



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR JUSTICE

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF CEPEJ MALTA | 27, 28 JUNE 2022

38TH PLENARY MEETING
20TH CEPEJ ANNIVERSARY

Intervention by the President of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) of the Council of Europe Dr. Ramin GARAGURBANLI

Dear distinguished guests and members of CEPEJ !

Respected representatives of justice community !

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen !

It is a great honour and pleasure to welcome all of you in the 20th anniversary ceremony of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice of the Council of Europe.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express our deep appreciation to Maltese authorities, especially Ministry of Justice for hosting this ceremony as well as CEPEJ plenary meeting and their warm hospitality.

20 years ago the very unique body of the Council of Europe in the field of justice has been established accommodating the representatives of Ministry of Justice, High Judicial Councils, Bar Associations, courts and prosecution systems from 46 member States for promoting the judicial-legal reforms in European continent with aim to increase the efficiency and quality of justice for the sake of more than 800.000 Europeans.

During 20 years of intensive work, the CEPEJ actively participated in the process of promotion the reforms and initiatives in the field of justice in view of enhancing the rule of law, democracy and a better protection of human rights in Europe.

The CEPEJ has been established for providing direct assistance to member States to improve their justice system and bring their judiciary up to the standards of the Council of Europe as well as to reduce the excessive workload of the European Court of Human Rights and ensure the offset of the load on litigation from the supranational to the national level.

Thanks to the commitment and efforts of all its members, experts and organizations with observer status, the CEPEJ's expertise and experience in this area has won widespread respect not only among the European justice community, but also in the wider world. CEPEJ has become an expert resource for developing and sharing solutions in the judicial sector. As evidence of our reputation, ever more countries outside the Council of Europe area, as well as international organizations are indicating an interest in obtaining observer status at CEPEJ with a view to further cooperation with us in the field of justice.

During 20 years of intense activity, we have devoted ourselves to developing a range of tools and methods for use by court presidents, senior justice officials and stakeholders - in particular, in the



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field of evaluation of judicial systems, digitalization of justice, judicial time management and quality of justice as well as mediation and enforcement of court decisions. I would like to focus very briefly on some of these achievements.

The CEPEJ contributes to collecting judicial data the complexity of which has increased over the years. The members of the EVALUATION working group and the national correspondents from each member State have played a pivotal role in ensuring collection of reliable qualitative and quantitative data. The emergence of the Network of national correspondents constitutes an important milestone in the evaluation of judicial systems with its first evaluation round conducted between 2002 and 2004. At present, we conduct the 9th evaluation cycle using the data from 2020. As a result, the CEPEJ biennial reports on judicial systems became the unique and comprehensive source of information worldwide.

The CEPEJ is actively involved in the implementation of the CoE – EU strategic partnership projects in the Eastern Neighborhood as well as in the enlargement process for EU membership (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo) – so called “Western Balkans Dashboard” in the framework of the Horizontal Facility with the European Union.

CEPEJ has developed also a strong cooperation with the European Commission within the framework of the “EU Justice Scoreboard” by providing it with information on the functioning of judicial systems in the EU member states – information which makes it possible for the Commission to publish annual report.

The collected data on judicial systems of Council of Europe Member states and observers can be found in the online database of European judicial systems (CEPEJ-STAT) available to the public at large. The platform (CEPEJ-COLLECT) has been established to facilitate data collection and quality control, thus providing for reliable and comparable data. These two tools become indispensable for the process of evaluation of judicial systems.

CEPEJ ADOPTS TOOLS FOR JUSTICE PROFESSIONALS

The CEPEJ remains a strong advocate for both users and professionals of justice. Over the last 20 years, the CEPEJ has entrusted working groups with mandates to develop measures and tools to support professionals of justice of member States in building efficient and quality judicial systems, which are at the service of users. Some of the groups have already completed their mandate. An example is the Working Group on mediation, which contributed to collecting mediation practices and developing standards on mediation in Europe.

Four working groups now assist CEPEJ on a more permanent basis. Apart from the above-mentioned Working Group on the evaluation of judicial systems, the CEPEJ created in 2007 the SATURN working group in charge of collecting information on judicial timeframes and creating tools to improve judicial time management, management of courts and prosecution services. A year later, the Working Group on quality of justice was set up. This working group developed in 2018 the European Ethical Charter on the use of artificial intelligence in judicial systems, providing for the first time in Europe for policy makers and professionals of justice main principles regarding the



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development of artificial intelligence in the national judicial process. The adoption of the Charter was an opportunity to start a major reflection on the use artificial intelligence and cyberjustice in judicial systems.

In 2019, the CEPEJ created the CYBERJUSTICE working group and adopted the Action Plan (2022-2025) "Digitalization for a better justice" providing for a new scope of intervention of the CEPEJ and its relevance many years ahead.

CEPEJ EXCHANGES PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES

The CEPEJ is a forum for exchange of practices and experiences in implementing measures to improve the quality and efficiency of judicial systems, helping the member States to advance with their reflection on domestic reforms.

The CEPEJ set up various networks of professionals of justice that became over the years important partners in its work contributing to exchanging practices and developing CEPEJ tools.

The Network of Pilot Courts serves as a forum for information exchange, reflection and trial of tools/measures developed by CEPEJ. The Network of pilot courts is regularly consulted on various topics related to the on-going work of the CEPEJ and some were involved in testing specific tools.

The European Cyberjustice Network, that was launched in 2021, provides a platform for interdisciplinary exchange of good practices and challenges in implementing IT and artificial intelligence solutions in judicial systems. The network is composed of policy makers, experts, representatives of the judiciary, lawyers, enforcement officers and scholars.

The Network of National Correspondents is important for the evaluation process. The national correspondent is the sole interlocutor of the CEPEJ Secretariat within the framework of the evaluation of judicial systems.

The creation in 2005 of the Crystal Scales of Justice Prize was one of the CEPEJ's key events, as it enabled the promotion of innovative and effective practices concerning the functioning of justice, judicial procedures or the organisation of courts within European jurisdictions. Moreover, the Junior Crystal Scales of Justice Prize gives the opportunity to the young generation of legal practitioners to get acquainted with the tools for efficiency and quality of the judiciary. It also provides the CEPEJ with the opportunity to make itself known to a younger public.

The European Day of Justice is a landmark event for the CEPEJ becoming an opportunity to promote its work and make it more accessible to European citizens, students and justice professionals. This event is an opportunity to bring users closer to their justice system.

CEPEJ CONTRIBUTES TO JUSTICE REFORMS THROUGH BILATERAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMMES

The CEPEJ helps a number of countries and entities to implement measures and tools to improve the quality and efficiency of justice. Co-operation programmes, which rely on a strong connection



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with tools developed at intergovernmental level by the CEPEJ, have evolved considerably over the last years. In the first years, support focused on the CEPEJ core expertise with judicial statistics and judicial time management. At the second stage, cooperation moved progressively to issues related to quality of justice with a strong focus on the users. More recently, support was devoted to cyberjustice in an effort to adapt constantly to the needs of the beneficiaries and the realities of judicial systems on the ground. The European Union and non-EU partners as well as the southern Mediterranean states co-operated today with the CEPEJ in the framework of bilateral or regional programmes (Albania, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Georgia, Kosovo, Latvia, Türkiye, Malta, the Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, Spain, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Egypt). At the moment more than 12 projects are under implementation.

Today I introduced a short overview of the work of the CEPEJ done within the 20 years and I do believe that we will continue jointly our tireless efforts to increase the quality and efficiency of justice in Europe based on the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.