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Making sense of legal texts

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Appendix C Sentence Classification Patterns

In section 4.5, a pattern-based approach for the classification of sentences in Dutch legislative documents was introduced. In order to provide some insight into these patterns, we'll give an overview of the patterns included in the parser for the categories Obligation/Duty and Short Title. The patterns are presented as JAVA regular expressions, and include a number of special markers:

| Marker | Meaning |
|--------|--|
| \s+ | one or more spaces |
| \+ | one or more (random) characters |
| \b | end of a word |
| ? | the preceding word or pattern enclosed by brackets is optional |

Table 18: JAVA regular expression elements

C.1 Patterns for Obligations and Duties

As mentioned in chapter 4, many obligations do not follow a pattern, but are instead presented using the normative indicative. The table below shows the patterns that are used to identify the sentences that do follow a pattern.

| Pattern | English translation ¹⁸⁸ |
|--|------------------------------------|
| \s+(is zijn)\s+verplicht\b | is obliged to |
| \s+(is zijn)\s+(.\s+)?verboden\b | is prohibited |
| \s+(is zijn)\s+(.\s+)?gehouden\b | is responsible for |
| \s+(is zijn)\s+verantwoordelijk\s+voor\b | is responsible for |
| \s+(moeten moet)\b | must |
| \s+(dienen dient)\b | ought to |
| \s+(draagt dragen)\s+zorg\b | takes care of |
| \s+is\s+geen\s+.\s+gelaten\b | no ... is open |
| \s+(is zijn)\s+niet\s+bevoegd\b | is not authorised |
| \s+(kunnen kan kunt)\s+niet\b | cannot |
| \s+(is zijn)\s+blijft\blijven\s+onderworpen\b | is subject to |
| \s+(is zijn)\s+niet\s+verenigbaar\s+met\b | is not combinable with |
| \s+(is zijn)\s+belast\s+met\b | is charged with |
| \s+(heeft hebben)\s+(mede\s+)?tot\s+(taken taak)\b | is tasked with |

Table 19: Patterns for obligations and duties

The table includes many different synonyms for *must* and *cannot*. Also, there are a few of (rare) patterns that are relevant for specific situations, such as *is not combinable with*, which implies a specific condition.

C.2 Patterns for Short Titles

The setting of a short title is more standardized than the obligations; as a result, there are fewer different patterns used.

| Pattern | English translation |
|---|---------------------|
| \s+kan\s+worden\s+aangehaald\s+als(:)?\s+ | may be cited as |
| \s+wordt\s+aangehaald\s+als(:)?\s+ | is cited as |

Table 20: Patterns for sentences setting a short title

¹⁸⁸ The patterns contain both the singular and plural of the verb; in the English translation, only the singular is included.