

# 2021 EU Justice Scoreboard: Focus on Digitalisation of Justice

Anna Pinggen

## News

On 8 July 2021, the Commission published the [2021 EU Justice Scoreboard](#). The Justice Scoreboard is an annual overview providing comparative data on the efficiency, quality, and independence of justice systems in all EU Member States (for the Scoreboards of previous years, see [eucriM 2/2020](#), p. 74-45, [eucriM 1/2019](#), p. 7; [eucriM 2/2018](#), pp. 80-81, and [eucriM 2/2017](#), p. 56). In comparison to the previous overviews, the 2021 Scoreboard refines different indicators and, for the first time, focuses on the digitalisation of justice, which has been of paramount importance in keeping the courts functional during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, the 2021 Scoreboard showed that a large number of Member States continued their efforts to further improve the effectiveness of their justice systems. The COVID-19 pandemic created new challenges, indicating the need for an acceleration of the digitalisation of justice systems.

The key findings of the 2021 EU Justice Scoreboard are as follows:

### *Efficiency:*

Since 2012, the efficiency of the judiciary in civil, commercial, and administrative cases has improved or remained stable in ten Member States, while it decreased in nine Member States.

### *Quality:*

- Legal aid: Legal aid, which has a major impact on access to justice, has become less accessible in some Member States compared to 2019. The accessibility of legal aid has been tightened in approximately one third of the Member States and expanded in five Member States, especially as regards partial legal aid.
- Training of judges: The number of judges participating in training on IT skills grew slightly. Most Member States provide training on victims of gender-based violence, and more than half of the Member States provide training on gender-sensitive practices, asylum seekers, or persons with different cultural, religious, ethnic, or linguistic background.
- Digitalisation: Almost all Member States provide access to some form of online information about their judicial system. Differences are evident regarding information content and how adequately it responds to people's needs. While most Member States have case management systems, videoconferencing systems, and the possibility for teleworking in place, the Commission sees room for improvement in access to automatic case allocation systems, and artificial intelligence. Additional improvements are also needed with regard to communication between certain legal professionals

### AUTHOR

Anna Pinggen 

Researcher  
Max Planck Institute for the  
Study of Crime, Security and  
Law

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and/or national authorities via secure electronic solutions. The Commission is also pushing for progress regarding online access to court judgments

*Independence:*

The general public's perception of courts' and judges' independence has improved in over two thirds of the Member States compared to 2016. Compared to last year, however, the general public's perception of independence decreased in almost half of all Member States. The main reasons for the perceived lack of independence of courts and judges are interference or pressure from governments and politicians and pressure from economic or other specific interests.

*Background:*

The EU Justice Scoreboard was launched in 2013 as one of the tools in the EU's [Rule of Law toolbox](#), which is used by the Commission to monitor justice reforms in Member States.

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