

NETWORK OF THE PRESIDENTS
OF THE SUPREME JUDICIAL COURTS
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Annual Report
2023

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The Network of the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts was created in 2004 by the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the European Union. The registered office of the Network is in Paris.

The Members of the Network are the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the Member States of the European Union. The Network also admits Associate Members (Member States of the European Free Trade Association and states formerly members of the Network) and Observers (states which are engaged in negotiations with a view to joining the European Union).

As of 31 December 2023, the Network encompasses Presidents and their respective Supreme Courts from 35 different countries, including the 27 European Union Member States as Members, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and the United Kingdom as Associate Members and Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine as Observers.

1. New Members, Associate Members and Observers

In the course of 2023 the following changes took place among the Members, Associate Members and Observers of the Network:

Slovenia: Mr Miodrag Đorđević was appointed President of the Supreme Court of Slovenia and took office on 15 February 2023. He succeeds Mr Damijan Florjančič, who has retired.

Italy: Ms Margherita Cassano took office as First President of the Supreme Court of Italy on 6 March 2023 where she succeeds Mr Pietro Curzio, who has retired.

Lithuania: Ms Danguolė Bublienė was appointed President of the Supreme Court of Lithuania and took office on 27 March 2023. She succeeds Acting President Ms Gabrielė Juodkaitė-Granskienė.

Ukraine: Mr Stanislav Kravchenko was appointed President of the Supreme Court of Ukraine on 26 May 2023 and took office on the same day. He succeeds Mr Vsevolod Kniaziev, who was removed from office.

Cyprus: Ms Katerina Stamatiou was appointed President of the Supreme Court of Cyprus and took office on 1 July 2023. She succeeds Mr Antonis R. Liatsos who, after the separation of the Supreme Court into two independent courts, took office as President of the newly created Supreme Constitutional Court of Cyprus.

Greece: Ms Ioanna Klapa-Christodoulea took office as President of the Supreme Civil and Criminal Court of Greece (*Areios Pagos*) on 28 July 2023. She succeeds Ms Maria Georgiou, who has retired.

Luxembourg: Mr Thierry Hoscheit was appointed President of the Superior Court of Justice of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and took office on 1 October 2023, where he succeeds Mr Roger Linden, who has retired.

Albania: Mr Sokol Sadushi was appointed President of the Supreme Court of Albania and took office on 17 October 2023 after having served as Vice-President of the Supreme Court since 7 July 2020.

2. General Assembly

The regular General Assembly of the Network was held on 9 November 2023 in Vienna, Austria. The agenda included the approval of the activity report of the Secretary-General, approval of the financial resolutions for the years 2020, 2021 and 2022, election of the Board Members and President of the Network and the request of the President of the Supreme Court of Serbia for admission as an Observer of the Network.

In June 2023 Ms Jasmina Vasović, President of the Supreme Court of Serbia, submitted a request for admission to the Network as an Observer. According to Article 5 of the Articles of Association of the Network, the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of States which are engaged in negotiations with a view to joining the European Union can be admitted as Observers. Decisions concerning admission as Observer are made by the General Assembly. The European Council granted Serbia candidate status in March 2012.

The request of President Vasović was referred to the General Assembly of the Network, which unanimously admitted the President of the Supreme Court of Serbia as an Observer of the Network.

The General Assembly also unanimously elected the new Board and the President of the Network, as follows:

President

Mr Anders Eka, President of the Supreme Court of Sweden

Members of the Board

Ms Katerina Stamatiou, President of the Supreme Court of Cyprus,

Mr Petr Angyalossy, President of the Supreme Court of the Czech Republic,

Mr Villu Kõve, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Estonia,

Mr Christophe Soulard, First President of the French *Cour de cassation*,

Ms Bettina Limperg, President of the Federal Court of Justice of Germany,

Mr Donal O'Donnell, Chief Justice of Ireland,

Ms Margherita Cassano, First President of the Supreme Court of Italy,

Ms Dineke de Groot, President of the Supreme Court of the Netherlands,

Mr Ján Šikuta, President of the Supreme Court of Slovakia,

Mr Miodrag Đorđević, President of the Supreme Court of Slovenia.

The Board and the President of the Network are elected for two years, and their term will come to end at the General Assembly of 2025.

The General Assembly also adopted the activity report of the Secretary General (covering the period since the previous General Assembly of 23 April 2021) and approved the financial resolutions for the years 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Minutes of the General Assembly are available on the intranet of the Network ([available via this link](#)).

3. Meetings of the Board

In accordance with the Articles of Association, the Board met on three occasions in 2023. The Board, in its composition as elected by the General Assembly of 23 April 2021, held meetings on 12 May 2023 in Bratislava, Slovakia and on 9 November 2023 in Vienna, Austria. The Board gave directions for the organisation of the various events and activities of the Network (colloquium and joint event of 2023, conference of 2024, judges' exchange programme, publications of the Network, comparative law working group etc.) as well as cooperation with outside partners.

The Board, in its composition as elected by the General Assembly of 9 November 2023, held its first meeting on 10 November 2023 in Vienna, Austria and appointed Mr Miodrag Đorđević, President of the Supreme Court of Slovenia, as Treasurer of the Network.



Photo: The Supreme Court of Slovakia

Board Meeting (12 May 2023, Bratislava, Slovakia)

4. Colloquium and Joint Meeting with the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights

9–10 November 2023, Vienna, Austria

At the Stockholm Board Meeting in 2022, the Board acknowledged that after the pause due to the Covid-19 pandemic there was, in addition to regular meetings of members of the Network, also a need to revive the dialogue with the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). The proposal by the Network to hold a trilateral meeting received positive reactions from both institutions and at the invitation of Ms Elisabeth Lovrek, President of the Supreme Court of Justice of Austria, the joint event was scheduled to take place in autumn 2023 in Vienna.

The first day of the Vienna Meeting was dedicated to internal discussions of members of the Network on the *“Uniformity of Case-Law at Supreme Court level. Internal divergences: solutions and good practices”*. The working session was prepared and moderated by Ms Beatrijs Deconinck, First President of the *Cour de cassation* of Belgium and Ms Ilse Couwenberg, judge of the Court. The session focused on what should be done when Supreme Courts are confronted internally with divergences in jurisprudence. The preparatory questionnaire of the session, circulated among members of the Network, invited them to reflect on possible factors contributing to the divergences in case law, mechanisms promoting consistency in case law, as well as tools designed to avoid discrepancies and their perceived effectiveness. The replies of members of the Network fed into the General Report of the session drawn up by First President Deconinck and the discussions in the Colloquium.

The second day of the event was dedicated to the Joint Meeting with the CJEU represented by its President, Mr Koen Lenaerts and Mr Andreas Kumin, judge of the Court, and the ECtHR represented by Ms Síofra O’Leary, President of the Court, and judge of the Court Ms. Gabriele Kucsko-Stadlmayer. The meeting was divided into two working sessions.

The first session entitled *“The judicial dialogue: fundamental rights issues in court judgments”* was prepared and moderated by Ms Dineke de Groot, President of the Supreme Court of the Netherlands. The preparatory questionnaire, distributed among members of the Network, focused on best practices, needs and dilemmas of Supreme Courts while dealing with access to justice and providing effective legal protection of the fundamental rights enshrined in the normative pluralism in Europe. The Introductory Report of President de Groot was based on contributions of members of the Network and, *inter alia*, touched upon the practice and intentions of Supreme Courts in making references to judgments of the CJEU and the ECtHR, illustrated with ample examples from national case-law. The viewpoints of the CJEU and the ECtHR were

presented by President Lenaerts and President O’Leary, with both Presidents making observations on the relationship of the two European Courts as well as their dialogue with national Supreme Courts.

The second working session entitled *“Impact of Artificial Intelligence on the work of the courts and the administration of justice”* was researched and moderated by Mr Donal O’Donnell, Chief Justice of Ireland. The Introductory Report established by Chief Justice O’Donnell offered general remarks on the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its possible implications for the judiciaries, and mapped the current adoption of the AI in the legal sphere. The preparatory questionnaire focusing on the use of AI by the judiciaries was circulated among the CJEU, the ECtHR and the members of the Network. Judge Kumin introduced the CJEU “AI Strategy” ([available via this link](#)) and highlighted the resulting benefits and challenges identified by the Court. Judge Kucsko-Stadlmayer provided an overview of the Council of Europe standards, including the “European Ethical Charter on the use of AI in judicial systems and their environment” and touched upon the current practice as well as the future potential of AI for the ECtHR.

The general reports, replies of Supreme Courts to the preparatory questionnaires and speeches of representatives of the CJEU and the ECtHR delivered in Vienna are all available on the intranet of the Network ([available via this link](#)).



Photo: peterberger photography

Colloquium and Joint Meeting with the CJEU and the ECtHR (9-10 November 2023, Vienna Austria)

5. Exchange Programme of Supreme Court Judges

The call for applications for the 2023 Exchange Programme was launched in February the same year and resulted in 32 individual applications from thirteen Supreme Courts. The applicants were from the Supreme Courts of Albania (1), Belgium (1), Czech Republic (2), Estonia (1), Finland (1), France (2), Germany (3), Italy (12), Lithuania (1), Netherlands (1), Poland (3), Slovakia (3) and Slovenia (1).

Initially 20 exchanges were planned and confirmed. However, due to personal reasons of participants, two exchanges were postponed until 2024. Of the 18 completed exchanges 8 lasted for two weeks and 10 for one week. The exchanges were organised in the Czech (1), Dutch (1), French (3), German (2), Italian (3) and English (8) languages. In total 17 Supreme Courts were involved in the Exchange Programme of 2023.

The participants were hosted by Supreme Courts as follows:

- The Supreme Court of Austria hosted two judges: one from the Czech Republic and one from Italy,
- The *Cour de cassation* of Belgium hosted one judge from Italy,
- The Supreme Court of the Czech Republic hosted one judge from Slovakia,
- The Supreme Court of Estonia hosted one judge from Slovenia,
- The *Cour de cassation* of France hosted two judges: one from Italy and one from Germany,
- The Federal Court of Justice of Germany hosted two judges: one from Finland and one from France,
- The Supreme Court of Ireland hosted one judge from Estonia,
- The Supreme Court of Italy hosted three judges: one from Albania, one from Germany and one from the Netherlands,
- The Supreme Court of Lithuania hosted one judge from Poland,
- The Supreme Court of Malta hosted one judge from Slovakia,
- The Supreme Court of the Netherlands hosted two judges: one from Belgium and one from Poland,
- The Supreme Court of Spain hosted one judge from Lithuania.

6. Consultation of the Network by the European Commission

The Network was invited by Mr Didier Reynders, European Commissioner for Justice, to take part in the targeted stakeholder consultations for the 2023 Rule of Law Report. The Network provided its contribution, emphasising that the judiciary can only fulfil its role when the independence of the judicial system is guaranteed, and therefore endorsed the efforts of the Commission to uphold and strengthen the rule of law and judicial independence in the Union. The contribution of the Network was published on the dedicated website of the European Commission ([available via this link](#)). The Network also facilitated the collection of answers from Supreme Courts required by the European Commission for the 2023 EU Justice Scoreboard.

7. Cooperation with other Judicial Networks

I. European Network of Councils for the Judiciary (ENCJ), European Association of Judges (EAJ) and Association of the Councils of State and Supreme Administrative Jurisdictions (ACA-Europe).

In 2023 the Network continued its close cooperation and regular meetings with ENCJ, EAJ and ACA-Europe. The Presidents of the said associations and the President of the Network have a tradition of meeting online once a month to discuss topical issues. Seven such meetings took place in 2023 (6 February, 6 March, 3 April, 8 May, 2 October, 5 November and 4 December).

II. Academy of European Law (ERA)

The Network participated in the founding of the Forum of the Judicial and Legal Professions initiated by the ERA and in the organisation of the Annual Conference. In 2023 Ms Andrea Moravčíková, Vice-President of the Supreme Court of Slovakia, represented the Network at the second Annual Conference of the Forum entitled *“The Media and the Legal Professions: Trust in the Judiciary Requires Trust in the Media – Enhancing Cooperation between the Two Pillars of Democratic States”* held on 1 December in Brussels, Belgium. During the session focusing on responsible press reporting Ms Moravčíková delivered an intervention entitled *“How can media influence a fair trial”* and participated in the panel discussion that followed. Cooperation with ERA in the framework of the Forum will continue.

III. European Judicial Training Network (EJTN)

Cooperation with EJTN continued in 2023. Mr Villu Kõve, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Estonia, represented the Network at the second *judges@europe* Forum (held on 25–27 October 2023 in Syracuse, Italy). Mr Kõve led a workshop inspired by real life cases and focusing on the responsibility and liability of judges for (gross) violations of the law and allegedly inappropriate “speech”. The written contribution of Chief Justice Kõve also appeared in the *judges@europe* publication issued in May 2024.

The Secretary-General attended the General Assembly of EJTN (held on 14–16 June 2023 in Stockholm, Sweden), and the Network was also represented by the Secretariat at the ninth Contact Point meeting (held on 26–27 January 2023 in Brussels, Belgium). In 2023, the Network continued disseminating information about the language courses provided by the EJTN among its members (including information on the recently established English language training for judicial leaders).

IV. European Law Institute (ELI)

The Network is an institutional member of ELI. Ms Bettina Limperg, President of the Network and Mr Pascal Pichonnaz, President of ELI, held an online meeting in May 2023 to discuss further cooperation between the two institutions. Mr Ján Šikuta, President of the Supreme Court of Slovakia, represented the Network at the Council Meeting and the Annual Conference of ELI (held on 6–8 September 2023 in Vienna, Austria).

8. Website, Common Portal of Case Law and Intranet of the Network

Website and Common Portal of Case-Law

The Common Portal of Case-Law is a search engine available on the website of the Network. The search engine allows case-law search by different indicators on multiple national case-law databases. The Portal is integrated with the national databases of the following countries: Austria, Belgium (2), the Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom & Ireland.

Three automatic translation tools (Google Translate, Deepl and the translation tool of the EU Commission) have been integrated into the Portal which enables users to access and read court decisions in any language supported by the tools (Google Translate: 108 languages, the translation tool of the EU Commission: 23 languages, Deepl: 11 languages).

A video tutorial introducing the functionalities of the Portal was published on the website of the Network ([available via this link](#)) in December 2023.

Intranet

The intranet of the Network, exclusively open to Members, Associate Members and Observers, serves as a repository of internal documents. Items available on the intranet include:

- Articles of Association and Byelaws,
- Agendas and Minutes of General Assemblies and Board Meetings,
- Documents related to Colloquia and Conferences (e.g., preparatory questionnaires, answers of Supreme Courts to the questionnaires, Introductory Reports etc.),
- Reports and evaluations of the Exchange Programme of Supreme Court judges,
- Collections of answers to requests for information submitted by Members, Associate Members and Observers via the mailing list of the Network,
- Contact information of Members, Associate Members and Observers.

9. Requests for information

In 2023 six requests for information were submitted to Members, Associate Members and Observers of the Network by the Supreme Court of Slovakia, the Supreme Court of Estonia, the Supreme Court of Montenegro, the Curia of Hungary, the Supreme Court of Croatia and the *Cour de cassation* of France. The replies of Members, Associate Members and Observers to the requests for information are published on the intranet of the Network.

The collections of answers available on the intranet of the Network cover the following topics:

- *Amicus curiae* mechanism
- The number of judges and the structure, competence as well as the workload of Supreme Courts
- Filming and broadcasting of court hearings
- Private international law study committee
- Status and working conditions of court employees; financing of the judiciary
- Case allocation log files, proceedings against the Supreme Court, appointment of the president of the Supreme Court
- Evaluation of Supreme Court judges
- Extradition requests from third countries
- Application of the theory of appearance to entities other than judges
- Fair remuneration of judges
- Freedom of speech of judges
- Observatory of legal disputes
- Appointment and social guarantees of judges

- Extrajudicial activities of judges
- Attractiveness of the magistracy
- Permanent confiscations without prior criminal conviction
- Support staff of Supreme Courts
- Civil liability in case of collapse of a building
- The number of judges in European jurisdictions
- The right of freedom of information concerning state activities
- Status of judges and the liability of judges
- Competence of courts in inheritance cases

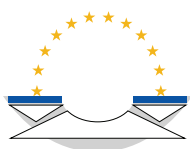
10. Comparative Law Working Group

The Network took the initiative in 2014 to establish comparative law liaison groups to allow exchange of information between Supreme Courts on the interpretation of terms and concepts derived from European law. The intention was that the groups would be composed of court officials dealing with legal research, and that the exchanges within the group would reflect the views of the participating individuals and not the official position of the Supreme Courts.

A working group composed of the representatives of the Supreme Courts of Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany and the Netherlands was created in 2014. The United Kingdom joined the Working Group in 2016 and Slovenia in 2023. The working language of the group is English. For the moment, this working group is the only active one.

The work of the group takes place on a dedicated forum available on the intranet of the Network. 37 new questions/topics touching upon a wide variety of issues were introduced by members of the working group in 2023 (e.g., *“Requests for preliminary ruling”*, *“Implementation of Directive 2019/1937”*, *“Surveillance of health facilities”*, *“Legal aid and suspension of criminal proceedings”*, *“Freezing and shareholders rights’ under the EU sanctions regime”*, *“Invalidity of trademark registrations”*, *“Electronic signature”*).

At the invitation of the Supreme Court of the Czech Republic members of the group held their annual meeting on 1–2 November 2023 in Brno. The meeting was opened with a welcome address by Mr Petr Angyalossy, President of the Supreme Court of the Czech Republic. The discussions that followed focused on the *“Rights Arising from Defective Performance – Reduction and Determination of Its Amount”*, *“The Scope of Extraordinary Remedies to the Supreme Court in Family Law Matters”* and *“The Consensual Ways of Settling Criminal Cases in Court Proceedings”*. The working sessions were also attended by judges of the Czech Supreme Court Mr Lubomír Ptáček, Mr Pavel Horák and Mr Petr Škvain.



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