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FONTES – Fostering iNnovative Training in the Use of European Legal Sources

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The FONTES project – FOstering iNnovative Training in the use of European legal Sources – was carried out from 2021 to 2024 under the ERASMUS+ program by a consortium of four universities.¹ The project was led by the University of Palermo (PI: Prof. Beatrice Pasciuta) in collaboration with partners: the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris (PI: Prof. Emanuele Conte), the University of Geneva (PI: Prof. Noëlle-Laetitia Perret), and the Jagiellonian University in Kraków (PI: Dr. Hab.

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Maciej Mikuła, JU Prof.). The focus of the project was medieval and early modern legal sources, with particular emphasis on developing formats to facilitate learning about these historical legal texts.

Written sources from distant epochs often serve as primary evidence of legal transactions, such as property transfers, as well as records of court proceedings or inter-state agreements. Simultaneously, these sources offer invaluable insights not only into legal systems of the past, but also into social, economic, political, and cultural history of their time. Recognizing the significance of such materials, the consortium designed the project to develop tools for the effective analysis and use of these challenging texts. The target groups for the project's outputs includes not only legal historians, but also historians, archivists, museologists, librarians, and other persons specialized in arts and humanities who may find working with medieval and early modern legal sources challenging.

The consortium pursued three main outputs. The first objective was a series of courses presented through various formats. The University of Palermo coordinated the semester-long courses. Updates were regularly shared via the project blog, which included the presentation of the course syllabus and ongoing reports on their progress.

In addition, multi-day intensive courses were conducted in Paris (2023), Palermo (2024), and Fribourg-Neuchâtel (2023), attended by Master's and Ph.D. students, including participants from the Jagiellonian University. Members of the JU team – Dr. Kacper Górski, and Prof. Maciej Mikuła – delivered lectures. Updates on these courses were shared on the project blog and the materials from the intensive courses were published on the project platform.²

As part of the initiative, three online courses were developed. They are available on the project platform as publicly accessible videos, complemented by bibliographic notes and tests. Additionally, they are offered as certified MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses) on the Copernicus College platform.³

The first course, titled “Introduction to the Sources of the European *Ius Commune*,” was developed by Dr. Anna Floris (University of Palermo).⁴ It comprises 12 videos covering various aspects of the European *ius commune*, with a particular focus on the practical aspects of studying these sources. The course also features a two-part introduction to legal paleography.

The second course, “Perspectives on Swiss Legal Sources and Diplomatic Treaties,” includes ten videos.⁵ It was created by a Swiss team comprising Dr. Ignazio Alessi, Dr. Marco Cicchini, Dr. Lionel Dorthe, Prof. Noëlle-Laetitia Perret, Dr. Gavino Scala, and Dr. Adrien Wyssbrod. The course deals with selected legal sources – such as diplomatic treaties, medieval canon law and municipal law.

The third course, “Legal Sources in the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania,” was produced by the Polish team. Dr. Hab. Łukasz Marzec delivered lectures focusing primarily on the influence of Roman law on the legal systems of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Dr. Hab. Krzysztof Fokt contributed lec-

² <https://fontes.project.uj.edu.pl/pariswinterschool> (accessed: 26.11.2024); <https://fontes.project.uj.edu.pl/palermosummerschool> (accessed: 26.11.2024).

³ <https://fontes.project.uj.edu.pl/fontes-edu> (accessed: 26.11.2024).

⁴ <https://fontes.project.uj.edu.pl/introduction-ius-commune> (accessed: 26.11.2024).

⁵ <https://fontes.project.uj.edu.pl/fontes-oer-swiss> (accessed: 26.11.2024).

tures on sources of ancient rural law. Additional lectures were recorded by Dr. Kacper Górski and Prof. Maciej Miłucha.⁶

Another significant objective of the project was the creation of a textbook on the sources of law in the Middle Ages and early modern period. Edited by Prof. Emanuele Conte and Dr. Louis Genton (EHESS), the book features contributions from legal historians across Europe. The 23 chapters were authored by: Marie Bassano, Marta Cerrito, David de Concilio, Emanuele Conte, Gero Dolezalek, Raphael Eckert, Anna Floris, Joanna Frońska, Florent Garnier, Louis Genton, Paolo Napoli, Sandro Notari, Silvia di Paolo, Beatrice Pasciuta, Noëlle-Laetitia Perret, Guido Rossi, Rosalba Sorice, Attilio Stella, Massimo Vallerani, Cristina Vano, Jesus Velasco, Sarah White, Adrien Wyssbrod. Two chapters were written by Kacper Górski and Maciej Miłucha: “Sources juridiques médiévales et outils numériques” (Medieval Legal Sources and Digital Tools) and “Les sources juridiques en Europe centrale. Le cas de la législation de la Diète de Pologne” (Legislative Sources in Central Europe: the Case of the Legislation of the Polish Diet).⁷

The third task involved developing the aforementioned project platform, hosted within the technical infrastructure of the JU. The FONTES platform serves not only as a repository for project materials and outputs but also as a hub designed for both experts in legal history and for those new to the field. To support this dual purpose, bibliographical guidelines were created to facilitate searches for legal sources across various European countries.⁸ What is more, the platform aggregates and organizes (thematically and geographically) descriptions and links to digital tools and repositories.⁹ The platform also provides supplementary resources, including links to social media groups dedicated to historical legal sources, a list of selected projects related to historical legal sources, links to open-access digital educational resources such as lectures and podcasts. Special efforts were made by Krzysztof Fokt, Kacper Górski, and Dr. Paulina Kamińska to curate this section, ensuring it includes relevant content.

We warmly invite you to explore the project platform at <https://fontes.project.uj.edu.pl>.



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⁶ <https://fontes.project.uj.edu.pl/lecture-pl> (accessed: 26.11.2024).

⁷ <https://fontes.project.uj.edu.pl/handbook> (accessed: 26.11.2024).

⁸ <https://fontes.project.uj.edu.pl/bibliographies> (accessed: 26.11.2024).

⁹ <https://fontes.project.uj.edu.pl/repositories> (accessed: 26.11.2024); <https://fontes.project.uj.edu.pl/tools> (accessed: 26.11.2024).

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