



ENCJ NEWSLETTER



ENCJ Newsletter April – June 2025

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European Network of Councils
for the Judiciary (ENCJ)

Réseau européen des Conseils
de la Justice (RECJ)

European Network of Councils for the Judiciary

Adoption of a Declaration of Riga ‘Confronting Threats to the Rule of Law’

From June 4 to 6, the ENCJ General Assembly took place in Riga, Latvia. This year, the event was dedicated to “*Confronting Threats to the Rule of Law*”, a topic that was chosen taking into consideration the increase and diversity of challenges the ENCJ Members and Observers face with regard to the Rule of Law and judicial independence in particular.

The ENCJ President, Ms. Madeleine Mathieu, and the President of the Judicial Council of Latvia, Mr. Aigars Strupišs, noted that the event provided an opportunity to have an open and frank discussion on the shocks the judiciaries face and the possible ways to build more resilience.

The discussion was also opened by the EU Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law, and Consumer Protection, Mr. Michael McGrath, and representatives of CCJE, EAJ and ACA Europe. Two guest speakers also shared their insights on the topic. Professor Hans Petter Graver, from the University of Oslo, spoke on the “*Decay of the Rule of Law*”, while Mr. Andris Piebalgs addressed the topic of “*Safeguarding the Rule of Law in the EU: Is the Framework Adequate for Contemporary Challenges*”.

Furthermore, the ENCJ Members adopted the “[*Declaration of Riga*](#)” at the General Assembly. The document singles out the areas where challenges to the Rule of Law and judicial independence arise, such as relations with other state powers, changes in the media landscape, allocation of resources to the judiciary and challenges related to the digitalization of justice.





United Nations

International Day for Judicial Wellbeing

The United Nations has declared the 25th of July as the International Day for Judicial Wellbeing in what has been described as a “*historic moment*” for judges around the world. The specific date was chosen because it was the day when the Nauru Declaration on judicial wellbeing was adopted at a landmark conference.

Nauru submitted the resolution to the UN for the establishment of this new official commemoration with the co-sponsoring of more than 70 countries. Earlier this year, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution after 160 member states voted in favour of it.

Justice Rangajeeva Wimalasena, president of the Court of Appeal in Nauru, and the person responsible for kickstarting the process for the submission and approval of this resolution, stated that: *“Judicial wellbeing is not just about individual resilience, it is about safeguarding the independence, integrity and effectiveness of judicial systems worldwide. This recognition at the UN level is a testament to the growing awareness that a strong, well-supported judiciary is fundamental to justice and democracy. Let this be a call to action for all stakeholders to prioritise judicial wellbeing and ensure that those who uphold justice receive the support they need”*.





European Association of Judges
*Regional Group of the
International Association of Judges*

European Association of Judges

Statement on Material Independence of Judges

At its 2025 meeting in Yerevan, Armenia, the European Association of Judges (EAJ) issued a formal [statement](#) reaffirming that “*material independence*” is a vital element of judicial independence. The statement emphasizes that this type of independence encompasses more than basic remuneration, it also includes pensions, social security, bonuses and housing benefits.

The EAJ outlines that judges' remuneration schemes should ideally be established on a legal basis, with modalities and procedures clearly defined in legislation, to protect judges from external influence and to preserve the neutrality and integrity of judicial decision-making. If salaries are not fixed directly in law, equivalent protective measures must be in place. The EAJ also reiterated that Councils for the Judiciary and Judges' Associations must be able to participate effectively in legislative and negotiation processes concerning judges' remuneration and material security, as well as have the right to represent judges in court proceedings on these issues.

The statement asserts that judges, as one of the three powers of the state, should receive a level of material benefits comparable to representatives of the legislative and executive branches. It explicitly states that judges of Supreme Courts should have at least the same remuneration and material privileges as ministers or members of parliament. Finally, regarding adjustments to remuneration or pensions, the EAJ states that reductions should not be permitted except as a temporary measure during extraordinary financial crises and only if applied proportionally to all branches of the state. Judicial salaries must not be linked to performance metrics and should be adjusted for inflation to maintain purchasing power.





Venice Commission

Opinion on Moldova's Media Law Reform Package

In an [opinion](#) adopted on 13–14 June 2025, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe assessed a package of draft laws submitted by the Moldovan Parliament concerning legislative package on mass media regulation. These include a draft law on mass media, amendments to the Audiovisual Media Services Code (AMSC) and changes to the law on advertising. The opinion follows a request from the Moldovan Parliament President and comes amid Moldova's broader democratic and European integration reforms.

The Commission recognized the context behind the legislative effort: post-2019 de-oligarchisation reforms, Moldova's 2024 constitutional referendum confirming the country's EU trajectory, and a challenging media environment shaped by foreign disinformation, particularly from the Russian Federation following its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Moldova's media landscape has faced significant challenges, including political interference, lack of transparency in ownership, and exposure to hybrid threats.

The Venice Commission also acknowledged Moldova's intent to align national legislation with EU law, notably the Audiovisual Media Services Directive and the newly adopted European Media Freedom Act. It welcomes efforts to enhance media pluralism, transparency, and editorial independence, as well as the inclusion of clearer legal definitions, particularly for "*media*", "*press publication*", and "*disinformation*". However, the Commission notes that certain definitions remain overly restrictive or vague, potentially excluding non-traditional media actors or enabling overly broad regulatory discretion. The opinion recommends clarifying legal criteria, avoiding overlapping scopes, and strengthening independent self-regulatory mechanisms to support high journalistic standards. Overall, the Commission considered the legislative package to be a positive step but advises further refinement to align the laws fully with democratic and human rights principles.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
(VENICE COMMISSION)

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

OPINION
ON

THE LEGISLATIVE REFORMS ON MASS MEDIA REGULATION:
THE DRAFT LAW ON MASS MEDIA, THE DRAFT LAW AMENDING
THE AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA SERVICES CODE, AND THE DRAFT LAW
AMENDING THE LAW ON ADVERTISING

Adopted by the Venice Commission
at its 143rd Plenary Session
(online, 13 – 14 June 2025)

Court of Justice of the European Union



Judgment of the CJEU in *Inspektorat kam Visshia sadeben savet*

In the case of [*Inspektorat kam Visshia sadeben savet*](#) (joined cases C-313/23, C-316/23, C 332/23, 30 April 2025), the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) examines, through the application of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a key legal issue relating to judicial independence – the competence of Inspectorate at the Supreme Judicial Council of Bulgaria to request lifting banking secrecy on the accounts of certain judges, prosecutors, and their family members.

In the request for a preliminary ruling the referring Sofia District Court indicates that prior to answering the questions related to the application of the GDPR, an issue of the competence of the Inspectorate to submit a request to lift banking secrecy has to be ascertained, as the term of office of all 10 inspectors, elected by the National Assembly, expired in 2020. The Constitutional Court of Bulgaria ruled that the Bulgarian Constitution must be interpreted as meaning that the Inspector General and the inspectors whose terms of office have expired are to continue to perform their functions until the National Assembly elects new members of the Inspectorate, taking the view that maintaining the functions entrusted to the Inspectorate outweighs the risks of abuse by members thereof whose terms of office have expired.

The referring court was unsure, whether EU law laid down stricter conditions, including, if an extension of a mandate of the members of the authority empowered to initiate disciplinary proceedings against judges, public prosecutors or investigating magistrates was permissible, and, if so, what the criteria for assessing whether and for how long such an extension is permissible.

The CJEU held in this judgment that the principle of **judicial independence** under Article 19(1) TEU and Article 47 of the Charter **precludes a practice** whereby members of a judicial body, here the Inspectorate, **continue to perform their functions beyond their constitutionally defined terms of office without clear legal rules limiting such extensions**.

The second subparagraph of Article 19(1) TEU, read in conjunction with Article 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,

must be interpreted as meaning that the principle of judicial independence precludes a Member State's practice under which the members of a judicial body of that Member State – who are elected by its parliament for terms of office of a specific duration and are competent to scrutinize the activity of judges, public prosecutors and investigating magistrates in the performance of their functions, to carry out checks in respect of their integrity and the absence of conflicts of interest on their part, as well as to propose to another judicial body the initiation of disciplinary proceedings with a view to the imposition of disciplinary penalties on those persons – continue to perform their functions beyond the legal duration of their terms of office as laid down in the Constitution of that Member State, until that parliament elects new

members, where the extension of the expired terms of office does not have an express legal basis in national law containing clear and precise rules such as to circumscribe the performance of those functions and where it is not guaranteed that that extension is, in practice, limited in time (paragraph 139).





Domstolsstyrelsen (Denmark)

Denmark's Courts Launch Large-Scale Digitization of Criminal Cases

On June 11, 2025, the Court of Justice of Denmark [launched a major step in the digitization of the judiciary](#) by introducing a new system that digitizes approximately one-third of all criminal proceedings handled by the city courts. The initiative covers key case types such as constitutional hearings, intervention requests, and appointments of legal representatives, and it streamlines their transmission to the national courts. The goal is to improve case flow efficiency and prepare the ground for full digital support in the criminal justice system.

The digitization project, which automates the processing of an estimated 63,000 criminal cases annually, has been tested since January in city courts across the country. During the pilot phase, case information was entered manually. A fully automated system allowing seamless data exchange between police, prosecution, courts, and correctional services is expected to follow in March 2026.

Martin Wood, IT Director of the Court of Justice, stated that the new system will lead to *"more effective times of case and a more flexible case flow"* by replacing paper-based processes with digitally generated data. Christian Schou, President of the Court of First Instance in Holstebro, also noted the pilot phase was *"instructive"*, expressing confidence that the system will significantly ease proceedings in the long term.

The initiative also enables the digital transmission of appeals and detention-related decisions, previously sent via email or mail, between city and national courts. This became possible after the national courts adopted a new system on May 6, 2025, which has since been extended nationwide. The effort is part of Denmark's broader Criminal and Change Program, launched in 2023, aimed at overhauling digital infrastructure in the criminal justice system and expanding on earlier digitization of simplified fines cases.



National Courts Administration of Finland

Sustainability Report on Finnish Courts' Commitment to Accessible Legal Services

The [Finnish judiciary's latest sustainability report](#) underscores its ongoing commitment to ensuring access to legal services for all, a central goal in the 2033 Court Strategy, which envisions courts delivering “*high-quality legal certainty with fast-track and modern methods*”. As Director-General Pasi Kumpula notes in the report's introduction, independent and impartial courts are the foundation of the Rule of Law and societal stability, and Finland continues to rank among the world's leading countries in upholding these values.

Despite this strong position, the judiciary still faces long-standing challenges such as delays and the high costs of litigation. In 2024, notable progress was made through the extension of the e-Justice Management System (AIPA) to criminal cases, concluding a decade-long digitalization effort. At the same time, attention remains focused on strengthening human resources and modernizing digital tools to ensure efficient operations across the judicial system.

The report also highlights advances in electronic services aimed at improving accessibility and efficiency. Administrative and Special Courts continue to expand the use of the AIPA case-handling system to support electronic case initiation, while “*Oma Court*”, a new e-service platform for general courts, is on track for full rollout in 2025, beginning with divorce cases. Prepared by the Judicial Institute's Sustainable Development Network in collaboration with courts and access organizations, this fourth sustainability report reflects the judiciary's broader vision of justice that integrates legal, technological, and social sustainability.



New Online Resource Helps Young People Navigate the Justice System

The Finnish courts have published a comprehensive and youth-friendly information package aimed at answering common questions children and young people may have about legal proceedings. The new online resource, titled [*"The Child or Young Person in Court"*](#), offers accessible explanations about what happens in court and what it means to be involved in a case whether as a victim, witness, or suspect.

The website addresses a wide range of topics, including the role of courts, the rights of minors, and the meaning of various legal terms. It also provides guidance on sensitive issues such as experiencing violence or understanding laws around sexual relationships involving minors. Special attention has been given to presenting legally accurate information in age-appropriate language, recognizing that a seven-year-old will have very different questions from a seventeen-year-old.

According to Nina Immonen, a Specialist at the Court's Office involved in developing the content, the site fills a major gap: *"While there is some information for child victims, there's been very little for minors who are witnesses or accused. This site is quite unique in that regard"*. The resource invites feedback from professionals, such as judges, educators, social workers, and guardians, as well as from young users themselves, whose real questions helped shape the material. The platform is also expected to be a valuable tool for educators in teaching legal literacy in primary schools.



Republika Slovenija Sodni Svet (Slovenia)

Judicial Council of Slovenia Condemns Threats Against Judges

On May 22, 2025, the Judicial Council of the Republic of Slovenia issued a strong [statement](#) condemning recent anonymous threats directed at judges, as reported in local media outlets. The Council emphasized that such actions are entirely unacceptable in a democratic and lawful society, characterizing them as a direct assault on judicial independence and the foundational principles of the Rule of Law.

Judges carry out their duties in the public interest and are bound solely by the Constitution and the law. The Council underscored that any form of intimidation or pressure intended to influence judicial decisions constitutes a grave interference in judicial independence and poses a serious risk to the personal safety of judges, who must rule based on their conscience and legal conviction.

Calling on all competent institutions to respond swiftly and decisively, the Judicial Council urged authorities to take threats against judges seriously and ensure robust protection for members of the judiciary. It also reaffirmed its commitment to defending the integrity of the judicial system, stating that attacks on judges are, in effect, attacks on the constitutional order and on society itself. The Council concluded by reiterating its unwavering stance in upholding the Rule of Law and judicial independence as the cornerstones of a civilized state.



