



European Network of Councils
for the Judiciary (ENCJ)

Reseau européen des Conseils
de la Justice (RECJ)

Threats and Intimidation against Judges: assessing the current level of protection.

Report of the ENCJ working group
on Independence, Accountability
and Quality of the Judiciary

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1. Introduction¹

The functioning of the courts and the well-being of the judges and court staff are affected by the incidence of threats and intimidation as well as actual violence. When such events occur, the administration of justice is influenced. The ENCJ Survey among Judges on the Independence of the Judiciary 2025 (hereinafter Survey 2025) shows that a substantial number of them have to deal with threats. Actual violence is rare, but it does occur.

It seems that threats and violence against judges are a consequence of developments in society. Diminishing authority of the democratic institutions is one of the reasons, while in the recent past terrorism in national jurisdictions affected court security severely. In many countries special protection is given to judges in chambers dealing with terrorism and organized crime. In several countries, attacks on judicial independence take on a personal dimension by criticizing of and mobilizing against individual judges who are outspoken. Social media create an environment in which animosity can be stirred up, while organizers remain relatively anonymous. These developments, taken as a whole, may have a negative impact on the authority of the judiciary and thus increase inappropriate behaviour towards it. Obviously, the judiciary is not the sole object of such pressures. Still, it has to deal with it. It should be emphasized that not only the judges and court staff who are confronted with threats and violence are affected but society as a whole, as these instances affect the functioning of the courts and the access to the courts is endangered.

In this report, current arrangements regarding security in the ENCJ Members and Observers are described in general terms, based on a questionnaire among the Councils for the Judiciary and alternative governing bodies of the judiciary, and major issues are identified. Suggestions for strengthening protection of judges and court staff and for the required institutional arrangements are made. The report is written from the perspective of and primarily aimed at the Councils for the Judiciary or alternative governing bodies.

The questionnaire was distributed among the ENCJ members and observers alike. This means that countries both with and without Councils for the Judiciary (such as Austria and Germany) participated. In Germany, there are large differences among the Länder and the questions were answered for Rhineland Westphalia.

Before turning to the questionnaire, the outcomes of the ENCJ Survey among Judges on their Independence 2025, as starting point for this report, are summarized in Section 2. In Section 3, the main challenges and the ways to address them are discussed as they stem from the answers to the questionnaire, while in Section 4 the answers for each question are summarized. Section 5 concludes. The report provides an initial

¹ On the basis of the replies to the questionnaire of and the discussions in the Project Team on Independence, Accountability and Quality, this report was composed by Mr. Frans van Dijk (ENCJ) with the assistance of Milda Treigė (ENCJ). The draft report was discussed. The members of the Project team are listed in the Annex of the report.

overview and does not describe individual security measures. It is drafted in a manner that it does not contain confidential information and is publicly available.

2. Experience of the judges of Europe

The ENCJ Survey among Judges on their Independence 2025 (hereinafter – Survey among Judges 2025) included for the first time two questions pertinent to the issues at hand. The answers are reproduced here. Figure 1 concerns the personal experience of judges with threats and intimidation in the last three years.

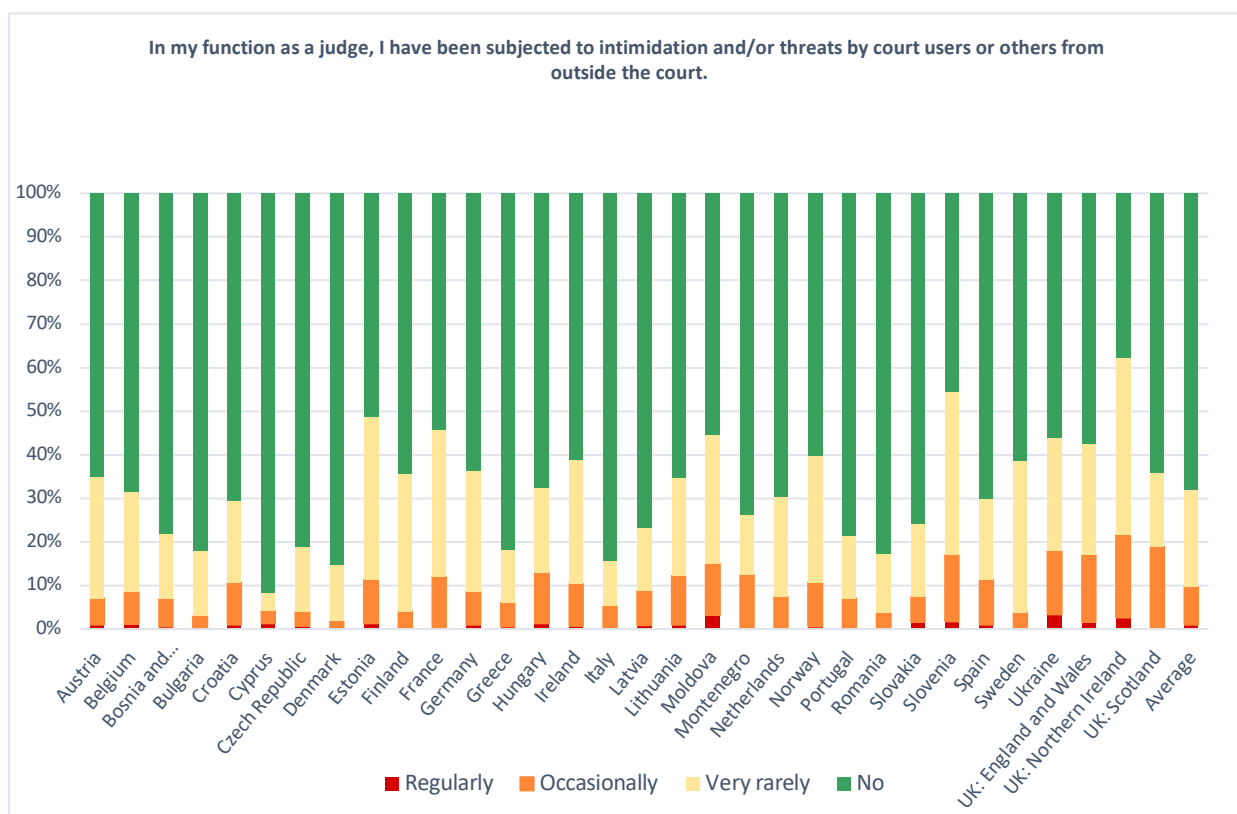


Figure 1 Occurrence of intimidation and threats by court users and others from outside the courts
Source: ENCJ (2025), ENCJ Survey among judges about the Independence of the Judiciary, Figure 16.

The figure shows that threats and intimidation are not as exceptional as they may seem. On average across all participating judiciaries, around 70% of the respondents have not personally experienced threats in the last three years. The other 30% did have that experience. Most of them report that this occurred *very rarely*. On average across jurisdictions, 10% of the judges were *occasionally* exposed to threats, while very few judges replied that this happened on a *regular* basis. The figure shows that, while some jurisdictions have a very high incidence of threats, the problem is not confined to them.

Physical attacks on judges are relatively rare, but do occur in all jurisdictions. Table 1 below gives a absolute numbers. These numbers are relatively small with 15 judges experiencing attacks regularly, 74 judges occasionally and 319 very rarely in all countries together out of 18.407 respondents. The figures only refer to the respondents of the Survey

and have not been extrapolated to all judges in the jurisdictions which implies that the incidence of violence in absolute numbers for all judges is substantially higher.

Table 1 Physical attacks on judges by court users or others from outside the courts, absolute number of respondents reporting attacks on themselves

	Regularly	Occasionally	Very rarely	Respondents		Regularly	Occasionally	Very rarely	Respondents
Austria	0	0	3	588	Lithuania	0	1	4	199
Belgium	1	2	14	429	Moldova	1	2	8	142
BiH	1	0	5	314	Montenegro	0	0	4	84
Bulgaria	0	1	6	507	Netherlands	0	2	2	656
Croatia	0	1	3	367	Norway	0	1	3	304
Cyprus	0	0	0	73	Portugal	1	4	1	980
Czech Rep.	0	0	2	286	Romania	2	4	8	1.281
Denmark	0	0	1	167	Slovakia	0	2	3	602
Estonia	0	0	2	78	Slovenia	0	0	4	172
Finland	0	0	2	290	Spain	4	3	15	1.052
France	1	29	122	1.879	Sweden	0	0	2	503
Germany	0	3	45	3.150	Ukraine	0	5	7	373
Greece	1	4	14	814	UK: E&W	1	2	12	668
Hungary	1	1	2	1.010	UK: NI	0	0	2	35
Ireland	0	2	4	128	UK: Scotland	0	0	1	94
Italy	0	5	15	563					
Latvia	1	0	3	211	Total	15	74	319	17.999

Source: ENCI (2025), ENCI Survey among judges about the Independence of the Judiciary, Table 2.

Recent events of violence in several jurisdictions underline the seriousness of the issue.

The Survey does not address the consequences for the judges concerned, their colleagues and the judiciary as a whole. CCJE Opinion No. 28 (2025) on the importance of judicial well-being for the delivery of justice addresses among other the impact of threats and violence on judicial well being. In the opinion CCJE notes that “threats to judges’ personal safety and security pose serious implications for judicial integrity and independence. When judges are subjected to intimidation or fear for their personal safety, and the safety of their families, there is a risk that their ability to adjudicate impartially may be compromised.”(CCJE p8). The CCJE also notes that “persistent threats and security concerns can have severe implications on the well-being of judges, leading to anxiety and feelings of isolation, particularly when judges are forced to alter their routines or restrict their public presence.” (CCJE p8).

The Opinion also points to the organized nature of threats. “In some member states, judges are exposed to targeted acts of violence, intimidation, abuse, and harassment, often driven by ill-informed media coverage and orchestrated political attacks on the judiciary. These hostile attacks seek to weaken judicial independence and impartiality and undermine public trust and confidence in the judiciary” (CCJE p10).

Against this background, it is important how the Councils for the Judiciaries and courts protect judges, staff and their organizations in general and what can be done to

improve to current policies.

3. Major issues arising from the questionnaire

Separation of state powers

Art 126 of the Constitution of Ukraine states that “the State ensures the personal security of judges and their families.” This summarizes succinctly the division of responsibilities in most judiciaries. In all countries, the judiciary is highly dependent on the executive for its security, generally at operational level, but also often relevant ministers take final decisions regarding particular measures. Many Judiciaries are not (fully) in control of personal protection policies for judges and their implementation and are highly dependent on the priorities, cooperation and good will of the executive. While some judiciaries have their own security personnel, in others regular police force often provides protection. Other government agencies such as those that are responsible for the protection of high-risk persons or objects in general are often involved, as well. Responsibilities are attributed to the Minister of Justice or, frequently, to the Minister of the Interior.

This dependence on the executive is to some degree unavoidable, in particular where there is no Council or the Council has no mandate. Courts are often small, may not have the required skills and do not have access to intelligence information. Therefore, court security is, like finance, an area of interdependence of the powers of the State. As this dependence on government is difficult to avoid, it should be regulated by jointly agreed policies and protocols at the operational level, thereby reducing discretionary powers of the executive. For instance, in one country in case of a threat against a judge, the court has to submit a motivated proposal to the minister of Justice to provide the necessary protection for a judge. While in practice such requests may not be refused, it leaves discretionary power with the government. At policy level, in another country, the Ministry of Justice prescribes security standards for court operations and generalized security measures that employees and judges are required to comply with in the event of security incidents.

Councils for the Judiciary often have limited or no mandate in this area, especially Councils with limited functions, mainly dedicated to the selection and appointment of judges, such as France and Belgium. This made it difficult for some Councils to fill in the questionnaire but, more importantly, it underlines the lack of coordination of the security of the courts and the safety of judges and court staff within the judiciary itself and a high dependence of the government. Thus, in several countries, individual courts are dealing with the relevant ministries and agencies.

From the viewpoint of judicial independence but also the effectiveness of protection measures, it does not seem good practice to leave security entirely or even primarily in the hands of the executive. The judiciary has experience with the risks involved in court cases and may be in a better position than other agencies to at least assess these risks, in particular, in other cases than criminal.

Specific problems arise when the politicians themselves instigate actions that threaten judges and mobilize their constituency against them. Recently, such events to a varying

degree were witnessed in France, Hungary, Moldova and Romania². Extreme criticism by political actors and calls for attacks on individual judges, in particular, by means of social media, are becoming increasingly common. Politicians create tensions which lead to threatening situations that they then are supposed to handle in their executive or legislative capacity. This in itself creates security hazards for judges, but it may also affect negatively the routine (ordinary) protection against case related threats. Such actions may also give rise to doubts about the willingness of the executive to provide regular protection.

Another issue at the systemic level remains the funding of the judiciary. The questionnaire shows that underfunding of the judiciary and/or of the agencies that have the responsibility to provide protection occurs regularly. This results in policies and specific security measures not being implemented and technology such as alarm buttons not working (e. g. in Lithuania, Slovenia and Ukraine).

Threats and intimidation by means of social media

It is striking that in nearly all judiciaries security policies do not differentiate between medium, in particular, online or offline. The argument is given that in a risk analysis the differences become visible and tailored measures can be taken. There seems to be a tendency to consider online threats as less dangerous and less immediate than threats in person (based on arguments such as distance and empty talk). The question may be raised whether this approach is still sufficient.

The Spanish Council for the Judiciary argues that social media creates a new challenge that needs to be considered. Social media can mobilize forces that endanger (or put pressure on) individual judges but also affect the judiciary as a whole and its independence (see above mentioned CCJE opinion). The Survey among Judges 2025 has shown that many judges (12%) believe that in their country decisions or actions of individual judges have, during the last three years, been inappropriately influenced by actual, or anticipated, social media postings. While inappropriate influence of the traditional media is seen by more judges to be affecting decisions (19%), social media is often used for extreme threats against individual judges. The ENCJ Survey among Lawyers 2025 also shows (for the judiciaries about which we have sufficient data) a stronger influence of media and social media than before. Postings on social media exert an insidious psychological pressure on judges. It cannot be ruled out that under such pressure judges function less well. Unsafe environments are detrimental to the functioning of judges and thus to the independent delivery of justice.

There is a need to react to or pro-actively affect social media campaigns to protect the reputation of the judiciary and reduce security risks. This means security policies should include specific measures regarding pressure on social media and be explicitly linked with communication strategies. In addition to security measures, a communication strategy is required to protect the reputation of the judiciary in the

² Statement of the ENCJ Executive Board of 17 December 2025 on '[Pressure and Intimidation of Judges through Media](#)'.

media and on social media.

To reduce the exposure of individual judges, such measures as hearing (sensitive) cases by a panel of judges and not a single judge and by announcing decisions by the whole panel, rather than only the presiding judge or judge rapporteur should be considered.

Need for comprehensive security policies of the Judiciary

The replies to the questionnaire show that most Judiciaries have security protocols to deal with threats and violence. As noted above, in many countries these policies and protocols were, however, determined by the executive and the role of judicial authorities in their creation was (is) often limited. Such protocols focus on who does what in case of threats and violence. While these protocols are, of course, of utmost importance, it seems necessary that judiciaries, preferably at the national level, would develop overarching comprehensive security policies that put the above “inter-institutional” policies and protocols in a broader context. Another reason for a comprehensive policy is that the involved government agencies generally focus solely on criminal matters, while aggressive behaviour in courts also in other areas of disputes occurs and perhaps even more so (e.g. family law). See further below section 4.

A key element of a comprehensive policy of the judiciary concerns the values that a policy must maintain. Art. 6 ECHR stipulates the right to a fair and public hearing. Security measures should not interfere with the public character of court proceedings, except in specific circumstances such as endangering public order, national security and private life of parties (Art.6 ECHR). Closing hearings to the public is detrimental to access to justice and the trust in the judiciary by society. While hearings can, in principle, be made accessible online, even by direct streaming, if so chosen by the national jurisdictions, this should not replace the presence in person at the trial. Lack of resources to ensure proper security should not be an argument to reduce public access.

It is advisable that a security policy of the Judiciary would cover at least the following topics:

1. Principles including the public character of trials.
2. Security at the court houses and court rooms, extending to not only criminal proceedings but to proceedings in all areas of law, including family law.
3. Protection of judges and staff in high-risk (high-profile) cases and under actual threats.
4. Measures to increase the resilience of judges and staff in general and after incidents.
5. Communication with society in response to political, media and social media excessive criticism on judiciary, fake news about and threats against the judiciary and, in particular, the person of a particular judge.
6. Information provision about judges such as asset declaration from the perspectives of accountability and safety.
7. Protection of information.²

A strong case can be made for a uniform security policy for the Judiciary as a whole, as in this respect differences between similar courts do not seem justified. Also, the judiciary of a country has a common reputation to which all judges and courts contribute. Councils for the Judiciary should take up this task, if they e not done so yet. While this may require for some that their mandates are broadened, also possibilities and opportunities to engage in this task voluntarily and to show the initiative should also be explored. It should be noted that most Councils for the Judiciary already speak out in defence of judges, who are subjected to threats and intimidation, and the judiciary as a whole, including attacks on its independence.

Need to support judges and court staff to strengthen their resilience

The answers to the questionnaire show that judiciaries have different approaches to supporting judges and court staff and strengthening their resilience. While some Councils have not yet been active in this area, others have been promoting training programs aimed at dealing with aggression and violence at court hearings, raising awareness and providing practical tools for judges and staff in high-risk positions. Court management can also play a role in preparing personnel for incidents and familiarizing them with security protocols. Several Councils for the Judiciary have engaged psychologists providing counselling for judges. While the initial purpose may have been to deal with work pressure and stress, counselling in the case of (repeated) threats and violent incidents seems to be a logical extension.

Several Councils for the Judiciary note that the nature of the work exposes judges to negative emotions and aggression of the parties to the disputes and that resilience is expected from judges. yet, tensions are increasing and, where possible, resilience should be strengthened.

² See CCJE, Opinion 28.

4. Overview of response to questions

This section provides an overview of answers to the questionnaire per question.

Has the judiciary (council, courts, other) a policy on threats, intimidation and violence against judges and court staff? If so, what is the main content?

Nearly all judiciaries report that they have a security policy in some form, generally focused on the operational division of responsibilities (“who does what”) in case of threats against judges and court staff. Explicit policies seem to lack in Belgium, Finland, Greece and Slovakia. Some judiciaries report more comprehensive policies that, in addition to protection of judges in high risk (high-profile) cases and in instances of threats, cover matters such as the security of the court houses, psychological support for judges and staff who are confronted with threats and violence and strengthening the resilience of judges and staff (e.g. Austria, the Netherlands).

Where policies have a single focus on the response to threats, these policies are generally determined by the government, most often the Minister of Justice, and give a dominant role to government agencies, either under the Ministry of Justice or that of Interior. Exceptions exist, however. For instance, in Ukraine the responsibilities rest fully within the judiciary. In this country, a court security service exists which is accountable to the High Council of Justice.

To illustrate the more common arrangements, the example of Italy is given. As explained in the Italian response, protection measures for magistrates and civil servants fall within the ordinary system of public security, provided by law. Decisions on assigning protection are made by the Prefect (local representative of the Ministry of the Interior), in coordination with the Provincial Committee for Public Order and Security. These authorities assess the level of risk based on investigative information and the nature of the proceedings handled by the magistrate.

A large variety exists in the government agencies involved, ranging from the regular police to agencies specialized in protecting high risk persons or objects. As example of the latter, in Slovakia the Office of the Ministry of the Interior for the Protection of Constitutional Officials and Diplomatic Missions (OPCD) is responsible.

As to the allocation of responsibilities within the judiciary, where Councils have a role in this, a variety of models in the division of responsibilities between Councils and the courts exist. If responsibilities are solely at the level of the court, there is little coordination between the courts and the lead is, generally, with the Minister of Justice. In this situation, differences in arrangements are due to the court size with small courts having minimal arrangements. An examination of individual courts in Sweden reveals notable variations between larger and smaller courts, with the larger courts demonstrating a significantly higher propensity to develop and implement their own security policies and crisis management plans. In Sweden, currently a national format is being developed. Portugal is an example of a country where the Council for the Judiciary plays a role. As described in the response of Portugal, whenever a threat occurs, the information is sent directly to the High Council for the Judiciary, which assesses the need for preventive/precautionary security for the magistrate (before assessing

the degree of threat) and immediately requests it from the Public Security Police, at the same time, an urgent assessment of the threat is requested in order to adjust the security already granted to the judge as a precautionary measure.

In some judiciaries, the regime for the protection of victims and witnesses (Greece, Romania) is applied to judges as well.

It is noteworthy that programs to address increasing threats and violence against public service providers, including the judiciary, have been initiated by several governments, focusing on resilience and communication (e.g. Rhineland Westphalia in Germany).

The answers to the questionnaire showcase that while policies in some jurisdictions exist, there may be difficulties with their implementation. Lack of financial resources is a major factor in several judiciaries (e.g. Lithuania) as a result of which policies are not fully implemented.

Another observation is that policies see to operational security matters in the daily execution of the judicial function. The arrangements do not specifically consider political actors, also in the government, criticizing and threatening the judiciary and individual judges on their judgments. In the case of Romania, the recently agreed upon security policy clashes with criticism on judges by political actors in government.

All in all, it would seem that each judiciary needs its own comprehensive security policy, in addition to the specific “inter-institutional” policies in place, to guarantee, in as far as possible, that the safety of judges and court staff is considered from all relevant angles.

Is there a protocol to follow when a threat is made against a judge or against court staff, in person or online? Does the approach differ between in-person and online (social media) threats?

Nearly all countries have a protocol on what to do in case of actual threats. The policies, discussed above, are elaborated in protocols, in the form of inter-institutional protocols. Generally, a procedure is set out in which the judiciary requests protection for a judge and the government decides to grant such protection based on a risk analysis. Often, protection is urgent and is granted immediately or automatically, followed by a risk analysis and a decision to continue or terminate the protection.

In nearly all countries, the same approach is used for in-person and online threats. Respondents argue that the differences between both types of threats come to light in the phase of risk-analysis. However, it is also noted that in case of online threats perpetrators are and often remain unknown. This approach to threats and intimidation by social media focuses on the practical handling of individual instances of threats and intimidation and does not address the broader issue of how to address the specific dynamics of online and in particular social media threats.

Following up on the previous question, are criminal complaints filed? In which cases?

While criminal complaints are generally filed, systems differ as to procedure and severity. At the minimum level, regular criminal law applies and the judge who is threatened can file a criminal complaint (e.g. Slovakia). In Hungary, filing a criminal complaint or reporting a petty offence (misdemeanour) is a possible route. In this country, the threatened judge or staff member

does not receive structured, systemic support. A report is typically made where there is a suspicion of an offence under the Hungarian Criminal Code (e.g. violence against a public official, harassment, coercion, threats, misuse of personal data).

In other countries, an investigation by the Public Prosecution is mandatory (Portugal). Similarly, in Slovenia, all state authorities and organizations with public authority are obliged to report criminal offences which are prosecutable ex officio. In many jurisdictions, threats against a judge are often an aggravating circumstance.

In the Netherlands, court management reports the incident to signal that the judge(s) or court staff subjected to the threat do not stand alone. In Rhineland Westphalia (Germany), the approach is similar. In both countries, this is part of broader efforts in the public sector to combat threats, intimidation and violence against public sector personnel. Increasing violence against the police but also health care personnel seems to be a trend. In the Netherlands, a program "Safe public task" includes fast treatment of cases and more severe penalties. In Rhineland Westphalia a similar program "Safe at work" is pursued.

Do judges who have been threatened get temporary or permanent protection? Does protection extend to their families?

A distinction is made between permanent and temporary protection. While in Northern Ireland most judges have permanent protection, in other judiciaries (e.g. France, Italy, Ireland, Ukraine) permanent protection is confined to specific chambers of courts, dealing with terrorism and organized crime such as the Special Criminal Court in Ireland. In Ukraine, judges of the High Anti-Corruption Court have additional security guarantees. Article 10 of the Law of Ukraine "On the High Anti-Corruption Court" stipulates that judges of the HACC, and, if necessary, their family members, are provided with round-the-clock security, as well as round-the-clock security for the judge's personal or official residence.

Temporary protection is provided in case of specific threats and generally extends to family, if needed. This may relate to criminal cases but also to other types of disputes. In particular, family cases regularly lead to negative emotions and threats.

If actual violence occurs against a judge or court staff, which measures are taken?

Immediate security measures are taken by the police or other competent authority and a criminal investigation is launched. Coercive measures may be applied to the aggressor, including preventive detention, if the legal requirements are met.

As to prevention, is a risk assessment made upfront in potentially high-risk cases, in view of protecting parties as well as judges and court staff?

In all jurisdictions risk assessment plays a role. However, according to most respondents, there is no uniform methodology or systematic approach. Risk assessment is often triggered by actual threats that are subsequently evaluated (Romania, Bulgaria). In Hungary, risk assessment

does not necessarily mean a formalized procedure based on a uniform methodology, but rather an appraisal of the circumstances of a particular case (e.g. the seriousness and nature of the offence, the number of defendants, criminal records, the expected level of public interest and prior threats).

A different approach is found, for instance, in the Netherlands. All cases, where any risk is expected, are assessed in advance and are assigned a risk classification according to a national methodology. Depending on the risk assessment, appropriate measures are taken for handling the case as well as for the involved judges and staff. Similarly, in Spain a risk assessment and vulnerability analysis is carried out in each case susceptible to protection and, depending on the result, the Secretary of State determines the level of protection and determines the number of officials assigned to such protection. In the event of the investigation of complex cases or cases with great media and social impact, preventive measures can be adopted.

In Italy, the assessment is carried out on a case-by-case basis by the public security authority, and protection may also be extended to family members. In Ukraine: The High Council of Justice assesses the reality of threats, regardless of whether they are expressed in person or on the Internet.

In the court room, is security present, always or in specific cases? If not, is there a red button to alert security? Are other physical measures in place to restrict defendants or others?

According to the replies, only in few judiciaries security personnel is present at every public hearing (Greece, Northern Ireland). In other countries, security personnel is only present in hearings in high risk cases. In addition, in criminal cases with defendants in detention, guards escorting the defendants are always present.

Nearly all judiciaries strive to have alarm buttons in all court rooms and other relevant spaces. Some succeed (Bulgaria), but in others implementation is incomplete or there are doubts about operability and effectiveness (e.g. Hungary). As Ireland notes, “there has been work done, and still continuing, on ensuring all panic buttons are operational and also seeking to streamline where those panic alerts are answered e.g. plans to have all panic alarms linked to a centralised Police base.” Financial constraints affect implementation (e.g. Lithuania).

Technology can play a role to increase effectiveness. In Austria, alarm buttons are linked to the audio and video registration in the court room providing direct information about what is happening and preparing security staff how to intervene. Furthermore, court room design is used to contain violence, for instance, by confining defendants or the public to enclosed areas. In the Netherlands furniture is designed to make attacks difficult.

It should be added that in the answers doubts are expressed about the availability of security personnel when needed and about the actual performance of security systems such as alarm buttons.

Can violence be instigated by professional arrangements of the Judiciary itself, such as asset declaration, and, if so, what is done to prevent such events?

Asset declaration plays an important role in banning judicial corruption and furthering the accountability of judges. When published on the internet, the data is available for everyone. While intended to promote transparency, this has also been shown to endanger judges in certain instances. Such a disclosure reveals information to criminals about the assets of a judge. It may also be used to discredit judges by publishing about their assets in a suggestive and demeaning manner on social media (Romania).

The same may happen with registers about secondary positions of judges. This creates a dilemma between accountability and vulnerability. Currently, the solution adapted in many judiciaries is to regulate access to the data bases of judges' asset declarations (e.g. Slovakia, Portugal and Hungary).

Are efforts made to increase the resilience of judges and court staff? Are judges and court staff trained in how to deal with threats? Does this extend to their families?

Judges are aware that the public nature of their function and the inherent focus on conflict require resilience from them and that that is expected from them (Bulgaria, Ukraine). This, however, does not stand in the way of supporting judges to strengthen their resilience. While several Councils have experience and work on this, others are only starting. The measures that are taken in judiciaries can be categorised as follows.

Management support

In Austria, it is recommended that in the courts department heads regularly focus on the topic of security within their areas of responsibility, with particular emphasis on informing staff about what to do in the event of an alarm or evacuation, how to interact with security services and authorities, and internal crisis management within the judiciary. In Ireland, there has been staff training on emergency measures. This is likely to happen in many judiciaries at court level.

Psychological support

In several Councils (in particular, Portugal, Romania, Ireland), support by psychologists (counselling for judges) has been introduced in general. This can obviously be of help in the face of threats, intimidation and violence. In Portugal, within the High Council for the Judiciary, there is an Occupational Health Office, staffed by a psychologist, which judges can turn to whenever necessary, contributing to psychological support and strengthening their ability to respond to situations of pressure or professional stress.

Training

The answers show that practices are mixed. In four jurisdictions no systemic training is taking place. In the other jurisdictions training is available. A common topic is how to deal with aggression and violence in the courtroom. Another topic is creating awareness and providing practical tools for employees in high-risk positions. Austria and Bulgaria show a particularly systematic approach. In Ukraine, resilience training is focused on the war.

Is budget available to fund these activities and ensure that judges and court staff are safe in court and out of court to reasonable standards? How much is needed for this purpose, as percentage of the total budget of the judiciary? Are the judges who are receiving protection, asked to finance a part of the protection?

Underfunding of the judiciary for this purpose or of the organizations that provide protection seems to be a recurring issue. As a result, policies are not always implemented and technology such as alarm buttons is not working. Lack of funding was explicitly mentioned concerning Belgium, Lithuania, Slovenia and Ukraine. In Slovenia the problem is recognized. In January 2026, a special interministerial working group tasked with improving the protection of judicial office-holders completed its work. It was established that a systemic overhaul is needed, including increased funding and enhanced training for judges and court staff.

Nearly all councils are not able to provide data on the costs of security. The reason behind this being the spread of relevant budgets across several agencies and the incorporation of costs in broader budgets. Therefore, a simple rule of a percentage of the court budget that should be allocated to security cannot be derived.

Judges do not have to bear the costs of protective measures, also regarding their personal homes, except for elementary expenditure (good locks).

5. Conclusion

The ENCJ Survey among Judges 2025 as well as the CCJE's Opinion No. 28 'On the importance of judicial well-being for the delivery of justice' show that threats, intimidation and violence against judges and court staff are an important concern, not only for the persons involved but for society as whole. While the urgency differs from country to country, such pressures affect the functioning of the courts and may impair access to the courts. This report deals with the practical arrangements both – available and required – to protect judges, court staff and the courts as such. It is based on a questionnaire among the members and observers of the ENCJ.

The major issues arising from the questionnaire are presented in Section 3 together with suggestions how to deal with these issues. Section 4 reports along the lines of the questionnaire and provides more detail. The *first* of the four major issues that were identified concerns the lack of separation of the state powers in the arrangements of the security of the courts. The judiciary is highly dependent on the executive and policies on the protection of judges are largely determined by the government and implemented by government agencies. While this dependence is to some degree unavoidable, it does not seem good practice to leave security entirely or even primarily in the hands of the executive. The judiciary has experience with the risks involved in court cases and may be in a better position than other agencies to at least assess risks, in particular in other cases than criminal.

The *second* issue concerns threats and intimidation by means of social media which put insidious pressure on judges. It is striking that in nearly all judiciaries security policies do not differentiate between medium, in particular, online or offline. The argument is given that in the phase of a risk analysis the differences become visible. However, there is a need to react to or pro-actively affect social media campaigns to protect the reputation of the judiciary and reduce the security risks for individual judges. Therefore, it is suggested that security policies would encompass measures dealing with pressure on social media and be possibly linked with communication strategies. This topic requires further elaboration.

The *third* issue, security policies, protocols and measures of the Judiciary seem to be fragmented and incomplete. It seems important that judiciaries, preferably at the national level, develop comprehensive security policies that put specific "inter-institutional" policies and protocols in a broader context. This broader context should start with the principles that apply. These include in particular the public character of hearings (Art. 6 ECHR). It is suggested that a security policy of the judiciary should at least take into consideration the following aspects: (1) principles, (2) security at the court houses, (3) protection of judges and staff in high risk cases and under actual threats, (4) measures to increase the resilience of judges and staff in general and after incidents (see below), (5) communication with society in response to political, media and social media excessive criticism on, fake news about and threats against the judiciary and, in particular, the person of the judge, (6) information provision about judges such as asset declaration from the perspectives of safety and accountability and (7) data protection. Councils for the Judiciary should be active in taking up this task, if they have not done so yet. However, restrictions due to their mandate may occur.

The *fourth* issue, there seems to be a need for an increased support to judges and court staff to strengthen their resilience. Support by management, psychological support and, in particular, training, for instance, in dealing with aggression and violence in court hearings or dealing with the insidious pressure of threats on social media, could contribute to strengthening resilience. Many judiciaries have already taken measures, but others are still at the beginning.

Annex.

Members of the Project Team

First name	Family name	Institution: ENCJ Members/Observer
Petra	Peer	Ministry of Justice, Austria
Gerhard	Reissner	Ministry of Justice, Austria
Bénédicte	Inghels	High Council of Justice of Belgium
Georgi	Kuzmanov	Supreme Judicial Council of Bulgaria
Tsvetinka	Pashkunova	Supreme Judicial Council of Bulgaria
Anna	Liski	NCA Finland
Marie	Dubuisson	CSM France
Céline	Parisot	CSM France
Martina	Von Storch	Ministry of Justice, Germany
Astrid	Bode	Ministry of Justice, Germany
Maria	Gkana	SJC AJ Greece
Agnes	Hild	Judicial Council of Hungary
Agnes	Kozlovszky	Judicial Council of Hungary
Brian	O'Moore	Judicial Council of Ireland
Mary Rose	Gearty	Judicial Council of Ireland
Dario	Scaletta	CSM Italy
Laura	Patelli	CPGA Italy
Dace	Sulmane	Judicial Council of Latvia
Gabriele	Granskiene-Juodkaite	Judicial Council of Lithuania
Tomas	Vanckus	Judicial Council of Lithuania
Nancy	Carier	CNJ Luxembourg
Selinde	Bokx-Boom	Raad voor de rechtspraak Netherlands
Areane	Dorsman (from 16 April 2026)	Raad voor de rechtspraak Netherlands
Ion	Guzun	SCM Moldova
Frode	Elgesem	NCA Norway
Rita	Mota Soares	CSM Portugal
Flavia	Florenta	SCM Romania
Roxana	Chiuariu	SCM Romania
Domen	Horvat	Sodni Svet Slovenia
Sara	Fredriksson	NCA Sweden
Paula	Boix Sampedro	Spanish General Council for the Judiciary
María Pilar Esther	Rojo Beltrán	Spanish General Council for the Judiciary
Ken	Duncan	Judges' Council Northern Ireland
Andrew	Henshaw	Judges' Council England and Wales
Andrew	Stewart	Judicial Council of Scotland
Madeleine	Mathieu	ENCJ President
Frans	Van Dijk	ENCJ Advisor
Milda	Treige	ENCJ Director
Aleksandra	Switalska	ENCJ Senior Policy Advisor
Alberto	Manicardi	ENCJ Intern