



Council of the European Union  
General Secretariat

---

---

**Interinstitutional files:  
2025/0255 (COD)**

---

---

**Brussels, 22 October 2025**

**WK 14063/2025 INIT**

**LIMITE**

**JUSTCIV**

**EJUSTICE**

**COPEN**

**JAI**

**CADREFIN**

**CODEC**

*This is a paper intended for a specific community of recipients. Handling and further distribution are under the sole responsibility of community members.*

## **WORKING DOCUMENT**

---

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
N° Cion doc.:	ST 12488 2025 INIT
Subject:	Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Justice programme for the period 2028-2034 and repealing Regulation (EU) 2021/693 - Comments from Member States

---

Delegations will find in the Annex written comments from Member States with their first reactions on the proposal for a Regulation establishing the Justice programme for the period 2028-2034 and repealing Regulation (EU) 2021/693 ('Justice') - 2025/0255 (COD).

---

WK 14063/2025 INIT

**LIMITE**

**EN**

I.	BELGIUM .....	2
II.	BULGARIA .....	4
III.	CZECH REPUBLIC .....	5
IV.	FRANCE .....	7
V.	ITALY .....	8
VI.	LATVIA .....	9
VII.	HUNGARY .....	10
VIII.	NETHERLANDS .....	12
IX.	POLAND .....	13
X.	SLOVENIA .....	14
XI.	FINLAND .....	19

## I. BELGIUM

### Text proposals from the Belgian delegation

- Recitals

(13) The Programme should support the training of the judiciary, including trainee magistrates, and judicial staff. Training activities should contribute to the implementation of Union strategic priorities, including for instance, training on civil and criminal law, on the effective application of the Charter, on mutual recognition as well as on procedural safeguards (including safeguards for strategic lawsuits against public participation (anti-SLAPP)). Training activities under the Programme should have a strong focus on supporting digitalisation of justice, by providing digital capacity building a supportive environment for the judiciary and judicial staff, including through increasing digital skills, knowledge and awareness. Training should also support the digitalisation of cross-border judicial proceedings. Support to training should happen in synergy with measures at national level, thus leveraging the impact of the Programme.

To ensure relevance and impact, the Programme should actively involve national judicial training institutes in the assessment of training needs and priority-setting, thereby aligning Union-level initiatives with the practical realities and evolving demands of national justice systems

(14) The Programme should support the annual work programme of the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN), which is an essential actor with regard to judicial training and plays an important role in supporting and implementing the objectives of European judicial training policy in the trainings they organize. The EJTN is the only network at Union level bringing together the judicial training bodies of the Member States. It is therefore in a unique position to organise exchanges and training for the judiciary between Member States and to coordinate complement the work of national judicial training bodies, thereby fostering synergies between Union supported and nationally funded training and structured communication between the Union and national training providers. Moreover, the EJTN may also include the judicial training bodies of candidate countries and potential candidates as observer members.

In light of this position, the Programme should explicitly strengthen the institutional role of EJTN as a strategic partner in organizing exchanges and in disseminating and supporting judicial training policy at Union level, including through structural support.

- **Articles**

*Article 2*

**Definition**

For the purposes of this Regulation, ‘judiciary, including trainee magistrates, and judicial staff’ means judges, prosecutors and members of staff of courts and of prosecutors’ offices, as well as any other justice professionals associated with the justice systems or otherwise participating in the administration of justice, irrespective of the definition in national law, legal status or internal organisation, such as lawyers, notaries, bailiffs or enforcement officers, insolvency practitioners, mediators, court interpreters and translators, court experts, prison staff and probation officers.

*Article 3*

**Programme objectives**

1. The general objective of the Programme is to contribute to the further development of an efficient, inclusive, resilient and digitalised Union area of justice, based on the rule of law, mutual recognition and mutual trust, thereby also strengthening democracy and the protection of fundamental rights, and contributing to the Union’s growth and competitiveness, as well as the digitalisation of justice at the Union level.

2. The Programme has the following specific objectives:

(a) to facilitate and support judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters, and to promote the rule of law, in particular the independence, quality and efficiency of justice systems, including through improving the effective cross-border recognition and enforcement of judicial decisions;

(b) to promote and support training of the judiciary, including trainee magistrates, and judicial staff, with a view to:

promoting the rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy; fostering a common legal and judicial culture; ensuring the consistent and effective implementation of the relevant Union legal instruments; enhancing judicial cooperation and providing a supportive environment for the digitalisation of judicial cooperation and justice systems.

(c) to facilitate and support effective and non-discriminatory access to justice for all and effective remedy, including by digital means, by promoting efficient civil and criminal procedures and by promoting and supporting the rights of all victims of crime and the procedural rights of suspects and accused persons in criminal proceedings as well as of requested persons in European Arrest Warrant proceedings.

## **II. BULGARIA**

On behalf of the Bulgarian delegation to the AHWP JHA, please find below comments with first reactions on the proposal for a Regulation establishing the Justice programme for the period 2028-2034 and repealing Regulation (EU) 2021/693.

- The Republic of Bulgaria welcomes the proposal for Regulation and would like express support towards its objectives.
- It is of particular importance that the proposal ensures continuity and complementarity with the current 'Justice' Programme 2021-2027 and builds on it in terms of thematic priorities, by also maintaining the management and control mechanisms.
- We would like to express a positive attitude towards the planned simplification of the requirements for application, management and reporting and for providing additional guidance. This will ease the work of national institutions, NGOs and the academic community, and is expected to reduce the difficulties encountered with application procedures and reporting requirements.
- At the same time, we consider it justified to extend the thematic scope of the programme, including due to the large number of policies and legislative acts supported by the implementation of the programme, as well as the increase in the indicative budget.
- The ambition of the Programme to ensure a stronger focus on the digitisation of the judiciary in all its specific objectives is directly linked to the priorities of the Ministry of Justice and the Bulgarian judiciary. We trust that the digitisation of justice will be duly incorporated when setting the funding priorities in the relevant policy areas each year.
- We appreciate that the proposal acknowledges the importance of the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN). Maintaining the financial commitments for the EJTN is crucial to secure its financial and operational sustainability.
- The inclusion of prison staff and probation officers in the target group of the Programme (Article 2) has the potential to directly contribute to improving the capacity and functioning of the prison administration. This will positively affect the impact of the programme and increase benefits and visibility.

### III. CZECH REPUBLIC

(1)The Czech Republic welcomes the opportunity to submit written comments on the proposal for a Regulation establishing the Justice Programme for the period 2028–2034. It supports the continuation of the Programme and expresses its full commitment to actively engage in the negotiation process.

In this context, the Czech Republic recalls that the Council of the European Union has already adopted two key documents that should serve as a foundation for the future Justice Programme. The first is the *Strategic Guidelines for Legislative and Operational Planning in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice*, adopted on 12 December 2024, which outline priorities for legislative and operational activities in the coming years. The Czech Republic particularly emphasizes the shared commitment of Member States and the European Commission to continue **supporting the European Judicial Network in Civil and Commercial Matters and the European Judicial Network in Criminal Matters**, as well as other relevant networks aimed at strengthening judicial cooperation. Further analysis is encouraged to ensure these networks are used effectively and to their full potential.

The second document, the *Council Conclusions on Measures to Promote the Competitiveness of the European Union and its Member States through Civil Justice*, also adopted on 12 December 2024, highlights the essential role of the European Judicial Network in Civil and Commercial Matters in implementing legislation and facilitating the exchange of good practices. Together with the European e-Justice Portal, these instruments contribute significantly to the effective application of EU law. The Council invited Member States and the Commission to further strengthen judicial cooperation through the Network, enhance its visibility among judges and legal practitioners, and promote the European e-Justice Portal to professionals, citizens, and businesses. Furthermore, the Council called on the Commission to ensure continued development and provide both professional and financial support to the European Judicial Network in Civil and Commercial Matters, including support for national networks.

In light of these commitments, **the Czech Republic considers it essential that the future Justice Programme reflects and supports the further development of these networks**. We also believe that the support for networks **should be explicitly mentioned among the specific objectives in Article 3(2)**. Moreover, **sufficient financial resources should be allocated to ensure their effective operation and continued enhancement**.

**Furthermore, the Programme should place strong emphasis on the digitalization and modernization of justice systems. For this reason, we deem it important that this objective be explicitly included in Article 3(2), rather than only referred to in general terms in para 1.** To achieve this, it should support the implementation of digital solutions through various means, including targeted funding for smaller-scale projects that facilitate meaningful progress in digital transformation.

(2)Moreover, the CZ proposes **to formally establish the provision of adequate resources for judicial training at the European level and to allocate a direct grant to cover the operational costs of the European Judicial Training Network in Article 9**, as was the case in previous budgetary periods. This funding enables hundreds of professionals (not only) from the Czech judiciary to participate annually in international training activities and projects that are essential for their continued professional development.

(3)The Czech Republic supports the position expressed by several Member States during the AWP meeting held on 3 October regarding the programme committee. We would appreciate the inclusion of an **explicit reference to the programme committee in the text of the regulation**, as was the case in the previous programming period.

#### **IV. FRANCE**

**Objet :** Commentaires des autorités françaises à la suite de la réunion du groupe *ad hoc* sur les instruments financiers JAI du 3 octobre 2025 sur la proposition de règlement établissant le programme « Justice » pour la période 2028-2034 et abrogeant le règlement (UE) 2021/693 – Note des autorités françaises.

A la suite de la réunion du groupe *ad hoc* sur les instruments financiers JAI du 3 octobre 2025, la présidence a sollicité les commentaires des États membres sur les premières réactions s'agissant de la proposition de règlement établissant le programme « Justice » pour la période 2028-2034 et abrogeant le règlement (UE) 2021/693. Les autorités françaises souhaitent faire valoir les éléments suivants :

- Elles suivront avec beaucoup d'intérêt les prochaines discussions sur le programme « Justice » pour la période 2028-2034 qui pourrait permettre, comme ce fut le cas pour le programme 2021-2027, la mise en place d'actions européennes à haute valeur ajoutée.
- Elles saluent la concentration particulière du programme « Justice » 2028-2034 sur le numérique mais rappellent l'importance qu'il reste également centré sur le renforcement de la coopération judiciaire, la formation des professionnels du droit, l'accès à la justice et la lutte contre la corruption.
- Elles rappellent le rôle essentiel joué par le réseau européen de formation judiciaire (REFJ) pour former les juges, procureurs et greffiers européens, contribuant ainsi à la défense de l'Etat de droit au sein de l'Union européenne. Les financements directs du programme « Justice » au REFJ sont à ce titre cruciaux pour assurer sa continuité d'action.
- Elles resteront très attentives aux échanges à venir sur les modalités de gouvernance prévues pour la période 2028-2034.

## V. ITALY

Italy welcomes the proposed regulation, which ensures continuity for an instrument that has proved its value in the previous and current programming periods. The focus on digitalisation is particularly commendable, as EU funding will provide a valuable contribution to the ongoing efforts of Member States.

In this context, two elements of the proposal raise concerns for Italy:

### 1. **Article 10 – Work Programme**

Italy would prefer that Member States maintain a central role in the governance of the Programme, including in the approval of the work programme. The comitology procedure provided for in the current regulation should therefore be reinstated in the proposal for the new regulation.

### 2. **Article 9(6) – Financing of the European Judicial Training Network**

Italy attaches great importance to the proper functioning of the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN), which plays an essential role in judicial training as the only network at Union level bringing together the judicial training bodies of the Member States. Its activities are largely dependent on financing from the European Commission through the current Justice Programme. The wording of Article 9(6) of the proposal (“an operating grant *may* be awarded”) appears to cast doubt on whether the permanent work programme of the EJTN will continue to be covered by the future Justice Programme. Considering that these funds are essential to allow the EJTN to operate freely and independently, Italy therefore suggests retaining the wording of the current regulation (Article 11(3): “The Programme *shall* support the EJTN’s expenditure associated with its permanent work programme, and any operating grant to that effect shall be awarded without a call for proposals”), which provides greater legal clarity and stability in this regard.

## **VI. LATVIA**

Latvia understands that the proposal for a regulation does not provide for the description of issues regarding the EC's project financing rates within the framework of the Justice Programme. This would in reality result from the Work Programmes that will be prepared after the adoption of the proposal for a regulation COM (2025) 463 final. However, the amount to which a Member State must provide co-financing, pre-financing and financing to cover ineligible costs (e.g. VAT) is an essential condition for being able to participate in project calls. Accordingly, we would like to know what the planned co-financing rates are.

Latvia would also like to add that it is necessary to:

1. Maintain full funding for the Justice Programme as proposed by the European Commission.
2. Ensure EJTN remains directly financed under the Programme by amending the wording in Article 9, point 6, from "may" to "shall".
3. Include a reference in the explanatory memorandum to the crucial role played by the EJTN in supporting the rule of law across the EU.
4. Acknowledge EJTN's comprehensive role in judicial training, explicitly referencing its training of court staff, in addition to judges and prosecutors.

## VII. HUNGARY

Hungary generally supports the objectives of the draft regulation (2025/0255 (COD)) on establishing the Enforcement Program for the 2028-2034 period and repealing Regulation (EU) 2021/693. We welcome that, according to the draft, the Justice Program to be adopted for the 2028-2034 period aims to further develop the EU's area of justice as a continuation of the current program, with a significantly increased budget and a strong focus on digitalisation.

However, similarly to the other proposals in the MFF package, we have concerns about the proposal due to the lack of a comitology procedure and evaluations related to the Justice Programme, and the resulting diminishing of the role of Member States. Hungary is interested in an MFF that effectively addresses both the Union's long-term strategic goals and current challenges while taking into account the needs of the Member States. It is crucial to maintain the current interinstitutional balance and to respect the treaty-based roles of each EU institution. The political priorities of the Union should be defined by the European Council, while Member States should retain their ability to effectively shape the fundamentals of the supporting budgetary policies, since it is Member States that should be provided with greater flexibility to build up the necessary capacity for crisis management and addressing unforeseen challenges.

We acknowledge that the Commission is addressing these horizontal issues uniformly for all proposals, and the provisions on evaluation have been removed from the sectoral proposals in order to ensure a consistent approach and are included in a proposal adopted as part of the first MFF package. Therefore, in these comments we focus solely on the merits of the current proposal.

Hungary generally supports EU financial programmes that promote the digitalisation of justice, recognising that digitalisation and the use of innovative technologies, including AI-based tools, are key drivers of efficiency, accessibility, and resilience within the Union's justice systems, as was also emphasised in the 2024 Council Conclusions on the use of AI in justice, adopted during the Hungarian EU Presidency.

As highlighted in the Council Conclusions, judicial cooperation between Member States is of utmost importance. In particular, it is essential to support innovation initiatives aimed at developing justice digitalisation and artificial intelligence systems designed in accordance with EU law for utilisation in judicial context. Close cooperation between judicial authorities and professionals is indispensable for promoting innovation. Additionally, continuous training for legal professionals and judicial administrative staff is essential, particularly in the areas of artificial intelligence and other technological developments, both at the national and EU levels.

We fully support digitalisation as a means to reduce administrative burdens, enhance transparency, and improve the efficiency of judicial proceedings. It ensures justice systems remain resilient in crises, strengthens EU legal cooperation, and supports economic growth by improving the legal competitiveness of Member States.

As set out in the 2024-2028 European Union e-Justice Strategy and Action Plan, the digitalisation of justice brings concrete and lasting benefits by decreasing the costs related to access to justice and the functioning of judicial system. However, investments in various actions require adequate funding.

We therefore support the current increase in the funding framework, which has more than doubled – from €305 million to €798 million –, while ensuring that all procedural safeguards are in place so that the role of Member States in the implementation of the Programme remains meaningful after the adoption of the regulation.

With regard to the possibility of establishing partial association agreements with third countries in relation to participation in the Justice Programme, pursuant to Article 7 of the proposed programme, we would like to make the following comment. In the current MFF, such partial association agreements can be concluded under Horizon Europe and have a very limited scope, covering only Pillar II ("Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness"). We are concerned that the current proposal do not provide adequate guarantees that the Council will be meaningfully involved in determining the scope and content of partial or full association agreements, particularly in the case of third countries where the Commission would negotiate with the third countries concerned on the basis of the standard authorisation used in FP9 (accessing countries, candidate countries and potential candidates, and European Neighbourhood Policy countries). We consider this to be an issue related to both governance and interinstitutional balance. As the problem arises in the case of 10 funds/programmes, we believe that the issue should be addressed by the horizontal ad hoc working group. The Council's role in establishing partial or full association agreements could be strengthened either horizontally, by including the same text in all proposals, or by addressing this issue in the interinstitutional agreement on the new MFF.

In conclusion, we emphasise that, with the necessary horizontal safeguards, an adequately flexible funding programme, such as the Justice Programme for the period 2028-2034, that enhances focus on digitalisation of justice across all its specific objectives is essential for reaching a more accessible, efficient, and resilient European justice system.

### **VIII. NETHERLANDS**

- Article 2: Are legal aid professionals included?
- Article 4.3: is there a percentage foreseen for the technical and administrative assistance?
- NL underlines that it is important that the Commission ensures that Member States are involved in the working programmes through adoption of delegated acts by the Commission and will raise this in the relevant ad hoc working party.

## **IX. POLAND**

Poland supports the general objective of the Programme and its specific aims in the fields of strengthening judicial cooperation, training and supporting access to justice, with emphasis being put on digitalisation in all these areas. At this stage we can only share a preliminary position on the draft Regulation.

On the substance of the proposal, we welcome the increased role of the European Judicial Training Network in supporting training for the judiciary and judicial staff. We perceive as relevant focusing training on the implementation of Union strategic priorities, such as safeguards for strategic lawsuits against public participation.

In Recital 12, it is suggested to include the “elderly persons” among the groups requiring special support in terms of facilitating effective and equal access to justice (as persons in a situation of vulnerability).

We would also like to address the definition of the "judiciary and judicial staff" in Article 2. Considering the training-related objective of the Programme, Poland suggests extending the above mentioned definition to court and prosecutor’s trainees. Furthermore, we would like to confirm that senior judicial clerks (*referendarze sądowi*) also fall within the scope of this definition.

With reference to the committee procedure under the current Programme, we request the Commission to provide more detailed information on the engagement of Member States in monitoring and oversight of the Programme implementation under the proposed draft Regulation. In Poland’s view, comitology should remain part of the Program architecture

## **X. SLOVENIA**

Slovenia welcomes the *Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Justice programme for the period 2028-2034 and repealing Regulation (EU) 2021/693* and presents its preliminary position:

**Slovenia enters a study reservation on the proposal at this stage.** While welcoming the overall objectives of the programme, Slovenia underlines the need to ensure continuity with the current Justice strand under Regulation (EU) 2021/693, greater clarity of thematic priorities, balanced geographical participation, and accessible funding for smaller and specialised beneficiaries. The proposal should also strengthen the consultative framework with Member States and civil society, improve budgetary safeguards, and ensure that digitalisation and artificial intelligence are developed in line with EU values, cybersecurity standards, and ethical principles.

We must strive for the new programme to be an upgrade to existing activities. The Regulation must remain committed to strengthening the rule of law, independence and efficiency of the judiciary, and access to justice for all citizens.

Stability and transparency of financing must be ensured, as well as the possibility of national projects and projects with a small number of partners to apply for funding. A broader circle of beneficiaries should be included in the programme.

Clear priorities must be set, financial safeguards and inclusive governance ensured.

### **Clarity of objectives and content**

Article 3 of the draft regulation states general objectives but does not define thematic priorities, which reduces predictability.

Slovenia considers that the regulation itself should include an indicative list of strategic funding areas, similar to the current work programmes (which explicitly list priority areas and budgetary envelopes): digitalisation of justice (e-Justice), judicial training, strengthening national networks, support for victims of crime, mediation, restorative justice, and strengthening the rule of law. Defining priority content in the regulation would increase transparency and enable timely planning of national projects.

Slovenia proposes an additional paragraph in Article 3 listing an indicative set of strategic areas: digitalisation of justice (e-Justice), judicial training, support for victims of crime, mediation and restorative justice, strengthening networks for judicial cooperation, and child-friendly justice. In addition to these, protection against Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP), in particular through training of judicial personnel and the creation of a repository of good practices with a clear delineation from the AgoraEU programme; the development and use of artificial intelligence in the justice area (ethical and legal safeguards, including a clause that funds must not be used for technologies or suppliers posing security risks, taking into account the AI Act and Guidelines for high-risk AI systems) should be included.

Ensuring geographical balance and the explicit inclusion of probation and prison services and smaller NGOs as priority areas are needed.

This will allow Member States and potential applicants to plan projects in good time and ensure alignment with national strategies.

The procedure for preparing work programmes in Article 10 (Work Programmes) is not defined. Slovenia proposes adding a provision obliging the Commission to consult Member States and civil society when preparing annual and multiannual work programmes and to publish priority themes at least six months before calls are launched.

The consultative framework should explicitly include the EJTN, judicial training centres, and also bar associations. Alongside annual work programmes, multiannual ones should also be prepared to ensure financing stability and continuity. This will improve legitimacy and ensure that EU measures are tailored to national needs.

### **Budgetary safeguards and flexibility**

Funds should be allocated across specific objectives with minimum guaranteed shares to prevent the diversion of resources at the expense of the most appropriate areas. Slovenia will propose the introduction of minimum shares for digitalisation of justice, judicial training, victim protection, and restorative justice. Adjusting lump sums to real market conditions or allowing the use of actual costs where lump sums are not appropriate is essential.

Slovenia proposes an indicative allocation of funds in Article 4 (Budget).

## **Access for small and specialised beneficiaries**

The wording should specify priority target groups. Slovenia proposes including a provision in Article 9 (Eligible Applicants) explicitly listing courts, public prosecutor's offices, other judicial bodies, probation and prison services, and civil society organizations as priority beneficiaries.

The programme should enable national projects, projects with a smaller number of partners (at least two organisations), and high co-financing rates (up to 90%) for smaller, non-profit organizations. It is especially important to ensure that smaller applicants (local NGOs, specialised organisations, probation and prison units) have easier access to funds through simplified administrative procedures and the possibility of re-granting via larger umbrella organisations that can redistribute funds.

This will ensure that resources are directed where they are needed to strengthen the rule of law and the efficiency of justice.

## **Governance and dialogue with NGOs**

**Slovenia** believes the regulation should provide for a permanent consultative mechanism, such as a programme committee (with Member State representation) and structured dialogue with non-governmental organisations. This approach would ensure that annual work programmes are prepared in cooperation with Member States and relevant stakeholders and that their needs are taken into account.

EJTN, Judicial training centres and bar associations should be systematically included in the consultative mechanism, as they play a key role in transferring EU priorities into national training systems and practice.

## **Digitalisation and cybersecurity**

Digitalisation of justice, including further development of e-Justice, should be supported with a dedicated budgetary framework and clear minimum shares. Particular attention should be paid to cybersecurity systems, interoperability, and digital identities to reduce technological gaps among Member States. Safeguards should be introduced so that digitalisation funds can not be spent on technologies or suppliers that pose security risks.

Slovenia stresses the need for open standards, interoperability, and open-source solutions to prevent dependence on individual suppliers (vendor lock-in). The regulation should therefore explicitly state that calls will prioritise solutions based on open technologies and that the compliance of funded solutions with EU cybersecurity standards will be regularly verified.

Slovenia will draw attention to the inclusion of development and use of artificial intelligence in the justice sector (as stated above).

### **Administrative simplification**

Slovenia proposes that point 3 of Article 8 (Forms of Financing) stipulate the obligation to regularly review and adjust lump sums and unit costs to market conditions, and that applicants be able to choose between lump-sum financing and reimbursement of actual costs.

This will allow flexibility and fairer cost reimbursement, especially for projects with high travel or accommodation expenses. Insisting on lump sums can lead to unrealistic cost estimates.

Slovenia supports the introduction of a re-granting mechanism via larger NGOs that can redistribute funds to local organisations, thereby ensuring greater programme accessibility for smaller applicants. Back-to-back financing via intermediaries should be clearly defined, and simplified procedures for small projects should be expanded.

Slovenia proposes that the regulation make regular user testing of the eGrants platform mandatory to improve user experience, especially for small and non-profit organisations, to reduce administrative burdens.

### **Cooperation with third countries**

Slovenia supports opening the programme to candidate and neighbouring countries while ensuring that cooperation proceeds under clear and fair conditions and that funds are not redirected at the expense of Member States. We propose that the regulation provide for conditional participation tied to compliance with rule of law standards. Respect for fundamental rights and data protection should be prerequisites for inclusion to prevent differences of standards within the European Area of Justice.

Article 7 (Opening to Third Countries) merely lays down the possibility of participation of third countries in general terms, without clear criteria. Slovenia proposes an additional provision allowing candidate and neighbouring countries to join the programme provided that they respect the principles of the rule of law, fundamental rights with EU data protection standards, and contribute to the programme budget in proportion to the scope of their participation. Clear conditions will provide legal certainty and prevent the diversion of funds at the expense of Member States.

### **Transitional provisions**

Slovenia welcomes that Article 12 provides for the continuation of funding for existing projects. A clause should be added clearly ensuring that existing projects are funded in full.

Slovenia also proposes the establishment of a mechanism to monitor the performance of projects transitioning into the new period, by including in the regulation an obligation for the Commission to prepare a special report on the transfer of good practices from existing projects into the new programme. This will ensure that the gained knowhow is systematically applied in future calls. In this way, the interruption of activities is prevented, and the experiences of existing projects are taken into account in new calls.

## **XI. FINLAND**

Finland thanks the Presidency for the opportunity to provide first reactions to the Justice Programme regulation. Finland would like stress that these are preliminary comments, and Finland will provide more detailed comments in future negotiations. For now, a scrutiny reservation must be placed on the entire text.

Finland generally welcomes the objectives of the Justice programme and the support it can provide to judicial cooperation, judicial training and ensuring equal access to justice for all citizens and businesses as well as upholding the Rule of Law and fundamental rights.

In Finland's view, the proposal does not adequately describe the opportunities for Member States to influence the programme. **Finland considers it important that the role of the programme committee, or a similar body**, be clarified during the negotiations.

National implementation and enforcement of EU level legislation requires considerable financial, legal and administrative resources. Therefore, in Finland's view, the **Justice programme should also provide support to actions at national level**. EU's Area of Justice, Freedom and Security cannot be effective if national frameworks are not effective.

In Finland's view, the interconnection of the future Justice programme with the National and Regional Partnership plans should be further clarified. The interlinkages have been specifically outlined as regards to **digitalization of justice systems**.

Finland would also like to highlight one key result/finding from the Justice programme evaluations. The evaluation **noted there is room for improvement in the geographical spread of the programme's resources**. Finland would welcome further discussions on how to make sure there is at least some sort of geographical balance in terms of the Justice programme funds.

Finland has noted the current proposal does not specify the types of actions the programme can provide funding for. **Finland suggests the inclusion of action types in the form a dedicated article**, similarly to the article 8 in the current Justice programme regulation (Types of action). Listing the potential forms of funded action types would provide clarity and predictability for the programme stakeholders. Without such specifications, the practical potential of the programme scope risks to remain vague and difficult to comprehend.

The new proposal does not include a reference to reporting on the programme results under EU Justice scoreboard reporting. Finland would welcome a similar reference under the new programme. In the current Justice programme this requirement is mentioned under art. 13 on Monitoring and reporting ("*[...] The Commission shall report on the performance of the Programme annually to the European Parliament and to the Council, within the existing reporting mechanisms, in particular the EU Justice Scoreboard. In particular, the Commission shall report on the use of the funds allocated to each specific objective. [...]*").

"Support to EU level actions to facilitate cooperation in relation to corruption" has been highlighted as a novelty/priority in the Commission's presentation in the AHWP meeting on 3 October and the theme has indeed been highlighted in several EU strategy documents. While corruption is repeatedly mentioned throughout the proposal, it does however not appear explicitly among the programme objectives or specific objectives. If measures related to corruption [=support to EU level actions in countering it] should warrant more attention in the programme, perhaps a more explicit reference should be made to it also under the programme objectives.