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EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR THE EFFICIENCY OF JUSTICE (CEPEJ)

ORGANISATIONAL CHARTER OF THE EUROPEAN DAY OF JUSTICE (EDJ)

2020 edition

On 5 June 2003, the Ministers' Deputies at their 842nd meeting, while agreeing to declare a European day of justice to be held during the last week of October of each year, instructed the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) to prepare a draft organisational Charter for the Day.

The present Organisational Charter of the EDCJ has been adopted by consensus by the CEPEJ at its 2nd plenary meeting (3-5 December 2003).

The Committee of Ministers approved this Charter during its 870th meeting (4 February 2004).

ORGANISATIONAL CHARTER OF THE EUROPEAN DAY OF JUSTICE (EDJ)

A. Presentation

1. As it is urgent to act together to bring justice closer to citizens, the European Day of Justice will be celebrated during the last week of October of each year in all European States which choose to do so. For practical reasons, States will be able to choose to organise events within this framework, either during the week or during the weekend.
2. This project stems from the desire to facilitate access to justice for all, as expressed by the European Council at the Tampere meeting of 1999¹.
3. It is also a follow-up to the Recommendations of the European Ministers of Justice who, at their 23rd Conference in London (June 2000), invited the Committee of Ministers in particular to promote citizens' awareness of their rights and to provide citizens with the information required for them to be able to exercise their rights confidently.
4. The idea of a European Day of Justice was launched during the European Conference «Towards a better access to justice for the citizen» held in Brussels in October 2002. This initiative was positively welcomed by all the States represented at the 1st meeting of the European Judicial Network in civil and commercial matters² and at the 1st meeting of the European Commission for the efficiency of justice (CEPEJ)³.
5. On 5 June 2003, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe approved the holding of this Day⁴. Following the communication by Commissioner Vitorino, dated 16 May 2003, the European Commission endorsed this initiative to be carried out jointly with the Council of Europe.

B. Why organising a European day of justice ?

6. Civil law, including its cross-border aspects, is omnipresent in the life of all citizens - at work, or when they get married, have children, or buy goods and services.
7. On the European day of justice, events should be organised all over Europe in order to bring justice closer to citizens and enable "justice users" to understand better how justice works and therefore improve, if necessary, their access to justice.
8. Indeed, it is generally recognised that European citizens are informed inadequately on their rights and even worse on how civil justice works. Moreover, civil law generally does not appear in the teaching programmes of schools.
9. The European day of justice must have a symbolic aspect, as a day on which we take the time to get acquainted with a little known system which is nevertheless very important in the daily life of each of us.
10. For several decades, the work carried out within the European Union and the Council of Europe has enabled major projects to be completed with a view to making life easier for European citizens. The EDJ will also be an opportunity to recall this progress, through concrete examples (Conventions and recommendations, guidelines, regulations, case law in various fields), and to help citizens understand the practical issues at stake in the construction of Europe.
11. Initiatives to highlight the cross-border aspects and nature of civil justice in Europe are also encouraged.

¹ Tampere European Council, October 1999, point 29 of the Presidency Conclusions.

² European Commission, Brussels, 4 December 2002.

³ Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 5-7 February 2003.

⁴ Decision of the Ministers' Deputies (842nd meeting - 5 June 2003).

12. With a view to mutual knowledge and understanding, the Day will also provide an opportunity for citizens of the various European States to become better informed about the functioning of legal systems in other countries.

C. Who is concerned by the European day of justice ?

13. The European day of justice is an event intended to give European citizens the chance to understand their rights more clearly (for example family law, property law, succession law, contract law, patient law, etc...) and how their legal system really functions (for example access to justice, mediation, execution of judicial decisions, etc...). It aims to educate and inform the general public on their day-to-day rights, but could also be useful for legal professionals who could use this opportunity to meet the users of the justice system.

D. What is the role of the States and/or interested national or international bodies?

14. Each State and/or interested national or international bodies is free to participate or not in the European day of justice. States and/or interested national or international bodies which choose to participate will define the initiatives they wish to take in this framework. This Day will be organised in a flexible and decentralised manner in order to take into account the wishes and the resources of each participant.

15. Each State or body will have to finance the events organised within the framework of this Day. Each year, the Council of Europe and the European Commission could be directly associated with one or the other specific event.

16. Each year, the Council of Europe and the European Commission may be associated more directly with one or more specific event(s).

E. What is the role of the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the celebration of the European day of justice ?

17. The Council of Europe and the European Commission will have the task of promoting initiatives and ensuring the coherence of the organised activities with the purposes of this Day.

18. The Council of Europe makes available via the CEPEJ website posters which can be personalised and downloaded by event organisers, as well as pictures which can be used on social networks. These posters are provided by the European Commission.

F. Suggested activities which could be organised by States and/or interested national or international bodies

19. Amongst the many activities that could be organised within the framework of the European day of justice, States and/or interested bodies could choose to organise events such as:

- Open days at civil courts or other relevant bodies including guided tours (as well as the judicial world, this will enable to discover the cultural and architectural heritage);
- Mock-trials;
- Meetings between legal professionals – judges, lawyers, bailiffs, notaries (free advice, visits to schools, to associations) and individuals;
- Local conferences (in particular in order to explain the programmes concerning access to justice for those with limited means);
- Radio or TV shows; chats on internet with the public;
- Production of specific information material;
- Awareness initiatives for children and young people.

20. Law faculties could be associated to the organisation of these events.

G. Information on the activities organised within the framework of the European day of justice

21. The Portals and websites of the Council of Europe and the European Commission would include a heading on the European day of justice which would contain a list of activities being carried out within the framework of this Day. A form to inform the Council of Europe and the European Commission and to be filled in by States or bodies participating in the Day.

19. Furthermore, appropriate media coverage by States of the European day of justice could be helpful for the activities organised in the States. Decentralised offices of the Council of Europe and the European Commission could, if necessary, constitute a useful bridge between both institutions and States concerning the circulation of the information.

20. Ideally, the preparation by the Council of Europe of a short educational film for television would be very useful publicity.

21. It should be taken into account that due to the particular situation of the 2020 edition of the European Day of Justice, and due to precautionary measures, virtual events are to be favoured by the organisers.

H. Follow-up to the European day of justice

22. The websites of the Council of Europe and the European Commission will contain a section on the European Day of Justice which will keep a regularly updated list of events organised in the framework of the Day. A form intended to inform the Council of Europe and the European Commission and to be filled in by the States or bodies participating in the Day is available on the CEPEJ website. This form should be completed before 10th October each year.

23. The programmes of the various events are published at the following address: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cepej/events/european-day-of-justice>.

24. In addition, appropriate media coverage of the European Day of Justice could usefully complement the events organised in the States. The field offices of the Council of Europe and the European Commission could, where appropriate, provide a useful bridge between the two institutions and States regarding the dissemination of information.

25. Ideally, the preparation of a short awareness-raising and informative film for television would be very useful to promote the Day.

26. In order to allow these States or bodies to be involved in this initiative under the best conditions possible, the Council of Europe and the European Commission propose to prepare and circulate at the end of each year a detailed evaluation report, containing, in particular, examples of good practice in this field (see Link to the report about the events organised throughout Europe to celebrate the 2019 edition of the European Day of Justice).

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