



European Network of Councils
for the Judiciary (ENCJ)

Réseau européen des Conseils
de la Justice (RECJ)

5 June 2026,
Paris

Declaration of Paris 2026 'Trust in the Judiciary'

I. Introduction

1. The European Union is founded on the rule of law, and judicial independence is one of its essential pillars. At a time when democratic institutions face growing scepticism and increasing pressure, maintaining public trust in the judiciary is more important than ever. Judges play a fundamental role in safeguarding democracy by ensuring that rights and freedoms are protected and that all public authorities act within the law.

2. The European Network of Councils for the Judiciary (ENCJ) has consistently affirmed that judicial independence and accountability are inseparable. Public trust depends on both. It is strengthened through transparent and merit-based judicial appointments, effective accountability mechanisms, high ethical standards, and open engagement with society.

II. The Role of Councils for the Judiciary

3. Public confidence in the judiciary requires independent institutions responsible for judicial governance, supported by adequate resources and protected from political interference.

4. Councils for the Judiciary play a central role in ensuring that the selection, appointment, evaluation, and promotion of judges are conducted according to objective, merit-based, and transparent criteria. Judicial careers must be governed by procedures that are open to scrutiny and free from undue influence.

5. High standards of judicial ethics must be upheld, supported by appropriate guidance and training. Where necessary, fair and clearly regulated disciplinary procedures must be ensured.

III. Strengthening Public Trust

6. Traditional transparency measures remain essential but are no longer sufficient on their own. Judicial institutions should continuously assess societal developments and seek structured feedback from court users, legal professionals, and other participants in judicial proceedings. Such feedback can improve the quality, accessibility, and public perception of the independence of justice, while fostering constructive dialogue between the judiciary and society.

7. Digitalisation offers significant opportunities to improve access to justice, efficiency, and transparency. Electronic case management systems, digital services, and broader public access to case law can strengthen confidence in the administration of justice. At the same time, digital

transformation must remain inclusive and must never create barriers for those unable to use digital tools. These developments should be under the control of the judiciary.

8. Artificial intelligence can support judicial work by reducing administrative burdens and improving the organization of information. However, AI must remain subject to meaningful human oversight and respect the principles of transparency, accountability, auditability, and non-discrimination. Judicial decision-making is an inherently human function and must not be replaced by automated processes.

9. Communication is an essential component of public trust. The judiciary should actively explain its role, the importance of the rule of law, and the meaning of judicial decisions, particularly in matters of significant public interest. Communication should be clear, accessible, adapted to different audiences, and conducted through appropriate channels, including modern digital platforms.

10. Judges should be perceived as an integral part of the societies they serve. Consistent with the requirements of judicial ethics and impartiality, initiatives that promote greater understanding of the judiciary and its work can contribute significantly to strengthening public trust. Judges should be educated in the need to create and maintain public trust, and be trained in the skills required to do so.

IV. Conclusion

11. Maintaining and strengthening public trust in the judiciary requires continuous commitment to independence, professionalism, transparency, and accountability. Councils for the Judiciary must assume a leading role in guiding the judiciary through the major transformations of our time, particularly in the fields of communication and digitalisation.

12. As guarantors of judicial independence, Councils must also ensure and supervise that technological innovation, including the increasing use of artificial intelligence, serves the administration of justice without undermining the essential role of judges, the rule of law and human rights. Public trust will be preserved only if modernisation is accompanied by unwavering respect for judicial independence, human decision-making, and the fundamental values of the rule of law.