

**Χαιρετισμός Υπουργού Δικαιοσύνης
και Δημοσίας Τάξεως**

**ΤΕΛΕΤΗ ΟΛΟΚΛΗΡΩΣΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΕΡΓΟΥ
«ΔΗΜΙΟΥΡΓΙΑ ΜΙΑΣ ΑΝΕΞΑΡΤΗΤΗΣ ΥΠΗΡΕΣΙΑΣ
ΔΙΚΑΣΤΗΡΙΩΝ ΣΤΗΝ ΚΥΠΡΟ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΑΔΙΟΡΓΑΝΩΣΗ
ΤΩΝ ΠΡΩΤΟΚΟΛΛΗΤΕΙΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΔΙΚΑΣΤΗΡΙΩΝ»**

18 Ιανουαρίου 2023, 11:30, Ανώτατο Δικαστήριο

Honourable President and Members of the Supreme Court,

Honourable Judges,

Dear President of the Cyprus Bar Association,

Representatives of the European Commission and the Council of Europe,

Today's ceremony marks the completion of a significant project, which is an essential component of the ongoing justice reform. The study for the establishment of the Courts Service, delivered today, constitutes a significant part of the ambitious plan of the Government for the holistic reform of justice.

As we all know, the idea for an Independent Courts Service, an independent body to undertake all aspects of the management, administration and support of courts, was derived from the experts' report of 2018 on the "Functional review of the Courts System of Cyprus".

It is evident from that report, as well as the mid-reports we received from the experts, that the existing set up for the management and administration of the courts, are no longer fit for purpose and need to be modernised. There is a general consensus among the various stakeholders that new arrangements need to be introduced.

As a Government, we firmly believe that the establishment of a Courts Service will effectively address the challenges of administration and serve to the maximum the well-functioning of the courts. Its implementation with other projects will significantly improve efficiency in the delivery of justice.

This new administration will incorporate the current administrative and support staff, but at the same time will identify other specific skills and specialist competencies that will need to be recruited.

The potential benefits to be derived from implementing new professional management and administrative structures in our courts, are many

- Allow more time for judges to focus on their judicial duties;
- Offer better support to judges;
- improve budgeting, planning, risk management, strategic planning, and better management of resources;
- more effective staff planning, management and development; and
- more effective management of the reform process and modernisation of the courts,

are only few of the many.

The implementation of the recommendations of the study is the next, also important step, through which we will feel the impact and the tangible results. This emerges as the solution to the weaknesses identified and the successive problems that are recorded every day within the courts and which I am sure you are very well aware of.

On behalf of the Government, I would like to express my gratitude towards our partners in this project:

- The Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support of the European Commission, for their continuous support in relation to the reform of the judicial system.
- The Council of Europe team that participates in this project and for the professionalism it always demonstrates in the implementation of any project it undertakes.
- All the experts who contributed to the project.

This is another example, as was the case with the Civil Procedure Rules, of how the cooperation between the European Institutions and the Member States can lead to successful results for the benefit of the citizens.

I would also like to express my thanks to the Director of Reform and Training, Mr George Erotocritou, for his continuous and essential contribution to all the projects.

Distinguished audience,

The reform of the justice system has been a long and demanding process, full of challenges and obstacles, which we have collectively managed to overcome. During the last years, steady steps have been taken towards the holistic reform of the judicial system.

2022 was a milestone year for the justice system. Very important laws were enacted, establishing the Supreme Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court, the new Court of Appeal and the Commercial and Admiralty Courts.

The importance and significance of those laws, lie in that they form a more flexible and functional highest level of justice. They enhance transparency, achieve specialization, introduce the necessary checks and balances, while at the same time serve the main goal of quick administration of justice, especially in the appeals landscape.

In parallel, many other, equally important projects, are taking place:

1. The backlog project, which has already exceeded the first target set in the Recovery and Resilience Fund.
2. The new Rules of Civil Procedure, which will come into force on September 1, 2023 for all new cases.
3. Technology has finally entered the courts. After a

successful pilot period, i-justice became mandatory from February 2022 and has been embraced by the legal world, which is evidenced by the extremely large number of registered cases and documents. Very soon, the complete e-justice system will be implemented.

4. Digital Audio Recording is promoted by the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy, with its implementation taking place in 2025 in all court buildings.

5. Trainings from the School of Judges are continued to be carried. We have, also, already exceeded the target set in the Recovery and Resilience Fund.

The progress so far achieved, makes me confident to say that we are moving towards the end of a long road. Maybe with a slower pace than we would like. But, definitely, to the right direction.

On this point, I would like to highlight that the reform has already been positively reported in the third Rule of Law Report of the European Commission, adopted in July 2022.

I look forward to hearing the presentation on the deliverables and achievements of the project. I am sure that these will not remain on paper, but instead we will all collectively proceed with the timely implementation of the project, having as ultimate aim, the improvement of the administration and management of courts and their workload.

Many thanks once again to all stakeholders. I am looking forward to extending and strengthening our cooperation with the Council of Europe, but also with DG-Structural Reform Support of the European Commission on new joint projects.

As my term of office soon comes to an end, before closing, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the President and the Members of the Supreme Court for the excellent co-operation we had during the last very challenging eighteenth months, but happily with a good end, and wish them every success in the new road of implementation that started.

Thank you.