

# CEPEJ: 2024 Report on European Judicial Systems

Thomas Wahl

## News

On 16 October 2024, the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) published the [tenth biennial evaluation report on European judicial systems](#). The report is based on data from 2022 and provides tools for a better understanding of the functioning of justice in the CoE member states and some observers states, in order to improve efficiency and quality of justice in the interest of close to 700 million Europeans. It also supports the prevention of violations of Article 6 ECHR. The tenth evaluation cycle analysed the judicial systems of 44 CoE member states (Liechtenstein and San Marino did not provide data) as well as Israel and Morocco as observer states.

The report has three parts:

- [General analysis](#) reviewing trends and highlighting good practices with regard to the following topics: budget allocated to the justice systems, justice professionals, access to justice, efficiency and quality of courts and prosecution services, and information and communication technology (ICT) within judicial systems;
- [Country profiles](#) summarising key data and indicators for each evaluated country;
- [CEPEJ-STAT](#), an online database containing CEPEJ data since 2010, and making available to policy-makers, legal professionals, and researchers various dashboards as a result of which comparisons between states with sound data can be made.

CEPEJ also pointed out that this is the first edition of the report using post-COVID data, the pandemic having also affected the functioning of justice in Europe (→ [eucrim 3/2022, 201-202](#) for the 2022 report). The key findings of the 2024 evaluation report are as follows:

### Budget allocated to justice systems

- Budgets allocated to the judicial system remain relatively small compared to other public sectors and the judiciary's significance: European countries spent on average €85,4 per inhabitant (7,31 € more than in 2020) and 0,31% of GDP on their judicial systems;
- On average, member states and entities spent about 2/3 of their judicial system budget on courts, around 25% on public prosecution services and the remaining on legal aid (11%);
- On average, there has been a notable 16% decrease in spending on legal aid since 2020.

### AUTHOR

**Thomas Wahl**

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

---

Published in  
2024, Vol. 19(3) [eucrim](#)  
ISSN: 1862-6947  
<https://eucrim.eu>

---



## Justice professionals

- In 2022, Europe had an average of 22 judges per 100,000 inhabitants (from a minimum of 3 judges per 100,000 inhabitants in England and Wales to a maximum of 42,4 in Croatia and Montenegro);
- On average, there were 12 prosecutors per 100,000 inhabitants (also here, there are great variations ranging from 3 prosecutors per 100,000 inhabitants in France and Ireland to 24 in Bulgaria, Latvia, and Moldova);
- There was an average of 180 lawyers per 100,000 inhabitants (from 23 in Azerbaijan to 505 in Cyprus);
- There were more women judges and prosecutors than men in Europe (57% of the professional judges and 54% of the public prosecutors are female), but the glass ceiling, i.e., the underrepresentation of women in the highest positions, is still present;
- Only in 28% of states, public prosecutors are subject to a ban of instructions – an important element for their independence;
- Between 2012 and 2022, the salaries of judges and public prosecutors as a proportion of average salaries increased slightly in Europe, although there were significant disparities, with some countries seeing decreases.

## Access to justice

- 44 states and entities provide free online access to legal texts, higher courts jurisprudence, and other various information about the judicial system through their courts' websites;
- Only in 3 member states access to court is free of charge;
- Legal aid is available in all evaluated countries for criminal, civil and administrative cases, regularly following an evaluation of the applicant's income and assets;
- In some countries, specific categories of persons, e.g. victims of domestic or sexual violence, immigrants or asylum seekers, are automatically granted legal aid;
- The downward trend in the number of courts in Europe has been confirmed in 2022;
- In 2022, the existence of alternative mechanisms to resolve disputes, as well as digital solutions appear more and more as a mean to enhance access to justice;
- In over 70% of countries digital tools are available to file a case or communicate with the court, but the real usage in the field of justice is low.

## Efficiency and quality

- Compared to 2020 data, which were largely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, figures for 2022 indicate that the European justice systems improved in terms of efficiency, but the pre-pandemic level has largely not been reached;
- The situation of efficiency depends on the type of case (civil, criminal, administrative) and the level of jurisdiction (first, second, Supreme Court). For example, while criminal cases have seen a reduction in processing times at first instance, the length of proceedings increased in first and second instances for civil and commercial cases;
- Administrative justice was the least efficient;
- Third-instance courts were the most efficient in all case types;
- Problems with prosecutorial efficiency have persisted over time. Looking at the clearance rate, the prosecutorial efficiency remains a challenge across Europe.

## Information and communication technologies (ICT)

- Investment in ICT is constant and almost all states have increased their average ICT budget per inhabitant;
- The deployment of ICT tools varies across different matters and countries, with the civil matter often exhibiting higher adoption levels compared to administrative and criminal matters;
- Since the last cycle and after COVID, many states and entities have made notable progress in introducing remote hearings in courts and in 33 states this is possible in criminal matters;
- The evaluation cycle saw the start of new innovative AI tools to assist judges, which became particularly relevant for areas such as class actions, automatic anonymisation of judgments, and specialised translation;
- When countries are grouped by their level of digitalisation, a pattern seems to emerge, suggesting that higher ICT deployment is associated with lower case processing times.

In the context of ICT, the CEPEJ report also pointed out that states must better distinguish between deployment and usage data. Many judiciaries must still make the effort to collect the data needed to assess and steer their e-justice initiatives. Implementing robust mechanisms to track and evaluate the utilisation rates of ICT tools within the justice domain is considered crucial not only to improve resource allocation but also to ensure transparency and accountability.

---

## About eucrim

eucrim is the leading journal which regularly informs about current developments in European criminal and “criministrative” law.

All news items are freely accessible at: <https://eucrim.eu/news/>

Stay informed by emailing to [eucrim-subscribe@csl.mpg.de](mailto:eucrim-subscribe@csl.mpg.de) to receive alerts for new releases of issues.

The project is co-financed by the Union Anti-Fraud Programme (UAFP), managed by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**