



European Network of Councils
for the Judiciary (ENCJ)

Réseau européen des Conseils
de la Justice (RECJ)

1. Projects 2024-2025

The General Assembly in Rome adopted the **ENCJ 2024-2025** work plan which includes the set-up of several projects.

1. Project on the Independence and Accountability & Quality of the Judiciary

**Coordinators: Independence and Accountability – CSJ/HRJ Belgium assisted by Frans van Dijk
Quality – The Judicial Council of Ireland (Brian O’Moore)**

Court users survey – TT Lithuania (Dalia Vasariene) and CSJ/HRJ Belgium

Preliminary meeting calendar for the year 2024/2025:

- 10-11 October 2024 (Brussels);
- 5-6 December 2024 (venue tbc);
- 3-4 April 2025 (venue tbc).

For Independence and Accountability

1. Surveys on independence and accountability. A Survey among judges on the independence of the judiciary will be held in the first quarter of 2025. Preparation will start in the summer of 2024. Coordination with the CCBE will be sought to explore possibilities to simultaneously run survey among lawyers on the independence of judges.
2. Connecting with society. A dialogue will be initiated between the ENCJ and civil society organizations/human rights organizations at the EU level on societal issues and perceptions regarding judicial independence and accountability in the form of meetings with a project team.
3. Work will be started on developing the format for an external review of the Councils for the Judiciary, learning from national experience so far. This is a first step towards the external review of the judiciary as a whole
4. An open discussion will be held about the position of Constitutional Courts in the framework of the independence and accountability of the judiciary.

For Quality

- Further work on the mandate of Councils for the Judiciary, including but not limited to individual Councils for the Judiciary will be carried out;
- A review of particular indicators of the Questionnaire on Quality of the Judiciary will be undertaken.

For Court users’ survey

- Each member and observer of the ENCJ is invited to conduct a court user survey, if it has not done so in recent years and share the results.
- The ENCJ will continue to work closely with the European Commission to further explore the possibility to conduct an EU-wide court user survey.



2. ENCJ Digital Justice Forum

Coordinators: SCM Romania (Claudiu Dragusin) and TP Latvia (Aigars Srupišs)

The Forum aims to:

- Provide a network for the exchange of information and advice for national experts dealing with digitization;
- Promote dialogue on challenges and opportunities – balancing efficiency and access to justice and independence;
- To monitor developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence and the challenges and opportunities it may provide for the judiciary;
- 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.

One or two in-person meeting(s) and several online meetings will be organised. A discussion on the work to be carried out by the group will be held in the beginning of September. One or two in-person meeting(s) and several online meetings are planned for the year 2024/2025. This year the Forum will aim to concentrate on the tools used by different judiciaries for access to court in digital form and tools used for online hearings. The Forum will continue to keep the group members up to date with the upcoming EU legislation in the field.

3. Thematic dialogue group: Judiciary and Media

Coordinators: SJCAJ Greece (Maria Gkana) and TT Lithuania (Dalia Vasariene)

Throughout the years the ENCJ has carried a number of activities on this topic, starting with the first report in 2005-2006, the first set of recommendations in 2011-2012 and a two-year project on the Image of Justice, which ran in 2017-2019 and also touched upon the topic of judiciary and the media. This work shall be continued to reflect the new practices and challenges that the ENCJ Members and Observers encounter in the area.

The results of the Survey on the independence of judges (2022) show that one of the stress points for judges when adjudicating cases is pressure from media and social media. Even more, last year a conference of Forum of Legal Professions was held on a similar topic and in preparation for the ENCJ intervention information was received from the ENCJ Members and Observers on different challenges they encounter.

Taking into consideration all of the above the thematic dialogue group will aim:

- take stock of the implementation of previous ENCJ recommendations;
- invite ENCJ community to share information on current challenges they encounter in the area;
- aim to look for solutions and exchange best practices in the realm of the distilled challenges.



4. Thematic dialogue group on disciplinary standards

Coordinators CSM Portugal (Tiago Pereira) and CSM France (Celine Parisot)

Minimum standards No. V on the Disciplinary proceedings and liability of judges were developed and adopted by the ENCJ in 2014-2015. Since then, a substantial case-law of both Court of Justice the European Union and European Court of Human Rights was developed in this regard.

The aim of the working group is to look into the ENCJ Minimum Standards No. V and update them in line with the case-law of the abovementioned supranational courts.

5. Working group on the ENCJ strategy

Coordinator: ENCJ President Ms. Madeleine Mathieu (CSM France)

The current ENCJ strategy for the years 2022-2025 was approved at the 2021 General Assembly . Therefore, a new ENCJ strategy will have to be approved in the General Assembly of 2025. In this light, a working group, consisting mainly of the Executive Board members will be set up to work on the new strategy.

All ENCJ Members and Observers will be invited to send their proposals on the way forward for the ENCJ.

6. ENCJ Lunch seminars

Coordinators: arranged by the ENCJ Office, chaired by a member of the Executive Board

To promote mutual knowledge and trust among the ENCJ Members and Observers, especially in times of remote meetings, the ENCJ started to organise regular online lunch seminars. On 3rd Tuesday of the month a seminar around a central theme is organized. External speakers and other stakeholders are invited to join. The seminars aim to discuss issues of common interest, for example, national practices or recent developments.

The character of the lunch seminars is informal. Six lunch seminars are foreseen for the year 2024-2025. Invitations to register will be sent to the ENCJ Members and Observers before every lunch seminar.

2. Registration

Registration for the projects is now available through the ENCJ website.

The first meeting of the project on Independence, Accountability and Quality of the Judiciary will take place on 10-11 October in Brussels (at the ENCJ premises).

The deadline for registration is **Thursday 12 September 2024**. We kindly ask you to use the **registration system provided**.

To register go to www.enci.eu. Log in with username **ENCJ** and password **network*** and click on the link **projects**.

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Co-funded by the Justice Programme of the European Union



Project team members

To enable fruitful meetings and constructive dialogue we remind the Members of what was decided at the General Assembly in Lisbon. The participation per ENCJ Member Institution to the IA&Q project is limited to maximum of 2 participants. The participation at the Digital Justice Forum per ENCJ Member Institution is limited to maximum 2 participants (1 judge or representative of the institution knowledgeable in the field and 1 technical expert). For the other projects the limit is set at 1 participant per ENCJ Member.

In the interest of the well-functioning of the projects Members are kindly requested to ensure that ***the same representatives participate in the project team meetings during the entire year***. Please ensure that representatives have the relevant competences to contribute to the work of the project team.

3. Rules of reimbursement

In 2024/2025 the following rules of reimbursement apply.

The ENCJ has been selected to be rewarded an operating grant under the new Framework Partnership Agreement 2022-2025 with the European Commission. The eligible countries for this grant are the EU Member States minus Denmark.

Twice per year the ENCJ Members will be invited to send in their reimbursement requests relating to the ENCJ project teams and organs (July and December) Members have to use the reimbursement form provided by the ENCJ Office. The requests will have to be sent to the Office before the end of the year.

The European Commission has decided on a new set of rules for the calculation of the costs for travel/accommodation and subsistence (meals). The new calculation (meaning the amount that the ENCJ will be eligible for the subvention) is based on unit prices set by the [European Commission](#).

Supporting documents that ENCJ needs to keep for the calculation of the units and for reporting to the European Commission are:

- For travel: registration forms and signed participants lists (indicating the place of origin) to justify the travel unit costs
- For the accommodation costs: proof of the number of nights (agenda & travel connections) as this unit cost is per night spent for the meeting
- For subsistence cost: the agenda and programme of the event and the list indicating the number of participants to justify the number of units per day (24hrs)

Therefore, participants always need to make sure that they signed the list of participants.

Without the signature reimbursement will not be possible.

Project team meetings

Travel

The ENCJ will reimburse the costs for travel for 1 participant per ENCJ Member per activity. The reimbursement will be calculated on the basis of the unit costs for travel set by the European Commission. The ENCJ will not make any travel arrangements.



Accommodation

The reimbursement will be done on the basis of the unit costs set by the European Commission (annex). For one day meetings (even if spread over two days) in principle 1 night will be reimbursed unless more nights are needed because there are no available flights (the burden of proof lies with the ENCJ Member).

In order to claim reimbursement for any night, it is necessary to prove that travelling on the date of the event was impossible. It is for the ENCJ Members who registered for the event to prove that there were not any reasonable flights. Flights requiring traveling late/ in the middle of the night are not seen as reasonable.

Screenshots of the flights schedule websites (for example Skyscanner) can be used to prove that an extra night was necessary. Please note that written explanations are not sufficient. Requests with no supporting documents will not be accepted.

Meals/Subsistence

ENCJ will pay for the meals provided to the hosting institution. The amounts will be calculated on the basis of the unit costs for subsistence set by the European Commission. The amounts are calculated on the basis of the number of participants per 24 hours, for longer meetings the amount will be rounded off to the closest full day (24hrs).

