

How to reduce backlogs in courtcases? **Meet the firefighters brigade!**

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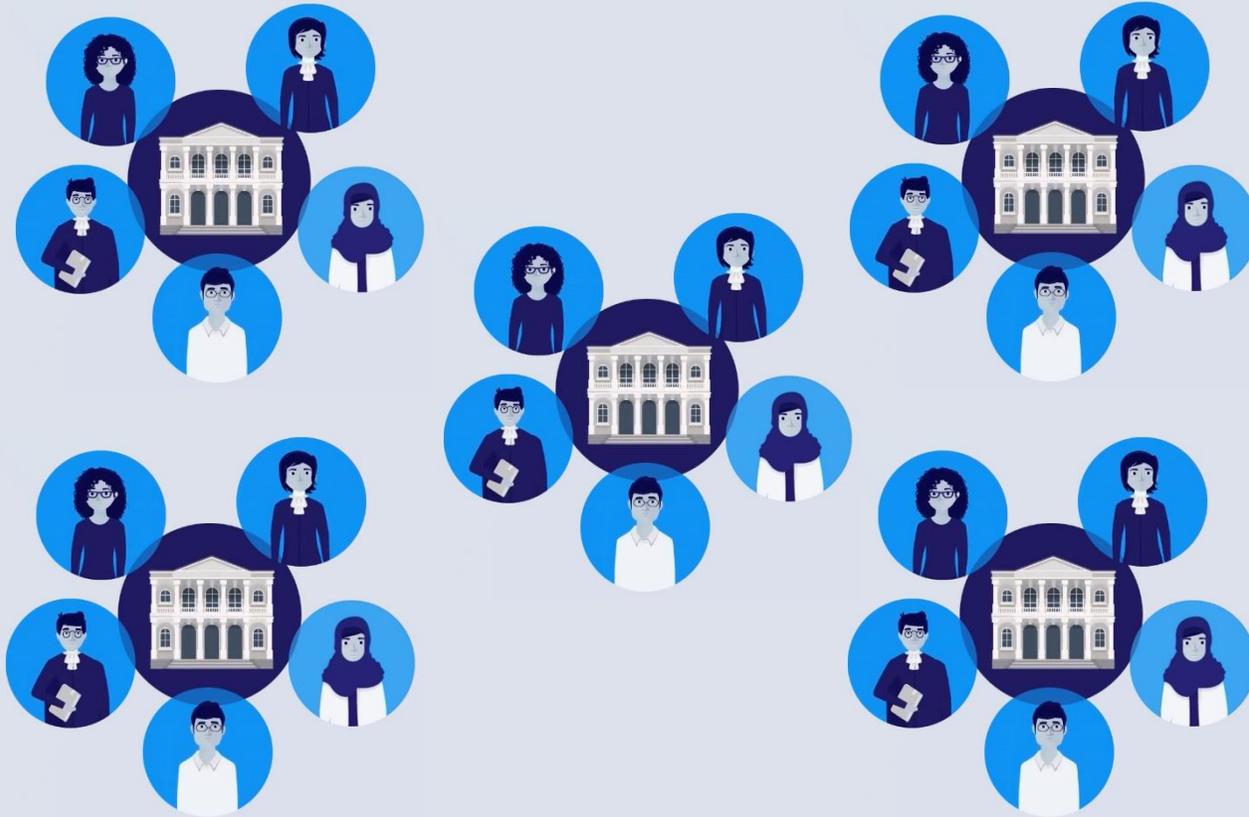
The quality of the Netherlands judiciary and judgments are good

But...the lead times for judgments and information to the participants in court cases must be improved

The Netherlands judiciary has started the program “Justice on Time” (2019)

- Four goals:
 - Improvement of the planning and scheduling of court cases
 - Improvement of the management information
 - Improvement of the information provided to the litigants
- **Reducing backlogs: firefighters brigade**

‘Justice delayed is justice denied’



The firefighter's brigade is a partnership and consists of 5 teams:

- Family law
- Civil law first instance
- Civil law appeal
- Administrative law
- Criminal law

*The judges are **highly experienced** and are **made available** by the courts*

*The legal assistants are recruited from **outside the judiciary***

How does it work?

- Courts are **free to decide** if and to what extent they want to hand over cases
- Generally **the oldest cases** are transferred
- The transferred cases are **divided at random**
- The **hearings are usually online**
- The judgements are **rendered in the name of the original courts**



Challenges

- The high workload within the courts: **making judges available is a burden**
- The legal assistants had to be **recruited and trained in a short period of time**
- In the beginning, **online hearings** were completely new

Successes

- The courts are **all positive about the legal quality of the judgments** rendered by the firefighter's brigade
- We succeeded in hiring and training **40 legal assistants** within a short period of time
- In 2021 the teams rendered approximately **3.000 judgments**
- For 2022 another **20.000 judgments** are expected

Positive changes

- **Less stress** for the judges and legal assistants in the courts
- **More time** to deal with the **other cases**
- The **litigants get their judgments in reasonable time**
- The **collegiality and solidarity** have improved:

‘We do this together’



