



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

Network of the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the European Union held its annual Conference in Lemesos (Limassol), Cyprus

The Network of the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the European Union held its Conference on Friday, 12 June 2026, in Lemesos (Limassol), Cyprus. Hosted by the Supreme Court of Cyprus, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU 2026, the Conference brought together the Members, Associate Members and Observers of the Network, as well as representatives of the Court of Justice of the European Union, the European Court of Human Rights and the Supreme Court of Canada. The Conference was structured around two working sessions, addressing matters of ongoing importance for the highest courts.

First working session “Rule of Law: Challenges in the 21st Century”

The Conference opened with a working session on “Rule of Law: Challenges in the 21st Century” moderated by Mr Donal O’Donnell, Chief Justice of Ireland and President of the Network. Introductory presentations were delivered by Dr Tatu Leppänen, President of the Supreme Court of Finland; Dr Síofra O’Leary, Hauser/Remarque Fellow at NYU and former President of the European Court of Human Rights; Mr Maciej Szpunar, First Advocate General of the Court of Justice of the European Union; and The Right Honourable Richard Wagner, P.C., Chief Justice of Canada. A free discussion involving all Presidents and speakers followed.

The ensuing discussions invited participants to reflect on what they regard as the most significant challenges to the rule of law in Europe and beyond, and to what extent these challenges are reflected in their own jurisdictions. Participants were also invited to consider what role, if any, Supreme Courts should play in responding to challenges to the rule of law beyond deciding individual cases. Finally, the session turned to the lessons that can be learned from jurisdictions that have experienced democratic backsliding or erosion of the rule of law, particularly as regards the restoration of the rule of law and of public confidence in institutions.

Second working session “Protecting individuals’ rights in the digital sphere – the impact of the Digital Services Act”

The afternoon session, “Protecting individuals’ rights in the digital sphere – the impact of the Digital Services Act,” was moderated by Dr Danguolė Bublienė, President of the Supreme Court of Lithuania, who delivered an introductory presentation alongside Dr Savvas S. Papasavvas, Vice-President of the General Court of the European Union. A free discussion involving all Presidents and speakers followed.

President Bublienė presented the introductory report she had prepared on the judicial application of the Digital Services Act (DSA) and its impact on the protection of individuals’ rights online. The report traced the evolution of the EU’s regulatory framework from the e-Commerce Directive to the DSA and its more protective, user-oriented approach. Drawing on responses to a questionnaire circulated to Members, Associate Members and Observers of the Network, it addressed the broad notion of “illegal content” and how it is understood across jurisdictions, the distinction between “illegal” and merely “harmful” content and its implications for freedom of expression, and the question of whether a prior criminal conviction is required before content may be treated as illegal.

The discussions that followed invited participants to reflect on whether a uniform interpretation of the DSA, particularly as regards the concept of illegal content, can be expected throughout the European Union, and on what role national supreme courts should play in shaping common DSA standards across Europe. Participants were also invited to consider whether the practical convergence of harmful and illegal content could lead to excessive restrictions on lawful content. Finally, the session turned to how the judicial system should respond when illegal or harmful information concerning the courts is published, and what measures courts themselves might take to address such content effectively.

Closing remarks

Mr Donal O’Donnell, Chief Justice of Ireland and President of the Network, said:

“The objective for creating the Network back in 2004 was nothing less than “to form a homogenous community”. We now face issues that dwarf anything that would have engaged the founding members of the Network in 2004 – the rule of law is under express and explicit challenge around the world. It is precisely in this climate that the exchange between our highest courts is so valuable. I want to thank all the speakers of today, and indeed all participants, for the frank and engaged dialogue. My sincere thanks go also to President Stamatou and the Supreme Court of Cyprus for their kind hospitality in welcoming us to Lemesos and for all the work done in organizing this Colloquium.”

About the Network

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. Its Members are the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the EU Member States. In addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and the United Kingdom participate as Associate Members, and Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine as Observers.