New EU rules: digitalisation to improve access to justice

Cross-border videoconferencing and safer and easier document exchange: learn how new EU rules for digitalising justice will benefit people and firms.

On 23 November, Parliament adopted two proposals aimed at modernising justice systems in the EU, which will help to decrease delays, increase legal certainty and make access to justice cheaper and easier.

New regulations will implement several digital solutions for cross-border taking of evidence and service of documents with the aim of making cooperation between national courts in different EU countries more efficient.
Endorsing **distance communication technologies** will lower costs and help evidence to be taken quicker. For example, to hear a person in a cross-border proceeding, videoconferencing can be used instead of requiring a physical presence.

A decentralised IT system that brings together national systems will be established so that documents can be exchanged electronically in a faster and more secure way. The new rules include additional provisions to **protect data and privacy** when documents are transmitted and evidence is being taken.

The regulations help simplify procedures and offer legal certainty to people and businesses, which will encourage them to engage in international transactions, thereby not only strengthening democracy but also the EU’s internal market.

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3.4 million

civil and commercial court proceedings a year have cross-border implications

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**EU efforts for the digitalisation of justice**

The two proposals update existing EU regulations on service of documents and taking of evidence to ensure they make the most of modern digital solutions.

They are part of the **EU’s efforts to help digitise justice systems**. While in some countries, digital solutions have already proved effective, cross-border judicial proceedings still take place mostly on paper. EU aims to improve cooperation at EU level to help people and businesses and preserve the ability of law enforcement to **protect people effectively**.

The **Covid-19 crisis** has created many problems for the judicial system: there have been delays of in-person hearings and of cross-border serving of judicial documents; inability to obtain in-person legal aid; and the expiry of deadlines due to delays. At the same time, the rising number of insolvency cases and layoffs due to the pandemic make the courts’ work even more critical.

The proposals enter into force 20 days following their publication in the EU’s official journal.

**Find out more**

Report: cross-border digital criminal justice