2025 EU Justice Scoreboard

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News

On 1 July 2025, the European Commission released the thirteenth EU Justice Scoreboard, an annual comparative assessment of the efficiency, quality, and independence of justice systems in the EU. According to the 2025 edition, public perceptions of judicial independence had either improved or remained stable in most Member States compared with the previous year (for the 2024 Scoreboard → eucrim 2/2024, 84-85; for the 2023 Scoreboard → eucrim 2/2023, 114; for the 2022 Scoreboard → eucrim 2/2022, 86-87).

For the first time, the Scoreboard included additional indicators linked to the Single Market, underscoring the role of efficient and independent justice systems in supporting fair competition. Companies in 16 Member States rated their national competition authorities positively for autonomy, and public procurement review bodies were viewed as independent in more than half of the Member States.

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Key developments:

- **Digitalisation**: Nine Member States now allow evidence to be submitted digitally in civil, commercial, administrative, and criminal cases, up from six in 2024. Twenty-six allow civil and commercial proceedings to be initiated online. By 2025, all 27 EU Member States offered online information about their judicial systems, including clear details on how to access legal aid, applicable court fees, and the eligibility criteria for the reduced fees. Six countries have fully or largely "digital-ready" procedural rules allowing the use of remote communication and the submission of evidence exclusively in digital form, while such provisions apply only in limited circumstances in 23 Member States. Overall, steady progress has been made in this area since 2020. The Scoreboard also assessed the use of digital tools by courts and prosecution services. While most have access to technologies, such as case management systems, videoconferencing, and teleworking arrangements, many are not yet making full use of the possibilities offered by their procedural rules. In particular, further improvements are possible in electronic case allocation systems to enable automatic distribution based on objective criteria. Secure electronic communication tools are available in all Member States' courts, but only 14 provide such tools for all types of monitored communication in all case categories. Five countries still lack secure systems for digital communication with notaries, detention facilities, or judicial officers. All Member States have secure electronic communication within their prosecution services, and all but one secure channels between prosecution services and courts. However, five still lack tools for secure communication between prosecution services and defence lawyers.
- **Efficiency of the justice system**: Eight Member States have shortened the duration of proceedings across all case types, and 13 reduced or maintained the length of first-instance civil and commercial

trials. In 2023, several Member States that reported data continued to improve the efficiency of their civil, commercial, and administrative proceedings, while others maintained stable performance levels. These results suggest that the measures adopted have strengthened the resilience of national justice systems against future disruptions. For *money laundering cases*, the Scoreboard indicated significant variation in the average duration of first-instance proceedings: in seven Member States, cases were typically resolved within one year; in five others, proceedings lasted up to two years; and in another five, they extended to around three and a half years. With regard to *bribery cases*, there are differences both in data availability and in the average length of criminal trials at first instance. In 2023, such proceedings concluded within about a year in eight Member States, while they could take up to two years in the other seven states which provided data. The time required reflects the complexity of investigating and adjudicating bribery offences, which, by their nature, tend to involve intricate evidentiary and legal issues.

- **Access to justice**: Twenty-six Member States have dedicated arrangements for people at risk of discrimination: 24 improved physical accessibility to courts, and 19 ran awareness campaigns on where to obtain legal help. In 19 Member States, women continue to make up less than half of the judges serving on supreme courts, whereas, in eight countries, at least half the judges at this level are women. The availability of legal aid and the cost of court fees significantly influences access to justice, especially for individuals living in poverty or at risk of poverty. The data for 2023 showed that those earning below the Eurostat poverty threshold were not eligible for legal aid in three Member States: Hungary, Luxembourg, and Slovakia. Court fees have remained largely unchanged since 2016, but were higher than in 2023 in four Member States, particularly for low-value claims, where the relative burden is proportionally greater. Looking at measures facilitating access to justice for people at risk of discrimination and for older persons, the Scoreboard found that 18 Member States have introduced initiatives to inform those at risk of discrimination about where to obtain legal advice and assistance. Sixteen countries have taken steps to make legal aid more accessible to the elderly, while NGOs or equality bodies were entitled to initiate or join court proceedings on behalf of, or in support of, one or more victims in 17 Member States.
- **Judicial independence:** Public perceptions of judicial independence have improved or remained stable in most Member States. Compared to 2016, 17 countries have seen stable or achieved better ratings from the general public, while five face persistent challenges; compared to 2024, 21 have improved or remained stable, and six have seen a decline. In three states, perceived independence remains particularly low. Among companies, 18 Member States recorded stable or improved perceptions compared with both 2016 and 2024, while nine have seen a decline. The most frequently cited reasons for low confidence are political interference and pressure from economic or other special interests, especially in the three countries with the lowest scores. The survey also measured confidence in investment protection, finding improvements in 13 Member States compared to last year. Key factors influencing confidence include the quality and stability of law-making, administrative conduct, court effectiveness, and property rights protection. Additional data covered safeguards for judicial impartiality (such as withdrawal and recusal rules for judges), the appointment and dismissal of prosecution office heads, and the independence of lawyers, which is generally respected across the EU.

Background

The findings fed into the 2025 Rule of Law Report (→separate news item) and informed broader monitoring under the Annual Rule of Law Cycle and the European Semester. Alongside the Scoreboard, the Commission published its Eurobarometer survey results on the perceived independence of the national justice systems in

the EU among the general public and companies. The survey results indicate that over half of EU citizens and businesses view their judicial systems as independent.

First launched in 2013, the EU Justice Scoreboard forms part of the EU's Rule of Law toolbox. The 2025 edition responded to the 2024–2029 Political Guidelines by expanding its data coverage. Under the 2021–2027 Justice Programme, with a budget of roughly €305 million, €41.2 million has been allocated to projects advancing judicial independence, quality, and cooperation in 2024.

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