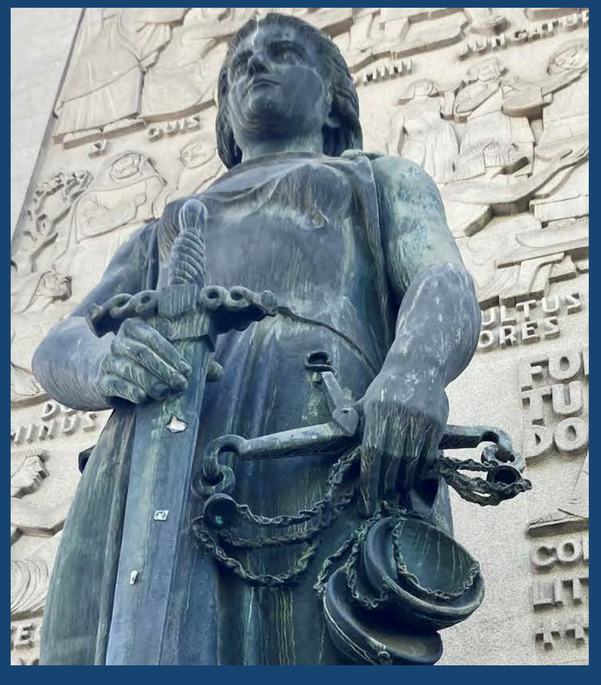


EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON LEGAL CO-OPERATION (CDCJ)

LAUNCH CONFERENCE

STRENGTHENING JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE CAREER AND TRAINING OF JUDGES

PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT OF THE FIRST THEMATIC REVIEW UNDER THE SOFIA ACTION PLAN

JULIE DEVYS

STRASBOURG, 17 NOVEMBER 2

WHY FOCUS ON JUDICIAL CAREERS AND TRAINING ?

- **Sofia Action Plan** (2016): strengthening judicial independence and impartiality
- CDCJ's 2022 implementation review: assessing progress and identifying remaining challenges
- First thematic review: focusing on judicial careers and training as two key pillars of independence
- Comparative approach: contributions from CDCJ and CCJE members, Council of Europe monitoring bodies (e.g., GRECO, the Venice Commission, CEPEJ and GREVIO) and other international sources.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE PLAN OF ACTION ON STRENGTHENING JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE AND IMPARTIALITY



JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE STARTS WITH HOW JUDGES ARE APPOINTED

Three essential safeguards:

- Independence: a meaningful role for independent judicial bodies
- Merit and transparency: objective criteria and reasoned decisions
- Equal opportunities: fair access, gender balance and diversity

Good practice examples:

- **Latvia:** the Judicial Council's role in proposing judicial appointments
- **Cyprus:** clearer criteria for selection, appointment and promotion
- **Spain:** identifying barriers to women's access to senior judicial positions



JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE MUST BE PROTECTED THROUGHOUT THE JUDICIAL CAREER

Essential safeguards:

- Security of tenure and protection against arbitrary dismissal
- Protection against involuntary transfers
- Adequate and guaranteed remuneration
- Transparent, merit-based promotion procedures
- Fair performance assessments, safeguards against interference

Good practice examples:

- ✦ **Portugal:** protection against involuntary transfers
- ✦ **Germany:** safeguards in judicial assessment
- ✦ **Cyprus:** protection during probation



JUDICIAL TRAINING: A GUARANTEE OF INDEPENDENCE AND QUALITY

Training must be:

- Independent and organised under the supervision of the judiciary
- Continuous, accessible and adapted to the judge's professional responsibilities
- Focused on both legal knowledge and practical judicial skills
- Responsive to emerging challenges, including AI and digitalisation

Good practice examples:

- ✦ **Latvia:** specialised training on child rights protection
- ✦ **Belgium:** compulsory training on sexual and domestic violence for certain judges
- ✦ **Albania and Serbia:** practical and confidential ethical guidance for judges.



FROM FORMAL SAFEGUARDS TO EFFECTIVE PROTECTION

Progress has been made — but important gaps remain

Stronger judicial councils	⟷	Uneven independence and involvement
More transparent appointments	⟷	Objective criteria not consistently applied
Greater representation of women	⟷	Underrepresentation in senior positions
More developed assessment systems	⟷	Excessive reliance on quantitative indicators
Wider availability of training	⟷	Uneven accessibility and practical impact



KEY MESSAGES AND PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Judicial independence must be protected throughout the entire judicial career.

1. Strengthen independent oversight of judicial career decisions
2. Ensure objective, transparent and consistent procedures at every stage
3. Protect security of tenure and safeguards against arbitrary transfers and dismissal
4. Address gender imbalances, particularly in senior judicial positions
5. Invest in continuous, high-quality and future-oriented judicial training



From standards to practice.

From formal guarantees to effective safeguards.



Download the report here

Thank you!