

Welcoming address

Closing event of the EU-CoE joint project:

**Enhancing the Capacity of the
Justice System by an Effective Implementation of the Reform
Recommendations and Processes in Cyprus**

18 January 2023, 11:30 – 13:25 EET

Supreme Court of Cyprus, Lecture Hall

Dear President and members of the Supreme Court,

Dear Minister of Justice,

Dear Director General of the Ministry of Finance,

Dear representatives of the European Commission,

Dear Director of Reform on behalf of the Supreme Court,

Dear Members of the Cypriot House of Representatives,

Dear Vice-President of the Cyprus Bar Association,

Honourable Justices, distinguished speakers and participants,

It is a great honour and pleasure to be with you this morning and to take part in this event, which gives us an great opportunity to consider our joint achievements regarding the implementation of the recommendations and

processes for the Justice system reform, but also the expected forthcoming developments on the functioning of Cypriot courts.

[As has already been said,] Over the last years, the Cypriot authorities, the European Union and the Council of Europe have been working together on the implementation of two joint projects aiming at improving the efficiency of the judicial system.

The first one, launched in 2020, focused on the modernisation of the Civil Procedure Rules.

It resulted in the adoption of the new Rules in May 2021 by the Supreme Court of Cyprus.

It also supported the development of training programmes, awareness raising and change management recommendations.

We are looking forward to the entry into force of the new Civil Procedure Rules, foreseen in September 2023, as it is expected to make the civil justice system more reliable, swift and accessible to everyone.

The second project, the completion of which we are marking today, was launched in February 2021, also as a part of the wider justice reform process.

Thanks to the support from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM), as well as to the continued efforts of the national stakeholders and specifically the Director of Reform of the Supreme Court, the project provided outputs contributing, firstly, to the establishment of a new court service responsible for the management and administration of all courts in Cyprus and, secondly, to the introduction of new administrative and case-management processes in the court registries.

Relying on our European standards and with the assistance of international experts, the project developed a detailed proposal for new management and governance structure, key processes, new roles and responsibilities, together with new staffing arrangements for the new court service to be established.

In addition, it prepared an implementation roadmap, which covers the immediate actions to be undertaken in the first three years of setting up and operation.

The roadmap and action plan propose a significant change in the functioning of the registries, with the aim of alleviating the current administrative duties of the Supreme Court.

Under the second outcome, the project developed an evaluation report on the existing administrative processes and case-management arrangements in court registries.

It also formulated concrete short- and long-term recommendations on the improvement of the internal processes, case-management by the registries and logistical arrangements, while taking into account the structures proposed for the new Court Service, the e-justice integration and the new Civil Procedure Rules.

This being said, of course, the achievement of the project's long-term outcomes and, crucially, its impact will largely depend on the degree of endorsement and implementation of these proposals by the Cypriot authorities.

Implementation stage will be critical.

We are well aware of the multiple simultaneous initiatives and efforts within the justice reform that are currently taking place.

It is important that the establishment of the court service goes smoothly and in coordination with all other initiatives that are taking place at the same time.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our Organisation has been working on justice sector reforms in our member states through co-operation projects for decades.

Work in this field is of a fundamental importance, because the rule of law on which European democracies rest cannot be ensured without fair, efficient and accessible judicial systems.

But it is also complex, and requires commitment from a great variety of actors, for the benefit of justice users, who must have confidence in the judiciary and benefit fully from the guarantees offered by Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights on the right to a fair trial.

So when engaging in justice reform work, it is essential to have reliable partners.

It has been the case in this project.

An efficient way of working, supportive and pleasant relationships we have been able to develop with both the project's beneficiary and DG REFOM have been extremely gratifying.

We are grateful to our Cypriot partners, for our excellent cooperation in the past three years with the Supreme Court of Cyprus and the Director of Reform, as well as with the Ministries of Justice and Finance for their continued commitment to our joint efforts.

Our gratitude also goes to our EU partners from DG Reform – Mr Daniele Dotto, Mr Sebastian Renauld and Ms Adamantia Manta.

I would like to extend special thanks to Mr George Erotocritou, the man who became the cornerstone of success of the last three years' endeavors.

Dear Mr Erotocritou, I know for sure from my team that it has been a honor and a pleasure to follow this journey with you and to share, sometimes stressful but mainly satisfactory experiences along the way.

If you allow me, I would also like to congratulate our Council of Europe team for managing and supporting this Project: Mr Tigran Karapetyan, Mrs Elena Yurkina, Ms Rafaella Hadjikyriacou and Ms Aggeliki Fotopoulou-Karageorgou.

The current project, together with the former EU-CoE Joint project on the introduction of new Civil Procedure Rules, constitute important milestones within the wider court reform process in Cyprus.

It is also an outstanding example of how the EU and the Council of Europe cooperate in upholding the rule of law among our member states.

We stand ready to continue such cooperation with the European Union and the Cypriot authorities through the design and implementation of future joint actions to address further issues in the field of human rights, justice and rule of law.

We are looking forward to future joint achievements.

Thank you for your attention.