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**EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR THE EFFICIENCY OF JUSTICE
(CEPEJ)**

2026 – 2029 CEPEJ Action plan (*VALLETTA ACTION PLAN*):

“Strengthening the Rule of Law by improving trust in justice systems”

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CEPEJ Action Plan 2026-2029 2026 – 2029 (VALLETTA ACTION PLAN)
“Strengthening the Rule of Law by improving trust in justice systems”

The 2022-2025 CEPEJ Action plan foresaw the promotion of digitisation in judicial systems to foster a better functioning of justice, which Plan was implemented through the various tools and guidelines issued throughout the years.

Though digitisation of justice still remains a challenge which needs to be addressed by judicial systems, the CEPEJ has, in recent years, noted that principles of the Rule of Law have been increasingly placed under threat, leading to the gradual erosion of trust in the judicial system as a whole. Whilst understanding that the judiciary is the ultimate guardian of the Rule of Law and democracy, the CEPEJ decided in its new Action Plan to work with national authorities and the judiciary, to render the judicial system more prepared and robust to counter the challenges and attacks to independence and impartiality.

The CEPEJ, which should act on the basis of specific and focused analysis, according to a result-based approach, should implement the following actions:

A. Providing up-to-date, focused and comparable data on the functioning of judicial systems

▪ ***Data-based analysis***

In order to provide all the stakeholders in the judicial system, including policy makers, with large overview of their justice systems, thus enabling all to assess their strengths and weaknesses, it is necessary to provide recent data and relevant information (N-1 data) on the state of European judicial systems and reinforce data-based analysis. Data collection should be refined as to collect data on different stages of judicial proceedings.

▪ ***Users-centred Data***

Collecting data on the needs of the various justice users, in particular the most vulnerable, as well as data on the perception of the efficiency of justice and standard of quality perceived by users and professionals could also enrich the global vision resulting from the CEPEJ data collection.

▪ ***Taylor-made indicators***

New indicators using collected data, adapted to the realities or difficulties of judicial systems including tailor made indicators relevant for group of countries and indicators on quality of justice would help States to assess and improve the functioning of their justice systems.

▪ ***CEPEJ-STAT***

Building on its recognised success, the CEPEJ-STAT database should continue to evolve and be further enhanced to remain the leading and trusted European reference for judicial data and statistics. Continuous efforts will be made to make it even more user-friendly and responsive to the needs of Member states and national judicial authorities, in order to better support data-based justice policies and reforms.

B. Supporting digital transformation and use of artificial intelligence (AI) in justice in line with human rights, the Rule of Law and democratic values

▪ ***A dual approach providing both ethical reflection and practical tools to guide professionals in accordance with the CEPEJ Charter and the Council of Europe AI Convention***

While the implementation of AI in judicial systems has the potential to increase efficiency, it also raises questions that could threaten public confidence in the judicial system. These include a lack of transparency and explainability, the erosion of human judgment and empathy, the risks of discrimination, as well as concerns about data security and integrity, democratic legitimacy and accountability. Another significant challenge is the radical transformation of the legal profession, with fears of potential job losses that could prevent the needs of litigants from being taken into account.

To address these challenges, the work of the CEPEJ should focus in particular on the safe use of automation in judicial procedures, the impact of computational law on proceedings, the requirements and pathways for data sovereignty in Europe, the handling of deep fakes and electronic evidence, and the promotion of open-source tools and standardisation.

- ***Creation of an Observatory for AI in justice***

In light of the rapid pace of technological developments in digitalisation, including AI, the Resource Centre on Cyberjustice and AI should evolve into an Observatory for AI in justice.

In addition to monitoring the emergence of AI-based tools and facilitating exchange of experiences in this area, the Observatory should conduct in-depth analysis of key AI systems in relation to regulatory and ethical requirements, showcase and promote particularly promising tools of common interest, and enable thematic analyses and guidance aimed at a high-quality judicial system. This could include, for example, collecting relevant case law and creating/sharing of templates for risk assessments, procurement clauses, etc.

C. Help strengthen the commitment of legal professionals and support for these professionals

- ***Enhance the attractiveness of the profession of judge***

As the attractiveness of the judicial profession is regarded as a growing concern in certain member States, the CEPEJ should continue its work on work-life balance and well-being of judges and other justice professionals.

- ***A new framework to guide professionals in the digitalised environment***

A framework should be developed that sets out the principles, tools, and best practices for using digital technologies in a way that is transparent, secure, and inclusive for users and legal professionals, with the aim of ensuring that digital developments remain fully respectful of fundamental rights, the quality of justice, and public trust.

- ***Contribute to improving judicial expertise***

Safeguards enabling judicial experts to work in confidence with courts and justice professionals would be worked upon. The costs of the expertise, the availability and the quality of the work of the experts should be considered in this manner.

D. Removing barriers to access to justice for all
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- ***Justice more human***

A Charter promoting the humanisation of justice should be adopted to ensure that judicial systems in Europe are accessible, fair, transparent, respectful of dignity, and continue to enjoy the trust of their users in an increasingly digital environment.

It should include measures to reduce the digital divide, to improve the knowledge on their rights which cannot be limited to the information found on social media or through AI and to rethink the

public service of justice which should better reply to the needs of the users. It should concern vulnerable groups but not only. Improving access to justice necessarily implies closer cooperation with lawyers. In this framework, the impact of costs of judicial proceedings to the access of justice by users could be measured.

- ***A structured and systematic communication on justice matters***

In a society where communication is instant, the CEPEJ should continue its mission to develop concrete tools for courts and legal professionals, with the aim of improving the reception of litigants and communicating better with them and the media about the functioning of the justice system.

E. Improving the efficiency of justice, in particular by the management of resources and workload
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- ***A new Working Group on the effectiveness of judicial proceedings***

As judicial time management is only one aspect of the efficiency of justice, the CEPEJ wishes to broaden the scope of its Working Group on judicial time management (CEPEJ-SATURN) and transform it into a new Working Group on the effectiveness of judicial proceedings, working on how justice is delivered, going beyond merely ensuring that justice is delivered. This refers to how smoothly, promptly, and economically judicial or administrative procedures are carried out, but also modern techniques for managing the operations of courts at all levels without undermining fairness or due process.

- ***Fighting delays through efficient organisation of courts***

Measures to reduce the backlog of cases, reliable systems for assessing the complexity of cases and workload, and the efficient processing of small claims are among the key tools for ensuring effective management of cases. As the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights establishes as a fundamental principle that judicial proceedings must be conducted within a reasonable time, the CEPEJ should continue its work on identifying the causes of delays in judicial proceedings and fighting backlogs of cases, in particular by identifying good practices, and should update and further develop the existing tools for the enforcement of proceedings. Court management and organisation concerning human resources, court's budgets and judicial training contribute to the efficiency of justice and to deliver justice within a reasonable time.

- ***Alternative dispute resolution***

Enhancing alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, including mediation, is also a key issue of an efficient and qualitative justice system.

F. A refined and focused approach to bilateral or multilateral cooperation

- ***Make the CEPEJ tools more visible***

In order to increase the success of its intergovernmental as well as bilateral and regional cooperation activities, the CEPEJ should improve the visibility of its tools through a more clear, direct and innovative communication following its adoption at plenary meetings, stronger links with the various justice stakeholders and the strengthening of its Networks. A "visibility plan" of CEPEJ tools and co-operation projects should be set up, possibly with the involvement of experts, who know the strengths of CEPEJ and the needs of the States, so as to encourage more co-operation programs.

- ***An innovative and tailor-made co-operation approach***

In order to improve the implementation of its tools in member and observer States, the CEPEJ should increase tailored-made bilateral or multilateral co-operation, possibly under short-term involvement responding to concrete needs of States.