



Strasbourg, 22 November 2023

CEPEJ-SATURN(2023)14

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

**WORKING GROUP ON JUDICIAL TIME MANAGEMENT  
(CEPEJ-SATURN)**

35<sup>th</sup> meeting, 5 and 6 October 2023

## **MEETING REPORT**

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

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1. The Working Group on judicial time management of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ-SATURN) held its 35<sup>th</sup> meeting in Strasbourg on 5 and 6 October 2026. The meeting was chaired by Ivan CRNCEC (Croatia), Vice-President of the CEPEJ.

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

## **2. TOOL ENABLING TO ANALYSE TIMEFRAMES ACCORDING TO THE STAGES OF CIVIL PROCEEDINGS**

3. In line with the decision taken by the CEPEJ-SATURN at its meeting in March 2023, a Task Force was set up to reflect on further actions to develop a tool to analyse the length of the stages of civil proceedings. Following a call for expression of interest, nine pilot courts<sup>1</sup> applied to participate in the Task Force. The joint meeting was held between the CEPEJ-SATURN and the task force during the 35<sup>th</sup> CEPEJ-SATURN meeting. The meeting provided the opportunity to jointly reflect on possible avenues for further work on this theme. The meeting was chaired by Marco FABRI, scientific expert.

4. To facilitate the discussion at the meeting, the Secretariat prepared a concept note entitled “Which way forward for the tool to analyse the length of the steps of civil proceedings?” (Document.CEPEJ-SATURN(2023)11). The concept note outlined the possible objectives of the activity, specified the possible methods of data collection and outputs expected to be delivered by the task force at the end of the process. The task force would need to decide between different options defined in the concept note in order to move on to the next steps.

5. It was agreed upon that regular meetings of the task force would be organised to move the project forward. The next meeting of the task force would be held on 23 November. Until then, it was agreed to gather information on the type of cases falling within the category of “regular civil procedure”, legal provisions concerning serving documents and filing a response to the legal action by the defendant and, for the pilot court in the United Kingdom, verify whether the defined steps in civil proceedings, are identical or similar to those existing in the common law system.

## **3. CASE WEIGHTING IN PUBLIC PROSECUTION SERVICES**

6. Ivan CRNCEC (Croatia), Ana KRNIC-KULUSIC (Croatia) and Alexandre PALANCO (France) presented the draft report on case weighting systems (CWS) in public prosecution services (Document CEPEJ-SATURN(2023)10). Since the last CEPEJ-SATURN meeting, the scientific experts have completed the interviews with the countries using CWS in their prosecution services that constituted the basis for comparative analysis of the existing systems. Considering the wealth of information collected throughout the questionnaire, the report also describes alternative systems to case-weighting providing detailed information on Croatian system as a case-study. The report is concluded by the description of the system in Norway pointing out to their specificities in institutional cooperation between the police and prosecution authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> The following pilot courts are members of the task force: District Court, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany, District Court, Maribor, Slovenia, County Court, Reading, United Kingdom, Commercial Court, Coimbra, Portugal, District Court, Banska Bystrica, Slovakia, Court of Appeal, Rovaniemi, Finland, District Court, Turin, Italy, District Court, Warsaw, Poland, District Court, Lublin-East Swidnik, Poland.

7. The report underlined the outstanding differences in CWS among the states: diversity stands out as the defining feature of the prosecutorial case-weighting in Europe and broader. Despite this fact, the scientific experts succeeded in identifying key guiding principles representing best practices: strong leadership, significance of long-term planning, importance of defining purposes targeted by the CWS introduction, quality and efficiency in data collection, incorporation of relevant and efficient IT tools, dissemination, transparency and communication and sustainability.

8. The CEPEJ-SATURN greatly appreciated the draft report and highlighted its good quality. It agreed that the report would be submitted for adoption to CEPEJ at its next plenary meeting in December 2023. Until then, the scientific experts would complete a final round of consultations with the eight countries using CWS to ensure the correctness, accuracy and reliability of information contained in the draft report (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Sweden) and incorporate minor comments provided by the CEPEJ-SATURN scientific experts.

#### **4. DATABASE OF BACKLOG REDUCTION PRACTICES**

9. In June 2023, the CEPEJ adopted the Backlog Reduction Tool. The tool contains a non-exhaustive list of measures to address backlog based on the information provided member States, pilot courts and scientific experts. In order to track additional successful measures and follow new developments in this area, it has been decided to complement the Backlog Reduction Tool by a Database/Resource Centre to collect practices conducive to fighting backlog. Its setting up could follow the path of the Resource Centre on Cyberjustice and Artificial Intelligence that provide an inspiring example for creating the database.

10. Daniel SCHMIDT and Lidija NAUMOVSKA from the Secretariat of the CEPEJ made a presentation of the above Resource Centre. The presentation highlighted the concrete steps to its creation (e.g. create input files, collect first information to find out the kind of backlog reduction activities are in place), lessons learned (e.g. start from small size and extend progressively, consider maintenance, manage expectations) and main difficulties encountered whilst developing the Resource Centre (e.g. verification, quality and presentation of information collected and liability for the information published, resources for maintenance and level of functionalities).

11. The CEPEJ-SATURN discussed the new database of backlog reduction practices and the modalities of its establishment based on the concept note prepared by the Secretariat (Document CEPEJ-SATURN(2023)9). The discussion was structured around three main questions related to the creation of the database: i) purpose; ii) structure (e.g. domain, level and areas of application, period and status of implementation of backlog reduction projects, state, description and link to the projects and implementation authorities); and iii) collection of information. The concept note also describes how the information will be collected and dealt with and the criteria for publication. The CEPEJ-SATURN adopted the concept note and agreed to submit it to the CEPEJ for adoption at its plenary meeting in December 2023.

#### **5. 2024 – 2025 CEPEJ-SATURN MANDATE**

12. The CEPEJ-SATURN discussed the proposal for future themes for its mandate for the period of 2024 – 2025 (Document CEPEJ-SATURN(2023)13REV2). The CEPEJ-SATURN agreed that the new mandate should not focus on judicial timeframes, but on the tools to improve the efficiency of the organisation and the functioning of courts and public prosecution services in order to enable member States to implement policies aiming to prevent violations of the right to a fair trial within a reasonable time.

13. In the light of the discussions, the CEPEJ-SATURN instructed the Secretariat to finalise the proposal for new mandate and submit the revised proposal to the Bureau of the CEPEJ. It includes proposals for i) ongoing themes (case-weighting, timeframes/length according to the various steps in civil proceedings), ii) themes to build up on the past work (follow-up to the Time Management Checklist and the Backlog Reduction Tool) and iii) new areas of work (e.g. work-life balance in the judiciary, effect of AI tools on court effectiveness and efficiency, effective court management).

## **6. OTHER BUSINESS**

14. The next CEPEJ-SATURN meeting will be organised together with the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Network of CEPEJ pilot courts. The meeting will be organised in Mechelen/Malines, Belgium, in spring 2024 upon invitation from the court of first instance in Antwerp that is a CEPEJ pilot court.

## ANNEX I

### AGENDA

**5 October 2023**

**1. Opening of the meeting**

Adoption of the agenda

Information by the Secretariat

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**WORKING DOCUMENT**

Draft report on case weighting in public prosecution services

[CEPEJ-SATURN\(2023\)10](#)

**2. Case weighting in public prosecution services**

Exchange of views on the draft report with a view to its possible adoption

*Experts in charge: Ivan Crncec, Ana Krnic-Kulusic, Alexandre Palanco*

(5 October 2023 – 10.00 am – 12.00 am)

**REFERENCE DOCUMENT**

Compilation of replies to the questionnaire on case weighting in public prosecution services – country-by-country

[CEPEJ-SATURN\(2023\)1](#)

Compilation of replies to the questionnaire on case weighting in public prosecution services overview by questions

[CEPEJ-SATURN\(2023\)2](#)

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**3.**

**Tool to analyse the length of the steps of civil procedures**

Exchange of views with the task force on the methodology and the way forward

*Experts in charge: Marco Fabri and Ruth Straganz-Schröfl*

(5 October 2023 – 2.30 pm – 4.30 pm)

**WORKING DOCUMENT**

Concept paper: which way forward for the tool on the length of the steps of civil procedures?

[CEPEJ-SATURN\(2023\)11](#)

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## REFERENCE DOCUMENT

Questionnaire on analysing the length of civil proceedings

[CEPEJ-SATURN\(2021\)11REV](#)

Brief information on the length of the various steps of the civil proceedings

[CEPEJ-SATURN\(2023\)8](#)

Data based on the replies to the questionnaire on analysing the length of civil proceedings

[CEPEJ-SATURN\(2023\)6](#)

**6 October 2023**

## WORKING DOCUMENT

Concept note on the establishment of the Database of Backlog Reduction Practices

[CEPEJ-SATURN\(2023\)12](#)

## REFERENCE DOCUMENT

Backlog Reduction Tool

[CEPEJ\(2023\)9FINAL](#)

Concept note on the revision of the compendium of “best practices” on time management of judicial proceedings

[CEPEJ-SATURN\(2022\)9REV1](#)

Compendium of “best practices” on time management of judicial proceedings

[CEPEJ\(2006\)13](#)

### **Database of backlog reduction practices**

Exchange of views on the draft concept note on the establishment of the Database of Backlog Reduction Practices with a view to its possible adoption

4. *Presentation of the experience with the establishment of the Resource Centre on AI and Cyberjustice:*  
*Daniel Schmidt and Lidija Naumovska,*  
*Secretariat of the CEPEJ*

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**WORKING DOCUMENT**

5. **Future work of CEPEJ-SATURN (2024 – 2025)**  
Exchange of views on the future themes to consider  
by the CEPEJ-SATURN

Proposal for new topics  
[CEPEJ-SATURN\(2023\)13REV1](#)

**REFERENCE DOCUMENT**

[Terms of reference](#)

[CEPEJ – SATURN](#)

[2022 – 2023](#)

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6. **Any other business**

**REFERENCE DOCUMENT**

Report of the 34<sup>th</sup> meeting

[CEPEJ-SATURN\(2023\)9](#)

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## **ANNEX II**

### **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS / LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS**

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#### **MEMBERS / MEMBRES**

**Vassilis ANDROULAKIS**, Judge, Council of State, Athens, GREECE

**Ivana BORZOVÁ**, Head of Department of Civil Supervision, Ministry of Justice, Prague, CZECH REPUBLIC

**Ivan CRNČEC**, Justice Sector Reform Expert, Ministry of Justice, Zagreb, CROATIA

**Francesco DEPASQUALE**, The Honourable Mr Justice, Superior Courts, Valletta, MALTA

**Mitja KOZAR**, Judicial Councilor, District Court of Maribor, Maribor, SLOVENIA

**Giacomo OBERTO**, Judge, First-Instance Civil Court in Turin, ITALY, President of CEPEJ-SATURN

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#### **SCIENTIFIC EXPERTS / EXPERTS SCIENTIFIQUES**

**Marco FABRI**, Research Director, National Research Council (IRSIG-CNR), Bologna, ITALY

**Dimitrije ŠUJERANOVIĆ**, justice reform expert, Belgrade, SERBIA

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#### **COUNCIL OF EUROPE / CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE SECRETARIAT**

Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DGI)  
*Direction générale droits de l'Homme et Etat de droit (DGI)*

**Muriel DECOT**, Secretary of the CEPEJ

**Eva KONECNA**, Secretary of the CEPEJ-SATURN

**Milan NIKOLIC**, Co-Secretary of the CEPEJ-SATURN

**Iulia TKACHENKO**, Assistance

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