



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 17 March 2014

The 2014 EU Justice Scoreboard: Towards more effective justice systems in the EU

The European Commission today released the second edition of the EU Justice Scoreboard to promote the quality, independence and efficiency of justice systems in the European Union. The EU Justice Scoreboard is an information tool that presents objective, reliable and comparable data on the justice systems in the Member States. Following the first edition in 2013 ([IP/13/285](#)), the 2014 European Justice Scoreboard will continue to assist Member States and the EU in achieving more effective justice systems, and hence contribute to fostering economic growth in the Union. It will do so by contributing to the [European Semester](#), the EU's annual economic policy coordination process that aims to boost Member States' economic performance and competitiveness through a set of country-specific recommendations.

"Justice delayed is justice denied. The EU Justice Scoreboard is a key tool within the EU's economic strategy, enabling more effective justice for citizens and businesses. A properly functioning, independent justice system is essential to gaining the trust of citizens and investors, and indispensable for mutual trust in the European area of justice," said Vice-President Viviane Reding, the EU's Justice Commissioner. *"This second edition of the EU Justice Scoreboard comes at a time when many Member States are carrying out judicial reforms to improve their competitiveness. Developments and data confirm the importance of continuing to pursue with commitment and determination the efforts made to improve the effectiveness of justice systems throughout the EU."*

The 2014 EU Justice Scoreboard brings together data from various sources. Most of the quantitative data is provided by the Council of Europe Commission for the Evaluation of the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) which collects data from Member States. The 2014 Scoreboard focuses on litigious civil and commercial cases and administrative cases. It looks at the same indicators as in 2013 while also drawing on some additional sources of information:

1. **Efficiency** of justice systems: indicators include the length of proceedings, the clearance rate and the number of pending cases;
2. **Quality**: indicators include the compulsory training of judges, monitoring and evaluation of court activities, the budget and human resources allocated to courts and the availability of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and of alternative dispute resolution methods (ADR);
3. **Independence**: the Scoreboard presents data on the perceived independence of the justice system. In addition, the 2014 Scoreboard provides a first general comparative overview of how national justice systems are organised to protect judicial independence in certain types of situations where it may be at risk. It looks at legal safeguards against, for example, the transfer or dismissal of judges.

The 2014 Scoreboard also presents the outcome of two pilot studies, which provide further fine-tuned data on the length of judicial proceedings relating to competition law and consumer law, expressed in average days.

Key findings of the 2014 EU Justice Scoreboard include (see Annex for breakdown in the three areas):

- **Some Member States continue to face particular challenges** with regard to the efficiency of their justice systems. Lengthy first instance proceedings together with low clearance rates or a large number of pending cases point to the need for further improvements. While ambitious reforms have been recently adopted in certain Member States (for example in Portugal), their effects cannot yet be reflected in the Scoreboard as data is mostly from 2012.
- The availability of **information and communication technology (ICT) tools** for courts increased but room for further progress exists, in particular to render contacts between courts and citizens easier. **Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms** are now available in nearly all Member States, while **monitoring and evaluation** of court activities exist in most Member States.
- In nearly a third of Member States the participation rate of judges in **continuous training activities** on EU law is above 50%. **Training of judges and legal practitioners** and ICT tools are crucial for the effective functioning of a European area of justice based on mutual trust.
- In several Member States **the perception of independence** has improved whilst in some Member States it has deteriorated.

Next steps

The findings of the Scoreboard will be taken into account in preparing the forthcoming country specific analyses of the 2014 European Semester. They will also be taken into account for work in the context of the Economic Adjustments Programmes. EU funds (Regional Development and Social Funds) can be used to support reforms of national judicial systems.

On the basis of the first comparative overview of legal safeguards aimed at protecting judicial independence, the Commission aims to further develop this comparative data. The Commission will work with experts from the judiciary and the Member States, as well as with legal practitioners and European justice networks, to improve the quality, availability and comparability of data for the future Scoreboard editions.

Background

Improving the quality, independence and efficiency of judicial systems already forms part of the EU's economic policy coordination process under the [European Semester](#). National judicial reforms are also an integral part of the economic adjustment programmes in Greece, Portugal and Cyprus.

The EU Justice Scoreboard contributes to the European Semester process by helping to identify justice-related issues that deserve particular attention. Together with the specific assessment of the situation in Member States, the 2013 Scoreboard contributed to addressing the [country-specific recommendations](#) in the area of justice for ten Member States (BG, ES, HU, IT, LV, MT, PL, RO, SI, SK). In this way, the scoreboard will assist both the EU and Member States in achieving more effective justice systems for citizens and businesses. This will help to reinforce growth strategies in the countries concerned and for in EU as a whole.

While the Scoreboard does not present an overall single ranking it gives an overview of the functioning of all justice systems based on various indicators which are of common interest for all Member States. It does not promote any particular type of justice system. Whatever the model of the national justice system or the legal tradition in which it is anchored, timeliness, independence, affordability, and user-friendly access are some of the essential parameters of what constitutes an effective justice system.

The 2014 EU Justice Scoreboard uses the same indicators as the [2013 EU Justice Scoreboard](#), including the time needed to resolve cases in court, the rate of resolving cases, numbers of pending cases, use of electronic means for managing cases, use of alternative dispute resolution, training available to judges and resources for courts. Justice must not only be done, but also be seen to be done - the Scoreboard therefore also provides data on the perceived independence of justice systems, based on findings of the World Economic Forum.

For more information

[MEMO/14/194](#)

Press pack: 2014 European Justice Scoreboard / Country Fiches – Data collected by CEPEJ from the Member States:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/effective-justice/news/140317_en.htm

Homepage of Vice-President Viviane Reding, EU Justice Commissioner:

<http://ec.europa.eu/reding>

Follow the Vice-President on Twitter: [@VivianeRedingEU](#)

Follow EU Justice on Twitter: [@EU_Justice](#)

Contacts :

[Mina Andreeva](#) (+32 2 299 13 82)

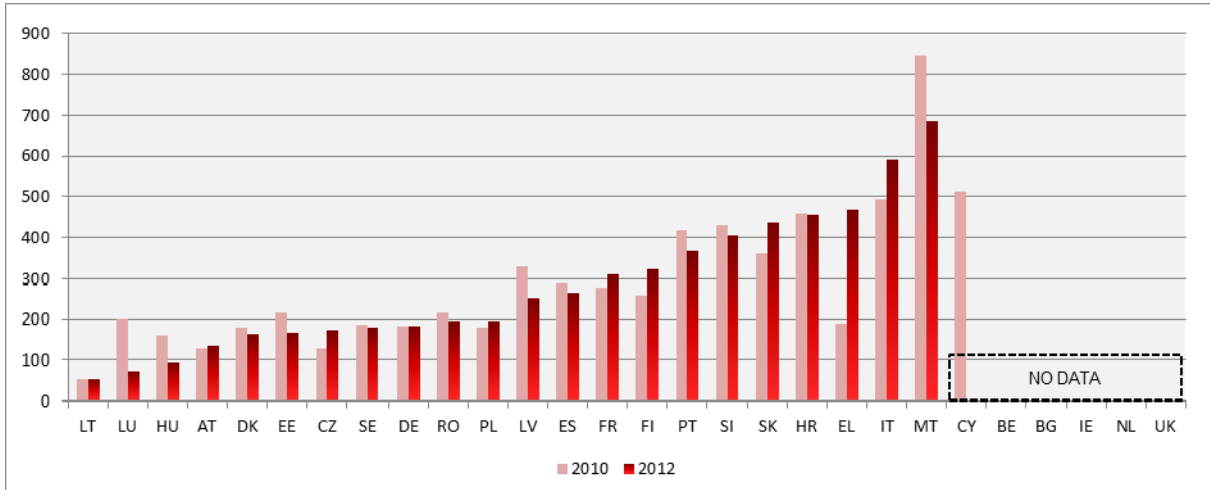
[Natasha Bertaud](#) (+32 2 296 74 56)

For the public: **Europe Direct** by phone **00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11** or by [e-mail](#)

ANNEX

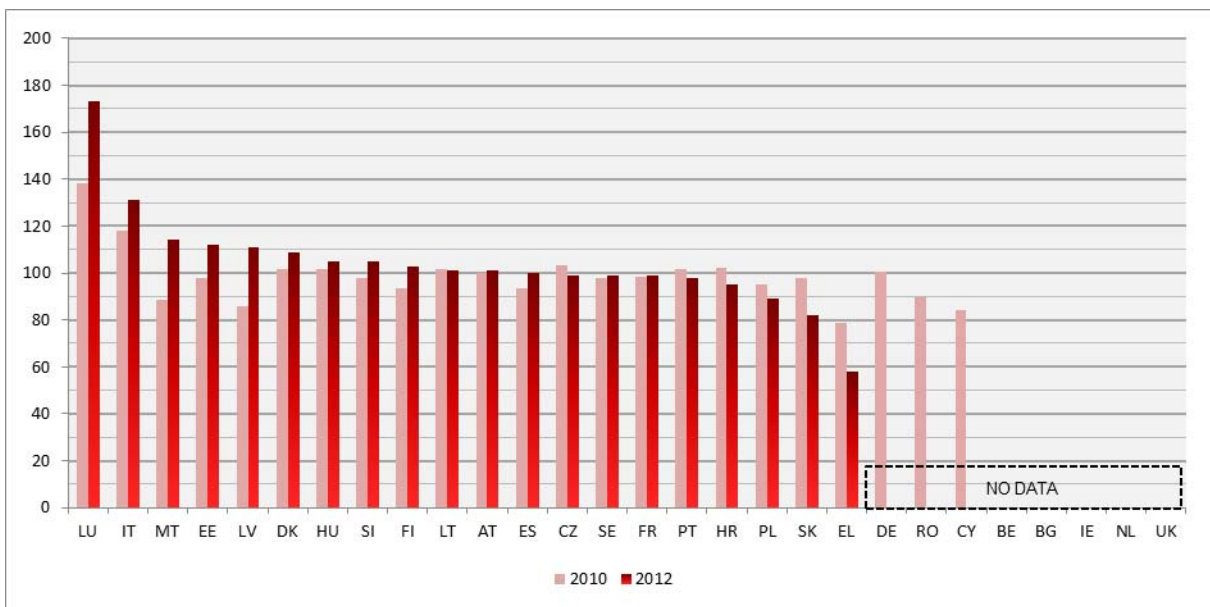
1. Efficiency

Figure 1: Time needed to resolve litigious civil and commercial cases* (1st instance/in days) (source: CEPEJ study)



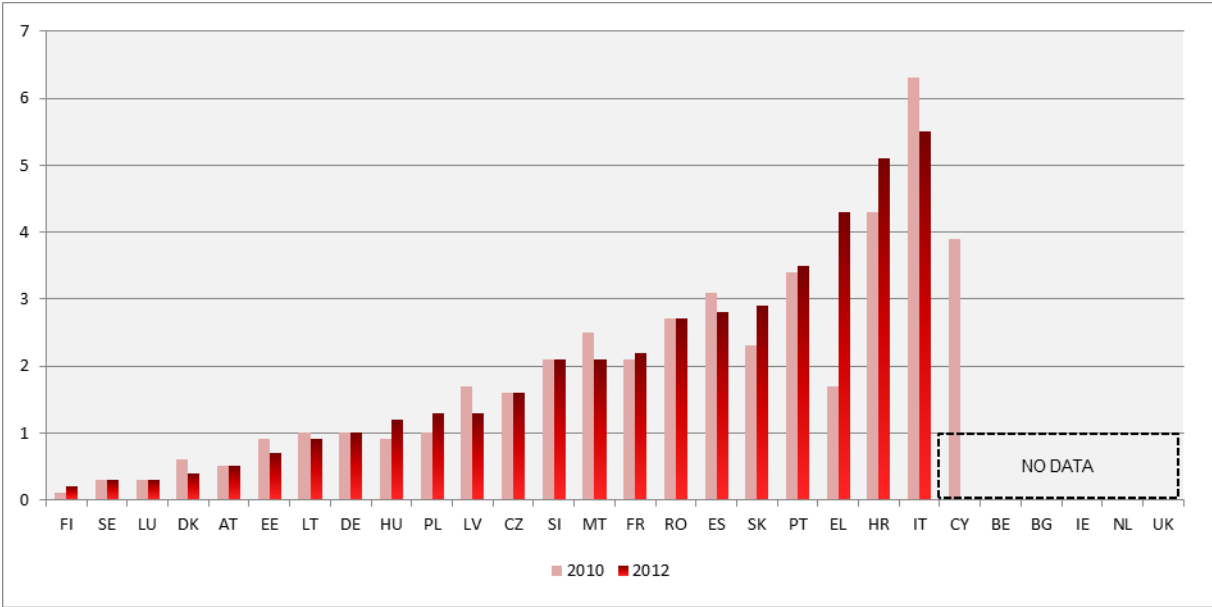
*Litigious civil (and commercial) cases concern disputes between parties, for example disputes regarding contracts, following the CEPEJ methodology. The length of proceedings expresses the time (in days) needed to resolve a case in court, that is the time taken by the court to reach a decision at first instance. The 'disposition time' indicator is the number of unresolved cases divided by the number of resolved cases at the end of a year multiplied by 365 days.

Figure 2: Rate of resolving litigious civil and commercial cases (1st instance/in %) (source: CEPEJ study)



The **clearance rate** is the ratio of the number of resolved cases over the number of incoming cases. It measures whether a court is keeping up with its incoming caseload. The length of proceedings is linked to the rate at which the courts can resolve cases, the 'clearance rate', and to the number of cases that are still waiting to be resolved, 'pending cases'. When the **clearance rate is about 100%** or higher it means the judicial system is able to resolve at least as many cases as come in. When the **clearance rate is below 100%**, it means that the courts are resolving fewer cases than the number of incoming cases, and as a result, at the end of the year, the number of unresolved cases adds up as pending cases. If this situation persists over several years, this could be indicative of a more systemic problem as backlogs build up which further aggravate the workload of courts, and which cause the length of proceedings to rise further.

Figure 3: Number of litigious civil and commercial pending cases (1st instance/per 100 inhabitants) (source: CEPEJ study)



The **number of pending cases** expresses the number of cases that remains to be dealt with at the end of a period. The number of pending cases influences the disposition time. Therefore, in order to improve the length of proceedings measures to reduce the number of pending cases are required.

2. Quality

Figure 4: ICT Systems for the registration and management of cases (weighted indicator-min=0, max=4) (source: CEPEJ study)

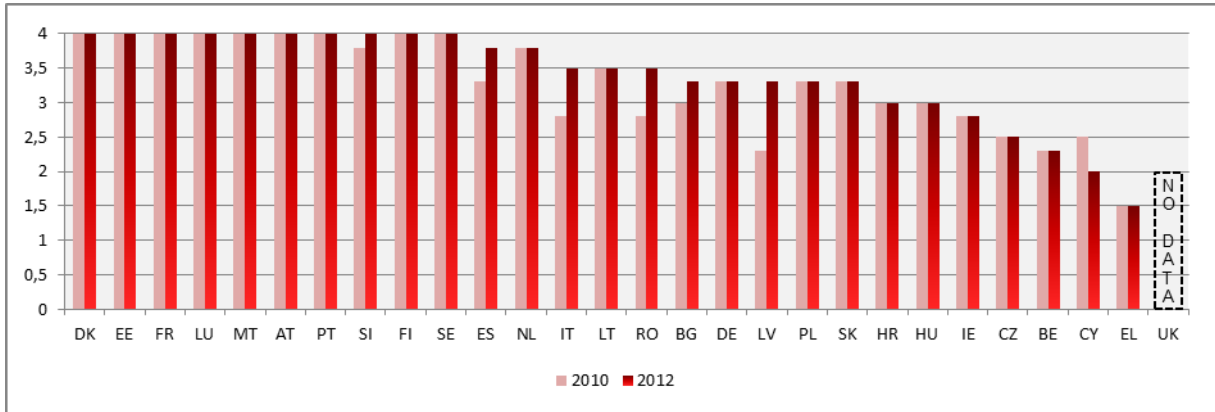
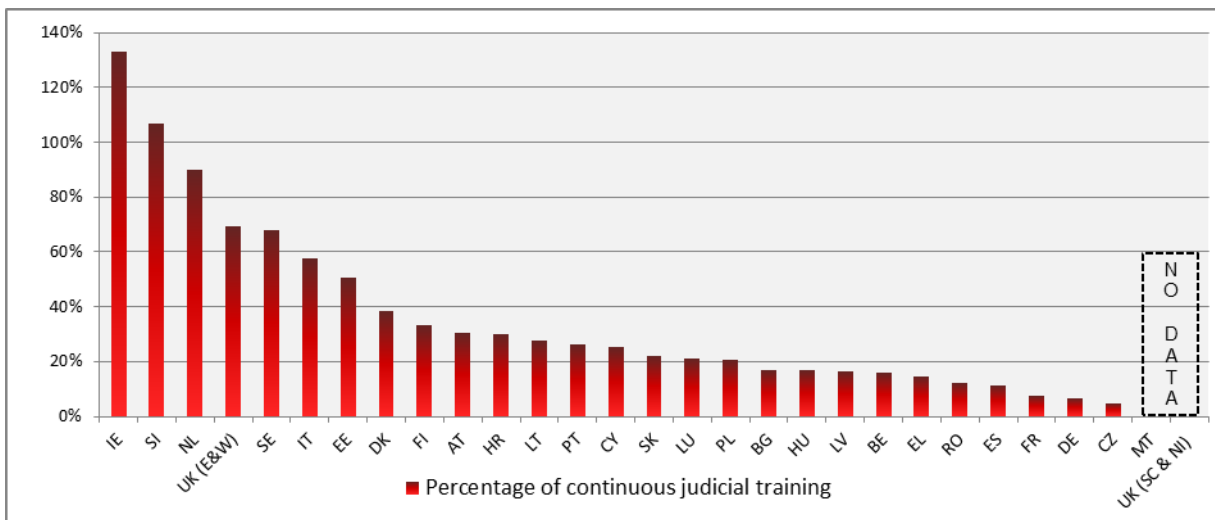
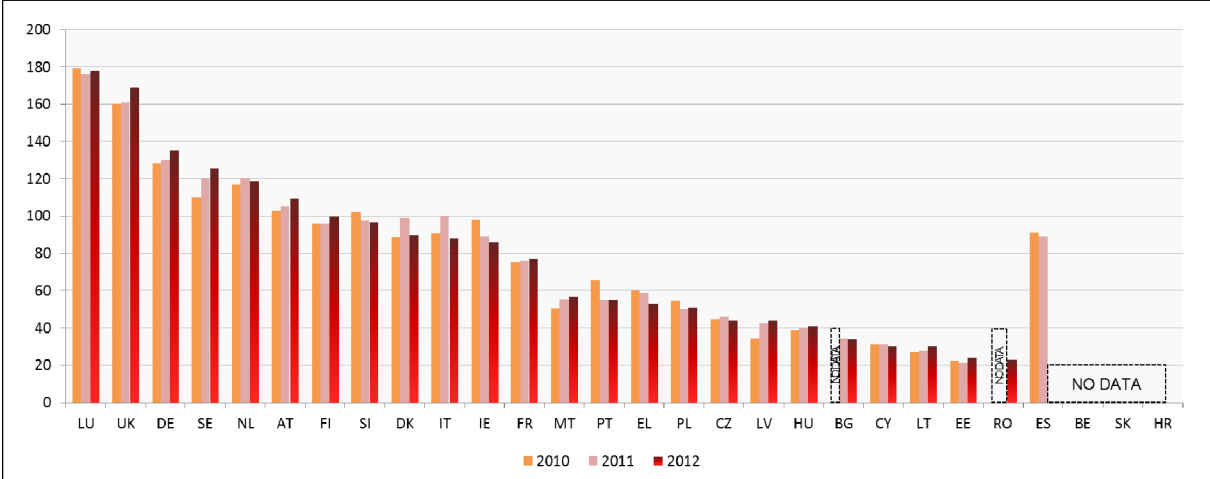


Figure 5: Judges participating in continuous training activities in EU Law or in the law of another Member State (as a % of total number of judges)* (source: European Commission, European Judicial Training, 2012)



*In a few cases reported by the Member States the ratio of participants to existing members of a legal profession exceeds 100%, meaning that participants took part in more than one training activity on EU law. Some of the exceptionally high figures may suggest that, the data delivered concerns training in all subjects and not just in EU law.

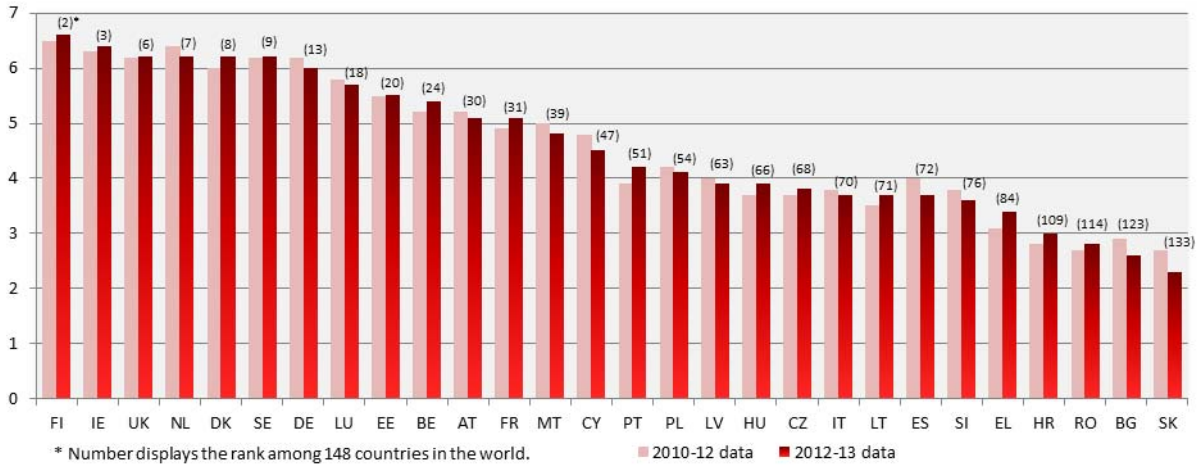
Figure 6: General Government total expenditure on "law courts"* (in EUR per inhabitant) (source: Eurostat)



*This figure presents general government total (actual) expenditure on courts.

3. Independence

Figure 7: Perceived judicial independence (higher value means better perception) (source: World Economic Forum [WEF])



The WEF indicator is based on survey answers to the question: "To what extent is the judiciary in your country independent from the influences of members of government, citizens, or firms?" The survey was replied to by a representative sample of firms in all countries representing the main sectors of the economy (agriculture, manufacturing industry, non-manufacturing industry, and services).