

Speaking points

Project Kick-off

Enhancing the Capacity of the Justice System by an effective  
implementation of the Reform Recommendations and Processes in  
Cyprus

18 February 2021, 10:00-12:00 (Strasbourg time)

Dear Ministers,  
Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am thankful for the opportunity to be with you today, to kick off another initiative to reform the justice system of Cyprus.

I am honoured that the Council of Europe can actively support this highly ambitious reform and would like to thank our partners from Cyprus for their initiative and the European Commission for making all this possible.

Today, I would like to encourage us to further reforms and contribute with the perspective of the Council Europe and outline our concrete support. Cyprus is a member of the Council of Europa for almost 60 years and we are delighted that we can share with you our experience and expertise to make the current reform a success.

Justice systems are not static. They need constant reform and improvements to keep up with reality. The Council of Europe, with its 47 Member states and strong relations to the national courts is aware of this constant reform need. We accompany our members in these reforms no matter if the reform is minor or

substantial or if the Member State is small or big. We see it as our obligation to ensure Rule of law, Human Rights and Democracy in Europe.

Rule of Law and Human Rights do not need to remain abstract. To become more concrete we rather talk about quality and efficiency of justice. A justice serving the people.

This is exactly what this reform project is about. We aim at feasible results. Namely, the

- Creation of an independent court service responsible for the management and administration of courts in Cyprus; and the
- Introduction of new administrative processes in the court registries.

Improving the courts' management, administration and case-management by court registries are concrete steps towards quality and efficiency of justice.

There is no doubt: a permanent improvement of the functioning of Cypriot courts will enhance effective judicial protection and the protection of human rights and rule of law in Cyprus.

Bringing the Cypriot courts at pace with technological developments and modern case management and administration methods will guarantee uninterrupted and prompt access to justice and upholding the rule of law.

So what can the Council of Europe contribute?

Throughout its existence since 1949 the Council has helped to define the standards of quality and efficiency of justice through its standard setting bodies and intergovernmental committees. Committees to which also Cyprus is a party.

I would like to mention in our context the following:

- The European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ),
- the Consultative Council of European Judges (CCJE),
- and the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ),

Furthermore the Council has other mechanisms that de-facto define standards and give guidance to its members. Most prominently

- the Venice Commission on Constitutional Reform,
- the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), and
- the Committee of Ministers overseeing the execution of its judgments.

In parallel, and drawing on this expertise, the CoE has been supporting justice sector reform in its member states through dedicated co-operation projects. This includes institutional and capacity-building assistance to judiciaries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Council can only be of help if the state is open to this support. In this regard I am delighted to see that the reform process was already initiated by the Supreme Court. The work of our joint project is based on the recommendations of the so called "Functional Review of the Courts System of Cyprus" prepared in 2018. This Functional Review Report revealed shortcomings in the judicial system. The reform process is addressing them including court operations.

It is good that we are already on this established reform path and I am delighted that we can walk it till the end together.

To conclude,

The achievements of our goals and their lasting impact depends on four factors:

First, the degree of endorsement and implementation of the advice by national authorities in Cyprus.

Second, the good cooperation of the different partners at European and national level.

Third, the active involvement of Registry and other Court Staff in the implementation of the Project and their consultation in all major stages. I would like to underline that the staff's contribution throughout the process will be valuable and highly desirable

Fourth, the commitment and motivation of all parties involved in the reform process.

In particular, the developments concerning the last factor make me optimistic. We see sincere and excellent commitment from the Supreme Court of Cyprus and the Director of Reform and Training.

The same applies to the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance and the European Commission through DG REFORM.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With this optimistic outlook I wish all of us a lot of success!

Thank you very much!

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