



Strasbourg, 8 November 2023

CEPEJ-GT-EVAL(2023)12

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

17th CEPEJ National Correspondents meeting - Summary of the Workshops

Document prepared by the CEPEJ Secretariat

The CEPEJ National Correspondents meeting, that was held in Strasbourg on 18 October 2023 was organized around thematic workshops throughout the day (see Agenda in Annex) and was an opportunity for the National Correspondents to discuss, with the President of the CEPEJ, the CEPEJ-GT-EVAL members and the Secretariat as well as with the other national correspondents, the different stages, experiences, and problems encountered during the CEPEJ Evaluation cycle.

This document prepared by the CEPEJ Secretariat after the meeting intend to share the different feedback received during the following workshops: "New national correspondent", "Data collection", "ICT questions", "CEPEJ-STAT", "Report".

1. Workshop “New national correspondent”

CEPEJ-GT-EVAL members and Secretariat welcomed the newly appointed CEPEJ National correspondents presenting :

- the different on-going data collection (Biannual Evaluation cycle, CEPEJ Study for the EU Justice Scoreboard, Dashboard Western Balkans and Dashboard eastern Partnership countries);
- the different tools available ([questionnaire](#), [explanatory note](#), [FAQ](#); excel file with previous data) and possible supports provided by CEPEJ-GT-EVAL members and Secretariat (visio/ad hoc visit in the country/peer review);
- importance and use of the data and comments;
- the different calendars and every steps of these calendars;
- explanations on the steps of the process (data collection/quality check/preparation of the reports namely)
- methodological elements namely about comparability of data
- principles guiding the process (transparency during the full process)
- role and tasks of the national correspondents.

CEPEJ Secretariat will prepare a “welcome package for the national Correspondent” including these different elements

2. Workshop “Data collection”

The workshop aimed to facilitate brainstorming sessions with the national correspondents and exchange and share experiences on internal data collection.

Preparation of the data collection process

- National correspondent should **identify all the institutions** relevant for answering CEPEJ questions during the data entry and quality check process and divide the questionnaire and explanatory notes accordingly so that each institution receives questions for which they are responsible and corresponding explanatory notes.
- It is recommended to **share the explanatory note** version with track changes. The indicated track changes reflect the modifications and the latest interpretations. It should be noted that even the questions for which the reply seems to be obvious can change or their interpretation can evolve. National correspondents should be always aware of possible updates in explanatory notes and importance of continuous consulting the content of the Explanatory notes.
- It is recommended to explain to the institutions that they should provide replies in accordance with the **CEPEJ definitions** contained in the CEPEJ Explanatory Note. In case of a doubt or conflict between definitions used in a national legislation and CEPEJ definitions, **the** advantage should be given to CEPEJ definitions in order to ensure comparability of data with other states/entities.
- National correspondents could prepare a “**welcome package**” for contact persons in institutions involved in data collection that would contain general information about CEPEJ evaluation process, links to the relevant CEPEJ website pages, timeline of data collection, explanation of the quality check process, and checklist with the important instructions when providing data (such as read carefully explanatory note, consult previous reply, provide general and specific comments, address discrepancies etc).
- **Sharing previous replies** (validated by the CEPEJ) with beneficiary institutions are of utmost importance. National correspondents should highlight the importance of providing consistent replies and providing explanations in each case when a reply has changed. In this way the proper information is shared, the process of collecting replies is accelerated and possibility of

mistakes and inconsistencies is minimized. The previous replies are available in PDF format (in the CEPEJ COLLECT and on the following page <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cepej/country-profiles>), but also in the excel format shared by the CEPEJ Secretariat at the beginning of every cycle. Nota bene: institutions that provide the data should not rely on the replies they originally sent in previous cycle, but on the final replies/comments that were accepted and validated by the CEPEJ at the end of the quality check process.

- An identified good practice for questions where replies are likely to remain, is to send the previous replies to institutions, and just ask to “**review and confirm the previous reply**”.
- It is recommended to explain to the institutions the **significance of general and specific comments** for proper interpretation of the replies provided. It should be highlighted that all comments will be published and will be **publicly available** in the online database CEPEJ STAT (available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cepej/cepej-stat>). This might contribute to the increase of number and quality of comments. It is to be noted that the comments should be short (up to half page), precise and not containing the “quotes” from the law, but they have to be explained in a plain language.
- A good practice is to ask institutions involved in data collection to explain in the comments the **structure of data** provided in the replies (what national data are included in the reply and what is excluded, e.g. what types of cases are included in “other cases”). Providing this information helps better understanding of the replies and ensures consistency as it serves as guidance for providing replies in the future.
- Furthermore, national correspondent should explain **that any discrepancy in the replies with previous cycle should be explained**. For quantitative data, generally the focus should be on discrepancies higher than 20% but this also depends on the nature of the question. For example, some questions would require an explanation for much smaller discrepancies (e.g. population, GDP per capita) whereas some larger percentual discrepancies should not be addressed at all (e.g. number of disciplinary proceedings increased from 1 to 2 doesn't have to be explained, because it is only a one case difference). In the later example, if the CEPEJ COLLECT system indicates discrepancy and requires a comment, it should be explained that reply relates to small absolute values.
- National correspondents should **define deadlines for collection of replies from different institutions** and ensure strict control of these deadlines. The good practice is to put earlier deadlines in order to allow more time to national correspondent to review/filter data and identify if additional comments and explanations of discrepancies are needed.
- It is recognized as a good practice for national correspondents to explain **consequences** of missing deadlines and inconsistent replying to the institutions involved in data collection by highlighting that replies might be replaced with NA (not available). Some national correspondents indicate in the comment that an institution failed to provide reply. The respective institution should be informed in advance that such note will be included in the CEPEJ questionnaire.
- National correspondents should define ways of communication and exchange of documents and information. **The good practice is to organize a meeting at the beginning of the cycle (or set of meetings)** with contact persons from institutions in order to explain important points and agree on the process.
- If there are sufficient resources, the reported good practice is to develop an **IT tool (online application) for the collection of replies from different institutions**.
- The institutions involved in data collection should be familiar with the **CEPEJ quality control process**. They should be informed in advance that some additional questions regarding replies might be sent by the CEPEJ secretariat. These additional questions usually request additional data or explanation of discrepancies. They have to be addressed by the institutions involved in data collection or replies might be replaced with NA (not available) in accordance with the CEPEJ methodology. With the full information shared in advance, the institutions will be more prepared to promptly react and provide required updates timely during the quality check process.

Support from CEPEJ Secretariat

- **Communication with the CEPEJ Secretariat** during the data collection is essential and encouraged, as it provides a possibility to timely inform the Secretariat about any difficulties encountered during data collection, ask for guidance and assistance.

National correspondents should use the capacities of CEPEJ Secretariat in sense of advisory and technical support during the entire process of data collection. **Good practices include organizing videocalls, as well as specific support and peer reviews in the country.** These activities are opportunity to provide more explanations of CEPEJ questions and definitions, understand better national legislation and available data, define which national categories should be included in or excluded from the replies, what discrepancies should be explained etc. They gave good results in practice as they ensured fast and direct exchanges of views and facilitated agreeing on the way forward.

- Use of **video calls** is recommended when there are questions relating to a specific section of the questionnaire that needs to be fast resolved. These meetings are brief and focused on a limited number of issues. They are usually organized with national correspondent and/or selected representatives of an institution in charge for replying the section under discussion.
- **Specific support and peer reviews** are similar way of assistance provided by the CEPEJ Secretariat to national correspondents. They consist of organizing a one or two-day visit to the member state/entity where representatives of the CEPEJ Secretariat meet with national correspondent and the network of contact persons from different institutions in a set of meetings. Peer review missions include participation of the CEPEJ experts as well. Both specific support and peer reviews are usually organized when there are several sections in the questionnaire that have had outstanding issues which need to be addressed. This is also an opportunity to support national correspondent in their work, provide general overview of CEPEJ work and strengthen the network of contact persons. Previous experiences confirm that these visits increase interest and motivation in the national correspondents' network.

During the workshop some other ideas were discussed such as:

- To create a simplified conversion table to send to the NCs once the new campaign is launched (this table should include a column where we say whether a question is new or has been amended compared to the previous cycle). *CEPEJ Secretariat will investigate the way to provide such a table*
- To have a global Timeline of activities (including when to ask data from national sources, enter data, QC, publication, promotion) *CEPEJ Secretariat will prepare a “welcome package for the national Correspondent” including these different elements*

Entering the replies in the CEPEJ COLLECT and quality check

- Before sharing the reply with CEPEJ, and if possible, one good practice could be for national correspondents to organize an “**internal quality control of data**”. This step includes verifying the collected replies to determine if there are no obvious omissions and errors (such as typos, unfinished comments, errors in summing numbers, reply submitted doesn't correspond to the question, and similar). Furthermore, it is advisable for national correspondents to compare collected replies with the definitions in the explanatory note, as well as with replies from previous cycle. It is also helpful if national correspondents check what issues were raised during quality check in the previous cycle and verify if they have been addressed in the new replies. This sort of internal quality control will reduce questions form the CEPEJ Secretariat and consequently shorten the time of the quality check.
- It is recommended that institutions involved in data collection are invited and trained to conduct these checks themselves before providing the replies to the national correspondent.
- Once the data are entered in the COLLECT, the system will also indicate certain discrepancies and automatically ask for explanations in the “**discrepancy comment boxes**” under the question. These discrepancy comments will now be shown even when replies are saved as pending (recent modification of the CEPEJ COLLECT). These comments should be provided before the replies are finally posted.

- **Progressive entering of replies** in the COLLECT is recognized as a good practice. The national correspondents do not have to wait for all replies to be collected and can enter the replies as they receive them from different institutions. This practice allows more time for requiring missing data or comments and might optimize the data quality check procedure. It should be noted that only the data which are final and not expected to be changed should be posted.
- Due to technical limitations of the system, it is recommended to **save replies often** (option “save in pending”) to prevent slow upload and potential loss of entered replies.
- **Finalizing all entries early**, in months before deadline (e.g. July and August), is also recognized as good practice as it gives possibility for earlier quality check and more time to provide additional explanations when needed.
- When the first round of quality check is finished, the CEPEJ Secretariat will send an information about it via email. National correspondents should ensure **quick distribution** of CEPEJ additional questions to the contact persons. They should define internal deadlines for responding.
- If an institution **refuses to revisit/change the data** during the quality check upon national correspondent’s request, the reported good practice is to try mediation by a third party (representative of another department/institution). A meeting (video call) with CEPEJ Secretariat is also an option in order to understand better the issue and define the way forward (see section above).

Follow-up

- At the end of this process, **it is a good practice to make/update a list** of all institutions which will contain the name of the institution, contact details and all questions for which each institution is responsible for. This list might be helpful in next data collections and it ensures consistency in case of a change of the national correspondent.
- In order to facilitate data collections in the future and ensure consistency of replies, **building institutional memory** is of utmost importance. Work of the national correspondents should be organized in a way which ensures continuity of the activities and consistency of replies without jeopardizing process in case of changing national correspondent and/or contact persons in different institutions involved in data collection. Different **good practices** were presented:
 - Maintain a record/list of national sources (institutions/individuals) and data that were used to provide replies validated by the CEPEJ.
 - Explanation of which national data were included in the reply of each question should be as specific and precise as possible.
 - national correspondents and their network of contact persons could consider creating a manual to be updated at the end of each cycle that will contain all CEPEJ questions with references to institutions, national sources and national data used to reply CEPEJ questions. This manual would have to be updated after each cycle.
 - Raising awareness and increasing the knowledge and capacities of the institutions in national correspondent’s network to reduce time of data collection and quality check.
- Once the CEPEJ report is published, national correspondents are invited **to share the CEPEJ report and media articles with all institutions** involved in data collection. A good practice is to organize a meeting to present report, country profiles, CEPEJ STAT, and media reports. This helps increase visibility but also understanding of the purpose of the whole data collection process. It could also help increase the motivation in the national correspondent’s network and could contribute to more efficient data collection in future.

3. Workshop “Report”

The workshop aimed to facilitate brainstorming sessions with the national correspondents and generate ideas to further promote the dissemination of the CEPEJ Evaluation report.

There was a consensus that the promotion of CEPEJ data should be intensified. The following ideas for promoting the report and the data collected by CEPEJ were put forward:

- Compilation of a checklist outlining the duties and functions of National Correspondents (NC) throughout the entire process, including their responsibilities during the promotion of CEPEJ report. This measure aims to provide clear guidance and recognition to the NCs, giving them mandate delegated from CEPEJ and recognized by their institution to pursue their list of duties and ensuring their active involvement and accountability including the effective promotion and dissemination of CEPEJ report.
- Arrangement of yearly hands-on training sessions on CEPEJ STAT to bolster the proficiency of users and their understanding of data analysis. Incorporating training modules on CEPEJ STAT into all CEPEJ projects and peer review missions to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge on CEPEJ data.
- Annual leaflet or newsletter to provide stakeholders with a comprehensive overview of recent CEPEJ tools and events, fostering better engagement and awareness of CEPEJ's initiatives beyond Evaluation activities.
- Creation of short thematic videos on specific topics that serves the purpose of capturing the interest of targeted stakeholders. These videos can effectively communicate crucial information, making it more accessible and engaging for the intended audience. By focusing on topics relevant to these stakeholders, the videos can deliver key insights and promote a deeper understanding of the data and its implications within their specific domains.
- Communication plan development: drafting a comprehensive communication plan outlining the scheduled release dates for our upcoming news, tweets, articles, and other content. This plan will facilitate direct sharing with the media departments within the Ministries/Institutions, enabling them to efficiently repost and share the information and ensure ultimately a consistent and coordinated dissemination of relevant updates and publications, effectively amplifying the reach and impact of CEPEJ report.

4. Workshop “CEPEJ-STAT”

CEPEJ Secretariat presented the application for data entry CEPEJ COLLECT and the interactive database CEPEJ STAT in this workshop. Main features of both tools were presented followed by discussion on the problems and suggestions for improvement and or promotion. The list below summarises the comments discussed during the two sessions of this workshop.

CEPEJ-STAT

- Promotion
 - All participants agreed that CEPEJ-STAT should be more promoted using different medias. *CEPEJ Secretariat will make a proposal on how its visibility and use could be enhanced and what might be the role of NC for this*
 - The participants also considered that making CEPEJ STAT more user friendly by improving the navigation to different dashboards will make it more accessible. *CEPEJ will investigate the way to improve the user friendliness of the dashboards, provide more training to popularise and make the dashboards easier for users.*
 - To ease the use of CEPEJ STAT the NC considered that Manual for its use will be helpful. *New manual is already under preparation by the Secretariat.*
- Content and User Interface
 - The participants agreed that a short description for each dashboard and explorer is important to understand its main purpose and in this way the user will know which dashboard is relevant for their need. *CEPEJ Secretariat will add this feature on the main page of CEPEJ STAT.*
 - Create some new dashboards. For example, allowing different questions comparison for analysis. *The Evaluation working group of the CEPEJ (CEPEJ-GT-EVAL) every cycle reviews the current dashboards/explorers and present a new one and or retire*

existing. Same applies to the next publication NC are encouraged to propose dashboard that they think will best suit their needs.

- Better navigation
 - Home button (on Tableau public profile of CEPEJ) bringing back to CEPEJ-STAT CoE page. *The link exists and CEPEJ Secretariat will try to put forward this access.*

CEPEJ-COLLECT

National correspondent agreed that there are some difficulties with the reaction time or/and disconnection timeout of the CEPEJ-COLLECT application. *The secretariat is fully aware of this issue, and it is trying to solve the problem with the IT department.*

There were also number of other proposals how to improve the application technically, its content or the user interface. *CEPEJ Secretariat is analysing all the proposals and all that do not require structural change and are considered relevant for all users will be considered for evolution of the system.*

In each workshop there were also ideas that overlapped with other workshop or they were of general nature. Few examples are for example a personal note system for the NC to write information to be checked and remembered by them 2 years later; User satisfaction survey and/or external evaluation of the system/s.

5. Workshop “ICT questions”

The workshop was more to inform the National Correspondent on:

- why the questionnaire was changed and what was changed;
- the changes made in the ICT part of the questionnaire;
- Explanation on the newly introduced usage rate;
- Emphasis on the importance of comments since it is first cycle of the new ICT questionnaire;
- Emphasis on reading the Explanatory notes where an example on how to calculate the deployment and usage rate .

The general feedback was:

- ICT questionnaire is clearer and easier to fulfil than previous cycles (the feedback given by the ICT sources of the NC within their country)
- still, some countries have problem to get answer from their ICT departments because of lack of interest.
- NC encountered difficulties to estimate usage rate or/and deployment rate. The advice was to first check in the examples given in Explanatory Notes but also to add comments that will help CEPEJ to advise if the selected answers are valid or how to calculate/estimate the reply. Whenever the situation is specific the case could be discussed directly with CEPEJ.
- The focus of the ICT questions is on litigious questions (civil = civil and commercial litigious and the same for criminal and administrative). The issue was raised by one NC and the answer is public in [Q&A](#)

9.00-9.30 Welcome and presentation of the day (Room 2)

General information on the current 2024 cycle (2022 data) and status of data collection

- *Status*
- *FAQs for national correspondents*

9.30-10.30 First workshop session (Room Bar des Parlementaires)

You can choose to attend one of the following workshops:

Workshop “Quality check” (permanent during the whole day)

Ongoing quality control on national data: individual meetings with the Secretariat in charge of quality control for each country

Workshop “New national correspondent”

What is my role as a new CEPEJ National correspondent?

- *How is the evaluation cycle organised?*
- *What is the timetable of the evaluation cycle?*
- *What is the CEPEJ methodology (data collection and quality control)?*
- *Other data collections for the CEPEJ*

Workshop “ICT questions”

10.30-11.00 Coffee break

11.00-13.00 Second workshop session (Room Bar des Parlementaires)

You can choose to attend one of the following workshops:

Workshop “Quality check” (permanent during the whole day)

Ongoing quality control on national data: individual meetings with the Secretariat in charge of quality control for each country

Workshop “Data collection”

Exchanges of experiences on internal data collection

- *What are the main difficulties with the data collection?*
- *What tools could help you?*
- *Are there any good practices for data collection?*

Workshop “CEPEJ-STAT”

Suggestions and feedback for a better use of CEPEJ-STAT and CEPEJ-COLLECT

- *How to improve the use of CEPEJ-STAT and CEPEJ- COLLECT?*
- *What are the difficulties of using these tools?*
- *How to make these tools more intuitive and easier to use?*

Workshop “Report”

Brainstorming on the use and dissemination of the report

- *Once published in the CEPEJ-STAT report, are the data used in your country?*
- *How can we promote our joint work and the CEPEJ report?*

11.00-13.00 Second workshop session: the regional data collection (Room 2 and 17)

The data collection organized in the framework of Dashboard Western Balkans (only for beneficiaries of the Dashboard) (Room 17)

The data collection organized in the framework of Dashboard Eastern Partnership (only for beneficiaries of the Dashboard) (Room 2)

13.00-14.30 Lunch break

14.30-16.00 Third workshop session (Room Bar des Parlementaires)

You can choose to attend one of the following workshops:

Workshop “Quality check” (permanent during the whole day)

Ongoing quality control on national data: individual meetings with the Secretariat in charge of quality control for each country

Workshop “Data collection”

Exchanges of experiences on internal data collection

- *What are the main difficulties with the data collection?*
- *What tools could help you?*
- *Are there any good practices for data collection?*

Workshop “CEPEJ-STAT”

Suggestions and feedback for a better use of CEPEJ-STAT and CEPEJ-COLLECT

- *How to improve the use of CEPEJ-STAT and CEPEJ- COLLECT?*
- *What are the difficulties of using these tools?*
- *How to make these tools more intuitive and easier to use?*

Workshop “Report”

Brainstorming on the use and dissemination of the report

- *Once published in the CEPEJ-STAT report, are the data used in your country?*
- *How can we promote our joint work and the CEPEJ report?*

Workshop “ICT questions”

16.30-17.00 Coffee break

17.00-17.30 Conclusions (Room 2)