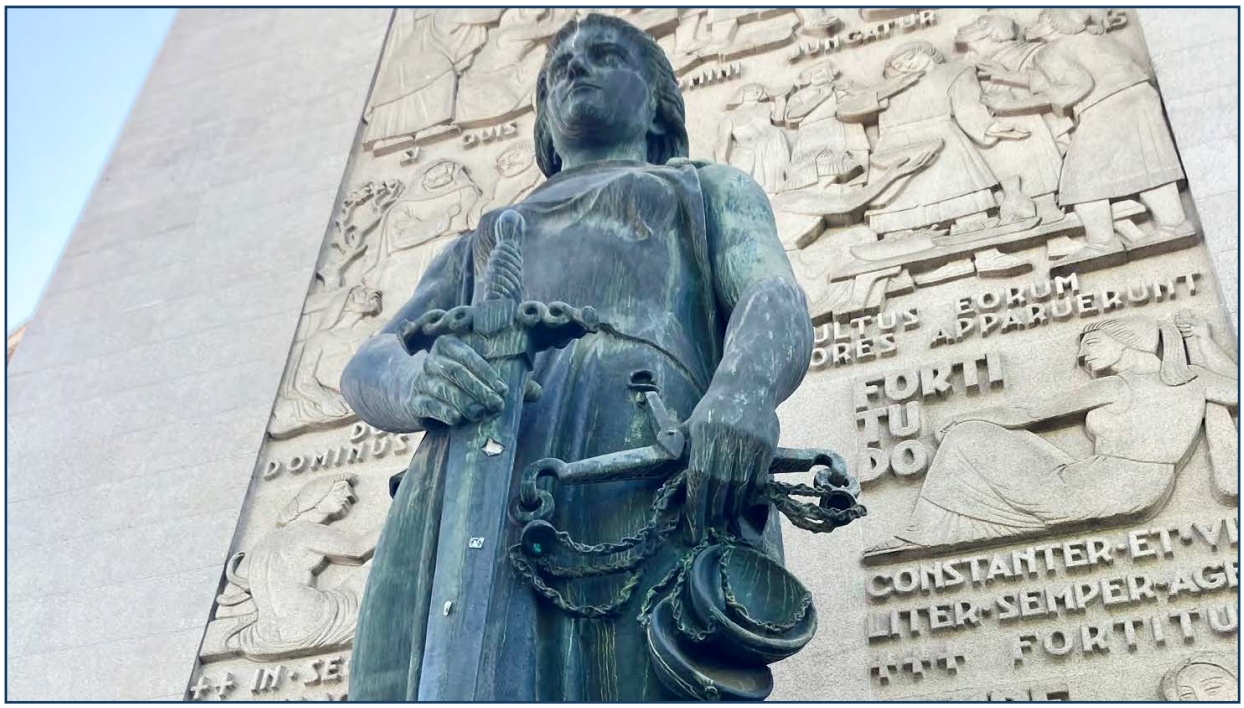
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STRENGTHENING JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE:

CAREER AND TRAINING OF JUDGES

PROGRAMME

LAUNCH CONFERENCE

Report of the first thematic review under the Council of Europe Plan of Action on strengthening judicial independence and impartiality (Sofia Action Plan)

17 NOVEMBER 2026
14:30 - 17:30

STRASBOURG
Palais de l'Europe
Room 11

& ONLINE

14:30 – 14:50 OPENING SESSION

Daniele Cangemi, Head of the Department of Human Rights and Justice Standards - DGI, Council of Europe

Signe Öhman, Chair, European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ)

José Igreja Matos, President, Consultative Council of European Judges (CCJE)

Focus: Frame the conference within the framework of the Sofia Action Plan, highlighting its contribution to strengthening judicial independence and advancing the New Democratic Pact for Europe.

14:50 – 15:00 PRESENTATION OF THE THEMATIC REVIEW REPORT

Julie Devys, Judge, Administrative Court of Strasbourg

Focus: Present key findings, trends, good practices, and remaining challenges identified by the thematic review.

15:00 – 15:45 SESSION I: JUDICIAL CAREER

Moderator: Guillaume Vieillard, CDCJ member

Career safeguards and judicial governance
Duro Sessa, Judge, Supreme Court of Croatia; CCJE member

Gender equality in the judiciary
Ivana **Jelić**, Vice-President, European Court of Human Rights

Selection and appointment based on objective criteria
Fabio Giovagnoli, Member of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission); *Ad hoc* Judge of the European Court of Human Rights; CCJE and CDCJ member

Focus: Examine how transparent career systems, effective safeguards and equal opportunities can contribute to judicial independence.

Q&A

15:45 – 16:15 ———— COFFEE BREAK ————

16:15 – 17:00 SESSION II: JUDICIAL TRAINING

Moderator: João Arsénio de Oliveira, CDCJ member; Chair of the CEPEJ Working Group on quality of justice (CEPEJ-GT-QUAL)

Judicial training and capacity-building
Ana-Maria Telbis, Head of the Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals Programme (HELP), Council of Europe

Artificial intelligence and emerging challenges
John Sorabji, Associate Professor of Law, University College London

Ethics and integrity in judicial training
Panagiota Vatikalou, Member of the Bureau of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO); Judge, Court of Appeal of Athens

Focus: Explore the role of judicial training in strengthening independence, resilience, and the capacity of judges to respond to emerging challenges.

Q&A

17:00 – 17:30 CLOSING SESSION

Daniele Cangemi, Head of the Department of Human Rights and Justice Standards - DGI, Council of Europe

Summary of key findings and next steps under the Sofia Action Plan
Lennart Houmann, Vice-Chair, European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ)

Closing remarks
Francesco Depasquale, President, European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ)

Closing keynote address
Margaret Satterthwaite, UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers

Focus: Highlight the main messages of the conference and consider priorities for further action to strengthen judicial independence and impartiality.