



European Network of Councils
for the Judiciary (ENCJ)

Réseau européen des Conseils
de la Justice (RECJ)

ENCJ Work plan 2023-2024



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 2023-2024 work plan sets out the actions that the ENCJ wishes to undertake from July 2023 to June 2024 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 7 June 2023 in Ljubljana. At the 2023 General Assembly meeting two Board Members will need to be elected.

1.2 The Executive Board

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

- Implement the ENCJ Strategy;
- The Board will follow the developments in certain particular Member States closely;
- The Board will 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;
- To strengthen the functioning of the Association the Board will:
 - Propose measures to enhance the level of commitment of Members and share the burden of the work in a more balanced way between the Members.
 - Reach out to Members and Observers to ensure that the relevant expertise is available (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.
 - Adopt a communication plan external communication. Strengthen the ENCJ brand & style. Actively participate in events linked to it.
 - Continue to raise awareness for gender equality and diversity.

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 2023 the proposal for the Operating Grant for 2024 from the European Commission needs to be submitted.

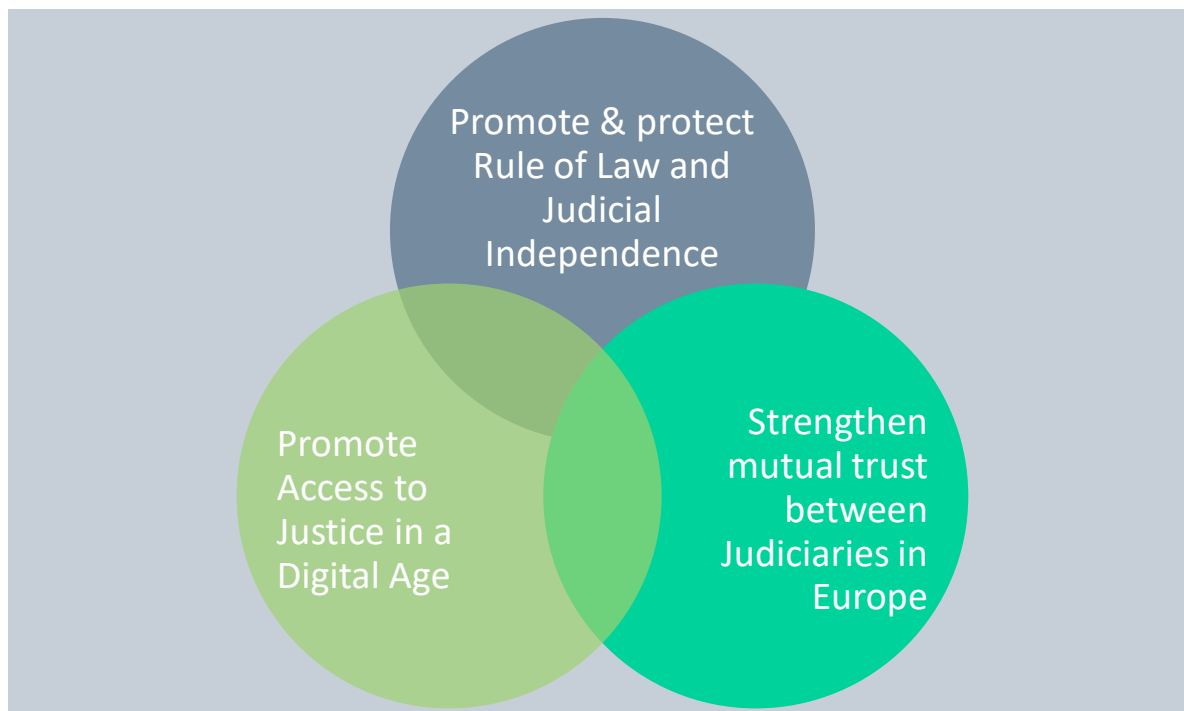
1.2.2 The Permanent Office

The Executive Board is responsible for the functioning of the ENCJ's Permanent Office. From 1 January 2023, the office has a staff of 2.2 fte (Milda Treige 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 to 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.

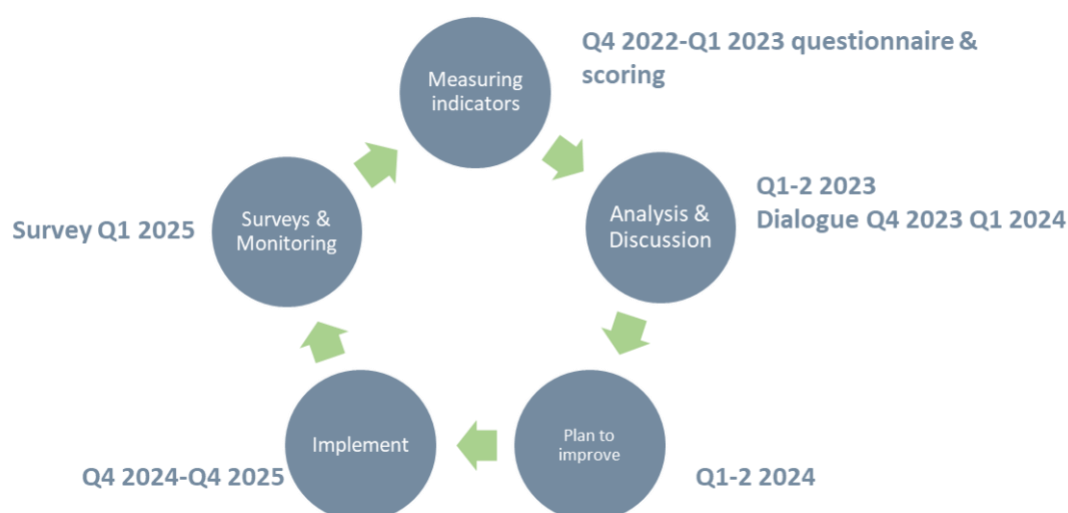
The ENCJ will continue cooperation with partners and stakeholders to promote and preserve the Rule of Law:

- 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, accountability and quality of the judiciary

Continue the multi-annual project on independence and accountability.

Cycle 2022-2025



Activities for 2023-2024

- For the Project on Independence and Accountability, based on results of the questionnaires of I & A and Quality questionnaire to form dialogue groups to identify the areas in national judiciaries prone to improvement and draw up improvement plans.
- Aim to use the Quality Framework in practice in one or more national jurisdictions and share the results.
- Continue to promote Court User Surveys across Europe, but also establish mentoring system among national jurisdictions which carry out court user surveys regularly and which do not.

4. 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 2023-2024 the thematic dialogue group on the attractiveness of the judicial career/ working conditions for judges will continue. The group becomes increasingly relevant in the light of the developments in a number of jurisdictions concerning working conditions of judges.

5. 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. Continue to improve online access to information on judicial systems will be improved.

6. 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.

7. To promote access to fair and impartial courts

Continue the organisation of lunch seminars.

Summary main projects 2023-2024

Project 1 Independence, Accountability and Quality of the Judiciary

- Independence and Accountability – Dialogue groups/ Action plans / Development of new indicators/ Court User survey
- Quality – exchange of information on certain cross cutting issues/ test Quality Framework

Project 2 To promote Digital Justice – ENCJ Digital Justice Forum

- Further development of Digital Justice Forum
- Meetings physical and virtual
- Aim to develop guidelines in a specific area

Thematic dialogue groups

- Continuation of work on attractiveness of the judicial career/ working conditions for judges;
- Aim to overview the remuneration mechanisms of judges across the EU and provide guidelines.