

# 2024 EU Justice Scoreboard with New Indicators



Anna Pinggen

## News

On 11 June 2024, the Commission published the [2024 EU Justice Scoreboard](#), which provides an overview on the effective functioning of the Member States' judicial systems with objective, reliable, and comparable data. The EU Justice Scoreboard traditionally contains data on three key elements measuring the effectiveness of national judicial systems: efficiency, quality, and independence (for the 2023 Scoreboard → [euclid 2/2023, 114](#); for the 2022 Scoreboard → [euclid 2/2022, 86-87](#)).

In response to the need for additional comparative data, the 12th edition (2024) incorporates a series of novel indicators: statistics on the accessibility of justice for children in civil and criminal proceedings; an overview of notaries and their powers in succession procedures; and information on the salaries of judicial and prosecutorial expert staff. In addition, this edition provides an overview of the authorities involved in the appointment of court presidents and prosecutors; updated information on the composition of national councils for the judiciary; and an overview of the powers of national bodies involved in the prevention of corruption, with a specific focus on asset declarations.

The Scoreboard uses various information sources and covers different periods in time. The data on efficiency of justice systems cover the period from 2012 to 2022, the ones on quality and independence cover the period 2012-2023. The key findings can be summarised as follows:

### Efficiency

- The efficiency-related indicators for 2022, in particular the number of incoming cases, clearance rate, and disposition time, demonstrated the initial outcomes of the recovery efforts after the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, which impacted Member States to varying degrees.
- In 2022, the majority of civil and commercial cases were concluded in less than one year across the majority of Member States. Furthermore, the duration of legal proceedings decreased in 17 Member States compared to the preceding year.
- Nine Member States have encountered difficulties in relation to the duration of proceedings in first-instance courts. Conversely, higher instance courts in the aforementioned Member States have been observed to operate with greater efficiency.
- The data for money laundering shows that, while first instance court proceedings take up to a year on average in 12 Member States, they take up to 2 years on average in five Member States, and up to 3.5 years on average in four Member States.

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- Regarding the duration of judicial proceedings pertaining to bribery cases, an analysis of the 2022 data reveals that proceedings are concluded within approximately one year in 11 Member States, whereas (where data are available), proceedings can last up to two years in the remaining seven.

## Quality

There is no single way to measure the quality of justice systems. The 2024 EU Justice Scoreboard continues to examine factors that are generally accepted as relevant for improving the quality of justice. They fall into four categories: access to justice for the public and businesses; adequate financial and human resources; putting in place assessment tools; and digitalisation.

- *Access to justice*: In three Member States, people whose income is below the Eurostat poverty threshold may not receive legal aid. The level of court fees has remained largely stable since 2016, with the exception of six Member States in which court fees were higher in 2023 than in 2022, particularly for low-value claims.
- The 2024 Justice Scoreboard marks the first year in which the specific provisions designed to facilitate the involvement of individuals with disabilities as professionals within the justice system have been assessed. 20 Member States have implemented specific measures to enhance the accessibility of employment opportunities within the justice system for individuals with disabilities, which may extend beyond the scope of general provisions pertaining to the employment of such persons.
- For the first time, this year's Scoreboard also presents the rate of legal aid paid to criminal defence lawyers in a certain criminal case. A significant discrepancy exists among the Member States in the amounts lawyers would receive from the public budget, with the lowest rate of legal aid received by a Cypriot defence lawyer and the highest by defence lawyers from the Netherlands.
- *Resources*: The proportion of female judges at the supreme court level remains under 50% in 20 Member States. Conversely, in seven Member States, the number of female judges at this level is equal to or exceeds 50%. In order to enhance communication with vulnerable groups, all Member States offer training on effective communication with asylum seekers and/or individuals from diverse cultural, religious, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds.
- *Assessment tools*: The utilisation of surveys among court users and legal professionals experienced a decline in 2023 in comparison to preceding years. This was evidenced by the fact that 13 Member States did not conduct any surveys.
- *Digitalisation*: The data indicates that Member States are not fully utilising the potential of their procedural rules. Member States' courts, prosecutors, and court staff have access to a range of digital tools, including case management systems, videoconferencing systems, and teleworking arrangements.
- Further advancement could be made in the implementation of electronic case allocation systems, however, with automatic distribution based on objective criteria.
- The accessibility of online court judgments has remained consistent when compared to data from the previous year. Judgments from the highest instances are predominantly accessible online.

## Judicial independence

Since 2016, findings on independence include two annual Eurobarometer surveys on the perception of judicial independence among [the general public](#) and [businesses](#). The main results of the eighth Eurobarometer survey in this regard indicates the following:

- In comparison to the results obtained in 2016, the general public's perception of judicial independence has improved or remained stable in 19 Member States, including four of the Members States facing

systemic challenges to judicial independence. Similar results can be taken from the survey with the businesses.

- The most frequently cited reason for the perceived lack of judicial independence was the influence of government and politicians, followed by pressure from economic/other specific interests.
- Looking at appointments and dismissals, the 2024 Justice Scoreboard found that in 14 Member States either the independent prosecutorial councils or prosecution service itself appoints prosecutors.
- 20 Member States give the executive or parliament the power to dismiss the Prosecutor General (in five of them on a proposal by the Council for the Judiciary), and in six Member States this power is given to the Council for the Judiciary.

The 2024 Justice Scoreboard concludes that efforts to improve the efficiency, quality and independence of the justice systems are underway in many jurisdictions. However, challenges remain to ensure the public's full trust in the legal systems of all Member States. The Scoreboard is an important information source that the Commission also uses for other purposes. It, *inter alia*, feeds the Commission's Rule of Law Report and is the basis for monitoring the national recovery and resilience plans to overcome the COVID-19 crisis.

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