

CEPEJ: 2018 Report on European Judicial Systems



Thomas Wahl

News

On 4 October 2018, the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice of the CoE (CEPEJ) published its [seventh evaluation report](#), based on data from 2016, on the main trends in the judicial systems of 45 European countries.

As regards budget issues, which were assessed in proportion to each country's level of wealth, there was a slight overall increase, with particularly sizeable budgets in Luxembourg and Norway. The budget cuts following the 2008 economic and financial crisis are gradually receding. In general, the budgets of court accounts make up the largest funds allocated to the judicial system. East European countries allocate more to the public prosecution services, whereas northern European countries tend to invest more in legal aid. The salary levels of judges and prosecutors are increasingly similar.

In all evaluated countries, the introduction of legal aid systems in criminal and other cases frequently goes beyond merely providing a lawyer free of charge, extending to areas such as mediation or enforcement of judicial decisions.

There is development in providing trainings, with a tendency to make them compulsory for access to specialized posts or functions. The number of professional judges is stable, as fewer states are using non-professional judges. Based on a number of indicators (staffing level, number of cases, roles, alternative procedures), the busiest prosecution services are in France, Austria, and Italy.

As regards parity within the judicial system, feminization within the ranks of judges and prosecutors is a continuing trend, but there are few specific measures for promoting parity, with only Germany having developed a global policy in favour of parity. The proportion of women is increasing among judges and prosecutors, but lawyers, notaries, and enforcement agents are still predominantly male. As to their organization, courts are becoming fewer in number, larger in size, and more specialized. The grouping together of courts goes hand in hand with the development and use of internet-based information and communication methods. The report states that information technologies enable better information on the part of court users, but human exchange still helps them to better understand decisions and to trust in justice.

As regards the performance of the judicial systems, the productivity of Europe's courts is improving in civil and criminal cases, but the duration of procedures in criminal cases appears to be increasing in supreme courts. Asylum applications have had a significant impact on the number of incoming cases in nine countries: Germany, Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

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