



European Network of Councils
for the Judiciary (ENCJ)

Réseau européen des Conseils
de la Justice (RECJ)

ENCJ Work plan 2022-2023



Co-funded by the Justice Programme of the European Union

INTRODUCTION

In June 2021 the ENCJ Strategy 2022-2025 was adopted. This is therefore the second work plan based on the new Strategy. The 2022-2023 work plan sets out the actions that the ENCJ wishes to undertake from July 2022 to June 2023 with the aim of attaining the strategic objectives set out in the 2022-2025 Strategy.

1. THE FUNCTIONING OF THE ASSOCIATION

1.1. The General Assembly

A General Assembly, members-only session will be held on 1 June 2022 in Athens. At the 2022 General Assembly meeting a new President and four Board Members will need to be elected. For the 2023 General Assembly no offer to host the meeting has been received yet.

1.2 The Executive Board

The Executive Board will have to deal with a number of issues:

- Implement the ENCJ Strategy
- Follow the developments in some particular Member States closely
- Maintain and where appropriate strengthen relations with the EU Institutions and the various bodies of the Council of Europe as well as the other judicial networks and networks of stakeholders such as the CCBE
- Between September 2022 and Spring 2023 a number of Councils will start a new mandate. The Board will reach out to the new members of these Councils to ensure a smooth transition and get the new members involved in the ENCJ. To assist with the transition the ENCJ Office will draft an introductory guide to the ENCJ.
- To strengthen the functioning of the Association the Board will:
 - Study how to enhance the level of commitment of Members and share the burden of the work in a more balanced way between the Members. The Board proposes to set up an internal organisation working group that will look at the functioning of the organs, the involvement of the Members and that will propose an improvement plan.
 - Study how to improve the impact and quality of the work of ENCJ. Study composition of project teams and how to ensure that the relevant expertise is available (call on Members and Observers to nominate appropriate participants / involve academics / stakeholders. See how ENCJ can use the knowledge and expertise of the ENCJ Members and Observers. For instance, by identifying groups of experts in staff of Members i.e. communication advisors / IT experts / GDPR staff etc.
 - Draft and adopt a communication plan external communication. Strengthen the ENCJ brand & style
 - Raise awareness for gender equality and diversity
 - Cooperation with the other legal professions through the recently set-up EU forum of the Judicial Professions which is facilitated by ERA. In December 2022 a conference on the attractiveness of the legal professions will be organised in Brussels (hybrid event) for representatives of the various networks.

1.3 Finances of the Association

The Executive Board is responsible for the budgetary issues of the Association. The ENCJ signed a Framework Partnership Agreement with the European Commission which guarantees funds for the years 2022-2025. In September 2022 the proposal for the Operating Grant for 2023 from the European Commission needs to be submitted.

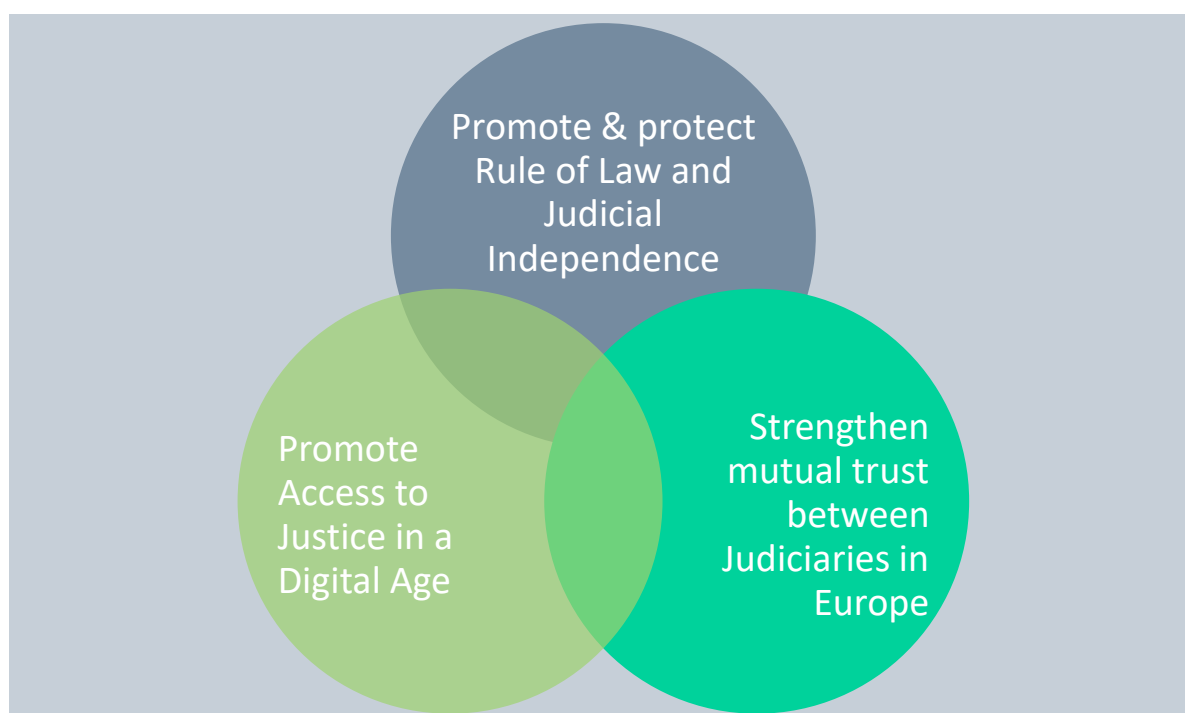
1.2.2 The Permanent Office

The Executive Board is responsible for the functioning of the ENCJ's Permanent Office. From 1 September 2021, the office has a staff of 2.2 fte (Monique van der Goes Director 1 fte/ Aleksandra Switalska, policy and administrative support officer 1 fte/ Frans van Dijk, researcher/ advisor 0.2 fte).

The Office will continue to organise all meetings of the ENCJ bodies: the General Assembly and the Executive Board. The Office also deals with the financial management of the Association (EC Subvention/drafting budgets/preparing accounts/raising payments etc.).

2. IMPLEMENTATION ENCJ STRATEGIC PLAN

The ENCJ strategic plan 2022-2025 was adopted at the General Assembly on 2 June 2021. The plan served as a basis for the EU Framework Partnership Agreement, which will guarantee the annual Operating Grants from the European Commission.



1. To strengthen the position of the judiciary in a democratic state

The ENCJ will continue to strengthen the role of Councils for the Judiciary as guarantors of the independence of the judiciary especially vis a vis the other State Powers and the EU Institutions. ENCJ will make public statements when and where relevant draw attention to this issue.

The ENCJ will promote its common standards for the set-up and functioning of Councils for the Judiciary.

ENCJ will **speak up** for Councils for the Judiciary and actively make the point that the judiciary is the third State Powers and should be acknowledged by the other State Powers. The ENCJ will **continue to promote dialogue** between the three State Powers on the EU and the national level.

The ENCJ will strive to obtain a **formalised consultation status** within the European Union for national Judiciaries through the ENCJ and other relevant EU level judicial networks.

2. To promote and preserve the Rule of Law

When ENCJ learns through its Members or Observers or otherwise, the Rule of Law in a Member State may be in jeopardy especially in relation to the independence of the judiciary as a whole or of the judges, ENCJ will provide support if desirable. Even though, the ENCJ is not in a position to get involved in any political dispute, it can give its opinion on the compliance of any planned reform or with general European or specific ENCJ Standards in this field. The ENCJ will also seek cooperation with the European Institutions in such a case. Actions by the ENCJ may include open letters to the EU Institutions, public statements and press releases.

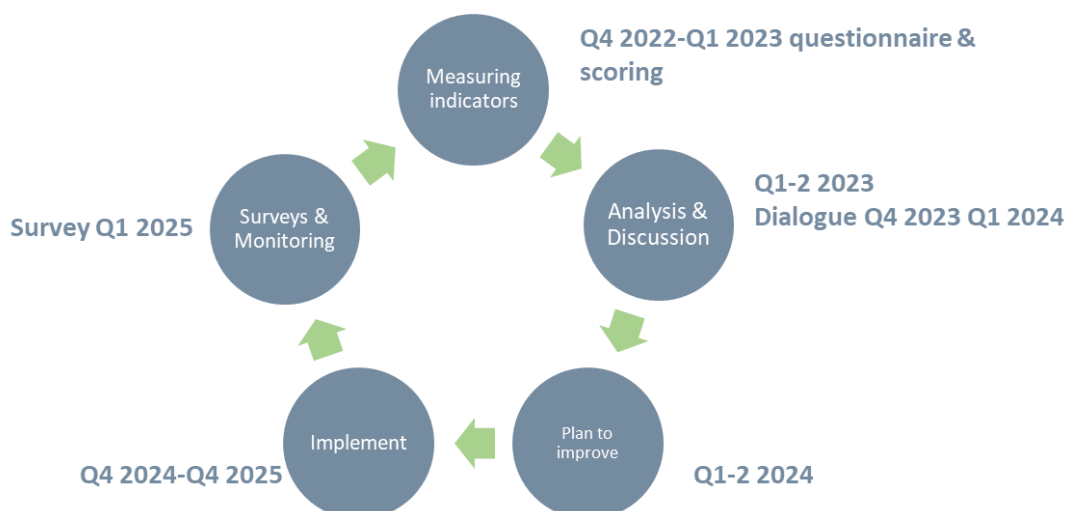
The ENCJ will continue cooperation with partners and stakeholders to promote and preserve the Rule of Law:

- Cooperate with DG Justice in the further development of the Justice Scoreboard
- Contribute to the EU Rule of Law report by providing an overview of current challenges
- Continue to be an interlocutor for the European Commission on issues such as the functioning of Councils for the Judiciary, Judicial Independence, Quality and Efficiency of Justice
- Engage with the European Parliament especially in relation to the Rule of Law and Judicial Independence
- Continue to engage with the Court of Justice of the European Union
- Work with FRA on strengthening the Rule of Law in the EU including Access to Justice
- Cooperate with Council of Europe: CCJE and Venice Commission
- Strengthen the relations with the other Judicial Networks, to share concerns about challenges to the Rule of Law and plan and plan and implement joint actions
- Raise awareness for Rule of Law challenges or challenges to Judicial Independence by organising lunch seminars for Members and Observers on specific countries.

3. To promote the independence and accountability of the judiciary

Continue the multi-annual project on independence and accountability.

Cycle 2022-2025



Activities for 2022-2023

- Filling out of the updated indicators questionnaire, scoring and mapping challenges to Independence and Accountability.
- Further development of the I&A indicators:
 - the role of inspection services in relation to the current indicator on external review
 - formulation of an ENCJ opinion with regard to formal and ceremonial roles of government that in principle can reduce the independence of the judiciary and
 - integration of the work on the image of justice and public confidence in the I&A framework and indicators.
- Promotion of implementation of Court Users Surveys across Europe

4. To promote the quality of the Judiciary

- Filling out of the updated indicators Quality questionnaire, scoring and mapping challenges to Quality
- Developing a Framework for Councils for the Judiciary on how to ensure Quality

5. To promote a European Judicial Culture: Thematic dialogue groups

Promoting a European Judicial Culture based on shared values and shared experiences by setting up thematic dialogue groups in which a small number of representatives of the ENCJ Members share experiences and best practices. In 2022-2023 the work on Code of Conduct for Council members will continue. In addition, in September a thematic dialogue group on the attractiveness of the judicial career/ working conditions for judges will start.

6. To share information on the organisation of national judicial systems

Upon request of an ENCJ Member or Observer questionnaires are disseminated among ENCJ Members and Observers. Online access to information on judicial systems will be improved. The procedure for the request for information will be written down and disseminated.

7. To Promote Access to Justice in a Digital Age

Continue ENCJ Digital Justice Forum consisting of one representative of each ENCJ Member and the interested Observers. Through an annual plenary seminar and series of online seminars, the aim of the forum is:

- Dialogue on challenges and opportunities – balancing efficiency and access to justice and independence;
- To exchange best practices and developments on national level;
- To provide a judicial perspective on e-Justice to the European Commission;
- To liaise with CEPEJ Cyberjustice working group, CCBE, Unit E-Justice DG JUST EC.

8. To promote access to fair and impartial courts

Continue the organisation of lunch seminars.

Summary main projects 2022-2023

Project 1 Independence, Accountability and Quality of the Judiciary

- Independence and Accountability – fill out questionnaire/ improve indicators
- Court User survey – promotion of surveys
- Quality – fill out questionnaire

Project 2 To promote Digital Justice – ENCJ Digital Justice Forum

- Further development of Digital Justice Forum
- Meeting virtual and physical

Working group on the Internal Organisation

- Study involvement members and functioning of the organs
- Propose an improvement plan

Thematic dialogue groups

- Continuation of work on Code of Conduct for Council Members
- Start the work on attractiveness of the judicial career/ working conditions for judges.