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The aim of the CEPEJ is to contribute to improving the quality of justice and the efficiency of its functioning in the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe.

Editorial by the President of the CEPEJ



As it looks forward to its fifth anniversary at the end of the year, the CEPEJ is pleased to publicise its activities more widely by releasing this first issue of its electronic newsletter, designed as

a link with the European judicial community and members of the public interested in the operation of the justice system as a public service. The aim of the newsletter is to highlight the work the CEPEJ is doing to improve the efficiency and quality of justice in the 47 Council of Europe member states and also, with each issue, set out some pointers for debate from guest writers who will honour us by sharing their views – for which I should like to thank them straight away. We begin by focusing on the quality of justice, at a time when the CEPEJ is setting up a working group to develop means of analysing and measuring a concept that still needs to be defined, which involves the efficiency, legitimacy and accountability of judicial systems, as well as user satisfaction, without, however, calling into question the fundamental principle of judicial independence. The contributions by Snježana Bagić, State Secretary at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Croatia, and Jacques Hamaide, President of the High Council of Justice of Belgium, will, no doubt, give us clearer insights into this difficult issue, which we have a duty to tackle in the spirit of the CEPEJ as an innovative body within the Council of Europe responsible for facilitating the implementation of European standards through practical measures consistent with the actual operation of judicial systems on a daily basis.

Fausto de Santis
President of the CEPEJ

Council of Europe always closer to European citizens



By establishing the CEPEJ five years ago, the Committee of Ministers wanted to set up an innovative body to ensure the effective implementation of European standards of justice for the benefit of more than 800 million Europeans. Today, the CEPEJ is an essential body within the European framework of human rights and the rule of law. Through the launch of this newsletter it aims to go one step further in targeting policy-makers, legal professionals, researchers and all European citizens interested in judicial issues. This initiative is part of the general policy of the Council of Europe to address the everyday concerns of people in its 47 member states. The significant number of cases submitted to the European Court of Human Rights clearly shows that a more efficient and credible system of justice is one of these concerns. That is why I welcome this initiative.

Terry Davis
Secretary General of the Council of Europe



"CEPEJ already published two Reports about the European Justice Systems and developed new approaches to optimize time-frames. I wish CEPEJ all success to improve further quality, fairness and efficiency of justice for the sake of our citizens."

Brigitte Zypries
German Minister of Justice

File "Quality of Justice"

The prerequisites for moving towards quality of justice



On her way towards the European Union the Republic of Croatia took and is taking a number of steps to strengthen the justice sector. The most important step was taken in 2005 when the Government of the Republic of Croatia passed the Strategy of the Reform of the Judicial System, and thereafter an Action Plan for its realisation. The Croatian Parliament acknowledged these two documents in February 2006. The Strategy's main goals are to strengthen the rule of law and independence of the judicial system and to improve its efficiency. It includes the necessary reform of Croatian court administration and envisages changes to the management of the work of the courts. The measures are designed to create a justice system based on the rule of law, with the full application of all the elements from the ECHR. ([more...](#))

The Quality of Justice: a two-sided issue



The "quality of justice" is what citizens feel in the face of litigation, their wishes and their aspirations. Equity is the key to the concept. A citizen who complains about the length of proceedings, or a journalist who criticises a judgment are two examples of how the quality of justice is perceived in society. What do we mean by the quality of justice? The answers to this question are many and varied. Some say it lies in the quality of judgments: they must be legally sound, logically structured and comprehensible to all. For others the speed of the proceedings and the prompt delivery of judgment are the fundamental qualities of justice. Many more consider that treating people with humanity is a priority, as is the independence of the judiciary. The legislation in force also affects the quality of justice. Some people argue that there is no quality of justice without equal access to justice and legal assistance. How well the judicial institution works is another frequently mentioned consideration. And finally, there are those who contend that quality in justice goes hand in hand with the existence of alternative, extra-judicial means of settling disputes. ([more...](#))

Jacques Hamaide
President of the High Council of Justice of Belgium

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On-going activities: what's new?

Evaluation of judicial systems



The in-depth exploitation of the Report "European judicial systems - Edition 2006" is going on, to "let the figures speak", identify trends and draw operational conclusions on several relevant issues for public policies of justice in the member states. Specific studies will be finalised before the end of the year on access to justice, administration and management of justice systems, use of IT in courts, training of judges and prosecutors and execution of court decisions.

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Mediation



The CEPEJ is finalising the drafting of its study for assessing the impact of the four Council of Europe's recommendations on mediation (in the civil, family, criminal and administrative law fields), from which it will propose to the Committee of Ministers, next autumn, Guidelines to improve the effective implementation of these instruments in the member states.

▶ [More information...](#)

Timeframes of proceedings



the CEPEJ SATURN Centre for judicial time management has been set up at the beginning of the year and has started working for a better knowledge of judicial timeframes, per type of cases, in the member states. Indeed, the CEPEJ has noticed that only few detailed figures were available on length of proceedings, whereas the violation of the concept of reasonable time (Article 6 ECHR) is the first reason for complaining before the European Court of Human Rights.

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Quality of Justice

A new Working group has been set up instructed to develop means of analyse and evaluation of the work done inside the courts with a view to improving quality of the public service delivered by the justice system.

▶ [More information...](#)

Publications

Two publications from "CEPEJ Studies" series will be issued in June 2007:

Upcoming events

▶ **24-25/05/07**
[European Conference on mediation](#)
Vilnius, Lithuania



▶ CEPEJ Studies No2
Time management of justice systems: a Northern Europe study drafted by Ms Mirka Smolej, Researcher at the National Research Institute of Legal Policy in Finland and Mr Jon T. Johnsen, Professor in Law, Dean, Faculty of law, University of Oslo, Norway

▶ CEPEJ Studies No3
Length of court proceedings in the member states of the Council of Europe based on the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights by Ms Françoise Calvez, judge, France

To book those publications, please send us an e-mail at the following address:
cepej@coe.int.

▶ **29-31/05/07**
[Conference "Work on e-Justice"](#)
Bremen, Germany

▶ **28/05/07 au 01/06/07**
[The CEPEJ supports an initiative of the Inter University Centre of Dubrovnik](#)
Dubrovnik, Croatia

▶ **13-14/06/07**
9th plenary meeting of the CEPEJ
Strasbourg, France

Readers corner

You wish to react to an article published in this issue or to suggest us topics to be approached, please send us your suggestions by e-mail to the following address:
cepej@coe.int.