



Strasbourg, 20 May 2025

CEPEJ-GT-EFF(2026)5

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

**WORKING GROUP ON EFFECTIVENESS OF JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS
(CEPEJ-GT-EFF)**

1st meeting, 30 March – 1 April 2026

MEETING REPORT

Report prepared by the Secretariat
Directorate General I - Human Rights and the Rule of Law

1. INTRODUCTION

1. The Working Group on the effectiveness of judicial proceedings (CEPEJ-GT-EFF) of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) held its inaugural 1st meeting in Maastricht on 30 March and 1 April 2026. The meeting was chaired by Ivan Crnčec (Croatia) who was elected as the President of the CEPEJ-GT-EFF.

2. The agenda and the list of participants are attached to this Report as Appendices I and II respectively.

2. STUDY ON THE LENGTH OF THE STAGES OF CIVIL PROCEEDING

3. The CEPEJ-GT-EFF exchanged views on the draft study on the length of the stages of civil proceedings (Document CEPEJ-GT-EFF(2026)2 and Document CEPEJ-GT-EFF(2026)3), prepared by Pawel Wrzaszcz (Poland), member of the Working group and Guillaume Dartigue (France) et scientific expert. The discussion centred on practical ways to reduce delays in civil proceedings in their different stages (i.e. serving documents, filing a response to the legal action by the defendant, preliminary/first hearing, final hearing, issuing a written judgment after an oral judgment, issuing a written judgment and lodging an appeal). Furthermore, there exist cross-cutting systemic factors for delays across different stages and suggested including a general section dealing with these reasons in the introduction (e.g. excessive workload, poor allocation of cases and understaffing among judges and court staff).

4. The discussions focus on:

- the service of documents at the proper address. Several participants noted that access by courts to national civil registers or other databases may be considered useful, provided that such registers are regularly updated;
- the use of legal fictions of delivery of service, whereby the document is considered served even if the recipient has not physically received it. While this mechanism can help courts continue proceedings and avoid unnecessary procedural paralysis, several participants stressed that it often merely postpones the underlying problem. A judgment obtained on the basis of fictitious service may later prove unenforceable if the debtor cannot be located. For this reason, the participants noted that systems for service of documents should be designed with the enforcement phase in mind, not solely to accelerate court proceedings;
- the electronic service of documents: some jurisdictions have introduced systems where documents are first sent electronically, and if confirmation of receipt is obtained, service is considered valid. If no confirmation is received, other service methods, such as post service or bailiffs, are used. However, participants noted that this hybrid model cannot fully solve the problem where individuals deliberately avoid the service of documents;
- good practices in the pre-trial phase. These included the use of preparatory hearings, procedural calendars, remote hearings, limits on lengthy written submissions, and better use of experts. Clear timetables for parties' submissions, evidence gathering, expert reports, and hearings can reduce unnecessary adjournments and encourage parties to prepare more efficiently. Several members also referred to the alternative resolution of disputes and, in particular in-court conciliation, provided they are conducted within reasonable time limits and do not become a source of additional delay. Remote hearings and videoconferencing were also mentioned as tools that can improve scheduling flexibility and reduce postponements;

- the measures conducive to improving the judgment phase. Participants discussed whether “oral or abbreviated reasoning” in certain circumstances or standardised templates in certain types of cases could help courts deliver decisions more quickly. In some systems, judges may pronounce the decision orally and prepare only a shorter written version unless an appeal is filed. This can save time in straightforward cases. Templates were considered useful for repetitive judgments, such as traffic fines, default judgments, or uncontested claims. However, templates should support judges rather than constrain them. The issue of lengthy written submissions by parties and lawyers was also raised. In some jurisdictions, agreements between courts and legal professionals on page limits or concise pleadings have reportedly improved efficiency in some countries while in others this provision is under discussion.

5. The CEPEJ-GT-EFF agreed to continue work on the draft study with a view to its possible submission for adoption by the CEPEJ plenary in June 2026. The Group stressed strengthening the introduction and conclusions to better reflect cross-cutting causes of delays, while acknowledging the study’s limited scope and non-exhaustive character that is based on the information from eight pilot courts. Some sections, including service of documents, “oral reasoning” and judgment templates, should be further developed. A summary table with reasons for delays and related measures should be added for better readability at the beginning of the study. Despite its limited scope, the members considered that the report provided useful insights. It should be circulated for feedback to the participating pilot courts and subsequently to the CEPEJ-GT-EFF members for their comments. The annexes – the initial questionnaire and the summary of interviews with pilot courts - should complement this work.

3. GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING WORKLOAD MEASUREMENT SYSTEMS IN COURTS

6. The CEPEJ-GT-EFF exchanged views on the concept note concerning workload measurement in courts (Document CEPEJ-GT-EFF(2026)1), prepared by the scientific experts Ana Krnić-Kulušić and Alexandre Palanco, building on the study published in December 2025. The experts noted that many presented systems often rely on hybrid approaches combining different methods for assessing workload. Consequently, the future guidelines should be designed as a set of flexible guidelines, allowing adaptation to national legal and institutional contexts. It is proposed to structure the guidelines around five phases: defining the scope and objectives, establishing governance arrangements, system development, implementation, and continuous monitoring and updating.

7. A first important point of discussion concerned whether court staff and prosecutors should be included alongside judges (see Section 5 of the draft guidelines). The members considered that the initial focus should remain on judges in order to preserve clarity and feasibility with the possibility of expanding the scope to court staff at a later stage. It was noted that judges and court staff perform fundamentally different functions, and that their respective workloads may therefore require separate analysis. It was suggested that any future guidelines concerning court staff may be preceded by a dedicated study exploring these issues in greater depth.

8. A second major topic concerned the development of workload indicators. Participants observed that an indicator based solely on the ratio between the number of cases and the number of judges is insufficient, as it fails to reflect differences in the nature and the complexity of cases. Conversely, full-fledged case-weighting systems that measure case complexity based on rigorous data collection may be too sophisticated or resource-intensive for many judicial systems. It was therefore considered desirable to develop one or more intermediate indicators positioned between these two approaches, taking into account both case-related activities (caseload) and non-case-related judicial tasks (workload).

9. A third key issue concerned the range of tasks that should be considered when defining judicial workload. The members stressed that non-case-related duties should be included in order to capture

the full scope of judicial responsibilities (workload). It was suggested that the guidelines could contain a non-exhaustive list of such tasks, particularly in relation to court presidents and their managerial responsibilities, that go beyond case adjudication (caseload).

10. The CEPEJ-GT-EFF decided to continue its work on this topic and instructed the scientific experts to proceed with the further drafting of the guidelines. There was broad agreement on the importance of developing workload indicators, particularly those that take account non-case-related judicial activities, as these are essential to understanding the full scope of judicial work. As the subject remains insufficiently explored, the members considered that further research would be necessary regarding non-case-related tasks, examples of existing indicators, and other relevant practices. Ana Bilic, member of the Working group, will also join the Task force in order to contribute to the drafting of the future guidelines.

4. RESOURCE CENTRE ON BACKLOG REDUCTION PRACTICES

11. The Secretariat informed the members that the Resource Centre on Backlog Reduction Practices (hereinafter “the Resource Centre”) contained 57 registered practices, with an additional 7 new submissions from pilot courts pending publication. Many practices go beyond strict backlog reduction, addressing broader aspects of the effectiveness of judicial proceedings. This raised the question of whether the scope of the Resource Centre should remain limited to backlog reduction or be expanded to encompass a wider range of efficiency-related practices. The latter approach was widely supported, as many existing practices contribute simultaneously to improving efficiency and reducing backlogs of cases.

12. The CEPEJ-GT-EFF also discussed possible avenues for further development of the Resource Centre. Suggestions included improving its visibility and communication, notably through professional social networks such as LinkedIn, as well as enhancing its internal structure through the introduction of additional thematic categories. It was suggested that the Resource Centre could be renamed the “Resource Centre on the Effectiveness of Justice”, or a similar title, in order to better reflect its expanded focus. This possibility should be submitted to the CEPEJ for its opinion, insofar as the scope of the Resource Center would extend beyond what was originally planned.

5. REVIEW OF TOOLS ON ENFORCEMENT OF JUDICIAL DECISIONS

13. The CEPEJ-GT-EFF exchanged views with the International Union of Judicial Officers (UIHJ), an observer to the CEPEJ, on the revision of documents relating to the enforcement of judicial decisions. Mr Jos Uitdehaag, First Vice-President of the UIHJ, reiterated the need to update the Guidelines for a better implementation of the existing Council of Europe Recommendation on enforcement, adopted by the CEPEJ in 2009. Although these Guidelines continue to be widely used, certain aspects are now considered outdated in light of evolving enforcement practices. Three new areas were identified for inclusion in the revised Guidelines: the growing digitalisation of enforcement procedures and the use of artificial intelligence, cross-border enforcement, and the recourse to mediation or other alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in pre-enforcement proceedings.

14. In addition to these emerging issues, several concrete aspects requiring review were identified for inclusion in the revised Guidelines. These included electronic communication between enforcement agents and courts; the evolving role of enforcement agents, reflecting the social aspects of enforcement, which involve physical contact between debtors and enforcement agents, as well as the identification of cases involving structural debt; access to information and its multiple use, together with data protection considerations; the right to provisional or conservatory measures; and the role of the state in enforcement and the related costs.

15. The CEPEJ-GT-EFF agreed to establish a dedicated Task force responsible for revising the Guidelines. The Task force will be composed of the following scientific experts: Mathieu Chardon, Jos Uitdehaag, Patrick Gielen and Guillaume Payan, together with two members of the Working group, Francesco Depasquale and Ana Bilic.

6. CHECKLIST FOR THE EFFECTIVE COURT MANAGEMENT

16. The CEPEJ-GT-EFF exchanged the views on the instrument to address court management, including its legal basis, format, development methodology, and content. A Checklist alone might not be sufficient and could instead be complemented or preceded by guidelines or a good practice guide.

17. The Working group also discussed possible approaches to developing such a tool. It was proposed to explore existing models of court management as well as general management theory. Ombeline Mahuzier, member of the Working group, suggested that this reflection may be supported by an intervention of a specialist in theory of management. In this context, it was highlighted that any expert involved in this work should possess specific experience in court management, as this differs from the management of private companies.

18. While certain management methods from the private sector could serve as a source of inspiration, they would need to be carefully adapted to the specific context and requirements of the judiciary. The discussion highlighted two key dimensions of court management: the degree of autonomy granted to courts in their management, and governance structures, including the actors involved in decision-making processes. In addition, several core areas of court management were identified, including court organisation, human resources management, infrastructure and buildings, financial management, communication, training, well-being, as well as Information Technologies and Artificial Intelligence.

19. The CEPEJ-GT-EFF agreed to move forward progressively with this reflection and decided to establish a dedicated Task force. The Task force will be composed of Sabine Matejka (Austria), Ombeline Mahuzier (France), Dimitrije Sujeranovic (Serbia), Christian de Valkeneer (Belgium). It was suggested that an initial presentation on court management by a specialist could be highly beneficial in providing orientation and helping to identify the type of tool to be developed, as well as the methodology to be followed. In parallel, the Task force will begin working on the theme.

7. TRAINING CURRICULUM ON COURT MANAGEMENT

20. The CEPEJ-GT-EFF debriefed on the discussions held during the workshop of the Network of Pilot Courts, which was dedicated to skills and competencies for court management. The members welcomed the questionnaire prepared for the workshop in co-operation with Ombeline Mahuzier, noting both its quality and the interactive manner in which it was used. The questionnaire included questions designed to explore the extent to which such trainings are offered in member States, as well as the format and topics of these trainings. The discussion in the workshop showed that training on court management is not yet sufficiently developed and that there is a demand for such training for court presidents and managers. It was recognised that effective court management requires competencies beyond legal expertise, including organisational skills, leadership, communication, conflict management, and change management. The participants also discussed whether the training on court management should be mandatory for court presidents and considered as a factor in decisions on promotion. The questionnaire was considered a valuable basis for further work and suitable for wider dissemination.

21. The CEPEJ-GT-EFF discussed the concept note prepared by the Secretariat (CEPEJ-GT-EFF(2026)4). The work in this area could be carried out in several phases, allowing for the gradual development of a comprehensive curriculum model. The members agreed that, in the first phase, a concept for an ideal curriculum for court management should be developed. This concept should identify the essential components necessary for comprehensive and effective modern court management training, including organisation, financing, training strategy, and content. The members further stressed the importance of including training for trainers within the future curriculum; trainers should not only possess sound pedagogical skills but also have practical experience within the judiciary. The concept should follow, as far as possible, the structure and methodology of the concept for the curriculum on developing digital skills currently being developed by the Working Group on Cyberjustice and Artificial Intelligence (CEPEJ-GT-CYBERJUST).

22. The CEPEJ-GT-EFF agreed to explore existing training opportunities and frameworks in member States and at the European level, including the work of the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN). It was agreed that preliminary research should be carried out to provide an initial overview of the situation in each State. This research may be complemented by the dissemination of the questionnaire to member States and all pilot courts. The information obtained will serve for the drafting of the concept. Overall, there was broad consensus that practical and accessible management training is important for the effective functioning of courts.

8. POTENTIAL NEW TOPICS

23. The CEPEJ-GT-EFF held an exchange of views on possible themes for its future work programme. The members discuss possible tools related to strategic court management, tools tailored to specific professional groups within judicial systems, such as court staff and prosecutors, and potential topics connected to criminal proceedings, such as compensation for victims.

9. MEETING OF THE CEPEJ NETWORK OF THE PILOT COURTS

24. The 19th plenary meeting of the CEPEJ Network of Pilot Courts was held in Maastricht on 31 March 2026, bringing together 46 pilot courts from 33 member and observer States. The meeting was co-organised with the District Court of Limburg. On the Dutch side, the meeting was opened by representatives of the Province of Limburg, the Court of Limburg, and the Council for the Judiciary of the Netherlands. The programme was organised around six workshops on digitalisation and the use of artificial intelligence in courts, the measurement of the quality of justice, court management and training for court management, and environmental sustainability in courts.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

25. The next CEPEJ-GT-EFF meeting will be held in Strasbourg (France) on 27 - 28 October 2026. There will be a joint meeting between pilot courts and national correspondents to be held on 27 May 2026. The next annual meeting of the pilot courts will be held in March or April 2027.

ANNEX I

AGENDA

The working documents will be available in [cloud](#).

Opening of the meeting

1.
 - a. Designation of the President of the Working group
 - b. Presentation of the members, deputy members and scientific experts of the Working group
 - c. Adoption of the agenda

Meeting of the CEPEJ Network of the pilot courts

2.
 - Preparation of the 19th meeting of the CEPEJ Network of pilot courts
- WORKING DOCUMENTS
- Draft agenda
CEPEJ-Pilot Courts(2026)E/OJ/1
- Draft list of participants

Study on means to reduce the length of the stages of civil proceedings

3.
 - Exchange of views on the draft preliminary study and the way forward
- Experts in charge: Pawel Wrzaszcz and Guillaume Dartigue*
- WORKING DOCUMENTS
- Preliminary draft report on the length of the stages of civil proceedings
CEPEJ-GT-EFF(2026)2
- Annex to the draft report
CEPEJ-GT-EFF(2026)3
- BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
- Interview-based comprehensive summaries with selected pilot courts
CEPEJ-SATURN(2025)7
- Key findings
CEPEJ-SATURN(2025)8
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4. Resource Centre on Backlog Reduction Practices Exchange of views on how to strengthen and expand the Resource Centre	WORKING DOCUMENTS Resource Centre on Backlog Reduction Practices
5. Guidelines for implementing workload measurement systems in courts Exchange of views on the draft concept note for the guidelines and the way forward <i>Experts in charge: Alexandre Palanco and Ana Krnić-Kulušić</i>	WORKING DOCUMENT Concept note for guidelines for implementing workload measurement systems in courts CEPEJ-GT-EFF(2026)1 BACKGROUND DOCUMENT Study on workload measurement systems in courts CEPEJ(2025)14
6. Review of existing CEPEJ tools on enforcement of judicial decisions Exchange of views on the way to update the tools and further develop the work in the field of enforcement <i>Speakers: International Union of Judicial Officers (UIHJ)</i>	BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS Good practice guide on enforcement of judicial decisions Guidelines for a better implementation of the existing Council of Europe's Recommendation on enforcement Enforcement of court decisions in Europe – CEPEJ Studies No. 8 Recommendation No. R(2003) 16 on the execution of administrative and judicial decisions in the field of administrative law Recommendation No. R(2003)17 on enforcement Link to CEPEJ tools on enforcement of judicial decisions
7. Visit to the pilot court of Limburg 1 April 2026 – 9.00 am – 11.00 am	

8. Checklist for efficient, effective, ideal and modern administrative and judicial court management Exchange of views on the topic and agreement on the way forward	BACKGROUND DOCUMENT Concept note on a tool for efficient court management CEPEJ-SATURN(2024)24REV
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9. Training curriculum on efficient court management Exchange of views on the draft concept note and agreement on the way forward	WORKING DOCUMENT Draft concept note on court management training curriculum CEPEJ-GT-EFF(2026)4
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10. Proposals for potential tools aimed at reducing duration of judicial proceedings Exchange of views on possible topics and tools that the working group can work on to strengthen the effectiveness of justice	
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Other business - CEPEJ Network of pilot courts Exchange of views on possible topics and tools that the working group can work on to strengthen the effectiveness of justice 11. - Work-life balance tool Information on the on-going work on preparation of the tool	
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Speaker: Sabine Matejka, member of the CEPEJ-GT-EFF

ANNEX II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

MEMBERS

Ana BILIC ANDRIJANIC, Head of Court performance Efficiency Department

Ivan CRNCEC, Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Justice and Public Administration, Zagreb, CROATIA

Francesco DEPASQUALE, Honourable judge, Superior Courts of Malta and Gozo, (President of the CEPEJ / Président de la CEPEJ), Valletta, MALTA

Ombeline MAHUZIER, Présidente, Tribunal judiciaire de Colmar, FRANCE

Sabine MATEJKA, President, District Court, Floridsdorf/Vienna, AUSTRIA

Pawel WRZASZCZ, Head of Land and Mortgage Register Department, District Court of Lublin, POLAND

DEPUTY MEMBER

Marta GARCIA DE VICUNA UNDA, Advisor, Directorate General for the Efficiency of the Public Justice Service, SPAIN (on-line)

SCIENTIFIC EXPERTS

Kaspars BERKIS, Judge, Regional Administrative Court, LATVIA

Christian DE VALKENEER, President of the Court of First Instance of Namur-Dinant, BELGIUM

Dimitrije ŠUJERANOVIĆ, Justice reform expert, Belgrade, SERBIA

Alexandre PALANCO, Expert, researcher at the Catholic University of Lyon, FRANCE (online)

Ana Krnic KULUSIC, Expert, Justice reform expert, Zagreb, CROATIA (online)

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

SECRETARIAT

Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DGI)
European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice

Muriel DECOT, Executive Secretary of the CEPEJ

Eva KONECNA, Secretary of the CEPEJ-GT-EFF / Responsible for the CEPEJ Network of pilot courts

Ervilda SMAJLAJ, CEPEJ Assistant