice. Project Automation, for the Department of Justice, was, and still is, the reference partner for multi Audio / Video-conference system) and audio-video verbalisation, for increased safety of detainees and for cost reductions. The Department of Justice thanks to the audio-video verbalisation and distant deposition system, drastically reduced the need of transferring the prisoners from jails to the Court Rooms in order to allow deposition in proceedings and consent the creation of a multimedia archive containing the proceedings themselves. Audio recording systems are installed and used in more than 1500 courtrooms for criminal cases, and Audio / Video recording systems are used in 200 courtrooms for complex criminal cases. Multi Audio / Video-conference systems are used in 123 remote stations (distributed in 15 prisons) and 200 courtroom stations.

Audio / Video recording systems produce storable supports containing audio / video tracks of trial depositions. In particular they produce:
- 6-tracks audio recording on VHS tape.
- Mono-track audio recording (used for transcriptions) on mini-cassettes.
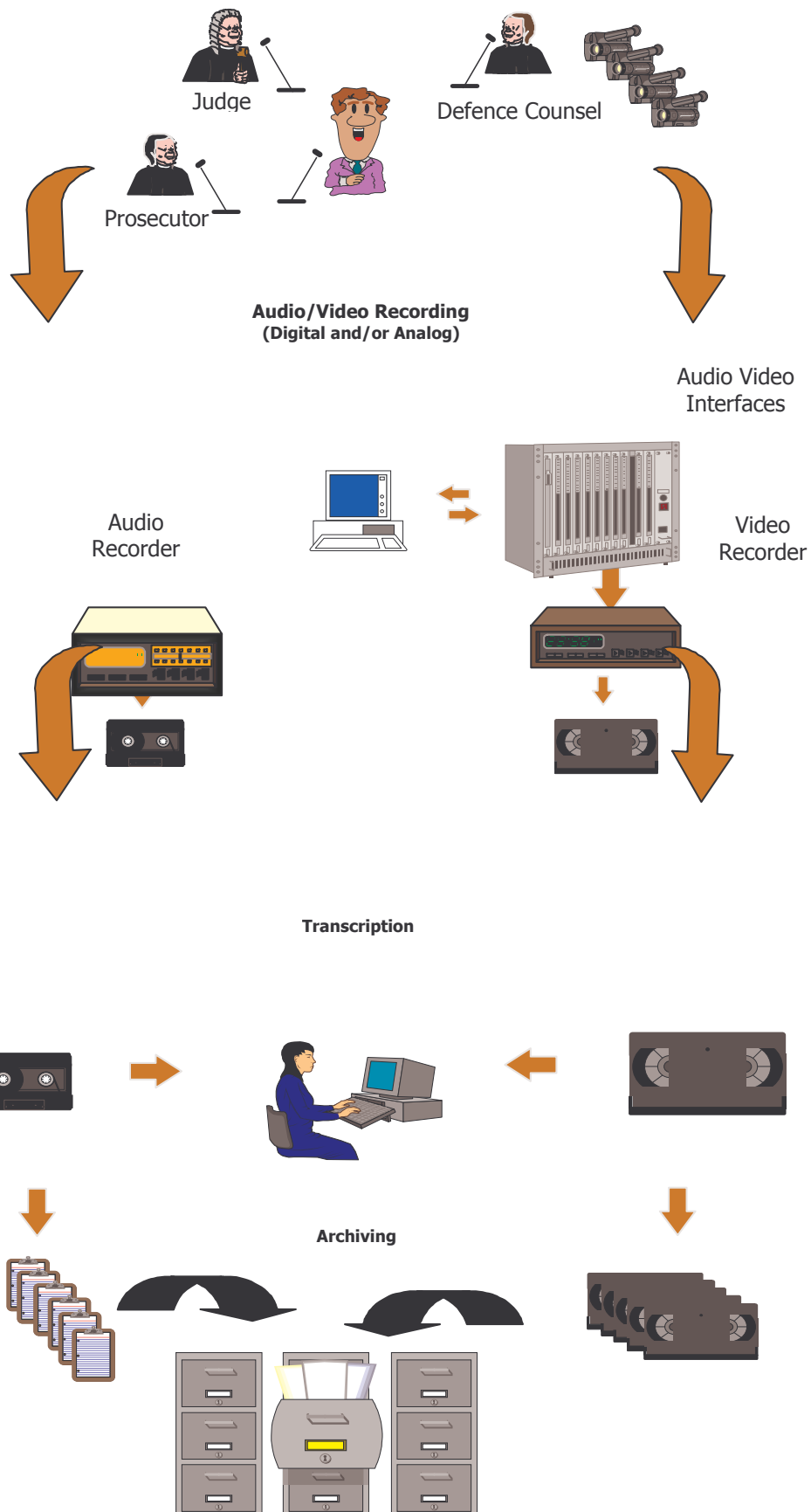- Audio / video recording on VHS tape.

Audio / Video Verbalisation

Project Automation, following the specific needs of the Department of Justice, has been the designer and supplier of almost all the Court Rooms in Italy for the Audio/Video Verbalisation system adapting the architecture of the systems in order to have the best cost per price performance.

Here follows the functional scheme of the typical Audio/Video verbalisation process:

The audio / video recording in Italian courts

Judge

Defence Counsel

Prosecutor

Audio/Video Recording
(Digital and/or Analog)

Audio Video
Interfaces

Audio
Recorder

Video
Recorder

Transcription

Archiving

In the near future Audio / Video recording systems will produce digital storable supports containing audio / video tracks of trial depositions. In particular they will be able to produce:
- 4-tracks digital audio recording on audio CD-R or CR-RW discs.
- Audio / video digital recording on DVD-R or DVD-RW discs.

Transcriber

DIGITAL RECORDER

CD ROM / DVD ROM

European Research Project: e-Court (electronic Court: judicial IT- based management)

The European Commission is going toward an always growing co-operation and homogenization of the regulations between the various Department of Justice among all European States.

In this context Project Automation, together with SchlumbergerSema, Cryptomathic, Intrasoft, the Ministry of Justice of Poland, the Ministry of Justice of Italy, the University of Toulouse, the University of Amsterdam, the Italian CNR, has formed a Consortium for the realisation of a Judicial IT-based Management system that aims to speed up trials giving a fast and reliable Information Technology support, based on a common platform called e-COURT. The e-COURT project, for which Project Automation is the leading company, is financed and approved by the European Community (5th Framework – IST programme)
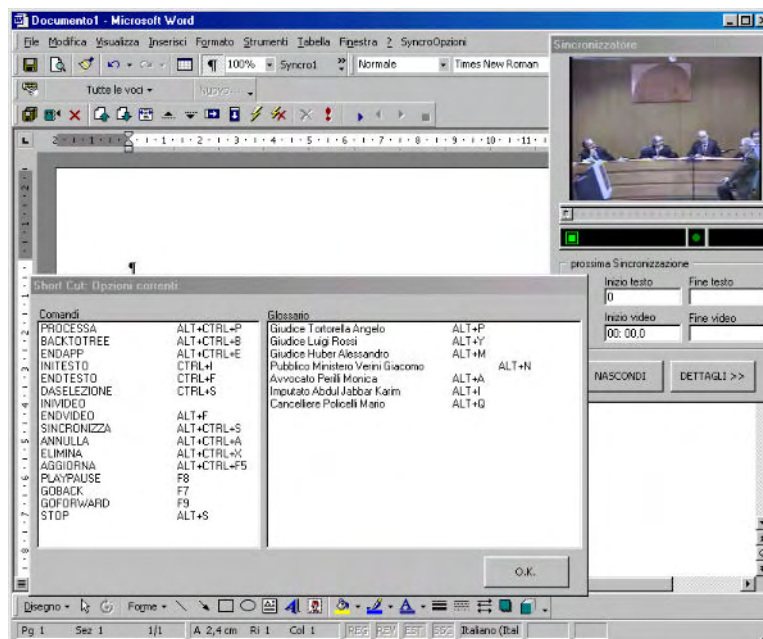
The main objectives of the e-Court project are:
- contributing to trans-national harmonisation in the field of Justice management among the Member States;
- enabling Justice Institutions belonging to different Countries to share information and co-operate;
- securing citizen rights to access public judicial information by providing an user-friendly and effective tool via a web portal;
- providing added-value information (multimedia and multilingual trial documents) to Institutions and experts (prosecutors, judges and lawyers) having different roles within the justice process management and among different Countries;
- allowing the whole justice Community to retrieve information about public trials, verdicts and any kind of public-domain information about activities in law courts; the access to the judicial information will be disclosed according to role and rights;
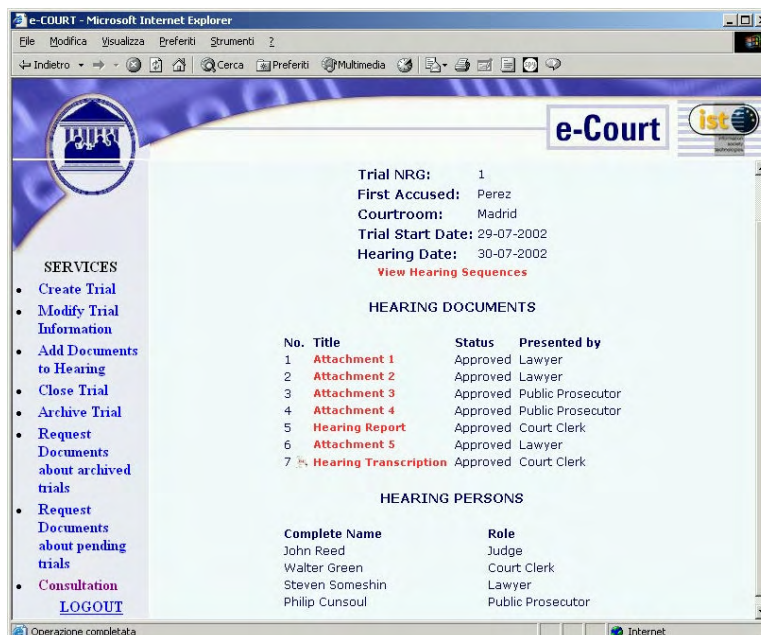
Obviously all the above mentioned will be managed according to privacy and security principles. Information about both trials in execution and reserved aspects of the law courts activities are sensible data, therefore they must be subject to safe protection. The authentication of the user accessing the information will be guaranteed by advanced security technologies.

In the picture below is a screenshot of the Audio/Video – Text Synchronisation Tool associated to a normal word processor:

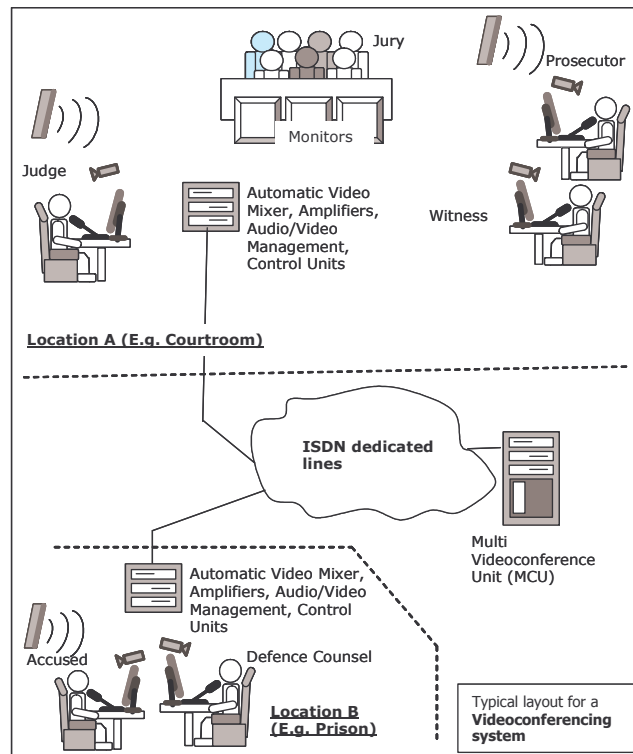In the picture below is a screenshot of the Web-Based application for data retrieval:

Multi Audio / Video Conference

The aim of the Multi Audio / Video Conference application is to keep trials without having "physically" all actors at the same place. The application, based on the latest video compression/transmission technologies, gives the possibility to have a sort of "distributed proceeding". The main advantages are:

 - No need to transport the prisoners in order for them to testify
 - Reduction of the costs
 - Reduction of the risks related to the transportation of the prisoners
 - Reduction of the time to arrange and keep the proceedings
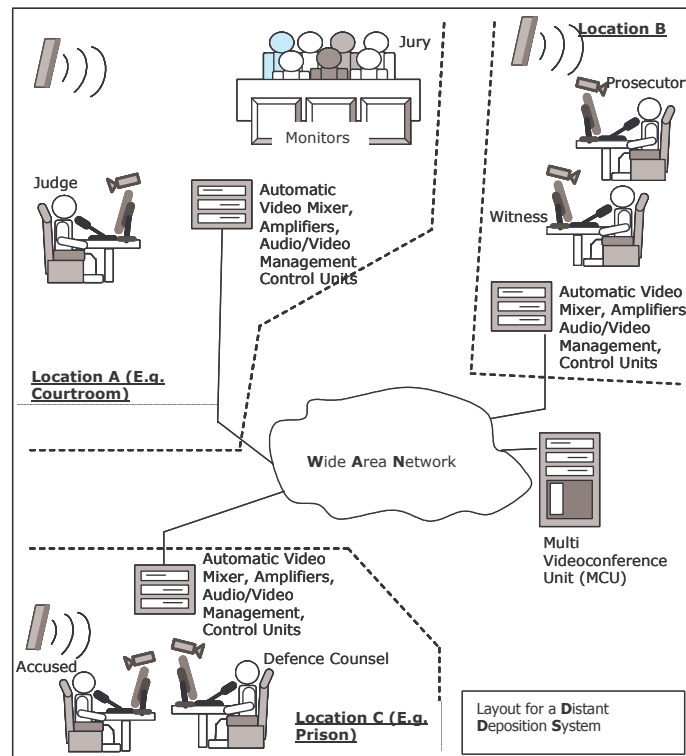 - Possibility to have an easy to consul "memory" of the trials

Here follows a typical scheme of a Distant Deposition System where Courtrooms are connected with "bunker courtrooms" or prisons using dedicated ISDN lines that ensures the required level of security:

A possible future scenario for Distance Deposition Systems include Courtrooms connected with "bunker courtrooms", prisons or any other locations using dedicated Wide Area Network that ensures the required level of security.

Layout for a Distant Deposition System

Examples of Italian courtrooms equipped with Audio / Video systems:

Court of Torino

Court or Cremona