# 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard

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**News**

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On 4 June 2026, the European Commission published the 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard, the fourteenth edition of its annual comparative overview of the efficiency, quality, and independence of the justice systems of all 27 Member States. As in earlier years (for the 2025 Scoreboard →eucrim 2/2025, 118-119), the Scoreboard did not establish an overall ranking but assembled indicators meant to support national reforms and mutual learning. It feeds into the Annual Rule of Law Cycle and the Commission's Rule of Law Report, into the European Semester, and into the closing phase of the Recovery and Resilience Facility. Much of the quantitative data was again supplied by the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) and covers the years 2014 to 2024.

Building on the single-market orientation introduced in 2025, the 2026 edition adds and refines indicators on independent authorities regarded as relevant for the internal market – among them supreme audit institutions, national competition authorities, first-instance public procurement review bodies, and preventive anti-corruption bodies. It also presents new figures, including on accessibility for persons with disabilities, the powers of equality bodies, child-friendly proceedings, the digitalisation of justice, and the transparency of lobbying. The key developments outlined in the 2026 Scoreboard are:

- **Efficiency:** The figures show broadly positive trends in civil, commercial, and administrative cases, with efficiency back to 2019 levels after a dip recorded in 2020 to 2021. Of particular relevance for criminal justice practitioners, the Scoreboard again measures the length of first-instance proceedings in money-laundering and bribery cases. In money-laundering matters, first-instance proceedings lasted on average between one month and one year in twelve Member States; between one and two years in ten Member States; and more than three years in three Member States. In bribery cases, proceedings were concluded within about a year in six Member States; between one and two years in ten Member States; and two years or more in four Member States for which data were available.
- **Quality:** The quality of justice systems covers aspects of accessibility, human and financial resources and digitalisation. As in the previous year's Scoreboard, people whose income is below the Eurostat poverty threshold cannot receive legal aid in three Member States. There is also a high disparity between Member States regarding the rate of legal aid paid to criminal defence lawyers in a specific criminal case. All Member States have some specific arrangements for child-friendly justice and proceedings, for both civil and criminal/juvenile justice proceedings. 11 Member States have all nine of the monitored specific arrangements in place, including measures to separate children from adults if they are deprived of their liberty. Significant differences persist between Member States in spending on law courts, both per inhabitant and as a percentage of GDP. On digitalisation, the Scoreboard finds

significant room for improvement. With regard to online information on judicial systems, the situation remains stable compared to 2025, but some differences still exist between Member States as regards information and the degree to which it responds to people's needs. For example, only nine Member States employ chatbots to help the public find information about the justice system. Figures also show that the potential of the use of digital technology by courts and prosecution services can be higher. Although there has been steady overall progress in digital-ready procedural rules, only six Member States allow fully for the use of distance communication and for the admissibility of evidence in digital format only.

- **Independence:** Drawing on Eurobarometer surveys of the general public (FL581) and of companies (FL582), the perceived judicial independence has improved or remained stable compared with 2016 in twenty Member States among the public, and in eighteen Member States among companies. Interference or pressure from government and politicians remains the reason most often cited for a perceived lack of independence, followed by pressure from economic interests. The 2026 edition also introduces and updates structural indicators on probationary periods for judges, on the management powers of Prosecutors General, on the allocation of cases within prosecution offices (developed with the NADAL Network), and on the independence of bars and lawyers.
- **Anti-corruption:** Specifically on anti-corruption, next to new and updated figures on the length of judicial proceedings in bribery cases (see above), the 2026 Scoreboard maps national transparency registers, which help prevent corruption by ensuring transparent lobbying. Data show that 16 Member States have such a register in place, presenting an overview of how they work, and which officials are subject to transparency requirements in their interactions with lobbyists.

The 2026 Justice Scoreboard concludes that it has further developed an in-depth insight into the effectiveness of justice systems in the Member States. *Michael McGrath*, Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection stressed that the Scoreboard "is an essential tool for strengthening justice systems and upholding the rule of law across the Union".


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