

Finding Foreign (non-U.S.) Law...in English, if possible

The NYU Law Library has primary law in paper for only selected non-U.S. jurisdictions and relies upon databases and other regional libraries for certain other jurisdictions. For details, see the description of the collection at <http://www.law.nyu.edu/library/collec.html#Foreign>. In addition, most of the law from non-English speaking jurisdictions is not translated into English.

At the very beginning, narrow your research question. What country's law do you need? Are you looking for a case, code, statute, administrative rule or decision, treaty, etc.? What is the specific subject area at issue? Do you want the law in full-text or abstract? How recent is the document? Must you have the latest amendments? What languages can you read?

It is also essential to understand the legal system (common law, civil law, Islamic law, etc) of the jurisdiction. Do not try to find a case reporter in a civil law country. Civil law countries do not recognize *stare decisis*. They do not have case reporters. Only selected cases are published in civil law country's legal journals, courts' newsletter, and international journals.

Think topical when trying to find foreign laws in English. Remember that primary sources of a foreign jurisdiction will never be officially translated into English, just as the U.S. statutes and cases will not be officially translated into other languages. Instead, major academic law libraries in the U.S. buy topical services that contain unofficial translations of selected laws from selected non-U.S. jurisdictions. These subject-oriented services are invaluable sources of foreign laws in English.

If you want to find a constitution, or perhaps codes of civil and criminal procedure, laws of environment, health, family, banking, taxation, social security, intellectual property, bankruptcy (insolvency), commerce, labor, etc of a specific foreign jurisdiction, these might be translated into English. Some of these print services also have an electronic counterpart. Specialized topical databases of foreign laws in English are rapidly growing in number.

If you do not know where to start, and you do not already have a citation to the foreign law, then start your research with secondary sources: commentaries, treatises, legal encyclopedias, articles. These sources may provide a specific citation to a law (name, date, etc.) so that you can search the library catalog. Also, a citation is essential if you have to request a copy from another library through interlibrary loan. Secondary sources may also provide a summary of the law (which is sometimes better than nothing).

You can also start by doing a simple search in JULIUS, the library's online catalog <http://julius.law.nyu.edu/>. In the example, below, we are trying to find out if the library has the labor law of France in English. Using the keyword search **labor and law and France**, you get 40 records. One of the first titles is *Commercial Laws of the World. France*. In the record for that title you discover that there is one volume containing the commercial code and another volume containing the labor code:

Author **France**
 Title **Commercial laws of the world. France**
 Imprint Ormond Beach, Fla. : Foreign Tax **Law** Publishers, 1986-

Identity Loose-leaf
Location [Reserve](#)
HOLDINGS 2v.
Latest Received: January 2004

LOCATION	CALL NO.	STATUS
Reserve	K1001.4 .C65x Book 8	AVAILABLE
Reserve	K1001.4 .C65x Labor laws of France	AVAILABLE

Call # K1001.4 .C65x
 Location Reserve
 Edition Rev
 Descript 2 v. (loose-leaf) ; 30 cm
 Note Includes index
 Contents [v. 1] Commercial laws of the world, **France** -- [v. 2] Commercial laws of the world, **France, labor law**
 Subject [Business law -- France](#)
 Alt author [Foreign Tax Law Publishers](#)
 Alt title **Labor laws of France**
[Commercial laws of the world. France. Labor law](#)

If you can read the language of the jurisdiction, you still must identify the title of the legal publication in the vernacular, or at least the type of legal publication, that might contain the law before you can search for it in a library catalog. You may have to use a legal foreign language dictionary in order to find the legal equivalents from one language to another.

Here are the most important tools for understanding the legal systems of non-U.S. jurisdictions, for finding out the titles of the legal publications of other jurisdictions, and for trying to find translations of foreign law:

I. Guides to Legal Systems and Citations to Foreign Law

Reynolds & Flores, Foreign Law: Current Sources of Codes and Basic Legislation in Jurisdictions of the World (Littleton, CO : F.B. Rothman, 1989- Reserve K38 .R49 1989
 Also online (IP access) on the Library's Home Page under [Indexes & Databases](#)
http://www.law.nyu.edu/library/database_type.html

Germain, Germain's Transnational Law Guide (Ardsley-on-Hudson, NY: Transnational Juris Publications, Inc., 1991-). Reserve NYUL K20 G37 T7

International Law Digest Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory. (Summit, NJ: Martindale-Hubbell. Annual) KF190 .M37x

International encyclopedia of comparative law / [issued] under the auspices of the International Association of Legal Science ; editorial committee; R. David ... [et al.] Reference K530. I57. 1973

Modern Legal Systems Cyclopedia (Ed. Kenneth Robert Redden. Buffalo, NY: William S. Hein & Co., 1984-) Reference K583.R313 M63 1984

Szladits, Bibliography on Foreign and Comparative Law: Books and Articles in English (New York: Parker School of Foreign and Comparative Law, Columbia University, 1955-)
K38 .B53

II. Foreign Language Dictionaries (Legal and non-legal)

Ask at the Reference Desk.

III. Indexes: [http://www.law.nyu.edu/library/database_type.html#Finding Articles](http://www.law.nyu.edu/library/database_type.html#Finding%20Articles)

Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals

Index to Legal Periodicals

Current Legal Information

LegalTrac

International Law In Brief at ASIL <http://asil.org/asilex.htm>

IV. Dictionaries for Cite-Checking Foreign Abbreviations

World dictionary of legal abbreviations (Buffalo, N.Y. : W. S. Hein, 1991-)

European Commission Translation Service English Style Guide

http://europa.eu.int/comm/translation/writing/style_guides/english/index_en.htm

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/translation/index.htm>

http://europa.eu.int/comm/translation/index_en.htm

V. Sources for Full Texts of Foreign Law in English

Identify these by searching JULIUS.

Country topical reporters, treatises and guides may contain or cite legislation. The **Doing Business in ...** series provides summaries or translations of business and business-related laws of a foreign jurisdiction such as civil codes, copyright laws, labor laws, etc.

Yearbooks of different countries contain not only laws but also important cases.

International law journals, such as International Legal Materials, are also a great source. They publish landmark foreign laws and cases or comment on them.

VI. Foreign Law in Vernacular and in English Translation on the Internet

http://www.law.nyu.edu/library/foreign_intl/index.html

Online databases

Westlaw and Lexis contain a great deal of foreign law (check by jurisdiction) in vernacular.

Foreign databases published by governments or private vendors are also a growing source

http://www.law.nyu.edu/library/foreign_intl/country.html

Topical databases look at:

http://www.law.nyu.edu/library/foreign_intl/foreign.html

http://www.law.nyu.edu/library/foreign_intl/bankruptcy.html and

http://www.law.nyu.edu/library/foreign_intl/intrade.html such as TaxBase, National Law Center for Inter-American Free Trade, The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Country Commerce, ISI Emerging Markets, etc.

VII. Guides

LLRX.com Comparative and Foreign Law (guides on specific jurisdictions of the world):

http://www.llrx.com/comparative_and_foreign_law.html

About foreign and international law by Genie Tyburski

<http://www.virtualchase.com/legalresearcher/foreign.html>

Foreign Law in English Translation on the Internet by Lyonette Louis-Jacques

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/~llou/global.html>

Foreign Laws: English Translation Sources at Georgetown University

<http://www.ll.georgetown.edu/intl/guides/english/>

Sources of International and Foreign Law In English by Jane Williams (University of Illinois College of Law) http://www.law.uiuc.edu/library/home/netsourc/for_ljw2.htm

To read more about how to find non-U.S. law:

“Finding foreign law” by Jeanne Rehberg and Mirela Roznovschi, in *Accidental Tourist on the New Frontier : An Introductory Guide to Global Legal Research*. Ed. by Jeanne Rehberg and Radu Popa Littleton, Colo. : F.B. Rothman, 1998. Reserve K85 .A27 1998

“Legal Research on the Frontier of Innovation,” in *Toward a Cyberlegal Culture* by Mirela Roznovschi. Ardsley, New York: Transnational Publishers, c2001. Reserve K87 .R69 2001