



EU Justice Scoreboard 2021: digital tools help courts and prosecution services mitigate COVID-19 challenges

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Today, the European Commission has published the [2021 EU Justice Scoreboard](#), an annual overview providing comparative data on the efficiency, quality and independence of justice systems in all EU Member States. This year's Scoreboard focused on the **digitalisation of justice**, which kept courts functioning during the COVID-19 pandemic and more generally made justice systems more accessible and efficient.

Vice-President for Values and Transparency, Věra **Jourová** said: *"The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for Member States to modernise their justice systems. The Scoreboard shows that in the majority of Member States, courts already use different digital solutions to the benefit of the citizens but significant room for improvement remains. What worries me is that in some countries the perception of independence of the judiciary further decreased during the pandemic. Politicians should resist temptation to use the pandemic as an excuse to pressure independent judges."*

Commissioner for Justice, Didier **Reynders**, said: *"The EU Justice Scoreboard is a pillar of our policy to ensure effectiveness of justice systems throughout the EU. This analytical tool provides valuable insights into the justice systems of the Member States. Its findings will also feed into our Rule of Law Report that we will present soon. The 2021 EU Justice Scoreboard has a focus on the digitalisation of justice systems and on judicial independence, two key drivers of our justice policy. The novelties in the 2021 edition identify opportunities and risks, enabling a more meaningful political debate on justice policy in the Union. This is more needed than ever before."*

Key findings of the 2021 Scoreboard:

- **Digitalisation of justice systems.** For the first time, the Scoreboard takes stock of how advanced judicial authorities are in the digital transformation – something that has gained a lot of importance due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings show that in almost all justice systems videoconferencing systems were used and that in the vast majority of Member States staff can work remotely in a secure manner. As to the use of digital solutions such as blockchain or artificial intelligence, most Member States already use them however, to varying degrees and there is significant room for improvement.
- **Challenges as regards perception of judicial independence persist:** In two-thirds of the Member States, the public perception of judicial independence has improved since 2016. However, compared to last year, the public's perception of independence has decreased in about two-fifths of all Member States. Interference or pressure from government and politicians was the most widely stated reason for the perceived lack of independence of courts and judges.
- **Independence of national Supreme Court judges.** There are two new indicators in the Scoreboard showing an overview of the bodies and authorities involved in the appointment of Supreme Court judges. Supreme Courts, as final instance courts, are essential to secure the uniform application of the law in Member States. Member States need to organise the procedure of appointment in a way that ensures their independence and impartiality. In that respect, European law requires Member States to ensure that, once appointed, judges are free from influence or pressure from the appointing authority when carrying out their role

Next steps

The information contained in the EU Justice Scoreboard contributes to the monitoring carried out in the framework of the European Rule of Law Mechanism and feeds into the Commission's upcoming Rule of Law Report, with information on guarantees for structural independence of the justice systems.

Background

Launched in 2013, the EU Justice Scoreboard is one of the tools in the EU's [Rule of Law toolbox](#) and used by the Commission to monitor justice reforms in Member States. The Scoreboard focuses on the three main elements of an effective justice system:

- **Efficiency:** indicators on the length of proceedings, clearance rate and number of pending cases.
- **Quality:** indicators on accessibility, such as legal aid and court fees, training, budget, human resources and digitalisation.
- **Independence:** indicators on perceived judicial independence among the general public and companies, on safeguards relating to judges and on safeguards relating to the functioning of national prosecution services.

As in previous editions, the 2021 edition presents data from two Eurobarometer surveys on how the public and companies perceive judicial independence in each Member State.

The findings of the 2021 EU Justice Scoreboard have been taken into account in the country-specific assessment carried out within the 2021 European Semester and the evaluation of the resilience and recovery plans of the Member States, outlining investment and reform measures to be funded from the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). The RRF will make available more than €670 billion in loans and grants, of which each Member State is required to dedicate a minimum of 20% to the digital transition. The 2021 EU Justice Scoreboard also has a role to play in assessing the allocation of resources in the context of [NextGenerationEU](#).

Improving the efficiency, quality and independence of national justice systems continues to feature among the priorities of the European Semester. The 2021 Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy, which sets out the strategic guidance for the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility ensuring that the new growth agenda is built on a green, digital and sustainable recovery, reiterates the link between effective justice systems and the business environment in Member States. Well-functioning and fully independent justice systems can have a positive impact on investment decisions and on the rapidity of all actors to start investment projects.

For More Information

[EU Justice Scoreboard 2021](#)

[Factsheet: Annotated graphs with full figures](#)

[2021 EU Justice Scoreboard quantitative data in Excel file format](#)

EU Justice Scoreboard 2021: [Factsheet](#)

[Questions and Answers](#)

[2021 Eurobarometer survey on 'Perceived independence of the national justice systems in the EU among the general public'](#)

[2021 Eurobarometer survey on 'Perceived independence of the national justice systems in the EU among companies'](#)

[Past scoreboards and factsheets](#)

[2020 Rule of Law Report](#)

[Factsheet EU's rule of law toolbox](#)

[EU Justice Scoreboard website](#)

[CEPEJ Study](#)

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Press contacts:

[Christian WIGAND](#) (+32 2 296 22 53)

[Katarzyna KOLANKO](#) (+ 32 2 296 34 44)

[Jördis FERROLI](#) (+32 2 299 27 29)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)

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