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

CEPEJ NETWORK OF PILOT COURTS

KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WORKSHOPS

19th plenary meeting

Netherlands, Maastricht, 31 Mach 2026



The aim of this meeting was three-fold:

- 1. inform pilot courts about the CEPEJ tools recently adopted**
- 2. gather feedback from pilot courts on the ongoing work of the CEPEJ**
- 3. exchange of experiences among pilot courts on their practices**

INTRODUCTION

The 19th plenary meeting of the CEPEJ Network of Pilot Courts was held in Strasbourg on 31 March 2026, with 46 pilot courts from 33 Member and Observer States in attendance. Participants took part in the plenary sessions as well as six thematic workshops. Their topics were selected based on themes relevant to the work of the CEPEJ. Pilot courts were invited to share their practices and specific needs, which will support the CEPEJ in developing its various tools.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

WORKSHOP 1: Court process automation: What processes should be automated in courts?

1. It is necessary to begin the reflection with a clear and coherent definition, supported by concrete examples. Automation should benefit both judges and administrative staff. It is essential to clearly distinguish automation, as a process of digitalisation, from Artificial Intelligence. It might be useful to extend the planned survey on automation conducted by the European Cyberjustice Network to include the pilot courts to complete the information with the points of view of practitioners. It was also proposed to include automation among the topics to be discussed at the next Annual Meeting of the European Cyberjustice Network, which will be held on 3 December 2026.

WORKSHOP 2: Environmental sustainability: What are the practices to mitigate the impact of court functioning on environment?

2. Judicial authorities are increasingly aware of the need to integrate environmental sustainability into court administration and judicial governance, which is a major challenge for society and institutions, including the judicial sector, with potential implications for the fundamental rights guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights.
3. Nevertheless, only a limited number of member States have adopted comprehensive environmental sustainability policies specifically targeting courts and judicial systems. The United Kingdom and the Netherlands, in particular, have adopted broader institutional strategies aimed at reducing carbon emissions, improving energy efficiency, and promoting sustainable working methods within the judicial system.
4. In many member States, *ad hoc* measures have been implemented rather than comprehensive policies, whether in the form of incentives for environmentally friendly modes of transport, reducing paper consumption through digitalisation, or efforts to improve the energy efficiency of court buildings.
5. Environmentally friendly measures are mainly driven by considerations of cost efficiency, modernisation, and resource optimisation, rather than by a clearly defined environmental sustainability strategy. The importance of developing a more coherent and long-term approach to sustainability within judicial systems was mentioned, and the CEPEJ initiative to develop guidelines on this matter was welcomed.

WORKSHOP 3: Court management: What are key aspects of modern court management?

1. The management of courts is essential to their proper functioning and requires the co-operation of the various stakeholders involved, including court presidents, court managers, and judges.
2. Court presidents play a crucial role in court management and the coordination of activities. They contribute to budget negotiation and management, supervise human resources, participate in setting annual objectives, determining the composition of chambers, evaluating judges, and coordinating training opportunities for both judges and court staff.
3. Court managers serve as the administrative backbone of courts, overseeing staff, budget planning, workflow management, security, and well-being of court staff. They also handle statistical data collection and the implementation of support measures.
4. Judges, beyond their judicial duties, contribute to court management by performing specific tasks assigned by court presidents, such as supervising the implementation of information and communication technologies (ICT), advising the court president, or mentoring new judges.
5. Court management, and particularly the role of court presidents, involves numerous managerial challenges. Coordination with other court presidents and chief prosecutors can be complex. Many court presidents report insufficient preparation for administrative responsibilities and limited authority over the recruitment of court staff. Understaffing, budgetary constraints, and unequal workload distribution - particularly in larger courts in urban areas - have been identified as recurring obstacles to effective court management.

WORKSHOP 4: Indicator on quality of justice: Which key aspects should be considered to assess the quality of justice from the perspective of practitioners?

1. Assessing the quality of justice is a complex task. How, indeed, can one meaningfully, objectively, and reliably evaluate the quality of justice? The challenge lies in translating qualitative dimensions into measurable and comparable indicator.
2. The quality of justice cannot be reduced to a single criterion or statistical measure. It is a broad and multidimensional concept encompassing several key elements, including effective access to courts, procedural fairness, transparency of proceedings, clarity and reasoning of judicial decisions, timeliness of case handling, and the capacity of courts to respond to the needs and expectations of court users. Participants also underlined the importance of maintaining judicial independence and public trust as integral components of quality justice.
3. It could be useful to combine quantitative data with qualitative assessments and user-centred approaches in order to capture the real experience of justice systems. The workshop also highlighted the value of sharing national practices and methodological approaches among member States.

WORKSHOP 5: Training curriculum on court management: What are the skills and competences for efficient court management?

1. It is necessary to strengthen skills and expand training opportunities in the field of court management. An interactive survey conducted during the workshop showed that, for the majority of participants, such training is available within their judicial systems, while for 30% of them, no such training was available. 5% of the participants did not know if such training existed.

2. The main challenges identified concerned the suitability of available training, the selection of participants, and the adaptation of training programmes to the specific judicial context, with a stronger emphasis on leadership and interpersonal skills.
3. Training in court management is generally organised by national judicial training institutes, which exist in the majority of member States. These training sessions are aimed primarily at court presidents and court managers, although some judges also participate. The main topics covered in these training programmes include human resources management, professional conduct and ethics, leadership, financial management, as well as organisational structure, performance management, and interpersonal skills.
4. The training formats available within their judicial systems are diverse: in-person group training, online courses, joint sessions with other professions, coaching, mentoring, internships, as well as peer learning activities. The sharing of experiences and practical approaches, particularly through mentoring and role-playing exercises, was considered especially useful. The ability to assess the quality of the training and to identify training needs also appears to be valuable. Participation in court management training is rarely taken into account in the career progression of judges.

WORKSHOP 6: Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence in the judiciary – Challenge or Opportunity?

1. The discussions highlighted the multiple dimensions of the digitalisation of judicial systems and the increasing integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, which are redefining the administration of justice across Europe and presenting technological, ethical, and human resources challenges.
2. Many European countries are still in the process of establishing basic digital infrastructure and converting court documents into digital formats, which does not necessarily generate data suitable for future AI applications. Moreover, according to the CEPEJ ICT index published in 2022, there is no clear correlation between a country's level of digitalisation and the efficiency with which its courts handle cases.
3. AI tools are gradually being adopted by courts, and judges are using them to improve both the efficiency and quality of judicial decisions, provided that human oversight and final validation are maintained.
4. Concerns exist regarding the potential effects of widespread use of AI on young professionals who are still learning the judicial profession. While experienced judges may benefit from AI assistance, novice judges could find it more difficult to develop essential professional skills if they systematically use AI applications. Yet, young legal professionals are often the first to be affected by the introduction of AI tools in the job market.
5. Divergences exist concerning the need for transparency about the use of AI tools and the results they produce. For some judges, clear disclosures indicating when AI has been used are necessary, while others prefer to retain human responsibility for decisions and produced documents, with the final signatory maintaining full ownership.