

Digital justice: Council adopts conclusions on digitalisation to improve access to justice



The Council today adopted conclusions on seizing the opportunities of digitalisation for access to justice.

The further digitalisation of the member states' judicial systems has enormous potential to continue to facilitate and improve access to justice for citizens throughout the EU. Digital tools can help to better structure proceedings and to automate and accelerate the handling of standardised and uniform tasks, thereby increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of court proceedings. The COVID-19 crisis has confirmed the need to invest and make use of digital tools in judicial proceedings.

In this context, the conclusions encourage member states to make increased use of digital tools throughout judicial proceedings and call on the Commission to develop a comprehensive EU strategy on the digitalisation of justice by the end of 2020. They also stress that using digital technologies should not undermine the fundamental principles of judicial systems, including the independence and impartiality of the courts, the guarantee of effective legal protection and the right to a fair and public hearing.

The conclusions also note the need to promote digital skills in the justice sector, to allow judges, prosecutors, judicial staff and other justice practitioners to use digital tools effectively and with due respect for the rights and freedoms of those seeking justice.

The text notes that the use of artificial intelligence in the justice sector is already being researched and developed and recognises that it has the potential to improve the functioning of justice systems. It underlines that the use of artificial intelligence tools must not interfere with the decision-making power of judges or judicial independence, or infringe the right to a fair trial and effective remedy.

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