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EVALUATION

Accompanying the document

REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

**on the *ex post* evaluation of the 2014-2020 justice programme and *interim* evaluation of
the 2021-2027 justice programme**

{COM(2025) 267 final}

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1. INTRODUCTION

This staff working document (SWD) presents the results of the *ex post* evaluation of the 2014-2020 justice programme¹ as well as the *interim* evaluation of the 2021-2027 justice programme². The evaluation is subject to a report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions.

1.1. Purpose and scope of the evaluation

The 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 justice programmes are two funding programmes contributing to the development of a European area of justice based on the rule of law.

The [justice programme \(2014-2020\)](#) contributed to the further development of a European Union area of justice based on mutual recognition and mutual trust, by promoting judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters and helping train judges and other legal practitioners. Since 2021, the [justice programme \(2021-2027\)](#) continues contributing to the further development of a European area of justice based on the rule of law, including independence and impartiality of the judiciary, on mutual recognition, mutual trust and judicial cooperation. It aims at strengthening democracy, rule of law, and the protection of fundamental rights.

Considering the links between the two programmes, the Commission carried out a joint evaluation made up of two components. The first component is the *ex post* evaluation of the 2014-2020 justice programme, assessing its longer-term impact and sustainability effects, based on the results of the [first part of the ex- post evaluation](#)³ completed in 2022. The second component is the *interim* evaluation of the 2021-2027 justice programme, assessing its preliminary achievements.

The first part of the *ex post* evaluation aimed to report to the European Parliament and the Council as provided by Article 14 of Regulation No 1382/2013. Considering that a significant number of projects were still ongoing, the first part *ex post* evaluation assessed the preliminary achievements of the 2014-2020 programme, which fed into the design of the activities of the current one.

The evaluation assesses from a longitudinal perspective to what extent the respective activities and expected outcomes achieved the objectives of the two programmes against the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU added value, and relevance. The evaluation also assesses the synergies between the two programmes and the new programme architecture's added value. In a forward-looking perspective, the evaluation provides lessons learnt for the ongoing implementation of the 2021-2027 programme as well as the following funding cycle.

The *ex post* evaluation's scope covers the implementation of the 2014-2020 justice programme from 1 January 2014 until 31 December 2020 and all of the programme's activities that took place in all participating countries⁴ during that time. The *interim* evaluation covers the implementation of the 2021-2027 justice programme from 1 January

¹ Regulation (EU) No 1382/2013 of 17 December 2013, OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 73-83, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1382/oj>.

² Regulation (EU) No 2021/693 of 28 April 2021, OJ L 156, 5.5.2021, pp. 21-38, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/693/oj>.

³ [COM/2022/121 final](#).

⁴ All EU Member States (except for Denmark and the UK), Albania and Montenegro.

2021 until 31 December 2023, and all of the programme's activities taking place in all participating countries during that time⁵.

1.2. Methodology framework

The evaluation – supported by an external study (hereafter the ‘supporting study’)⁶ – combines and triangulates qualitative and quantitative data sources and methods; it is underpinned by desk research⁷. It was carried out by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST).

The evaluation: (i) takes stock of an earlier impact assessment⁸ (2018) and (ii) acknowledges both the *interim*⁹ evaluation of the 2014-2020 justice programme (2018) and the first part *ex post* evaluation¹⁰ of the 2024-2020 justice programme (2022). The *interim* evaluation of the 2021-2027 justice programme draws on the findings of both the first part and the second part of the *ex post* evaluation of the 2014-2020 programme.

A wide range of stakeholders was consulted to prepare this evaluation, including representatives of: (i) EU Member States who are also members of the relevant programme committees; (ii) programmes' applicants and beneficiaries; (iii) agencies; (iv) civil society organisations; and, (v) the general public¹¹. Dedicated methods and tools were used to conduct the consultations: a questionnaire-based online public consultation, interviews, targeted surveys. They complemented data and information collected through other methods, such as desk research and case studies.

Four main challenges were identified and mitigated:

- Limited data accessibility for the *ex post* evaluation: the quantitative analysis for the years 2014 and 2015 presents caveats related to challenges in retrieving data from obsolete corporate tools. Considerable time was dedicated to build an updated dataset of grants and procurement contracts and to clarify approaches for data analysis. Additionally, data analysis was complemented with qualitative sources of information mainly drawn from the stakeholder consultation activities.
- The statistical analysis on survey participants' associations with programme related variables needed to be matched to the data sample: different statistical tests were run, and their requirements verified. The test that was finally used was different from the initially envisioned one and required a further adaptation of the scale measuring interviewees' attitudes¹². As a result, the conditions for the selected statistical test could be met and the test performed.
- Inherent limitations in the text-mining exercise: the use of automated prompts within natural language processing (NLP) models limits the scope for parameter definition; this makes it difficult to obtain in-depth results. To mitigate this challenge, various manual prompts were tested on a smaller data set. This helped in gauging the prompts' accuracy and select suitable ones.

⁵ All EU Member States (except for Denmark) participate to the programme. In November 2024, participating countries also included Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Ukraine.

⁶ The term ‘evaluation’ refers to the Commission Staff Working Document, while the term ‘supporting study’ refers to the study carried out by external experts to support the evaluation. The supporting study was carried out by a consortium led by Tetra Tech International Development (hereinafter ‘the Contractor’) and was coordinated by the Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, with the support of an Inter Services Steering Group (ISSG) including a range of Commission Directorates-General.

⁷ The overall approach is detailed in Annex II.

⁸ [SWD\(2018\) 290 final](#).

⁹ [COM\(2018\) 507 final](#).

¹⁰ [COM/2022/121 final](#).

¹¹ Details available in the stakeholders' consultations synopsis report in Annex V.

¹² The Fisher's exact test was selected. This required to consolidate the Likert-scale from five categories to three categories. Details available in Annex II.

- Limitations with the quantitative analysis: to examine the geographical dimension of the 2021-2027 justice programme, both the analysis of variance and the association analysis relied on categorising countries into regions. However, the categorisation in itself may affect the results. Desk research was performed to determine the most appropriate categorisation, and it was finally decided to rely on the 2023 EU Rule of Law report's one. Countries were clustered into four regions considering their similarities and differences and based on the indicators employed in the analysis. This approach allowed selecting a categorisation that considers the different types of justice systems in each Member State and that is meaningful in the context of the evaluation.

2. WHAT WAS THE EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THE INTERVENTION?

This chapter is organised in three parts. Section 2.1 describes the context and rationale for the two programmes, Section 2.2 depicts the intervention logics, and Section 2.3 explains the approach to establish the points of comparison.

2.1. Description of the interventions and their objectives

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provides for the creation of a European area of freedom, security and justice based on the mutual recognition of judicial decisions and mutual trust among Member States. This priority was reaffirmed by the European Council in the Stockholm programme¹³.

Regulation (EU) No 1382/2013 established the justice programme for the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2020¹⁴ (hereafter also referred to as 'the previous programme') by merging three previous funding programmes¹⁵. The programme's general objective was to contribute to the further development of a European area of justice based on mutual recognition and mutual trust, in particular by promoting judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters¹⁶.

The programme had four specific objectives¹⁷:

- a) facilitating and supporting judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters (JCOO);
- b) supporting and promoting judicial training, including language training on legal terminology, with a view to fostering a common legal and judicial culture (JTRA);
- c) facilitating effective access to justice for all, including promoting and supporting the rights of victims of crime, while respecting the rights of the defence (JACC);
- d) supporting initiatives in the field of drugs policy as regards judicial cooperation and crime prevention aspects closely linked to the general objective of the programme, insofar as they were not covered by the internal security fund (ISF)

¹³ OJ C 115, 4.5.2010, p. 1.

¹⁴ Regulation (EU) No 1382/2013 of the European Parliament and of The Council of 17 December 2013 establishing a Justice Programme for the period 2014 to 2020 (OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, pp. 73-83, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1382/oj>).

¹⁵ (i) The criminal justice programme as set out in Council Decision 2007/126/JHA of 12 February 2007 establishing for the period 2007-2013, as part of the General Programme on Fundamental Rights and Justice, the Specific Programme 'Criminal Justice' (OJ L 58, 24.2.2007, p. 13); (ii) the civil justice programme as set out in Decision No 1149/2007/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 September 2007 establishing for the period 2007-2013 the Specific Programme 'Civil Justice' as part of the General Programme 'Fundamental Rights and Justice' (OJ L 257, 3.10.2007, p. 16); and (iii) the drug prevention and information programme as set out in Decision No 1150/2007/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 September 2007 establishing for the period 2007-2013 the Specific Programme 'Drug prevention and information' as part of the General Programme 'Fundamental Rights and Justice' (OJ L 257, 3.10.2007, p. 23).

¹⁶ Regulation (EU) No 1382/2013, Article 3.

¹⁷ Regulation (EU) No 1382/2013, Article 4.

for financial support for police cooperation, preventing and combating crime, and crisis management or by the health for growth programme (JDRU).

Nevertheless, different national standards in the justice systems of the Member States continued to negatively affect mutual trust and the consistent application of EU law; vulnerable groups still suffer from an inadequate access to justice for; and unharmonised training levels among judicial staff still hinder effective cooperation and cross-border legal processes. Therefore, **Regulation (EU) No 2021/693 established the justice programme for the duration of the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027**¹⁸ (hereafter also referred to as ‘the current programme’). Other factors called for the 2014-2020 programme’s continuation: a growing threat to fundamental rights, EU values and democratic principles due to rising extremism and a diminished space for civil society.

The general objective¹⁹ of the 2021-2027 programme is to contribute to the further development of a European area of justice based on the rule of law including the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, on mutual recognition and mutual trust, and on judicial cooperation thereby also strengthening democracy, the rule of law and the protection of fundamental rights.

The programme has three specific objectives²⁰ that are mostly in continuity with the previous programme:

- a) to facilitate and support judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters, and to promote the rule of law and the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, including through supporting efforts to improve the effectiveness of national justice systems and the effective enforcement of decisions²¹;
- b) to support and promote judicial training, with a view to fostering a common legal and judicial culture as well as a culture based on the rule of law, and to support and promote the consistent and effective implementation of the Union legal instruments that are relevant in the context of the programme;
- c) to facilitate effective and non-discriminatory access to justice for all, and effective remedy, including by electronic means (e-justice), by promoting efficient civil and criminal procedures and by promoting and supporting the rights of all victims of crime as well as the procedural rights of suspects and accused persons in criminal proceedings.

For the 2021-2027 programming period, supporting initiatives in the field of drugs policy were transferred to other EU funding programmes²² while the objective on effective access to justice was amended to include effective and non-discriminatory access to justice, including by electronic means (e-justice), as well as effective redress. Therefore, the 2021-2027 justice programme has an increased focus on the respect of the rule of law, the involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) and on ensuring an equal and non-discriminatory access to justice for all.

The following paragraphs zoom in the programme’s main building blocks over the course of the 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 funding periods.

¹⁸ Regulation (EU) 2021/693 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing the Justice Programme and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1382/2013 (OJ L 156, 5.5.2021, pp. 21-38, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/693/oj>).

¹⁹ Regulation (EU) No 2021/693, Article 3(1).

²⁰ Regulation (EU) No 2021/693, Article 3(2).

²¹ The same three acronyms (i.e. JCOO, JTRA and JACC) are used to refer to the same three specific objectives of both the previous and current programme.

²² Drugs-related initiatives were transferred to the [internal security fund](#) (Regulation (EU) 2021/1149) and the [EU4Health programme](#) (Regulation (EU) 2021/522).s

i. Judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters

Judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters is a specific objective that the justice programme addresses in both funding periods (2014-2020 and 2021-2027). Under this objective both programmes focus on ensuring the correct application and enforcement of the existing EU *acquis* in this field thus increasing trust between legal professionals from different Member States.

Both programmes also support key EU-level networks active in field of judicial cooperation and contribute to the EU participation in The Hague Conference of Private International Law²³²⁴. The European Judicial Network in civil and commercial matters is another important pillar funded by the two programmes. The network provides continued support to Member States for the setting up and strengthening of national networks active in the area of judicial cooperation in criminal matters. Additionally, both programmes support EU cooperation with the Council of Europe in advancing data collection in prisons through the publication of the SPACE report²⁵ and the EU network of prison monitoring bodies.

ii. Judicial training

In line with the European judicial training strategies²⁶²⁷, in both funding periods, the justice programme supports cross-border judicial training for justice practitioners, including judges, prosecutors, court staff, bailiffs, lawyers, notaries, prison staff, probation officers, mediators, and legal interpreters. EU topics covered during training courses are numerous, ranging from EU civil and criminal law, fundamental rights and the rule of law. To complement training on EU legislation, both programmes fund courses on non-legal issues such as judicial ethics to support the development of professional skills. In both funding periods, the justice programme supports also the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN). In particular, the Regulation establishing the 2021-2027 programme provides that the programme shall support EJTN's expenditure and that any operating grant to that effect shall be awarded without a call for proposal²⁸. The 2021-2027 programme further invests in supporting the digitalisation of training, both in terms of content and methodology.

iii. Access to justice for all

In both funding periods, access to justice is tackled both from the perspective of promoting and supporting victims' rights and the procedural rights of suspects and accused persons. At the same time, both programmes support the creation of more effective justice systems also thanks to the use of e-justice. The 2021-2027 justice programme puts more focus on ensuring a non-discriminatory access to justice, also through a higher use of digital tools and new technologies. Finally, both programmes (2014-2020 and 2021-2027) support key EU-level networks active in field of access to justice and the annual collection of data and information through the EU Justice Scoreboard²⁹.

²³ The EU is party to The Hague Conference on Private International Law since 2007. The purpose of this international intergovernmental organisation is to work for the progressive unification of the rules of private international law in the participating countries. Most of the conventions developed by The Hague Conference fall within exclusive or partial external competence of the EU and are part of the EU *law*.

²⁴ 2006/719/EC: Council Decision of 5 October 2006 on the accession of the Community to the Hague Conference on Private International Law OJ L 297, 26.10.2006, pp. 1-14.

²⁵ Statistiques Pénales Annuelles du Conseil de l'Europe (SPACE).

²⁶ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Building Trust in EU-Wide Justice - A New Dimension to European Judicial Training, COM(2011) 551 final.

²⁷ [2011-2020 European judicial training strategy](#) and [European judicial training strategy for 2021-2024](#).

²⁸ Regulation (EU) 2021/693, Article 11(3).

²⁹ [EU Justice Scoreboard](#).

iv. Drugs policy and crime prevention

This specific objective was only covered by the 2014-2020 programme. It focused on drugs and crime prevention policy via judicial cooperation with key activities fostering the practical application of drugs-related research. Funding promoted stakeholders' knowledge and capacity to address new psychoactive substances.

The programmes' synergies

The 2014-2020 and the 2021-2027 justice programmes have links, potential synergies, and are complementary to other relevant initiatives of the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe and the United Nations such as: the EU Justice Agenda for 2020³⁰; the European Agenda for Security³¹; the 'Juncker priorities' for 2015-2019³²; the von der Leyen's Commission priorities for 2019-2024³³; the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda³⁴; the European Convention on Human Rights³⁵. These initiatives have similar objectives, particularly regarding issues of effectiveness of judicial remedies, judicial cooperation, and drugs prevention. At the same time, both programmes support the implementation of several sectorial EU strategies thereby contributing to the achievement of key policy objectives and priorities in the justice field. The core EU strategies supported are the EU strategy on victims' rights (2020-2025)³⁶, the European security union strategy (2020-2025)³⁷, the European e-justice strategy (2024-2028)³⁸, the European judicial training strategies (2011-2020 and 2021-2024)^{39,40}, and the EU strategy on the rights of the child (2021-2024)⁴¹.

The programmes' geographic scope

In the period 2014-2020, the justice programme's geographical coverage encompassed all EU Member States except for Denmark and the United Kingdom⁴². In addition, Albania joined the programme in 2017 and Montenegro in 2018.

Under the current programming period, the justice programme's geographical coverage encompasses all EU Member States, except for Denmark. By the end of 2024, the following non-EU countries participated in the programme: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovoⁱ and Ukraine.

The programmes' implementation mode

Both the 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 justice programmes are implemented through direct management by the European Commission under the lead of the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST). A limited number of initiatives is implemented under indirect management, in particular by the Council of Europe. Both programmes use similar

³⁰ COM/2014/0144 final.

³¹ COM/2015/0185 final.

³² European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, Ten priorities for Europe, Publications Office, 2015, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2775/983859>.

³³ [A Union that strives for more. My agenda for Europe. Political guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024.](#)

³⁴ Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations, 2015, available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/publications/transforming-our-world-2030-agenda-sustainable-development-17981>.

³⁵ Council of Europe, European Convention on Human Rights, as amended by Protocols Nos 11, 14 and 15, ETS No 005, 4 November 1950.

³⁶ COM/2020/258 final.

³⁷ COM/2020/605 final.

³⁸ C/2025/437.

³⁹ COM/2011/0551 final.

⁴⁰ COM/2020/713 final.

⁴¹ COM(2021) 142 final.

⁴² The justice programme has legal bases that belong to Part V of Title III of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Therefore, protocols 21 and 22 to the TEU and the TFEU apply, and Denmark and the UK never participated in the Justice programme.

actions (i.e. action grants, operating grants, indirect management and procurement) to achieve their objectives.

2.2. Intervention logics

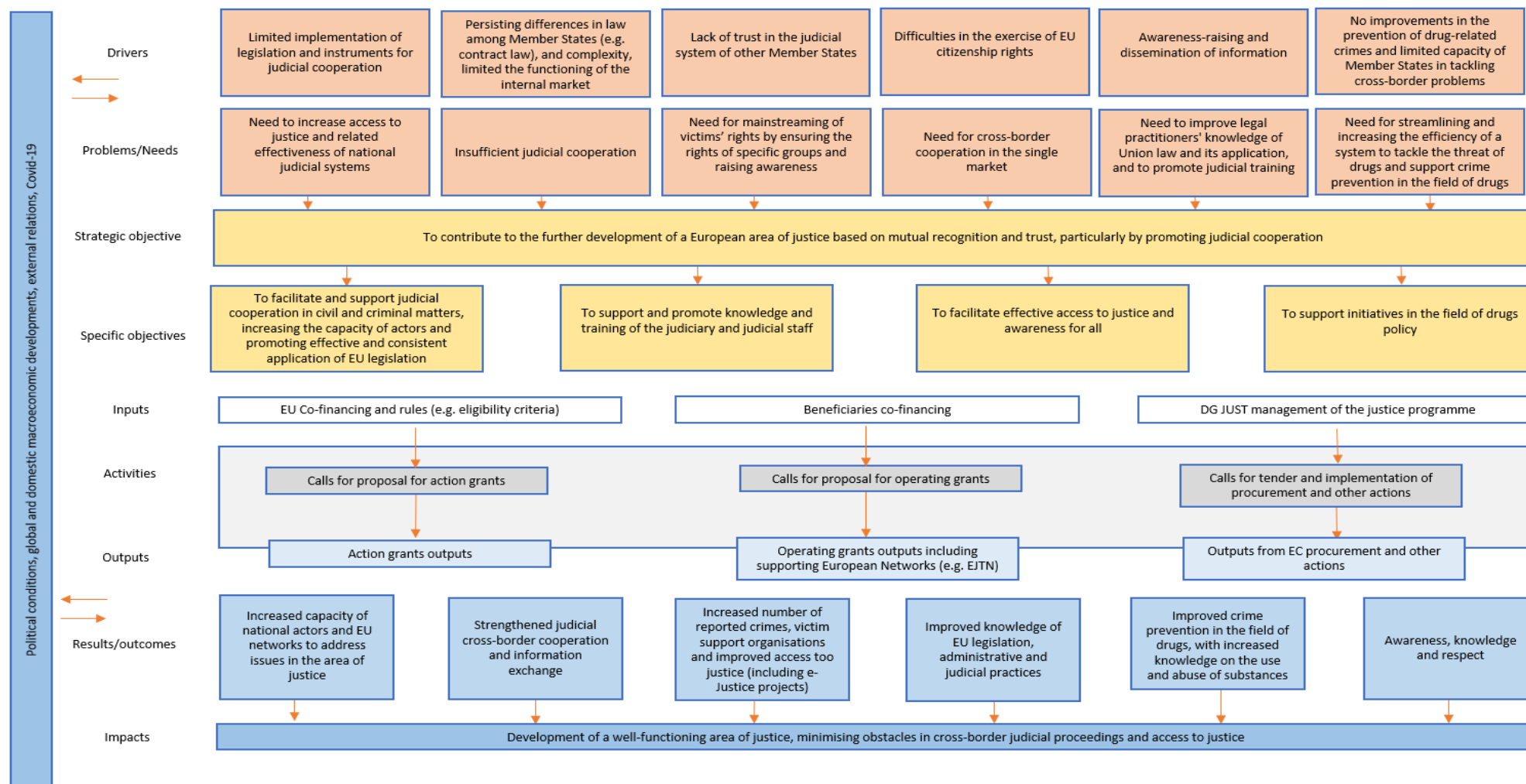
The 2014-2020 justice programme's general and specific objectives were derived from a set of underlying problems, including:

- a) legislation and instruments' limited implementation in judicial cooperation;
- b) persistent differences in law among Member States;
- c) a lack of trust in the judicial systems of other Member States;
- d) difficulties in the exercise of EU citizenship rights;
- e) a lack of awareness on EU law;
- f) no improvements in the prevention of drug-related crimes;
- g) limited capacity to tackle cross-border problems.

The 2014-2020 justice programme aimed to finance a variety of activities to contribute to the development of a European area of justice, including analytical work, mutual learning, cooperation, awareness-raising, dissemination, and training, as well as actions supporting key actors such as European networks, public and private organisations (typically non-profits), authorities at all levels, CSOs, universities, research institutions within EU Member States and participating countries, as well as international organisations. The programme's primary target group was the judiciary and judicial staff. Other direct target groups covered by the activities of the programme are victims of crime, people suspected or accused of crimes and, indirectly, all EU citizens.

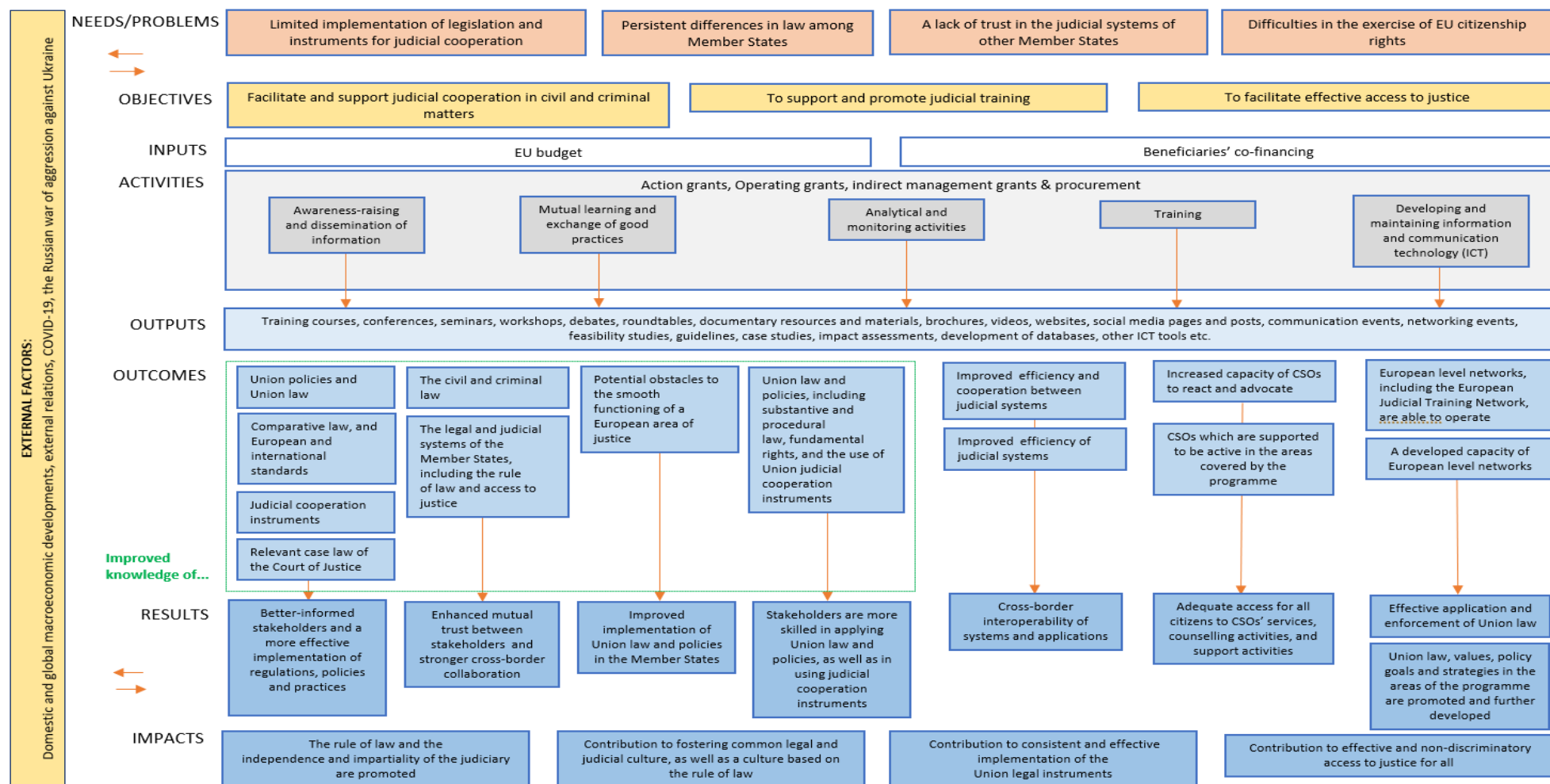
ⁱ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Figure 1 - Intervention logic of the 2014-2020 Justice programme



The intervention logic of the justice programme 2021-2027 summarises the causal links between needs, problems, objectives, inputs, activities, outputs, results and impacts. Specifically, the intervention logic presents more in details the types of activities which can be funded under the programme through action grants, indirect management actions, procurement contracts and operating grants. These types of action are specified in Article 8 of Regulation (EU) 2021/693, with the view to contributing towards the achievement of the specific objectives of the programme. The list of outputs resulting from these activities illustrates how they play a crucial role in achieving the objectives of the programme, as well as helping to ensure the sustainability of the programme beyond its termination, contributing to the realisation of the outcomes and results.

Figure 2 - Intervention logic of the 2021-2027 Justice programme



2.3. Point(s) of comparison

The *ex post* evaluation of the 2014-2020 justice programme used the 2011 impact assessment⁴³ as point of comparison for measuring achievements. The impact assessment outlined a baseline scenario against which the policy options for the justice programme were benchmarked as well as a series of expected outcomes. The baseline analysis showed that, if no changes had been made between the 2007-2013 and the 2014-2020 programming periods, the programme would have continued to be successfully implemented, but it would not have reached its full potential. The Commission identified the following issues as potentially critical:

- the **lack of flexibility** in the funding instruments would have been an obstacle, given the pace of change and reform in the area of justice;
- the **fragmentation of funding**, especially where funding is needed to support horizontal and cross-cutting issues, could have reduced the capacity of the predecessor programmes to deliver results;
- **having multiple funding programmes** with different rules and procedures, in the context of rising numbers of applicants, could have increased the administrative burden, potentially resulting in delays in procedures for the beneficiaries.

As a result, the three predecessor programmes – i.e. the criminal justice programme, the civil justice programme and the drug prevention and information programme – were merged into the 2014-2020 justice programme.

In addition, the regulation establishing the 2014-2020 justice programme⁴⁴ set out performance indicators which served as a basis for monitoring and evaluating the achievement of the programme's specific objectives. The baseline is the same as for the first part of the *ex post* evaluation, which included contracts and grant agreements signed until 31 December 2020. The current report complements the previous one through the inclusion of the contracts and grant agreements signed as of 1 January 2021. Annex II.2 presents the points of comparison related to the indicators set out in Article 15 of that regulation (see Table 4).

The *interim* evaluation of the justice programme 2021-2027 used as point of comparison the baseline scenario outlined by the 2018 impact assessment that accompanied the proposal for a regulation establishing a justice, rights and values fund with two underlying funding programmes: the 2014-2020 justice programme and the rights and values programme (which later became the citizenship, equality, rights and values programme – CERV)⁴⁵. The *interim* evaluation also referred to the performance monitoring framework, established as per the requirements of the regulation establishing the 2021-2027 justice programme⁴⁶, and its set of indicators. The achievement of the programme's general and specific objectives is assessed against the indicators listed in Annex II of Regulation (EU) 2021/693 (see Table 5 in Annex II.2).

⁴³ SEC(2011) 1364 final.

⁴⁴ Regulation (EU) No 1382/2013, Article 15.

⁴⁵ [SWD/2018/290 final](#).

⁴⁶ Regulation (EU) 2021/693, Article 13 and Annex II.

3. HOW HAS THE SITUATION EVOLVED OVER THE EVALUATION PERIOD?

3.1. Implementation of the justice programme 2014-2020

The 2014-2020 justice programme was allocated⁴⁷ a budget of EUR 377 604 000, with the largest proportion of funding (approx. 37%) dedicated to the JTRA objective. As per the programme's annual work programmes (AWPs), the budget allocations per year are illustrated in the table below.

Table 1 - Budget per year

Budget year	Amount planned (EUR)	Amount planned (including amendments) (EUR)
2014	45 812 000	45 812 000
2015	48 051 000	48 051 000
2016	50 250 000	50 250 000
2017	52 631 000	52 786 000
2018	45 949 000	45 948 700
2019	43 675 000	43 675 000
2020	45 603 000	45 603 000
Total	332 971 000	332 125 700

Source: Elaboration from annual work programmes and following non-substantial modifications

The programme awarded 568 grants, through a total of 118 calls, and 445 procurement contracts⁴⁸, distributed to specific objectives as following:

- 188 grants and 203 procurement contracts supporting access to justice;
- 180 grants and 7 procurement contracts providing judicial training;
- 168 grants and 200 procurement contracts fostering judicial cooperation;
- 32 grants and 3 procurement contracts supporting initiatives in drugs policy.

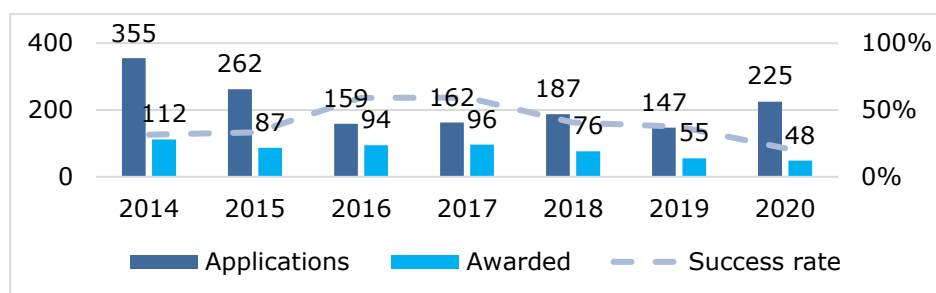
413 procurement contracts supported the programme's specific objectives, with most contracts dedicated to the JACC and JCOO objectives. The remaining procurement activities covered general funding needs related to IT maintenance and IT experts.

The number of grants awarded per year, as shown in the figure below, decreased during the period. The highest success rates – defined as the percentage of projects awarded in relation to the number of applications submitted – were recorded in 2016 and 2017, with both years achieving a success rate of 59% respectively. The lowest success rate was recorded in 2020 (21%).

⁴⁷ Regulation (EU) No 1382/2013 of 17 December 2013, OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 73-83, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1382/oj>.

⁴⁸ For procurement contracts, elaboration of data based on the Commission's Accrual-based Accounting (ABAC) system (DG JUST, 2024).

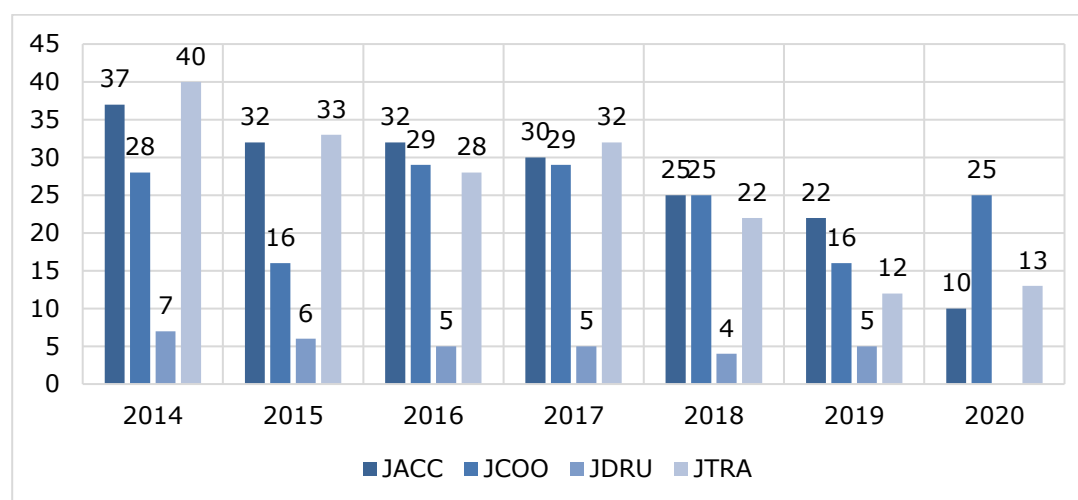
Figure 3 - Number of grants signed per year and success rate (2014-2020)



Source: Elaboration of data from the interim evaluation (2014-2018) and programme data (eGrants, 2019 – 2020)

The highest number of projects were funded under the JACC objective (188), followed by JTRA (180) and JCOO (168), while the lowest number of grants was awarded under JDRU (32).

Figure 4 -Grants by year and specific objective (2014-2020)



Source: Elaboration of data from the interim evaluation (2014-2018) and programme data (eGrants, 2019 – 2020)

Projects funded under the JDRU objective were larger on average, both in terms of the average consortium size (15 partners) and the average amount of requested EU contributions (EUR 478 815) compared to other projects. JACC projects involved on average 7.5 organisations with an average requested budget of EUR 350 931. JCOO projects involved an average of 9 consortium partners, with an average funding request of EUR 335 385, while JTRA consortia on average included 10 organisations with an average requested EU contribution of EUR 393 989⁴⁹.

3.2. Implementation of the justice programme 2021-2027

The 2021-2027 justice programme is on track to meet its targets and milestones linked to its general and specific objectives, with notable achievements in several key areas such as judicial training, judicial cooperation, and the support of CSOs. Some areas, such as awareness-raising and information dissemination, can be further improved. Chapter 4 presents the analysis of performance and findings by evaluation criteria, while Table 5 in Annex II.2 provides details on indicators.

Three of the indicators used to assess the **objective 1: facilitate and support judicial cooperation** are not only on track to hit their target, but they have already exceeded it. This is the case for the number of exchanges recorded on the European Criminal Records

⁴⁹ Elaboration based on programme data and documents extracted from eGrants (DG JUST, 2024).

Information System (ECRIS), the number of CSOs supported and the cumulative number of people reached by mutual learning activities under this specific objective⁵⁰. Only one indicator (i.e. people reached by JCOO awareness raising, information and dissemination activities) shows that more progress is still needed to meet the 2024 milestone, particularly considering the specificities of the programme's main target group⁵¹.

Two indicators under **objective 2: to support and promote judicial training** are on track. The annual target for the number of justice professionals trained using funding from the programme⁵² was exceeded in 2022, showing a good trend following the record number of justice professionals trained in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, which then led to a drop in 2021 when the annual target was not reached⁵³. In addition, cumulatively between 2021 and 2023, the number of CSOs supported⁵⁴ under this objective already surpassed the milestone foreseen in 2024. The two indicators linked to the 'number of people reached by awareness raising, information and dissemination activities' and 'number of people reached by mutual learning and exchange of good practices activities' are not on track to meet their targets⁵⁵.

For the **objective 3: to facilitate effective and non-discriminatory access to justice for all**, the following two indicators have significantly exceeded their targets⁵⁶: 'number of hits on the e-justice portal / pages addressing the need for information on cross-border civil and criminal cases' and 'people reached by mutual learning and exchange of good practices activities'. The latter reached the highest number of people across the three objectives⁵⁷ with 2 262 057 people, which significantly exceeds the targets set for both 2024 and 2027.

Concerning the two indicators linked to the 'number of people reached by awareness raising, information and dissemination activities' and 'number of CSOs reached by support and capacity building activities', the data collected for this evaluation provides a partial picture⁵⁸. Due to its temporal scope, the analysis did not include data related to the 2023 access to justice call⁵⁹, which often attracts many CSOs, and it is now every two years. The results achieved so far show a positive trend⁵⁹ toward the achievement of the 2024 milestone in relation to the number of CSOs reached by support and capacity building activities.

In fact, overall, there appears to be a notable improvement in the total number of CSOs being reached. The allocation of funding showed that non-profit entities received a significant portion of the grants financed by the justice programme, second after public bodies. Ensuring an increased support for CSOs active in the justice field is an important objective of the current programme and the data show that the programme is going in the right direction⁶⁰.

⁵⁰ See Table 5 in Annex II.2 for data sources and values.

⁵¹ Based on data provided in beneficiaries' application, see Table 5 in Annex II.2. The programme primarily targets the judiciary and national authorities, which focus less on awareness-raising and dissemination activities.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Being available at the end of 2024 following the preparation of the annual report on European judicial training, data for 2023 was not available for the analysis of this evaluation.

⁵⁴ Based on programme data extracted from eGrants (DG JUST, 2024).

⁵⁵ See Table 5 in Annex II.2 for data sources and values.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

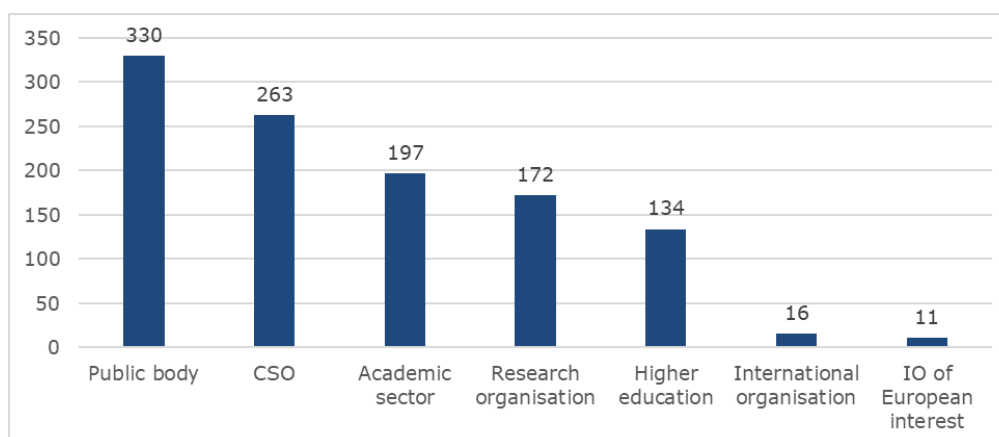
⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Call for proposals for action grants to support transnational projects in the fields of e-Justice, victims' rights and procedural rights (JUST-2023-JACC-EJUSTICE).

⁵⁹ See Table 5 in Annex II.2.

⁶⁰ See recital 17 and Article 8 (g) of Regulation (EU) 2021/693 establishing the justice programme.

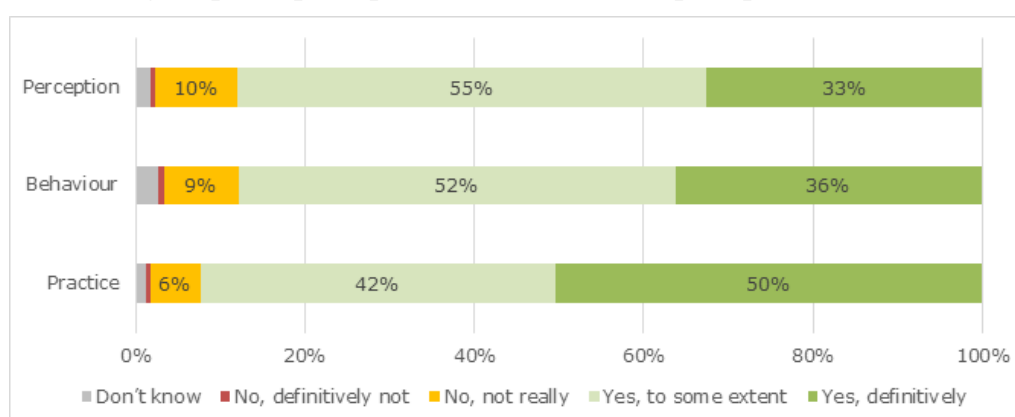
Figure 5 - Number of beneficiaries participating in grants per organisation type



Source: Elaboration of programme data (eGrants, 2021-2023)

Indicators also pointed to results in terms of changes in the behaviour, perception and practice of participants.

Figure 6 - Change in participants practice, behaviour and perception

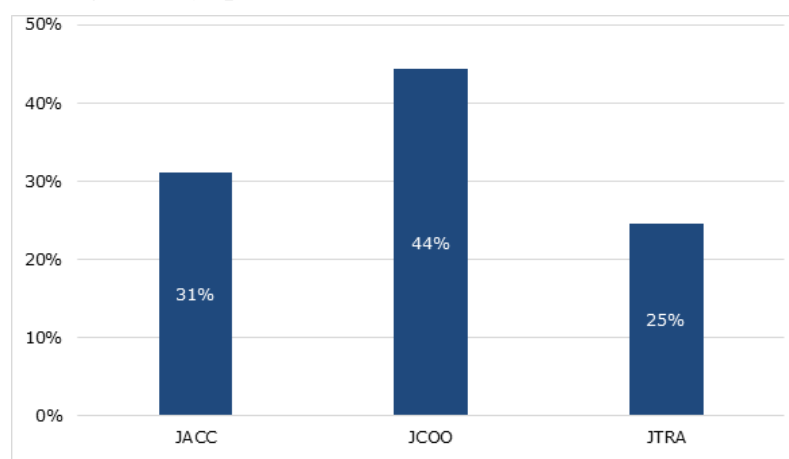


Source: Elaboration of data from the EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Values (2021-2023)

The data below presents the state of play of the physical implementation of the programme over the period 2021-2023.

167 grant agreements were signed of which 44% supported the JCOO specific objective. The overall success rate of the programme was circa 38%.

Figure 7 - Awarded grants by specific objective



Source: Elaboration of programme data (eGrants, 2021-2023)

In terms of consortium size, grants awarded under JACC and JCOO have been relatively similar involving on average 3.80 and 3.12 organisations respectively. On the other hand, the grants awarded under JTRA have been led by larger consortia comprising of an average of 6.12 organisations⁶¹.

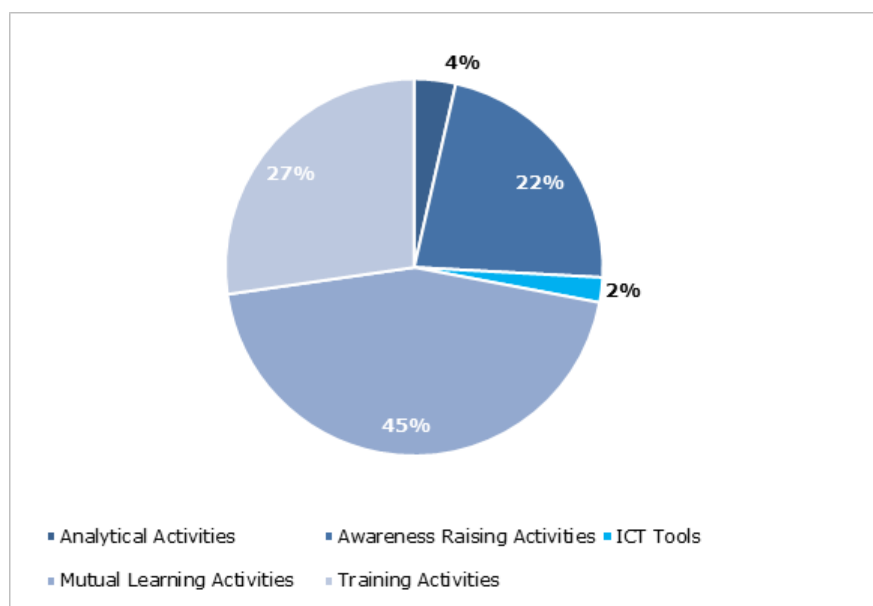
The average value of the requested EU contribution varied between grants⁶² awarded under the three specific objectives, with:

- JCOO and JTRA grants amounting to an average of EUR 413 258 and EUR 462 303 respectively⁶³.
- Grants under the JACC objective have been larger with the average amount of requested EU contribution amounting to EUR 567 535⁶⁴.

In total, in the period 2021-2023, the 2021-2027 justice programme is expected to reach around 2 million people through its activities. These figures are estimates provided by the applicants at the application stage, which need to be confirmed after the finalisation of their projects.

The type of activities most frequently granted was mutual learning and training, followed by awareness-raising.

Figure 8 - Grants per type of activities implemented



Source: Elaboration of programme data (Part C, 2021-2023)

Instead, data on the distribution of procurement contracts (260 signed until December 2023) showed that they were used mainly to support the JACC and JCOO objectives through ICT and analytical and monitoring activities.

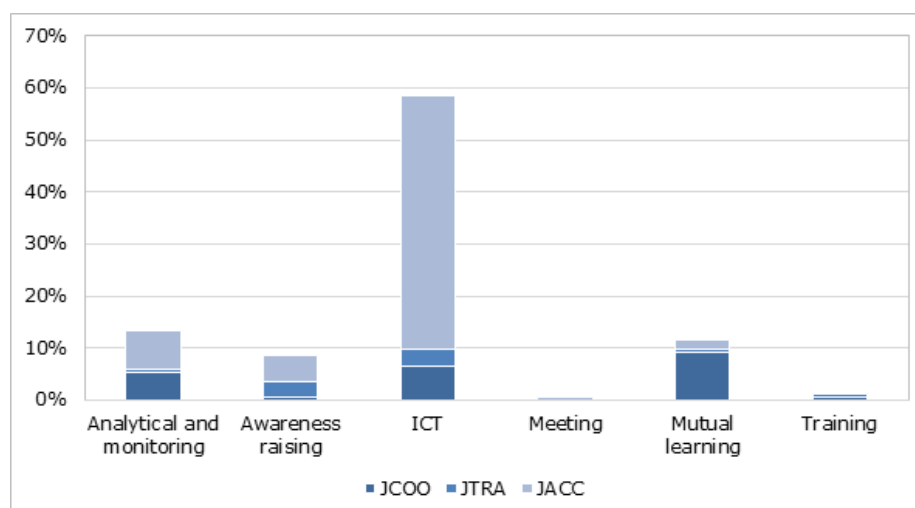
⁶¹ Elaboration based on programme data and documents extracted from eGrants (DG JUST, 2024).

⁶² Considering only action grants.

⁶³ Elaboration based on programme data extracted from eGrants (DG JUST, 2024).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

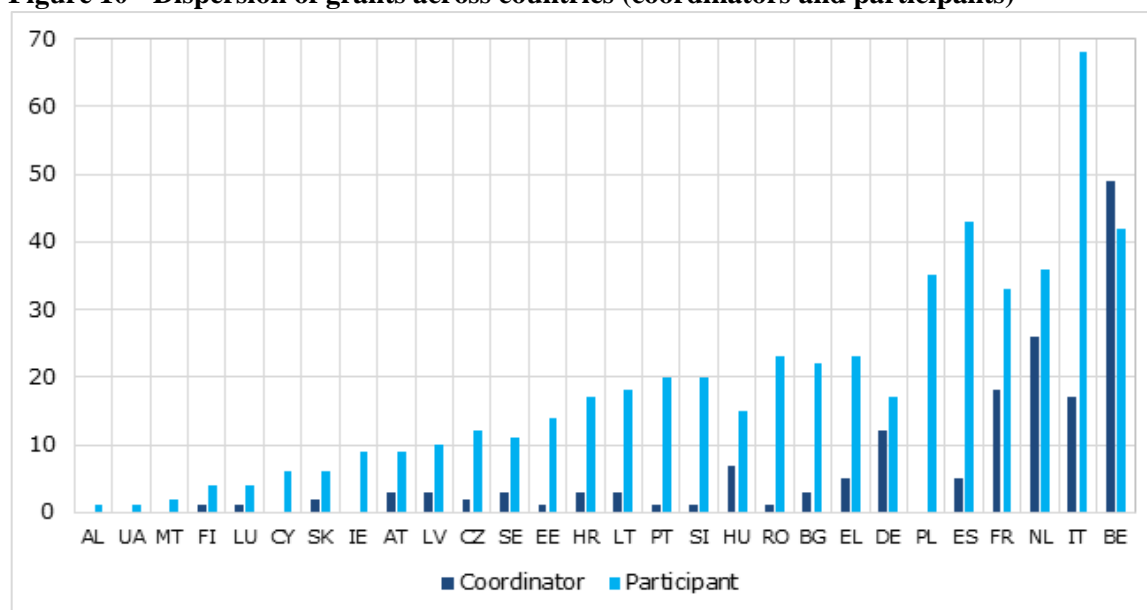
Figure 9 - Activities undertaken in procurement contracts



Source: Elaboration of programme data (DG JUST, 2021-2023)

Overall, beneficiaries of the justice programme came from 28 countries, covering 26 Member States and 2 non-EU countries (Albania and Ukraine). Like for the previous programme, a high number of grants was received by southern and eastern countries⁶⁵. Evidence gathered for this evaluation indicated that the grant distribution has not changed between the two funding periods⁶⁶.

Figure 10 - Dispersion of grants across countries (coordinators and participants)⁶⁷



Source: Elaboration of programme data (eGrants, 2021-2023)

⁶⁵ Countries are clustered by regions: Northern Europe (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden), Western Europe (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and The Netherlands), southern Europe (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain) and eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia). Details available in Annex II.1.

⁶⁶ Elaboration based on programme data extracted from eGrants (DG JUST, 2024).

⁶⁷ Project partners are referred to as participants.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS (ANALYTICAL PART)

This chapter is structured in three parts: Section 4.1 assesses the two programmes' performance through their effectiveness, efficiency⁶⁸ and coherence; Section 4.2 identifies their EU added value; and Section 4.3 analyses their relevance.

4.1. To what extent was the intervention successful and why?

4.1.1. Effectiveness

Justice programme 2014-2020

The first part of the *ex post* evaluation concluded that the 2014-2020 justice programme was effective as it was overall successful in reaching its objectives. This finding is based on metrics assessed through a set of indicators, which are based on the programme's impact assessment⁶⁹ and further outlined in the programme's basic act⁷⁰.

To meaningfully assess the previous programme's effectiveness and illustrate the programme's impact, the evidence is presented by specific objective. This section also touches on relevant horizontal factors and challenges.

i. Judicial training

Evidence from the *ex post* evaluation emphasised the programme's effectiveness in advancing judicial training.

The number and percentage of EU judiciary and judicial staff participating in training activities funded by the programme was set as an indicator of the specific objective related to judicial training. This indicator provided an absolute and relative measure to assess how the programme reached the judiciary and judicial staff, with targets of 16 000 people working in the judiciary and judicial staff and 13% of judiciary's members and judicial staff trained⁷¹ by 2020.

The threshold of 16 000 trainees was already reached in 2017. By contrast, the 13% threshold was only reached in 2020⁷². This lag of three years indicates the expansion of the justice programme's target group. Even though the judiciary consists of a rather specific group of actors, the scope of judicial staff is more dynamic. Another factor that helps to explain this lag is the evolving legal context. Beneficiaries reported in interviews that they struggled to keep training guides up to date. The justice programme's continued funding in this area was therefore effective as it helped legal practitioners to engage in continued training. Follow-up trainings with updated content were highlighted as essential to promote judicial training's sustainability together with peer-to-peer workshops. Sustainability for judicial training lies in their trickle-down effects. Several beneficiaries illustrated this with reference to social workers active in judicial systems: according to interview feedback, the trickle-down effect manifested in knowledge transfer from social workers to people working in CSOs. There is further evidence from interviews that underpin the justice programme's effectiveness in providing judicial training. When prompted to indicate which activities contribute the most to projects funded by the programme, three quarters of answers from beneficiaries and programme committee members indicated that training activities contribute the most. Interviews with beneficiaries, text mining and surveys corroborated this result. Nearly all surveyed beneficiaries (96%) indicated that training led to the acquisition of new skills and knowledge.

⁶⁸ An overview of costs and benefits as well as potential for simplification is presented in Annex IV.

⁶⁹ SEC(2011) 1364 final.

⁷⁰ Regulation (EU) No 1382/2013, Article 15.

⁷¹ Ratio between the number of supported participants and the total number of legal practitioners.

⁷² Based on first part *ex post* evaluation and programme data extracted from eGrants (DG JUST, 2024).

Overall, the justice programme contributed to the cumulative number of legal practitioners receiving training on EU law, including training funded by other EU programmes. The programme contributed to the target number of 800 000 legal practitioners trained, which was achieved ahead of schedule: already in 2016, such number amounted to 820 000 people⁷³.

ii. Judicial cooperation

The analysis conducted for the *ex post* evaluation yielded evidence confirming the programme's effectiveness in promoting judicial cooperation. The 2014-2020 programme met a significant number of targets, even though not all those targets related to the promotion of judicial cooperation. Although achievements in this area cannot be fully attributed to the justice programme, the qualitative data provided robust evidence to confirm its effectiveness.

The relevant specific indicators⁷⁴ are:

- The surrender procedure's average time under the European arrest warrant. This indicator measures the time in days to execute the procedure.
- The total number of information exchanges via the ECRIS platform.

The target to reduce the average time taken to surrender a wanted person to a requesting country under the European arrest warrant to 10 days by 2020 was not met by a margin of 11 days. The data showed that the average time increased from 16.7 days in 2019 to 21.26 days in 2020⁷⁵. As confirmed by the Commission working document on European arrest warrant statistics, Member States do not always comply with the obligation to execute arrest warrants in the indicated time frame⁷⁶. Across Member States there is a tendency to increase the time for the surrender procedure. This tendency from Member State that contributes to delays together with the COVID pandemic's effects are likely explanations for the increased time needed to conclude the surrender procedure.

By contrast, the programme met its target on the total number of information exchanges via the ECRIS platform. The final target of 3 500 000 exchanges in 2020 was exceeded by over 500 000 with a total of 4 136 249 exchanges⁷⁷.

Qualitative evidence from the *ex post* evaluation showed that both mutual trust between members of the judiciary in different EU countries and consistent implementation of EU law are key to the effectiveness of 2014-2020 the programme. Investments in judicial cooperation were considered to promote the effective and comprehensive implementation of EU law⁷⁸. Programme committee members identified judicial cooperation as a driver of change. According to them, effective collaboration between partners across EU Member States was the main reason for them to adapt their way of working. Projects promoting court-based support of judicial practitioners and probation practices have proven to be particularly suited to facilitate learning.

Finally, as emerged from the consultation activities, the programme was effective in disseminating best practices to address crucial issues such as gender-based violence and mental health in criminal justice systems.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ See Table 4 in Annex II.2.

⁷⁵ European e-Justice Portal, EAW. Available at: https://e-justice.europa.eu/topics/court-procedures/criminal-cases/judicial-cooperation/european-arrest-warrant_en?clang=en.

⁷⁶ European Commission (2024), Statistics on the practical operation of the European arrest warrant – 2022. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/publications/replies-questionnaire-quantitative-information-practical-operation-european-arrest-warrant_en.

⁷⁷ See Table 4 in Annex II.2.

⁷⁸ Interview feedback from beneficiaries.

iii. Access to justice

For the 2014-2020 justice programme, the number of hits on the e-justice portal quantified the programme's promotion of access to justice⁷⁹. The indicator set a dynamic target of a yearly 20% increase starting from the baseline of 441 000 hits. In 2020, the total hits amounted to 4 619 548, thus the programme exceeded its goal by far⁸⁰. As confirmed by the analysis, the e-justice portal was perceived by programme committee members, EU networks and agencies as an important tool to make information available.

Interview feedback stressed that the 2014-2020 programme effectively raised awareness on the important role of professionals who support victims of crime. These professionals acted as trusted companions for victims of crime during court proceedings.

iv. Drugs policy

The programme did not meet its target to assess a set number of new psychoactive substances: as of 2015, the number of new substances assessed decreased. Between 2016 and 2020 the number of substances assessed was around 50. In 2020, the programme set out to assess 95 new substances, but only assessed 46⁸¹. According to the European Union Drugs Agency, the reason for the observed decline in the number of substances assessed is uncertain⁸². Potential explanations for the decline are increased controls and interventions to reduce the sale and consumption of these substances.

Horizontal factors promoting the programme's effectiveness

Interviews conducted for the *ex post* evaluation found that the 2014-2020 programme helped to develop models that are applicable across various jurisdictions. The evaluation found⁸³ that the programme's design allowed for the necessary flexibility to run projects that covered multiple countries: projects were effective in disseminating knowledge and best practices across participating countries; networks and stakeholder meetings supported by the programme were a key driver for knowledge sharing. Although geographic balance was not an objective of the programme per se as opposed to funding the maximum number of quality projects, evidence collected for this evaluation showed a skewed funding distribution⁸⁴ with organisations based in Italy, Belgium and Spain featuring more frequently within funded projects.

Another key benefit of networks supported by the programme was their sustainability. Programme committee members and beneficiaries alike underpinned that networks created through funding remained operating after the projects' end. According to them, long lasting partnerships also increased mutual learning and thereby the operational capacity of funded organisations.

Starting in the 2014-2020 funding period, the justice programme was effective in promoting digitalisation. Although this was not a programme objective, when confronted with the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme ultimately accelerated the digitalisation of the activities it funded. The programme accelerated digitalisation by funding different types of activities, including Information Technology (IT) related activities that fell under its remit. The constraints imposed by the pandemic raised the need to find alternative ways

⁷⁹ See Table 4 in Annex II.2.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ EMCDDA, European Drug Report 2020: Trends and Developments. Available at: https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/edr/trends-developments/2020_en. EMCDDA, European Drug Report 2021: Trends and Developments. Available at: https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/edr/trends-developments/2021_en.

⁸² EUDA (2024), EU Drug Market: New psychoactive substances – Distribution and supply in Europe. Available at: https://www.euda.europa.eu/sites/default/files/pdf/31821_en.pdf?527243.

⁸³ Based on triangulation of data from consultation activities and desk research.

⁸⁴ Based on programme data extracted from eGrants (DG JUST, 2024).

of conducting trainings and cooperating within project consortia. Along with the shift to more digital tools came obstacles to using these tools throughout project implementation. Evidence from projects⁸⁵ shows that the uptake of digital tools has been uneven. Differing levels of digital literacy of participants as well as difference in digital infrastructure in Member States posed obstacles to legal practitioners.

Challenges

Interviews highlighted that the 2014-2020 programme could have provided more support to citizens in accessing services offered by CSOs. Specific examples included legal aid, psychosocial counselling, family conflicts, and housing assistance.

Another challenge was the limited involvement of judges as target groups of projects. This could be explained mainly by the limited time judges usually have at their disposal to engage in activities on top of their duties at courts.

Justice programme 2021-2027

The *interim* evaluation of the 2021-2027 justice programme showed that the programme has been effective so far in reaching its objectives, surpassing its goals in judicial training and cooperation, despite the negative external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the political situation in some Member States. The programme has been particularly successful in strengthening connections and training among legal professionals, with over 81% of projects encompassing these elements among their main activities⁸⁶. Overall, the findings gathered for this evaluation pointed towards a positive trajectory for the programme, with most stakeholders expressing confidence in its success and its alignment with the overarching goals of the EU's justice agenda.

Compared to its predecessor, the programme incorporated better programme management and administrative procedures as well as better monitoring mechanisms and data collection tools (e.g. the EU survey on Justice, Rights and Values)⁸⁷ to track the effectiveness of the funded projects. The performance monitoring framework was developed to take on board suggestions highlighted in the 2018 impact assessment and in the previous programme's .

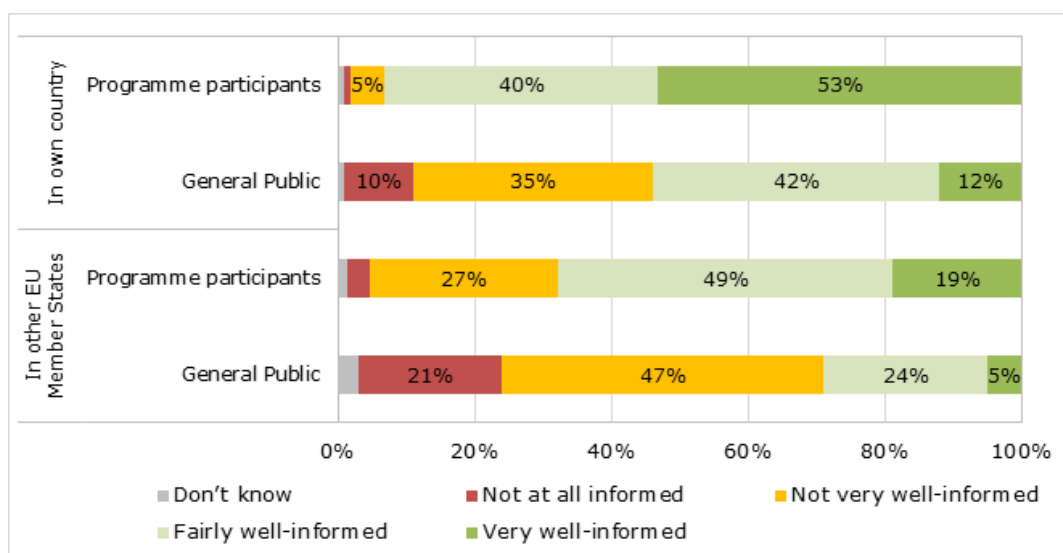
The consultation activities carried out for the evaluation highlighted that beneficiaries believed that their projects contributed to programme objectives more than under the previous programme. While the same areas (i.e. training, improving EU law implementation and raising public awareness) remained significant, beneficiaries reported even greater contributions towards improving access to CSO services and enhancing cross-border system interoperability. This indicates progress in areas that had previously been regarded as more challenging. Overall, through its comprehensive approach and targeted initiatives, the current programme has fostered a significant shift in the knowledge, skills and behaviours of its target groups, suggesting a strong potential for long-term effects. Surveys conducted with the beneficiaries indicated that the programme has raised awareness among participants in particular on the rule of law and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, with a marked difference in knowledge levels compared to the general public (see figures hereafter).

⁸⁵ Project CrimiLAW, ID 882042.

⁸⁶ Based on programme data and documents extracted from eGrants (DG JUST, 2024).

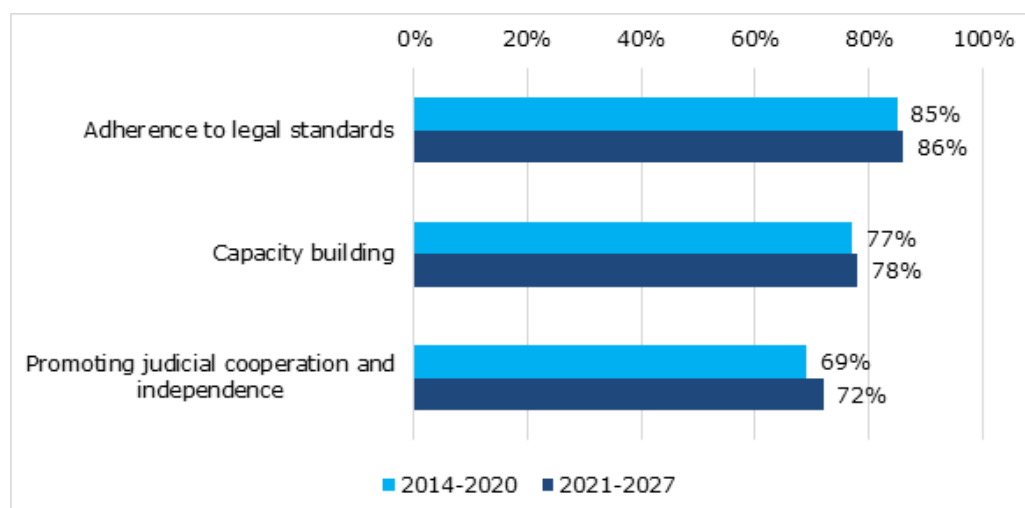
⁸⁷ See Annex II.1.

Figure 11 - Awareness of the rule of law



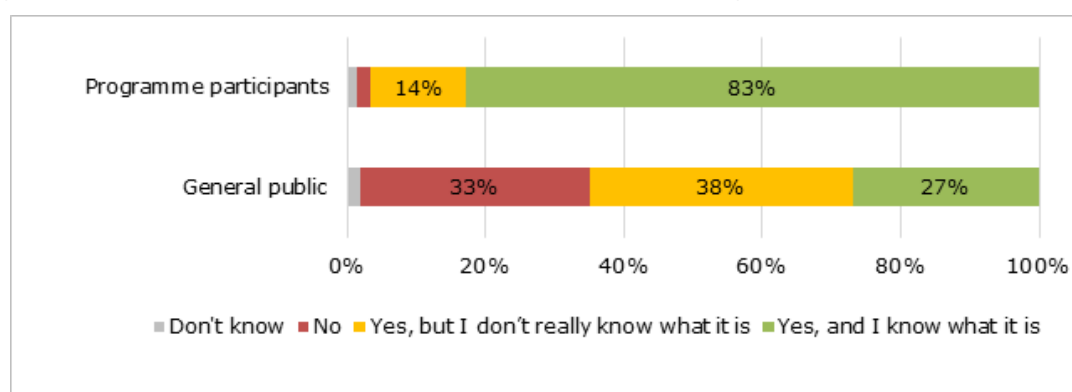
Sources: Elaboration of data from the EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Values (programme participants) and [Special Eurobarometer 554, 2024](#) (public)

Figure 12 - Focus on the 'Rule of law' in the projects (2014-2020 vs 2021-2027)



Source: Elaboration of results of text-mining analysis based on project documents (eGrants)

Figure 13 - Awareness of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights



Sources: Elaboration of data from the EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Values (programme participants) and [Special Eurobarometer 554, 2024](#) (public)

This suggests that, despite there is still scope for improvement in reaching out the expected number of people, those reached by the programme activities increase their knowledge and understanding of both EU law and the rule of law.

The 2021-2027 programme's contribution to upholding the rule of law and enhancing the protection of fundamental rights remains evident. Rule of law aspects as addressed by projects have continued to grow in importance, building on a foundation established in the previous programming period. The 2021-2027 justice programme has advanced and broadened the rule of law aspects during the current funding period by enhancing adherence to legal standards and compliance with EU Directives. The programme has evolved to incorporate more advanced digital tools with a slight increase in projects focusing on capacity building, judicial cooperation and independence. The findings⁸⁸ suggest that the 2021-2027 programme is improving the protection of fundamental rights by promoting effective and non-discriminatory access to justice for all with more emphasis on the use of digital tools for broader accessibility. The programme's efforts to ensure inclusivity, combat discrimination, and support vulnerable groups have also been enhanced with 32% of projects⁸⁹ addressing the needs of migrants, refugees, LGBTI individuals, and persons with disabilities as well as incorporating anti-discrimination training. Children's rights have also been emphasised, with 13% of projects focusing on protecting children's rights in legal proceedings⁹⁰, ensuring adherence to EU standards for child-friendly legal procedures.

Stakeholders and beneficiaries expressed confidence in the sustainability of the programme outcomes, with a high percentage of beneficiaries (94%) believing that the impact of their projects will extend beyond their conclusion. The programme's influence is already visible through the connections and networks established, indicating a strong likelihood of long-term effects. Professional development and networking as well as the development of methodological tools, platforms and training materials have been highlighted by stakeholders as areas of long-term impact going beyond the projects' end date⁹¹. Beneficiaries have pointed to systems that were created under the previous programming period which remain operational and continue to be utilised by legal professionals, indicating the programme's sustained utility.

The availability of materials in multiple languages has also contributed to an even greater impact, ensuring that the benefits of the programme are accessible to a wider audience and have a lasting presence in the justice sector. A significant majority of beneficiaries⁹² believed their projects will have the potential to shape future legislation (such as in the field of victims' rights), improve judicial practices and set new EU standards for judicial cooperation and access to justice. At the same time, some beneficiaries also expressed concerns about their dependency on EU funding for the continuation of their initiatives, which could limit long-term impact. The short duration of some projects may also limit their contribution to the examination of emerging topics and the ability to respond to recent changes, such as the adoption of new legislation (for example, the adoption of the Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act))⁹³.

The communication activities funded through the programme have demonstrated their significant capacity for informing and engaging stakeholders, as evidenced by the

⁸⁸ Based on triangulation of data from consultation activities and desk research.

⁸⁹ The analysis was based on a sample of 62 representative projects which were analysed using text-mining techniques.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ 81% of projects funded in the period 2021-2023 aimed to enhance the skills and connections of legal professionals.

⁹² Based on targeted consultation activities, such as beneficiary survey.

⁹³ Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence.

substantial number of individuals reached through various initiatives⁹⁴. Moreover, the e-justice portal's pages on criminal matters have seen a 76% increase in visits between 2021 and 2022, with 2.25 million hits in 2022⁹⁵, reflecting a growing interest in the justice system across EU Member States.

Concerning the programme's visibility and the channels through which stakeholders learn about it, the EU Funding & Tenders portal remains the primary source of information to know more about the 2021-2027 justice programme and its funding opportunities. The justice programme does not have national contact points in Member States. Based on the evidence gathered through stakeholder consultations, it appeared that communication activities to share awareness on the programme deriving from national, regional or local governments as a source of awareness have decreased from 8.7% in the previous funding period to 3.7% in the current funding period. But, in general, 71.6% of both successful and unsuccessful applicants perceived the justice programme as well-known among potential applicants, mirroring results from the previous funding period. Nevertheless, evidence gathered for this evaluation through stakeholder consultations highlighted a disparity in awareness among different stakeholder groups. Higher education and public authorities reported higher awareness of the programme compared to CSOs. This suggests that while the programme's communication activities are effective, they may not be reaching all sectors equally. This can be explained by the technical nature of the programme, which mainly focuses on the specialised needs of the judiciary and judicial staff. In addition, there may be a need to enhance communication efforts in some EU regions to further increase the overall effectiveness of the programme and the diversity of partnerships across Member States. In fact, although geographical balance is not an objective of the programme per se, the data⁹⁶ showed that, until the end of 2023, organisations based in some Member States applied and received funds more frequently, as observed also in the previous programme.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021-2027 programme has put more emphasis on digitalisation. Beneficiaries have increasingly made use of digital tools in their activities, thereby increasing their effectiveness (e.g. increased accessibility and reach of their projects). At the same time, the programme has also increasingly focused on gender mainstreaming. This focus includes the implementation of a tracking methodology, more explicit requirements in call documents and evaluation criteria, as well as a dedicated analysis of the gender dimension of project proposals. The requirement for a more dedicated focus on integrating gender mainstreaming in the projects co-funded by the justice programme improved the programme's effectiveness as interventions were better aligned with target groups' needs. Over 80% of the projects funded have incorporated elements of gender equality and were able to effectively mainstream gender equality in their applications⁹⁷. The evidence gathered for this evaluation mainly through stakeholder consultations highlighted, however, that some applicants would still benefit from further guidance, such as more good practice examples tailored to the specific objectives of the justice programme.

Overall, the 2021-2027 justice programme has increased efforts to ensure inclusivity, combat discrimination and support vulnerable groups, indicating a forward-looking approach to creating fair and equitable justice system across the EU⁹⁸. Ensuring a non-

⁹⁴ The programme's monitoring data indicates that 201 888 people were successfully reached through awareness-raising activities, while 379 mutual learning activities have engaged a remarkable 2 288 580 individuals.

⁹⁵ See Table 5 in Annex II.2.

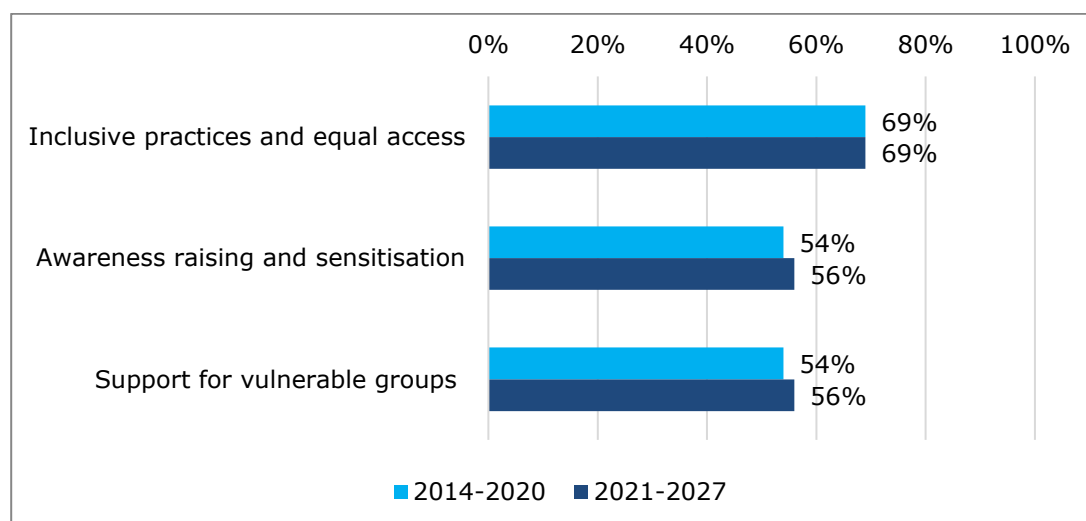
⁹⁶ See Figure 10. Based on programme data extracted from eGrants (DG JUST, 2024).

⁹⁷ Based on programme data analysis and text mining of project documents.

⁹⁸ Between 2021-2023, around 32% projects address the needs of migrants, refugees, LGBTI individuals, and persons with disabilities; 13% of projects focus on protecting children's rights in legal proceedings.

discriminatory access to justice for all is a novelty of the current programme which is already showing good progress in this regard as well as in supporting gender mainstreaming and in mainstreaming non-discrimination in all its activities as required by its legal basis.

Figure 14 - Focus on Inclusivity and Awareness-Raising in Funding Periods (2014-2020 vs 2021-2027)



Source: Elaboration of results of text-mining analysis based on project documents (eGrants)

4.1.2. Efficiency

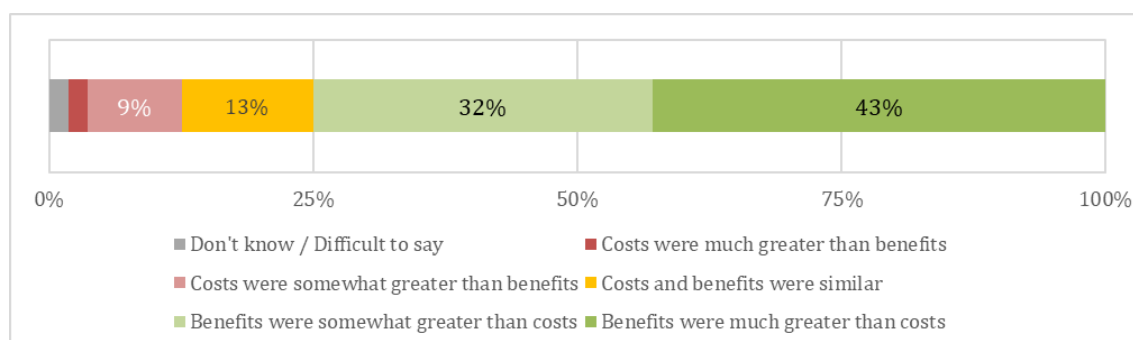
Justice programme 2014-2020

The *ex post* evaluation assessed the 2014-2020 justice programme's efficiency on the macro and micro level. Conclusions on the programme's cost efficiency are based on data collected on the programme and project level. Overall, the evaluation found that the programme has been cost-effective⁹⁹ in attaining its objectives.

Insights on the project level

Feedback from beneficiaries largely confirmed that the benefits of participating in the programme outweighed the participation cost.

Figure 15 - In your opinion, what was the cost-benefit ratio of participation in the justice programme for your organisation?



Source: Beneficiary survey (2014-2020 programme)

⁹⁹ Measuring the value provided for the investment made.

The formation of new partnerships emerged as frequently mentioned and leading to benefits such as (i) mutual trust between judicial actors; (ii) enhanced implementation and application of Union law and (iii) increased awareness and promotion of fundamental rights. Although 75% of respondents drew a positive balance, there were also common concerns.

The surveys carried out for this evaluation revealed that the application process and linked administrative processes posed a challenge for applicants to submitting their project ideas. Half of the survey respondents identified the application process as highly demanding on their resources. The process was particularly demanding for first-time applicants that had to acquaint themselves with the application rules and procedures. By contrast, subsequent project submissions were perceived as less challenging. This finding indicates that the applicant's experience in drafting applications was a relevant factor and the process itself was not the only reason contributing to the perceived burden. Administrative burden was as well frequently mentioned concerning reporting requirements. Many of the consulted beneficiaries indicated that the highest staff costs were attributed to administrative activities.

Notwithstanding these challenges, stakeholders also valued the Commission actions aimed at simplifying the administrative process. For the 2014-2020 programme, almost half of surveyed stakeholder, 46%, stated that the most significant simplification was the application process' digitalisation with the EU Funding & Tenders Portal's introduction.

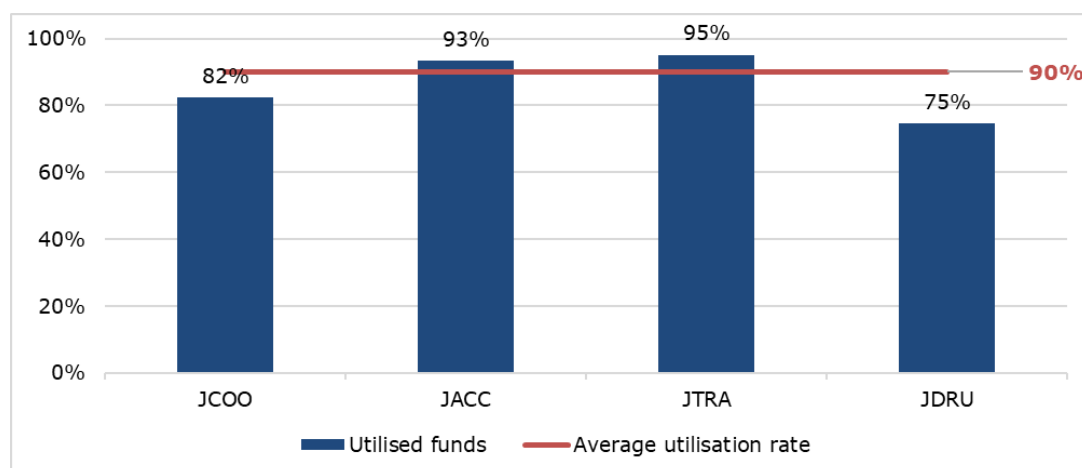
Further interview evidence underlined the investments' efficiency in IT systems, which provide long-term value to their users and were therefore an efficient tool for the programme to achieve its objectives. This qualitative feedback was further evidenced with quantitative metrics on the programme level.

Insights on the programme level

The regulation set a budget of EUR 377 604 000 for the period 2014-2020, with yearly amounts set in the work programmes. Based on data collected for this evaluation, over 90% of the budget planned for grants and procurement (i.e. EUR 332 125 700) had been committed (i.e. more than EUR 304 000 000).

At the level of specific objectives, funding implemented under specific objectives on access to justice and judicial training was slightly above the average 'consumption rate' (the 'consumption rate' or 'utilisation rate' is the percentage of planned funding allocated to a programme that has actually been awarded to activities under that programme). By contrast, funds implemented under judicial cooperation and drugs policy had below average consumption rates. The figure overleaf illustrates the consumption rate of available budgets by specific objective.

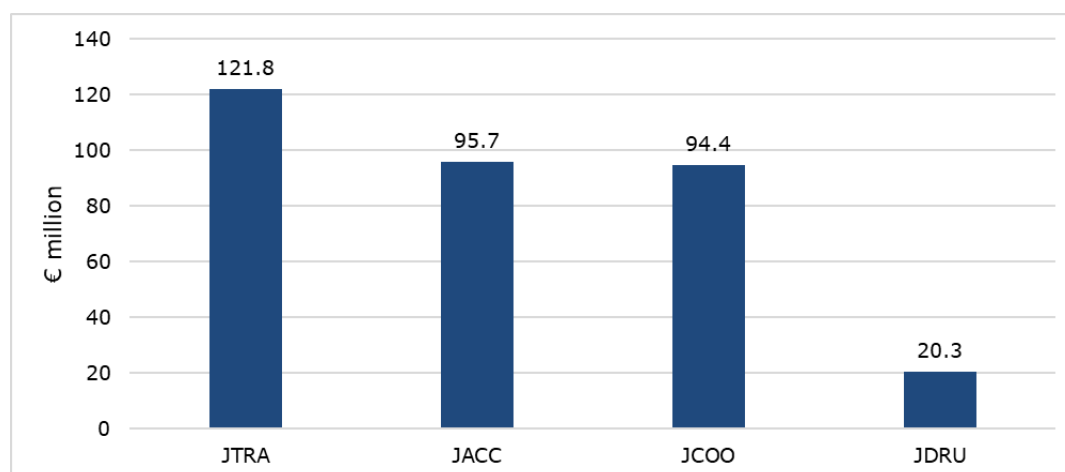
Figure 16 - Consumption rate of available budgets per specific objective



Source: Elaboration of programme data (DG JUST)

Juxtaposing the relative funding consumption rate against the planned budgets yields a more nuanced picture.

Figure 17 - Planned budgets per specific objective



Source: Elaboration of programme data (DG JUST)

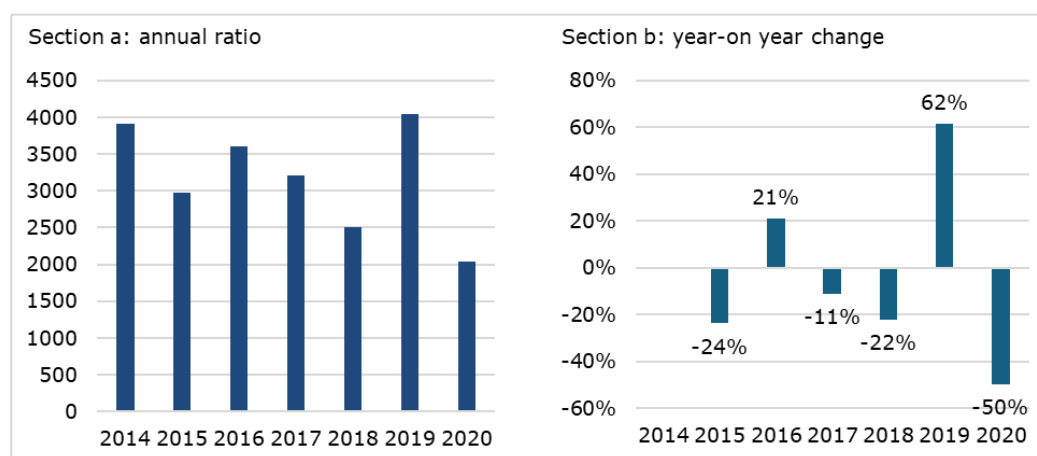
As outlined in the preceding section on effectiveness, the programme was effective in achieving its objectives by engaging almost all its planned funds. On the one hand, this underpinned the funding's efficiency. On the other hand, the unused budget, albeit not comparatively large, could have been used to further promote the programme's objectives. Interviews carried out for this evaluation confirmed that especially first-time beneficiaries underestimated the resources they needed to implement their project, thus leading to lower funding requests than what planned at programme level. This finding is in line with the evidence from the first part of the *ex post* evaluation that identified the underestimation of project costs as a key reason for not utilising the programme's entire budget.

The evaluation scrutinised 2014-2020 the programme's investments in two large and important IT systems and in training activities more closely. The IT systems were selected as they were associated with the programme's effectiveness in promoting judicial cooperation and access to justice. The evaluation also analysed the cost-effectiveness of training activities, which provide an insight into the programme's investments in judicial training. The evaluation did not further analyse data related to the specific objective on drugs prevention as the programme ceased to cover the specific objective.

For all three investments analyses, the evaluation created a cost-effectiveness ratio, which put the programme's total annual cost in relation to the output under a programme objective. Although the ratios are only an approximation of relative cost-effectiveness as annual budgets varied, they still provide a longitudinal insight on the programme's efficiency.

First, and related to judicial training, the evaluation analysed the training sessions' efficiency funded by the programme. Thus, the total annual programme budget was weighted by the total number of people trained in training courses. Figure 18 (section a) illustrates the development of the cost- effectiveness ratio and (section b) the ratio's annual change.

Figure 18 - Cost- effectiveness ratios of the number of the judiciary members trained (2014-2020)



Source: Elaboration of programme data (DG JUST)

As of the programme's inception in 2014, the annual ratio exhibited a decreasing trend until 2018. In 2019, the ratio peaked to an all-time high. Interestingly, the ratio dropped afterwards to its lowest level in 2020. It is striking that the number of people trained was at its lowest with 10 799 in 2019 and that it was at its highest in 2020. The rapid change in the number of people trained and the change in associated costs can be largely explained by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Triggered by the onset of the pandemic in 2020, digitalisation of training courses increased. Previously reported¹⁰⁰ data confirmed that the stark increase in the number of people trained between 2019 and 2020 could be attributed to online attendance. By funding remotely organised trainings, the programme improved its cost-effectiveness. The figures should, however, be contextualised as the work of the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN), focusing on in-person exchanges, illustrates. Networking and in-person exchanges remain important features contributing to the quality of judicial training courses.

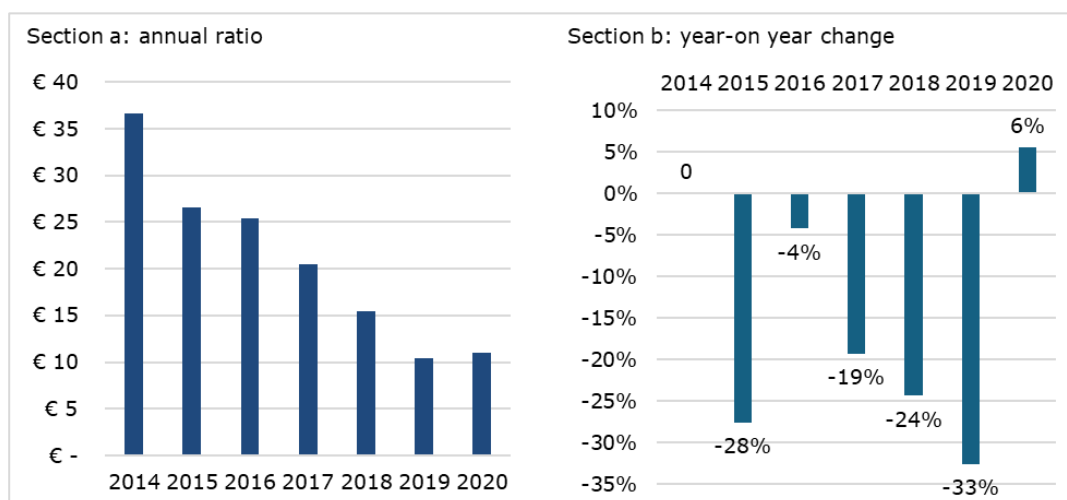
Another factor adding to the 2014-2020 programme's cost- effectiveness were EJTN's activities at European level that created economies of scale. The nexus provided by the EJTN established an enabling environment for large-scale judicial training sessions. Benefiting from its wide outreach, the EJTN promoted training opportunities impactfully among its members. As a result, the programme could offer training sessions at a lower cost.

¹⁰⁰ Programme performance statement, 2022, available at [Working documents 2023 - European Commission](#).

The cost-effectiveness of digital infrastructure is further demonstrated by the two IT systems that were analysed.

The European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS) is an IT system operated by Member States' central authorities to exchange information on criminals¹⁰¹. The number of exchanges in the ECRIS was one of the indicators to measure how the programme promoted judicial cooperation; it is therefore a good estimator to gauge cost-effectiveness. Analogue to judicial training, a ratio put the programme's total annual cost in relation to the total number of exchanges via ECRIS in a year. The cost of the exchanges decreased continuously until 2019. The number of exchanges via ECRIS increased over the years and thus contributed to the good cost-output ratio. The pandemic also had an effect on the number of exchanges via ECRIS, albeit to a very small degree. Figure 19 (section a) illustrates the development of the cost-effectiveness ratio and (section b) the ratio's annual change.

Figure 19 - Cost-effectiveness ratios of ECRIS exchanges (2014-2020)



Source: Elaboration of ECRIS data (DG JUST)

According to a Eurojust report¹⁰², the slight increase of costs in 2020 can be mainly attributed to reduced activity of national competent authorities. Among other factors, teleworking and a lack of skilled staff were the underlying factors. However, after a short transition period, activities returned to normal. As a result, the reduced activity increased only slightly the cost of operating ECRIS. From a longitudinal perspective, the marginal cost (i.e. the cost for one additional exchange) dropped significantly from EUR 36.65 in 2014 to EUR 11.03 in 2020. The strong decrease in marginal cost illustrates the usefulness of ECRIS and by extension its increasing cost-effectiveness.

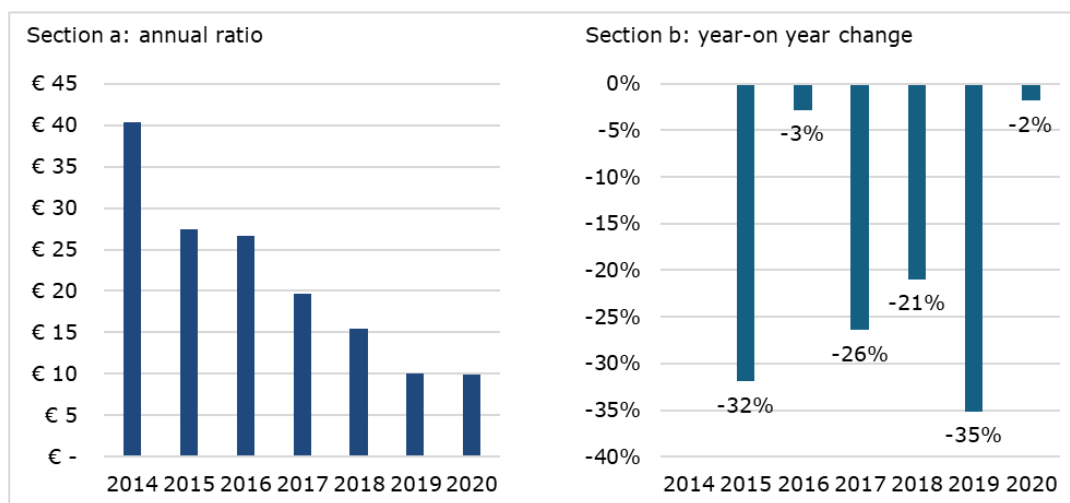
The second IT system for which a cost-effectiveness ratio was established is the e-justice portal. The portal provides online access to information to citizens when trying to obtain information on legal matters, procedures or legal practitioners to aid them. The hits on the e-justice portal were used as a proxy in the 2014-2020 programme's impact assessment to measure how the programme provided access to justice. Building on this metric, the cost-effectiveness ratio for access to justice put the total annual programme cost in relation to

¹⁰¹ Council Decision 2009/316/JHA.

¹⁰² Council of the European Union, (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on judicial cooperation in criminal matters - Executive summary of information compiled by Eurojust and EJN. Available at: <https://db.eurocrim.org/db/en/doc/3528.pdf>.

the total number of hits on the e-justice portal. Figure 20 (section a) illustrates the development of the cost-effectiveness ratio and (section b) the ratio's annual change.

Figure 20 - Cost-effectiveness ratios for hits on the e-justice portal (2014-2020)



Source: Elaboration of e-justice portal's data (DG JUST)

In a similar way as the investments in the ECRIS, the cost for hits on the e-justice portal decreased over the period in which the programme was implemented. The 2014-2020 programme invested in expanding the e-justice portal and maintaining it and these investments are likely to have increased general awareness of the portal. This view is further supported by the increased number of hits on the portal. Thus, the increased use of the e-justice portal showed the cost-effectiveness of building a larger digital structure.

In conclusion, the three ratios illustrate the programme's long-term cost-effectiveness through increases in the use of established IT systems and training approaches.

Justice programme 2021-2027

Evidence gathered for this evaluation showed that, so far, the 2021-2027 justice programme has been overall cost-effective. Stakeholders' feedback also corroborates this view, as most respondents confirmed that the benefits outweigh the costs. As for the previous programme, collaboration and long-term partnerships led to the main benefits for beneficiaries and their target groups. Such benefits materialised in increased awareness and knowledge of the issues addressed by the programme as well as increased skills and enhanced cooperation.

The programme management and administrative procedures improved over the three initial years compared to the previous programme. Challenges remain for beneficiaries and applicants regarding the completion of administrative tasks associated in particular with the application process and reporting, which remain costly and time-consuming.

Nevertheless, many stakeholders also acknowledged the improvements introduced with the 2021-2027 programme¹⁰³.

Overall, according to the stakeholders consulted for this evaluation, the simplification measures introduced in the 2021-2027 programming period have been positive and largely

¹⁰³ Based on interviews with beneficiary carried out as part of this evaluation, over 90% respondents assessed the **application process** as very or somewhat challenging; however, the share of respondents who assessed it as very challenging decreased from 50% to 40% between the two programmes. About 80% assessed the **reporting** as very or somewhat challenging; also, in this case the share of respondents who assessed it as very challenging decreased from 25% to 14% between the two programmes. The financial reporting process was highlighted for its complexity. Nonetheless, almost half of the beneficiaries (42%) believed that the administrative process improved between the two programming periods.

reduced the administrative burden. Changes introduced were seen by beneficiaries as having a positive impact even if it is too early to draw definitive conclusions. This includes the use of lump sum contributions, the simplification of the reporting process and the introduction of the e-Grants system. Stakeholders reported that the changes have put more emphasis on content and less on administrative procedures, which has given beneficiaries more flexibility with regards to the implementation of activities. The introduction of lump sums should also help simplify and increase the quality of final reporting, which is still challenging for some beneficiaries.

On the other hand, the introduction at Commission corporate level of the standardised unit costs for travel and accommodation was assessed less positively since unit costs often fail to reflect actual market rates. Additionally, when it comes to financial reporting, it remains difficult to maintain two separate bookkeeping records (i.e. one based on actual costs and another one on standardised unit costs). This adds a layer of complexity, especially for public authorities.

The feedback received through targeted consultation activities also indicates that there is efficiency and clarity in how information is communicated: beneficiaries overall agreed that they had heard about funding opportunities in good time (84%) and that the conditions for receiving support were clear and transparent (88%).

Furthermore, thanks to a more structured approach for assessing the performance of funded activities, the 2021-2027 programme is better equipped than the 2014/2020 to ensure that funds are used efficiently. This is a significant improvement compared to the previous funding period. The monitoring framework of the 2021-2027 programme allows for regular adjustments, ensuring that the programme remains responsive to beneficiaries' needs and emerging challenges.

Collaboration with existing networks, such as the EJTN, has continued to show the potential for improving the cost-effectiveness of the programme. As highlighted by the *ex post* evaluation of the 2014-2020 programme, these partnerships enable beneficiaries to organise large-scale events with extensive outreach at reduced costs, thus achieving economies of scale.

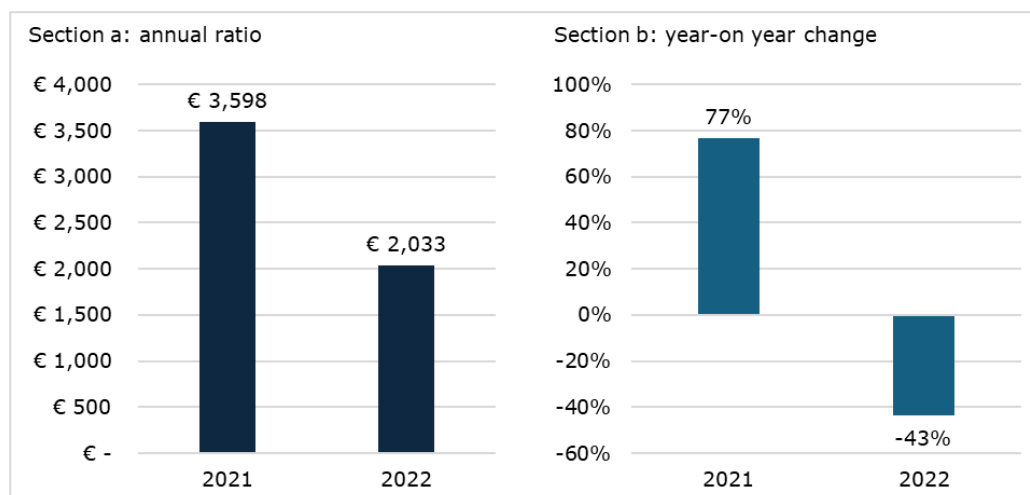
In terms of external factors influencing the efficiency of the programme, stakeholders consulted for this evaluation particularly highlighted economic and political factors (e.g. inflationary pressures caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine). Instead, challenges linked to COVID-19 pandemic were no longer considered an issue beyond early 2022 since the programme has been quick and flexible in adopting mitigating measures. In the longer term, COVID-19 has even increased the efficiency of projects funded under the justice programmes by accelerating the uptake of digitalisation. Approximately 29% of projects funded over the period under analysis redirected funds to support the transition to digital platforms and to cover increased IT support costs.

Also, for the *interim* evaluation of the 2021-2027 programme, the evaluation scrutinised the programme's investments in training activities for members of the judiciary and in two important IT systems (ECRIS and the e-justice portal).

In terms of the number of judicial staff trained under the current justice programme, findings indicate that, overall, cost-effectiveness improved between 2021 and 2022. In 2021, a sharp increase in the cost-effectiveness ratio was observed. The reasons for this could be varied, including potential changes in programme execution, increased costs, or external factors. Then, the subsequent decrease in 2022 brought the cost-effectiveness ratio back down to a level very similar to that of 2020, essentially recovering from the spike in 2021.

Figure 21 (section a) illustrates the development of the cost-effectiveness ratio and (section b) the ratio's annual change.

Figure 21 - cost-effectiveness ratio of the number of members of the judiciary trained (2021-2027)

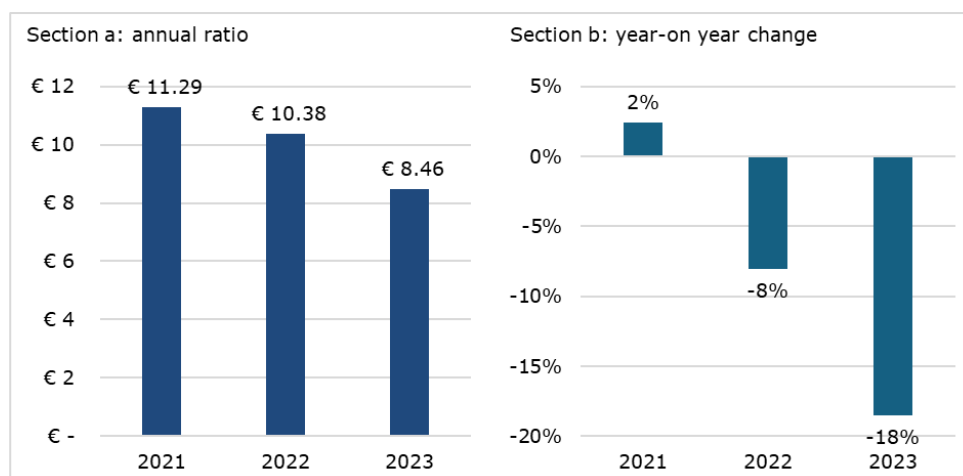


Source: Elaboration of programme data (DG JUST). Note: 2023 data not yet available at the time of carrying out the analysis.

In terms of exchanges of information in ECRIS, data showed increases in cost-effectiveness over the period 2021-2023. The most significant improvement occurred between 2022 and 2023 (see Figure 22).

The combined data from 2014 to 2023 showed a predominant trend of increasing cost-effectiveness given the steady decrease in the cost per exchange of information on ECRIS. The two years of increase (2020 and 2021) represent brief interruptions in an otherwise consistent improvement over the ten-year period.

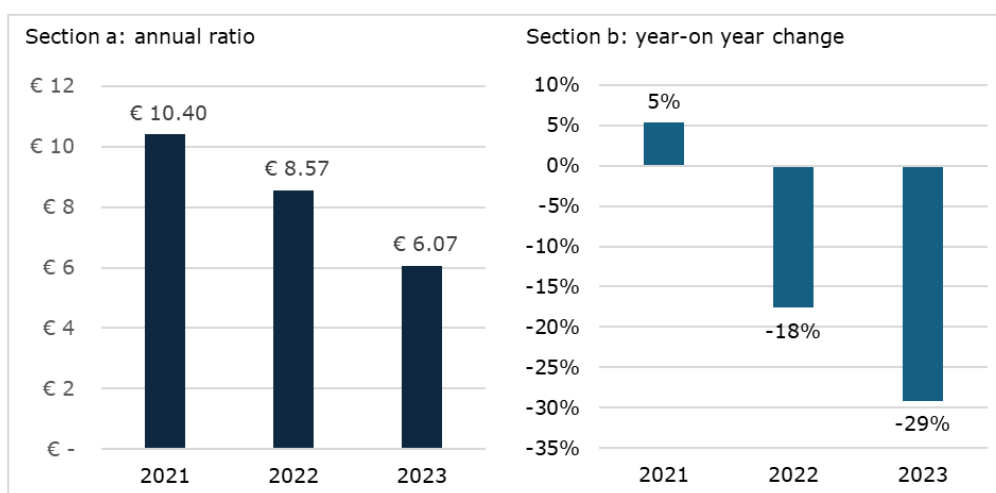
Figure 22 - cost-effectiveness ratio of ECRIS exchanges (2021-2027)



Source: Elaboration of ECRIS data (DG JUST)

Finally, looking at the number of hits on the e-justice portal, despite a brief increase in the cost-effectiveness ratio in 2021, the 2021-2027 programme demonstrated a strong ability to improve its cost-effectiveness for this indicator over subsequent years, culminating in a significant reduction in costs per 'hit' by 2023. This suggests that the programme became increasingly efficient in delivering its intended results over time, with the cost per 'hit' on the e-justice portal decreasing substantially.

Figure 23 - cost-effectiveness ratio of hits on the e-justice portal (2021-2027)



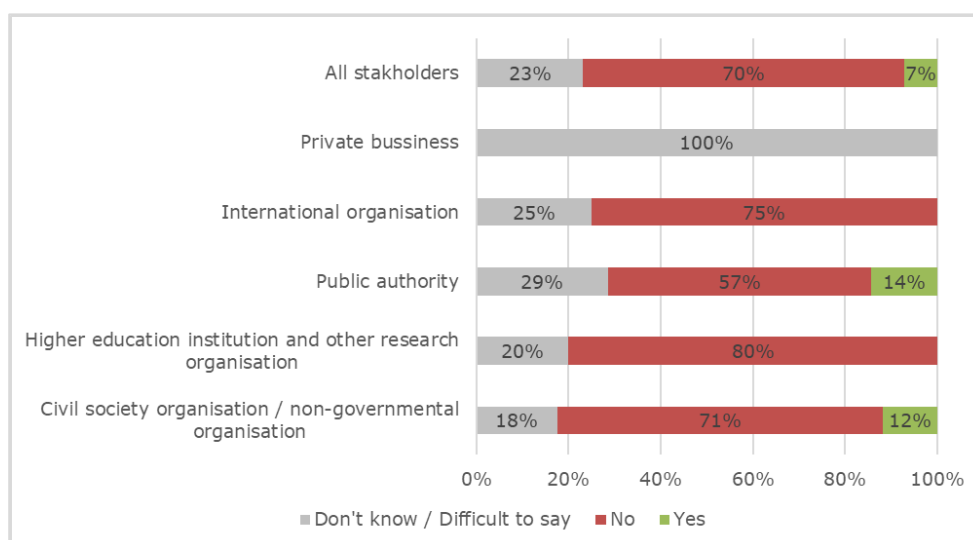
Source: Elaboration of e-justice portal's data (DG JUST)

4.1.3. Coherence

Justice programme 2014-2020

The *ex post* evaluation showed that the 2014-2020 programme reached overall its goals in a coherent way. The programme succeeded particularly in promoting fundamental rights and ensuring effective remedies, promoting judicial training and cooperation without duplicating other EU funding programmes. Survey results indicated that the programme has been unique in offering funding that addressed stakeholders' specific needs. Only 7% of surveyed beneficiaries confirmed that other EU funding programmes could have provided them with funding. By contrast, 70% of surveyed beneficiaries said that they would not have been able to secure other EU funding in the justice programme's hypothetical absence. Figure 24 illustrates the stakeholders' views.

Figure 24 - If your project had not received funding from the justice programme, would your organisation have been able to secure funding from other EU financial instruments for the project's implementation?



Source: Beneficiary survey (2014-2020)

At the programming level, the evaluation of the EU drugs strategy¹⁰⁴ confirmed the 2014-2020 justice programme's complementarity on EU drugs policy. Interventions funded by the justice programme specifically focused on judicial cooperation and crime prevention. Thereby, the justice programme specifically focused on areas that were not covered by the ISF. The complementarity between the 2014-2020 justice programme and the ISF was further confirmed by the fund's *interim* evaluation¹⁰⁵.

Feedback from programme committee members supported the positive assessment of synergies between the justice programme and the ISF. They confirm that moving the programme's objective on drugs policy to the ISF was the right choice. Although interventions funded through the 2014-2020 justice programme did not overlap with ISF initiatives, programme committee members indicated that they fitted much better within the ISF's remit.

Further evidence from interviews with programme committee members identified two salient areas in which the 2014-2020 justice programme successfully complemented other national or EU initiatives.

The first area is digitalisation. According to programme committee members, projects focusing on digitalisation of justice effectively added to national digitalisation initiatives. Moreover, the evaluation identified synergies in this area with the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)³⁷: funding for digital infrastructure projects under CEF was aligned with projects advancing judicial training online funded under the justice programme. The second area is fundamental rights. Synergies were most salient with the rights, equality and citizenship programme. Both programmes promoted protection of fundamental rights and access to justice from their respective angles and synergies were obtained by close coordination between Commission services responsible for the two programmes which helped in aligning the approaches to evaluate proposals. For instance, a thematic synergy existed in the area of victim rights, where the 2014-2020 justice programme was complemented by the REC programme with its support for victims of gender-based violence. Beneficiaries reported that training activities funded by the REC programme complemented judicial training courses funded by the justice programme.

Justice programme 2021-2027

The actions funded under the 2021-2027 programme and their objectives were shown to be coherent with the EU policies in the justice field. The EU priorities in the field of civil and criminal justice are similar to those in the previous programming period, but there is now a stronger focus on e-justice, digitalisation of judicial systems and cross-border information exchange tools. The majority of programme committee members consulted for the evaluation, who generally belong to Ministries of Justice of the Member States, believed that so far, the 2021-2027 programme aligns well also with national policies.

Thanks also to its focuses on three specific objectives, the justice programme is coherent and has created synergies with other funding programmes, such as the (CERV) programme, in particular in relation to support provided to victims of crime and other vulnerable groups. Furthermore, since the current programme plays an important role in supporting Member States' efforts for their interconnection to existing EU instruments and IT systems, there is complementarity and synergies with programmes dealing with EU-

¹⁰⁴ Final assessment of the EU drugs strategy 2013, available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/daf5ddf5-cd52-11ea-adf7-01aa75ed71a1>.

¹⁰⁵ European Commission SWD (2018) 341 final *interim* evaluation of the internal security fund - police.

level IT systems and the digitalisation of national judicial systems (such as the Digital Europe Programme¹⁰⁶, the Technical Support Instrument¹⁰⁷, and the Recovery and Resilience Facility)¹⁰⁸.

Only a small percentage of beneficiaries consulted for this evaluation believed they could secure alternative EU funding if the justice programme were unavailable (public authorities and higher education institutions being the most optimistic about this possibility, while CSOs are very unlikely to find alternative sources of funding if the programme were to be discontinued).

The programme is also coherent with EU international commitments and objectives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals¹⁰⁹, specifically with SDG 16 on ‘promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels’.

4.2. How did the EU intervention make a difference and to whom?

Justice programme 2014-2020

For the 2014-2020 justice programme, beneficiaries’ interview feedback indicated that they would not have been able to implement their projects in the absence of the justice programme. This finding is echoed by the online survey’s result. Only 9% of surveyed beneficiaries were confident that if the justice programme had not existed, Member States would have been an alternative viable funding source for them¹¹⁰. Public authorities such as courts, ministries and higher education institutions were among the stakeholders that reported most frequently that they would have been able to secure national funding. By contrast, CSOs were less confident to find alternative funding sources. Close to half of the surveyed CSOs indicated that national funding would not have been available to them. Figure 25 depicts the responses’ summary.

Figure 25 - If there were no justice programme, would you be able to obtain financing for your project from national instruments/programmes?



Source: Beneficiary survey (2014-2020)

¹⁰⁶ [The Digital Europe Programme](#) (Regulation (EU) 2021/694).

¹⁰⁷ [Technical Support Instrument \(TSI\)](#) (Regulation (EU) 2021/240).

¹⁰⁸ [The Recovery and Resilience Facility](#) (Regulation (EU) 2021/241).

¹⁰⁹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

¹¹⁰ This feedback is based on a sample population of 56 beneficiaries.

Underlying reasons for the reliance on EU funding via the 2014-2020 justice programme included the specificity of national funding instruments. Interviews clarified that reference to national funding related to specific budgets earmarked under targeted national funding programmes.

By contrast, only some beneficiaries believed that their projects would have been implemented also without the 2014-2020 justice programme's funding, albeit with a lower scope. The interviewed beneficiaries pointed specifically to the following limitations:

- The projects' geographical scope would have been smaller based on national funding.
- The project's thematic scope would have been limited. According to beneficiaries, national funding is tailored to specific groups such as victims of a specific kind of crime. The justice programme was perceived more flexible. For example, it was broader than national funding by providing financial support to projects addressing victims of all types of crime.
- The organisation's capacity to implement projects of a larger scope would not have been sufficient.

Feedback from programme committee members contextualised these limitations by identifying two areas in which the 2014-2020 justice programme helped level the playing field among Member States.

The first is the added value from training sessions co-funded by the 2014-2020 programme, which were perceived to be very valuable and impactful for programme stakeholders.

The second is the 2014-2020 programme's contribution to digitalising the justice systems and making them interoperable. Programme committee members underlined that the justice programme was an important tool for them to advance digitalisation. Especially for one programme committee member the need to purchase court IT equipment was striking and trumped the need to promote interoperability. Digitalisation proved particularly important to overcome issues raised by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In conclusion, the 2014-2020 justice programme was essential in providing financial support to its stakeholders, who would not have been able to achieve the same outcomes had the programme not existed.

Justice programme 2021-2027

The 2021-2027 justice programme continues to provide a unique added value which is difficult to replicate at national level. The programme adds value over and above that created by Member States acting alone. Beneficiaries consulted for this evaluation still believe that, while alternative funding sources exist (e.g. private entities, regional and national research projects or other EU-level opportunities), the support offered by the justice programme is unparalleled in its scope and impact. So far, the programme enabled organisations to undertake extensive activities that would otherwise have taken years to accomplish or would have been significantly scaled down. Moreover, evidence gathered for this evaluation through both stakeholder consultation activities and desk research showed that, in most cases, no national funding was available to provide the same kind of support to EU justice policies such as cross-border digitalisation or inherently transnational activities. Beneficiaries acknowledged the programme's role in accelerating processes and facilitating cross-border projects, which would be limited in scope and scale without its support. The justice programme therefore fills in a crucial funding gap, especially in areas requiring international cooperation and victims' support.

The 2021-2027 justice programme is also particularly valued for fostering the creation and awareness of EU-level networks and in enabling smaller Member States to undertake projects that, otherwise, would be beyond their capacity.

Cross-border collaboration increased from 69% of all funded projects in the 2014-2020 period to 78% in the 2021-2023 period¹¹¹, showing a continued focus on enhancing cooperation among different legal professionals across EU Member States. Institutional participation also grew in 2014-2020, with 69% of projects involving universities, national training academies and judicial authorities against 78% in 2021-2023¹¹².

This suggests that stopping the programme would likely result in significantly reducing the scope of justice-related activities, particularly those involving cross-border initiatives.

The arguments with regards the subsidiarity principle put forward as part of the 2018 impact assessment are still valid. The objectives set out in the impact assessment are still better addressed at EU level due to the persistent nature of the issues relating to cross-border cooperation in the area of justice, the paradigm shift needed for a true change in the legal cultures of Member States to cooperate with each other's judicial systems, and the need for coherent application of EU law by national courts.

The added value of the 2021-2027 justice programme also lies in its more targeted approach, enhanced focus on digitalisation, and improved monitoring systems. These improvements render the current programme even more effective in meeting the evolving justice needs for justice of the EU and its citizens.

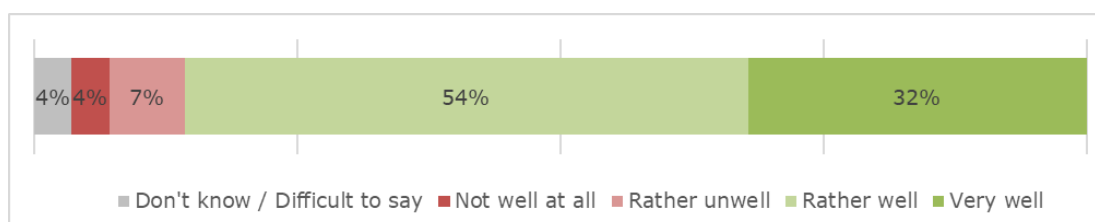
4.3. Is the intervention still relevant?

Justice programme 2014-2020

The evaluation confirmed the relevance of the 2014-2020 justice programme as already identified in the programme's *interim* and first part *ex post* evaluation¹¹³¹¹⁴.

The beneficiaries survey results showed that 86% of respondents agreed that the programme met (very or rather) well their needs. By contrast, only 7% (four respondents) indicated that the 2014-2020 justice programme did not meet their needs well.

Figure 26 - How well did the objectives of the justice programme correspond to the needs of organisations like yours? (beneficiaries)



Source: Beneficiary survey (2014-2020)

A similar picture emerged from the results of the unsuccessful applicants' survey.

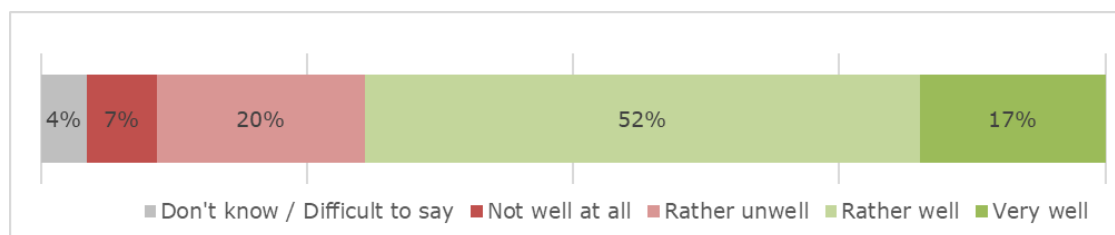
¹¹¹ Based on results of text mining analysis.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ EUR-Lex - 52018SC0356 - EN - EUR-Lex.

¹¹⁴ eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0121.

Figure 27 - How well did the objectives of the justice programme correspond to the needs of organisations like yours? (unsuccessful applicants)



Source: Unsuccessful applicants survey (2014-2020)

On average, unsuccessful applicants were less positive than beneficiaries in considering the programme adapted to their needs. However, the majority of unsuccessful applicants (69%) still believed that their needs were met rather well or well.

The correlation analysis scrutinised the perceptions of success and unsuccessful applicants based on their geographic location and organisational type. It did not find any statistically significant link between the opinions of success and unsuccessful applicants on the programme's relevance¹¹⁵. Thus, successful and unsuccessful applicants alike supported the programme's relevance in surveys.

The data showed¹¹⁶ that the 2014-2020 justice programme funded several projects that had 'sequels'. These follow-up projects pointed to the programme's relevance to its stakeholders over time. A good third, 34% of all beneficiaries, participated either in a follow-up project or in a different project. Hence, between 2014-2020, the justice programme managed to steadily keep a significant part of its stakeholders engaged.

A feature that helped the 2014-2020 justice programme remain relevant over the course of its implementation was its ability to adjust its priorities and address emerging needs. The justice programme merged the formerly separate civil justice programme, criminal justice programme and the drug prevention and information programme. As a result, its objectives made it flexible and able to cover emerging needs, especially in the area of judicial cooperation. The programme's effective re-programming made it possible to launch new call for proposals to address rising radicalisation of prison inmates and cooperate with the Council of Europe to gather prison statistics.

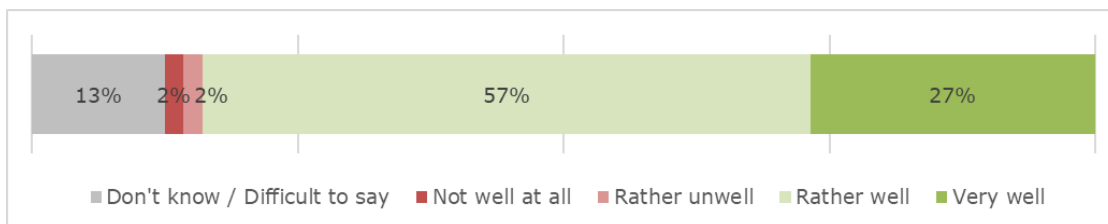
The programme further proved its flexibility throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Beneficiaries consulted for this evaluation stated that the programme provided them the needed administrative flexibility to implement their projects despite the limitations imposed by the pandemic. Reporting extensions, reallocations of funds and shifting from in-person to online and hybrid project activities helped to implement projects throughout the pandemic, and thereby to maintain the programme's relevance.

Beneficiaries were also asked to indicate how the 2014-2020 justice programme helped address needs at national level.

¹¹⁵ See Fisher test results in Annex II for details.

¹¹⁶ Based on results of text mining analysis.

Figure 28 - How well do/did the objectives of the justice programme correspond to the needs of the justice sector in your country?



Source: Beneficiary survey (2014-2020)

Based on feedback illustrated by the figure, 84% of surveyed beneficiaries believed that the 2014-2020 justice programme met their needs, showing that the programme addressed problems that were relevant in Member States and participating countries.

Notwithstanding the programme's stakeholders' positive feedback and high level of engagement, stakeholders would have appreciated additional support from the programme to disseminate projects' results.

The first part *ex post* evaluation part shed light on a potential improvement of the 2014-2020 programme's relevance. It identified the need to broaden the justice programme's target group. In particular, it singled out CSOs working on victims' rights as a group that should have been actively supported. By contrast, the 2021-2027 justice programme's *interim* evaluation did not find strong evidence for this need. Only gathered scattered feedback from individuals in interviews suggested a need to better include correctional services and prison staff in the target groups. These mixed findings indicate that the 2021-2027 justice programme should closely monitor its relevance to CSOs working on victims' rights to consolidate the findings from the *ex post* evaluation.

Justice programme 2021-2027

Some of the needs and challenges identified in the 2021-2027 programme's intervention logic still exist and need to be addressed. This is despite some of the recent progress in this area. For instance, insights from the EU Justice Scoreboard¹¹⁷ and data collected via recent Eurobarometer surveys¹¹⁸ highlighted progress in Member States' efforts to deliver effective national justice systems, but these insights also suggest that there is a continued need for improvements¹¹⁹. Several challenges persist such as variations in judicial efficiency, uneven implementation of judicial reforms and barriers in citizens' access to justice. These current and evolving needs prove the continued relevance across the EU of the programme' objectives of promoting judicial cooperation, judicial training and access to justice.

As it was the case under the 2014-2020 programme, the evidence collected for this analysis confirmed that the 2021-2027 justice programme is meeting the needs of its key stakeholders, i.e. beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries. The data clearly demonstrate

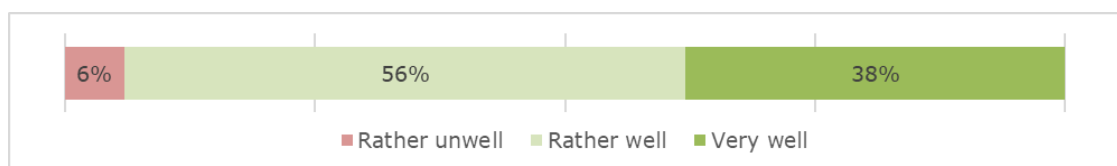
¹¹⁷ See EU Justice Scoreboard 2024/ 'The EU Justice Scoreboard 2024', Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions COM(2024) 950.

¹¹⁸ Flash Eurobarometer 540 – *Perceived independence of the national justice systems in the EU among the general public*, February 2024. For this Flash Eurobarometer, a representative sample of EU citizens, aged 15 and over, in each of the 27 EU Member States, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia was interviewed. Between 14 and 27 February 2024, 29 484 interviews were conducted over the telephone.

¹¹⁹ This includes the need for reduction of the burden of court fees and the availability of legal aid, promotion of voluntary use of alternative dispute resolution methods (ADR), support the participation of persons with disabilities as professionals in the justice system and facilitating access to justice by electronic means, as the uptake of digitalisation in national justice systems across EU Member States remains uneven. In addition, cross border crimes continue to rise since 2020, suggesting cross border judicial cooperation will only become more important.

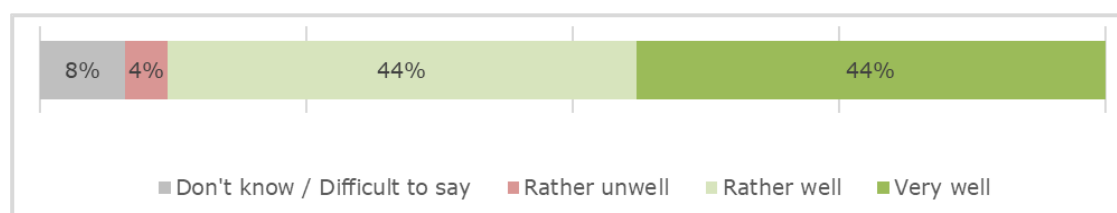
that the programme, not only aligns with their expectations, but also plays a crucial role in addressing the needs of the justice sector at national level (see figures hereafter).

Figure 29 - How well do/did the objectives of the justice programme correspond to the needs of organisations like yours?



Source: Beneficiary survey (2021-2027)

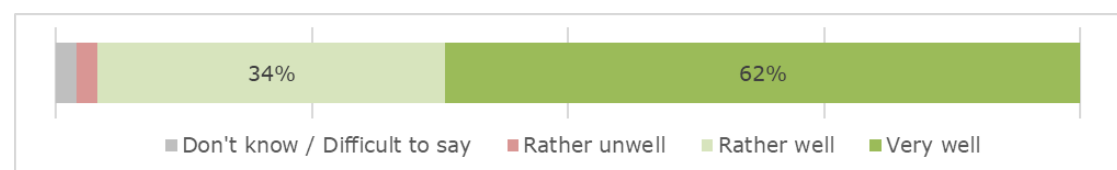
Figure 30 - How well do/did the objectives of the justice programme correspond to the needs of the justice sector in your country? (n=50)



Source: Beneficiary survey (2021-2027)

At the same time, 96% of beneficiaries believed that the outputs of their project correspond to the needs of the relevant target groups within the justice sector and society more broadly.

Figure 31 - Based on your experience, to what extent do the outputs of your project correspond to the needs of the relevant target groups within the justice sector/society?



Source: Beneficiary survey (2021-2027)

All this underlines the continued relevance of the 2021-2027 justice programme's specific objectives. The architecture of the current programme brought significant added value compared with the 2014-2020 programme in this regard, particularly through its more streamlined and focused design. In fact, the removal of drugs policy led to a sharper programme focus through its three specific objectives, which are key for the justice area, hence allowing for greater impact. Moreover, the broad scope of the three specific objectives allows for flexibility and ensures that the programme can respond to new priorities, such as the increased importance of digital transformation in the justice sector.

In fact, another key element of the 2021-2027 programme's ability to maintain its relevance to its beneficiaries and target groups in recent years has been its capacity to harness digital technologies. This is particularly important given the uneven progress and sometimes fragmented approach seen in Member States' efforts to digitise their national justice systems. Although the digitalisation of national justice systems in the EU is not one of the specific objectives of the justice programmes, digitalisation of justice is a horizontal component that informs all three specific objectives in a cross-cutting manner and that is enabling more accessible, efficient and interconnected judicial processes across the EU.

The digitalisation of justice systems has the potential to create justice ecosystems that are more resilient, adaptable and aligned with the EU broader digital transformation goals,

ultimately strengthening public trust in the judicial system and supporting a more cohesive European area of justice. Stakeholders and beneficiaries noted a number of areas in which funding for digitalisation of justice would be relevant, both in terms of thematic areas (AI, copyright infringement, cyberbullying, and transparency in the digital space) and types of activities. This includes developing digital tools (e.g. for the purpose of improving communication, access to information, comparable data collection), supporting the practical implementation of digital tools, as well as improving interoperability, and raising awareness on opportunities and benefits of digitalisation in the justice sector.

There remains scope to ensure a more strategic and focused approach to address the challenges linked to an uneven level of digitalisation of justice in the Member States and all opportunities presented by the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

5. WHAT ARE THE CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT?

This chapter is organised in three parts. Following a brief overview focusing on synergies between the two programmes, conclusions are presented by programme and structured according to the evaluation criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU added value and relevance; they refer to findings presented under the previous chapter. The chapter closes with operational findings and lessons learnt for the 2021-2027 justice programme.

5.1. Synergies between the 2014-2020 and the 2021-2027 justice programmes

Overall, the continuity of the 2014-2020 and the 2021-2027 justice programmes' general and specific objectives fosters tangible synergies. **Both programmes have successfully contributed (so far) to supporting mutual recognition of judicial decisions across Member States and improving cross-border cooperation**, which help creating long-term impacts in further developing a cohesive European area of justice built on mutual trust and cooperation between Member States. The programmes' joint focus on **judicial training creates synergies**. The 2014-2020 programme fostered a shared legal culture across Member States through training thousands of judges, lawyers, and court staff in both national and EU law. The 2021-2027 programme builds on these effects to further develop and unify the legal landscape across the EU.

Ensuring access to justice, particularly for vulnerable groups, has been a fundamental objective of both programmes. In the 2014-2020 funding period, substantial efforts were made to reduce barriers to access to justice, resulting in improved frameworks and increased protections for marginalised individuals. These advancements inform the 2021-2027 programme's approach, ensuring that established lessons continue to drive forward a more equitable and inclusive EU legal system.

The digitalisation of justice systems is also an area in which the two programmes are mutually complementary. The 2014-2020 period saw the further improvement of digital tools like the European e-justice portal, which continues in the current programme. This facilitates easier access to legal information and cross-border cooperation. The 2021-2027 programme builds on this foundation, continuing to expand digital initiatives and modernising judicial cooperation mechanisms. This continuity supports the EU's broader digital transformation goals, making the justice system more efficient and accessible.

Both programmes have contributed to the correct, coherent and consistent application of EU law. By facilitating exchanges of best practices, the 2014-2020 programme fostered collaboration among Member States, resulting in a more uniform application of EU laws by judicial practitioners. This ongoing synergy enhances the integrity of EU legislation and promotes legal coherence across borders, an approach furthered in the current programme.

Finally, **the support for European networks and civil society in the field of justice continues across both programmes.** The provision of funding for networks such as the European Judicial Training Network allows for sustained collaboration and capacity building across the EU, ensuring that projects have long-term impact and that cooperation between Member States is strengthened. This ongoing support helps ensure that legal professionals and organisations can engage in sustained, high-quality collaboration on justice matters across the EU.

5.2. Conclusions and lessons learnt

Justice programme 2014-2020

Effectiveness

The *ex post* evaluation confirmed that 2014-2020 programme's implementation yielded the expected results. **The programme was especially effective in promoting mutual trust and raising awareness of EU law via its training activities.** Stakeholders' feedback stressed the network's sustainability as they continue to support the programme's goals after the EU funding ended. Thus, the programme effectively established long-term partnerships that kept the programme's momentum.

Although digitalisation's advancement was not one of the programme's explicit objectives, **digitalisation played a key role** for the programme's effectiveness. Faced with the COVID-19 pandemic's impact, the programme ensured it supported its stakeholders by implementing activities digitally. Moving project implementation to the digital space revealed potential for closer cooperation between Member States and improved thereby information exchange and interoperability.

Efficiency

The *ex post* evaluation confirmed the conclusion that **the programme's benefits outweighed its costs.** Direct funding beneficiaries and target groups who benefited by their activities obtained immediate and tangible benefits from the projects. **The EJTN functioned as a multiplier in the area of judicial training.** By leveraging its outreach, it enabled beneficiaries to organise large-scale trainings at a low cost. The EJTN created economies of scale by facilitating and ensuring quality of training sessions at European level.

Streamlining administrative processes with the introduction of the EU Funding & Tenders portal and e-Grants system for the 2014-2020 justice programme made the application and grant management process easier for applicants. Although the portal was well received among applicants, there is still scope for improving its user friendliness. Beneficiaries' interview feedback pointed clearly to the need to make grant applications lighter and ease administrative burden.

The pandemic promoted the uptake of digital technologies for project implementation. **The increased use of digital tools helped the programme reach a wider audience** through their funded activities. It thus led to economies of scale and reached out better to its target groups at a comparatively lower cost.

Coherence

The programme's objectives were coherent with EU policies and priorities over the 2014-2020 implementation period. The programme was aligned with EU strategic agendas such as the EU Agenda for Justice 2020 and national policies. Throughout its implementation, **the programme created synergies with other EU funding programmes.** The most salient synergies were confirmed with the REC programme. Close cooperation between Commission services responsible for the REC and the justice programmes improved project evaluation and the training courses' impact.

In hindsight, **moving the objective related to drugs policy from the justice programme to the ISF was the right decision.** Although with its focus on judicial cooperation it did not overlap with other specific objectives, the objective related to drugs policy synergised much better with the international security fund's objectives.

EU added value

The justice programme provided funding for activities that yielded an impact which Member States would not have achieved on their own. Interview feedback concluded that individual projects could have been funded by Member States on the same topics, however, with a lesser scope and impact. The justice programme's EU added value was indeed articulated by its scope and size. Without the programme's funding, stakeholders would have required much more time and efforts to build and develop their capacities. The analysis identified three areas in which the programme helped promote Union-wide capacity building. **The programme succeeded in contributing to a more level playing field in the areas of judicial training, interoperability of IT systems and digitalisation.** Judicial staff and national judiciaries largely benefited from training offers and investments in digital capacities.

Relevance

The programme was highly relevant to its beneficiaries and target groups' needs. Interview feedback from applicants and beneficiaries alike confirmed the programme responded well to its stakeholders' needs. This conclusion was further stressed by the projects with sequels. The programme supported its stakeholders over a longer period of time to work towards obtaining its objectives.

Merging the formerly separate civil justice programme, criminal justice programme and drugs prevention and information programme into the justice programme yielded a long-term impact. It provided the justice programme with a broad, albeit flexible remit. Thereby, the programme remained relevant to its stakeholders over the course of its implementation.

This flexibility was a strong asset when the programme had to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic's impact. The programme's design and scope enabled it to adjust its programming and address emerging needs.

Justice programme 2021-2027

Effectiveness

The 2021-2027 justice programme is making notable progress towards its main objective of creating a European area of justice rooted in the Union's core values, such as the rule of law, and mutual trust. **The programme's contribution to upholding the rule of law and enhancing the protection of fundamental rights remains particularly evident.** Significant progress has been seen also in promoting judicial training and cooperation. Instead, areas like awareness-raising and information dissemination may need more focus to achieve the set targets.

The performance monitoring framework has significantly addressed and improved the gaps identified during the previous programme and **provides now a solid basis for monitoring the programme performance.** Nonetheless, certain improvements could still be considered. For instance, in the process for collecting stakeholders' perceptions and experiences; moreover, the added value and visibility of the project's outputs could be enhanced by linking the existing networks (such as the EJTN, the e-justice portal) with successful projects on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal.

Most beneficiaries of the 2021-2027 justice programme believe that their projects contributed to programme's objectives more than under the 2014-2020 programme and that the results of their projects will be lasting. At the same time, some beneficiaries

have also expressed **concerns about their dependency on EU funding for the continuation of their initiatives.**

The programme's communication activities have demonstrated a significant capacity to inform and engage stakeholders and the programme itself appears as well-known among potential applicants. At the same time, **the programme awareness is somewhat limited particularly among stakeholders from the non-profit sector and it varies between Member States**, even though this is explained by the programme's technical nature and its focus on the needs of the judiciary and judicial staff. Programme committee members play a crucial role in supporting national stakeholders in identifying which funding instruments are most relevant to them and, in general, in raising awareness about the different funding opportunities. In Member States where they are responsible for more than one funding instrument, an increased cooperation could be explored to engage more national stakeholders.

Overall, **the current programme has put an increased focus on digitalisation, inclusivity, combating discrimination, supporting vulnerable groups, and on gender mainstreaming.** The programme's increased attention on gender mainstreaming made its funding more effective by better aligning the funding's design with beneficiaries' needs. This last point could be further improved by providing additional guidance tailored to the specific objectives of the programme.

Efficiency

According to the majority of stakeholders, **the benefits of the programme outweigh its costs.**

Taking on board the conclusions of the first part of the *ex post* evaluation, **the 2021-2027 justice programme implemented several simplification measures to streamline its processes and administrative procedures** thereby enhancing its efficiency. The new measures show promising results even though it is too early to assess their full impact.

Therefore, **it is important that the Commission maintains the current support and guidance** and enhances the visibility of existing materials before developing new ones. Providing additional *targeted* support may be also considered. Beneficiaries appreciated, in particular, that the new measures allowed for more emphasis on the content by ensuring also more flexibility. However, some of them continue to experience challenges with the application procedure and the reporting requirements. Even if more time is needed to assess the effects of the simplification measures introduced (in particular, the lump sums), additional guidance targeting the identified challenges could be provided.

Thanks to its performance framework, **the current programme is better equipped than the 2014-2020 programme to ensure that funds are utilised efficiently.** This is a significant improvement compared with the previous funding period.

As in the previous programme, **collaboration with existing networks, such as the EJTN, has continued to show the potential for improving the cost-effectiveness of the programme.** These networks enable beneficiaries to organise large-scale events with extensive outreach at reduce costs, thereby achieving economies of scale. Consequently, these types of collaborations should be maintained and opportunities to collaborate with other networks could be further explored.

Also, the analysis of the programme's investments linked to the performance indicators for its three specific objectives showed that the trend of improved cost-effectiveness is still valid.

As during the previous programme, **COVID-19 has created some disruptions but mostly during the first year of the programme.** Issues related to the pandemic were mitigated by 2022, thereby demonstrating the potential of digitalisation to further improve the efficiency of the projects funded.

Coherence

The actions funded under the current programme are coherent with the EU policies in the justice field. Compared with the previous funding period, the current programme sees an increased focus on digitalisation. The actions funded are also coherent with policies at national level and with other EU international commitments and objectives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

The justice programme ensures a high level of coherence amongst the different available EU funding instruments, in particular with the CERV programme. Enhanced coherence is also due to the programme's focus on just three specific objectives.

The current programme is playing an **important role in helping Member States in developing national tools to create the interfaces required between EU-wide systems and national ones.** In this regard, most extended synergies identified were between the justice programme on the one hand and the Digital Europe programme and Recovery and Resilience Fund investments in the field of digitalisation on the other. Funding for digital projects could benefit from a clear mapping of needs at EU, national and local level in terms of IT infrastructure and training to ensure that the full potential of existing and future investments is reached.

Only a small percentage of beneficiaries said that they believed they could secure alternative EU funding if the justice programme were unavailable. **CSOs, in particular, said they were very unlikely to find alternative sources of funding if the programme were to be discontinued.**

EU added value

By addressing EU-level issues and needs, the justice programme, provides unique added value that would be difficult to replicate at national level. The programme plays an important role in accelerating processes and facilitating cross-border projects, which would be limited in scope and scale without its support or might even not exist according to some beneficiaries. The justice programme is also particularly valued for **fostering the creation and awareness of EU-level networks and enabling smaller Member States to undertake projects they otherwise could not.**

Stopping the programme would likely result in a significant reduction in the scope of justice-related activities in the EU, particularly those involving cross-border initiatives as the programme is filling a crucial funding gap. **The added value of the 2021-2027 justice programme also lies in its more targeted approach, greater focus on digitalisation, and use of improved monitoring system.** These improvements allow the current programme to be effective in meeting the evolving justice needs of the EU and its citizens.

Relevance

The current justice programme, also thanks to its more streamlined and focused design, is maintaining a high degree of relevance, a conclusion in continuity with the findings from the 2018 *interim* and the first part *ex post* evaluations of the previous programme. **The programme's specific objectives are still highly relevant to the needs of its beneficiaries and target groups in the wider justice sector.**

The programme could play a key role in bridging the gaps still existing in the next funding period by further enhancing its EU added value.

The programme's broad objectives have been crucial in also ensuring that the programme remains sufficiently flexible to adapt to new merging needs.

In particular, **the justice programme was able to adapt to the pace of the progress generated by digital technologies.** The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to digital technologies and underscored the programme's ability to maintain its relevance through its flexibility in an evolving judicial and societal landscape.

However, **while recognising the progress made so far, there is a continued need for the programme to fund projects that strengthen Member States' capacities in new digital technologies and encourage innovation.** The possibility to include 'digitalisation of justice' as an additional specific objective of the programme in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), rather than treating it as a horizontal one, could be explored to ensure a more strategic and consistent approach to all the related issues and challenges.

Operational findings and lessons learnt

Based on the conclusions of the *interim* evaluation, some areas for improvement or follow-up could be addressed through the current implementation of the 2021-2027 justice programme.

During the first three years of implementation, the 2021-2027 programme showed notable progress towards its main objective of creating an EU justice area. However, to better reflect the programme's impact and enhance its added value and visibility, some actions could be considered. For instance, a more systemised process for collecting stakeholders' perceptions and experiences and ways to link the existing networks (such as the EJTN, the e-Justice portal) with successful projects on the EU Funding & Tenders portal.

While the programme has already reached a large number of people, the programme's awareness remains limited among certain types of stakeholders, and it varies also between Member States. To address this, an increased cooperation with programme committee members could be explored to engage more national stakeholders.

At the same time, and also to keep increasing the cost-effectiveness of the programme, the collaboration with existing EU-level networks could be further explored.

Progress made on gender mainstreaming could be consolidated through additional guidance for applicants and beneficiaries as well as good practice examples tailored to the specific objectives of the justice programme. Additional guidance to support applicants and beneficiaries, who still experience some challenges with the application procedure and the reporting requirements, could also be provided.

Finally, there remains scope to further capitalise on opportunities brought on by digitalisation in the justice field. The possibility to include 'digitalisation of justice' as an additional specific objective of the programme in the next funding period could be explored to ensure a more strategic and consistent approach to all the related issues and challenges.

Lead DG, DECIDE Planning/CWP

This evaluation was included in the Commission's *Agenda Planning System* (PLAN/2023/1855) and carried out in compliance with the Article 14(4) of the [justice programme Regulation 1382/2013](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013R1382)¹²⁰ and Article 14(2) of the [justice programme Regulation 2021/693](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0693)¹²¹. In line with the [Better Regulation Guidelines](https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en)¹²², it assesses the extent to which the two programmes were effective, efficient and coherent, provided EU added value and remained relevant to tackle present needs.

The evaluation was carried out by the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST).

DG JUST carried out the *ex post* evaluation of the 2014-2020 justice programme based on a two-step approach to both fulfil the requirements of the regulation and carry a meaningful, cost-effective evaluation exercise. The first part of the *ex post* evaluation was completed in March 2022¹²³; it provided an overview of the funding distribution and assessed the preliminary achievements of the programme, which fed into the design of the activities of the current one. The second part instead focused on assessing long-term impact and sustainability. The structure and timeframe of the evaluation were agreed with the Secretariat-General and Legal Service. Agreement was re-confirmed by the dedicated Inter-Service Support Group supporting the evaluation during its meeting¹²⁴ of 23 October 2024.

Organisation and timing

DG JUST prepared the evaluation [roadmap](#), the stakeholder consultation strategy and the technical specifications for the supporting study contract. The documents were submitted for feedback and approval to the dedicated Inter-Service Steering Group (ISSG).

The ISSG was established in June 2023 following the invitation sent on 25 May 2023 to the following DGs: BUDG, HOME, COMM, COMP, SANTE, RTD, DIGIT, EAC, EMPL, ESTAT, REGIO, REFORM, OLAF, DGT, CNECT, INTPA, NEAR, the Secretariat-General, the Legal Service and the European External Action Service. The group met five times (see '*Evidence, sources and quality*').

¹²⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013R1382>

¹²¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0693>

¹²² https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en

¹²³ [COM/2022/121 final](#)

¹²⁴ [Ares\(2024\)7725582](#)

DG JUST conducted the supporting study with external experts between 4 December 2023 – 17 November 2024. The ISSG was consulted on the supporting study report (inception, interim, final and synopsis reports) during the dedicated meetings and through a dedicated online collaborative space. The relevant evaluation documents (evaluation roadmap, call for evidence, open public consultation) were published on the [Europa ‘Have your Say’ dedicated page](#) for stakeholders’ feedback and consultation respectively between 22 August 2023 and 19 September 2023 for the call for evidence, and between 3 April 2024 and 26 June 2024 for the public consultation.

DG JUST concluded the evaluation in 2025 with issuing a Commission Report and a stakeholders consultations synopsis report.

Exceptions to the Better Regulation Guidelines

The Commission’s [Better Regulation Guidelines](#) were followed to carry out the evaluation without deviations.

Evidence, source and quality

Table 2 summarises the successive steps of the evaluation. An external supporting study was carried out by a consortium led by Tetra Tech International Development with a contract duration of 50 weeks. The study applied a mix of evaluation methods including desk research, online public consultation, surveys, and interviews with stakeholders, EU officials and Member States’ representatives. The ISSG concluded that the study was conducted in line with the technical specifications and the agreed inception report. The study used relevant qualitative and quantitative sources and methods, although data had some specific caveats (discussed in Chapter 1 and Annex II). The analysis and conclusions are sound, and the methodological framework and its limitations are clearly outlined.

Table 2: Evaluation timeline

Steps/tasks	Timing
Preparation (March 2023 – November 2023)	
Draft the evaluation roadmap and the consultation strategy	March – May 2023
Set up the inter-service steering group (ISSG) and draft the supporting study technical specifications (ToR)	May – June 2023
ISSG meeting to discuss the ToR and the consultation strategy	21 June 2023
Tendering procedure	July – November 2023
Roadmap publication	August 2023
Call for Evidence	22 August 2023 – 19 September 2023
Evaluation supporting study (December 2023 – November 2024)	
Signature of the contract	4 December 2023

Kick-off meeting	12 January 2024
Inception meeting (with ISSG)	15 February 2024
Online public consultation	3 April 2024 – 26 June 2024
Interim meeting (with ISSG)	10 July 2024
Validation workshop	24 September 2024
Final report meeting (with ISSG)	23 October 2024
Finalisation of the supporting study	October – November 2024
Report and Staff Working Document (November 2024 – May 2025)	
Draft Report, SWD and Synopsis report	November – December 2024
ISSG meeting on Report and SWD	5 February 2025
Prepare and launch the Inter-Services Consultation package	February – March 2025
Revision and presentation to College of final Report	April 2025
Transmission of the Commission Report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (Interinstitutional Database, Europa, etc.)	May 2025

Source: DG JUST

Consultation of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board (RSB)

The evaluation was not scrutinised by the RSB.

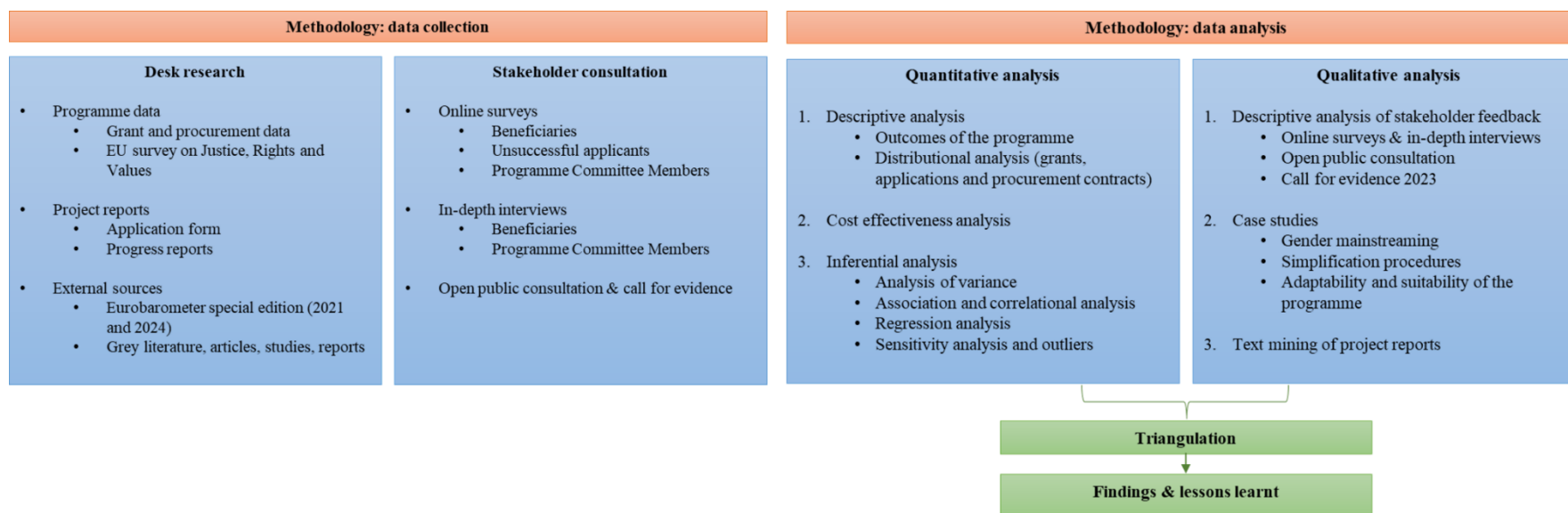
ANNEX II. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL MODELS USED

This annex provides an overview – complementary to Section 1 – of the methodology adopted to carry out this evaluation. It details data collection methods and tools used, as well as limitations to the reliability of the analysis carried out.

II. 1 Methods and tools

This Staff Working Document builds on data collected and findings obtained mainly through the supporting study carried out by the contractors. The study provided an evidence-based assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value of the two programmes. An intervention logic was designed or reviewed for evaluating each programme. The analytical approach was rooted in theory-based evaluation, complemented by a mixed-methods strategy that incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data. The approach was tailored to maximise the benefits of conducting two concurrent evaluations of separate programmes at different stages. Three case studies were also conducted. Figure 32 presents an overview of the study's methodology.

Figure 32. Overview of study methodology



The following sections provide an overview of the methods used in the supporting study.

Study desk-based research (secondary data collection)

The preliminary data mapping helped identifying a wide range of available, relevant documents at policy, programme and project level for the two programmes. The **policy review** was based on policy-specific reports as well as political and policy documents to support the assessment of coherence and complementarity of the programmes with EU policies or other funding programmes with similar objectives. The review also helped to show interlinks between the programmes and their wider policy context. **At programme level**, programming documents for the two programmes were reviewed to support the analysis of questions under effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance, as well as to contribute to collecting and aggregating data on specific indicators listed for each programme. Furthermore, the study elaborated data from the special programme's Eurobarometers¹²⁵. **For project-level documents**, an automated text mining approach was used to extract relevant data from proposals and periodic reports. The desk review also included project-level data collection, including: grant data, procurement data, Part C data¹²⁶, results of the EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Values¹²⁷.

Text mining

The text mining aimed to assess the effectiveness of the programmes by analysing a set of qualitative indicators, as follows: (a) change in participants' perception, behaviour and practice; rule of law aspects reflected in project applications; (b) enhanced focus on anti-discrimination in the access to justice reflected in project applications; (c) extent to which gender equality is mainstreamed in projects; (d) impacts of the programme on gender equality; (e) participants' overall assessment of project activities; (f) target groups of the participants; (g) examples of programme design being adapted to the page of progress generated by digital technologies; (h) impact of COVID-19 on project implementation; (i) dissemination of project's best practices to other member States; (j) unexpected or unintended effects (positive or negative) of the programme.

The analysis enabled collecting additional qualitative input needed for answering the relevant evaluation questions. The text mining was performed on project documents (n= 1 180) for a sample of 62 projects. The project sample was selected with the aim of ensuring representativeness of the selected projects, based on the following sampling criteria: funding period (i.e. 42% of projects funded between 2014-2020 and 58% of projects funded since 2021), type of beneficiary, type of support received, and other criteria such as the Member State of the beneficiary, specific objective of the projects, type of activities funded, and size of funding. To review the documents, the supporting study team used the EYQ chat tool¹²⁸, which employs advanced natural language processing algorithms to identify and group relevant patterns within large volumes of text. Prompts were set-up and refined to extract relevant

¹²⁵ [Eurobarometer 514](#) and [Eurobarometer 552](#). The series of surveys aims to give a snapshot of EU citizens' perception of the values promoted by the EU funding programmes related to rights and values (the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme and the justice programme) and their awareness of the different instruments used to promote and protect rights and values. The Eurobarometer survey is one of the tools set up by the performance monitoring framework of the 2021-2027 programme.

¹²⁶ Between 2021 and the beginning of 2024, the Commission collected data on the (estimated) number of people reached by activities organised by the funded projects through the 'Part C form' annexed to the application form submitted by applicants.

¹²⁷ Mandatory event survey for beneficiaries to distribute among event participants, officially kicked-off in September 2022. The survey is one of the tools set up by the performance monitoring framework of the 2021-2027 programme.

¹²⁸ EYQ Chat is an advanced textual analysis and text-mining tool designed to efficiently process and extract relevant information from large volumes of documents. It is an in-house tool of one of the consortium partners that carried out the supporting study. It provides adherence to data protection and GDPR compliance.

data for the selected indicators. However, when creating prompts the following limitations were encountered: prompts used to analyse some indicators (i.e. those related to gender equality, or those related to the impact of COVID-19 and digital technologies) yielded similar results. Although the related analysis focused on different aspects, some results were repeated across different indicators, particularly in areas such as gender equality and anti-discrimination. To address this limitation, the analysis differentiated the results, with the anti-discrimination indicator focusing on other forms of discrimination.

Study fieldwork activities (primary data collection)

This task comprised the stakeholder consultation activities conducted for the evaluation. A broad range of stakeholders were reached through the various consultation activities, covering a wide geographical scope, showing views of all stakeholder groups directly affected by or having an interest in the programme. The consultation activities are summarised hereafter and analysed in the stakeholders' consultation synopsis report (Annex V).

The study included four surveys – a public consultation, a targeted survey of beneficiaries, a targeted survey of unsuccessful applicants, and a survey of Programme Committee Members.

Online public consultation

The online public consultation aimed to strengthen the evidence base for the evaluation of the two programmes by gathering the views of relevant stakeholders on the programmes' effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, and EU added value. It was launched on 3 April 2024 and was open for 12 weeks (closing on 26 June 2024). The questionnaire – including closed and open questions – was published on the [dedicated “Have your say” webpage](#) of the European Commission. Respondents were also invited to submit position papers at the end of the survey. A total of 8 responses were received. The factual summary report can be consulted [here](#).

Survey of beneficiaries

The survey of beneficiaries was shared with all project coordinators for the two programming periods. It was hosted on the Qualtrics platform. The survey was launched on 29 March and closed on 24 May 2024. It was shared with 274 beneficiaries in total and received 109 responses. Respondents came from 23 Member States¹²⁹.

Survey of unsuccessful applicants

The survey of unsuccessful applicants was launched on 29 March and closed on 24 May 2024 for those who had unsuccessfully applied for both programmes¹³⁰. It was hosted on the Qualtrics platform. The survey was shared with 454 unsuccessful applicants in total and received 79 responses.

¹²⁹ No responses from beneficiaries in Ireland, Malta, and Poland.

¹³⁰ As of 1 March 2019, to comply with GDPR requirements.

Respondents came from 18 Member States¹³¹ and Albania. The response rate and the number of respondents was considered sufficient for having produced valid results, particularly considering the challenge of engaging unsuccessful applicants, for whom the time investment in responding to a survey about programmes that they had not been a beneficiary of could reasonably be assumed to be inefficient.

Survey of Programme Committee Members

The survey of Programme Committee Members was launched on 29 March and closed on 24 May 2024. It was hosted on the Qualtrics platform. Since Programme Committee Members had already provided feedback on the 2014-2020 justice programme during the first part of the *ex post* evaluation, this survey focused on the current edition of the programme. The survey was shared with Committee Members in all Member States (n=78 contacts in total) and received 27 responses from respondents in 21 Member States¹³².

The study also carried out 40 interviews with beneficiaries (n=35) and Programme Committee Members (n=5).

Interviews with beneficiaries

The supporting study conducted 35 interviews with beneficiaries across the two programmes. The sample aimed for a proportionate approach to balance both programmes, types of grants, types of beneficiaries per programme, specific objectives. The interviews were carried out using a semi-structured guide that facilitated discussions on a range of topics, including the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and added value of the programmes, as well as the impact of COVID-19 and digitalisation. Interviews were conducted between 11 April and 31 July 2024.

Interviews with Programme Committee Members

The supporting study conducted 5 interviews with Programme Committee Members (i.e. those who accepted to be interviewed, representing Austria (n=2), France, Finland, and Italy). Interviews were conducted between 11 April and 31 July 2024. They followed a semi-structured guide, covering topics such as programme effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, added value, the impact of COVID-19, and digitalisation. The discussion also included topics such as gender mainstreaming and simplification.

Case studies

The three thematic case studies explored and provided additional in-depth qualitative and quantitative evidence illustrating topical issues. While each drew on findings from the main data collection activities conducted in the supporting study, additional data collection was conducted for case study 1 and case study 3. Table 3 provides an overview of the case studies' themes and methodology.

¹³¹ No responses from applicants in Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, and Slovakia.

¹³² Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Spain.

Table 3. Overview of thematic case studies

Case study	Methodology
Case study 1: Evaluation of gender mainstreaming at the level of the programme and its activities	Desk-based review of the main documents at programme level (e.g. programme regulations, annual work programmes, programme statements, previous evaluations) and project level (e.g. proposals, periodic reports and grants agreement) for a sample (n=12) of all projects considered for the consultations of the overarching evaluation. Interviews with beneficiaries, Programme Committee Members and the European Commission (n=15 interviews in total). The case study also considered the results of the analysis carried out on the same topic in the context of the first part of the <i>ex-post</i> evaluation of the 2014-2020 programme.
Case study 2: Effects generated by the simplification efforts	Desk-based review of the main documents at programme level (e.g. programme regulations, annual work programmes, programme statements, previous evaluations). Analysis of the findings from the surveys of beneficiaries and unsuccessful applicants. Interviews with beneficiaries from the sample of projects, Programme Committee Members and the European Commission.
Case study 3: Adaptability and suitability of the programme for the (possibly) combined impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and new digital technologies	Desk-based review of EU policy documents (e.g. the EU 2030 Digital Compass, Communication on the digitalisation of justice, the e-Justice strategy and associated action plans) as well as specific documents related to the justice field (e.g. impact assessment, evaluations and studies on digitalisation uptake within the EU; Eurobarometer reports; Justice Scoreboard; Rule of Law report; etc.). Desk-based review of the main documents at programme level (e.g. programme regulations, annual work programmes, programme statements, previous evaluations). Desk-based review of project documents (e.g. proposals, periodic reports and grants agreement of a selected sample of projects). Analysis of the findings from the surveys of beneficiaries and the text mining exercise as well as the finding from the previous evaluation of the justice programme (2014-2020). In-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including beneficiaries (n=9) from the sample of projects as well as EU stakeholders from EU Institutions and Agencies, EU networks and organisations, and Programme Committee Members (n=7). These interviews provided insights into the programme and the views of both EU institutions and Member States, as well as on the spread of digitalisation in justice systems, the impact of COVID-19, and potential synergies between EU-funded initiatives.

Data analysis and triangulation

Data analysis included both qualitative and quantitative methods based on the data collected in relation to each evaluation question. Several types of data analysis activities were performed, including: descriptive, association and inference analysis.

Quantitative analysis

Quantitative analysis aimed to identify specific and quantifiable outcomes of the programmes as well as any relevant trends. It was performed per each programme separately and grouped into different types: descriptive analysis of quantitative data, testing correlation or association between variables of interest, variance analysis, and regression analysis.

One aspect of the quantitative analysis consisted of testing association¹³³ between variables measured through the survey with beneficiaries and unsuccessful applicants. For this purpose, a chi-square independence test¹³⁴ was considered; if the assumption on the adequate sample size was violated, Fisher's exact test¹³⁵ was used instead. In the context of this analysis, the assumption was not satisfied in all cases, which is why Fisher's exact test was finally used to conduct the association analysis. All statistically significant associations were further investigated with the Cramer's V test¹³⁶ which provided more insight about the strength of the association.

The regression analysis was based on ordinal logistic regression. Instead, the analysis of variance used methods such as one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA)¹³⁷, the Welch's test¹³⁸ or the Kruskal-Wallis test¹³⁹ amongst others.

The analysis also explored how outliers or certain groupings may affect its results. Outliers can be excluded from an analysis because they could have a significant impact on the results, potentially leading to misleading conclusions; throughout the analysis, outliers were excluded considering the organisation type of the survey respondents. Grouping was used to construct country regions, which were tested as a predictor throughout the entire analysis. Since the sample size did not allow stratification per country, the analysis relied on grouping the countries according to different criteria. The supporting study grounded the classification of Member States into four regions in the framework established by the [2023 EU Rule of Law report](#), which considers Member States based on their adherence to rule of law principles, including judicial independence, anti-corruption measures, media freedom, and governance effectiveness. By utilising this report as a reference, the countries were grouped according to shared challenges and characteristics that reflect their respective contexts in relation to the characteristics of their justice systems, rule of law issues and other related characteristics. Based on the parameters defined in the 2023 EU Rule of Law report, the geographical regions were defined as:

- Northern Europe: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden.
- Western Europe: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and The Netherlands
- Southern Europe: Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain.
- Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Albania was added to this group, as non-EU country that participated in the programme.

¹³³ The association analysis tested the hypothesis that certain outcomes, perceptions and behaviours may vary between different types of participants and between participants from different countries. In other words, the analysis assessed if organisation type and country are associated with any variation in stakeholder's perceptions about the programmes' effectiveness, efficiency and relevance.

¹³⁴ A statistical method used to determine if a significant association between categorical variables exists. It compares the observed frequencies in each category to the frequencies that would be expected if there were no association between the variables.

¹³⁵ A statistical test used to determine if there are non-random associations between two categorical variables in a contingency table, typically of size 2x2. It is particularly useful when sample sizes are small, or when the expected frequencies in the contingency table are too low for the chi-square test to be reliable.

¹³⁶ A test that measures how strongly two categorical fields are associated.

¹³⁷ A statistical method used to compare the means of three or more independent groups to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between them.

¹³⁸ When the homogeneity of variances assumption is not met, especially with unequal sample sizes, Welch's Test is a good approach for performing an ANOVA analysis.

¹³⁹ The test is particularly useful when the assumptions of one-way ANOVA (such as normality and homogeneity of variances) are not met.

Different grouping was also tested for outcome variables. This involved Likert scale¹⁴⁰ data obtained from the survey.

Qualitative analysis

The qualitative analysis relied on findings from the case studies, text mining as well as opinions gathered through interviews and the three surveys.

To analyse the interview data, a combination of qualitative research methods was employed, including thematic analysis, content analysis, cross-case analysis, and the constant comparative method. These approaches allowed for a thorough and structured interpretation of responses that aligned with the evaluation's goals and criteria.

To support the analysis of the efficiency of the programme, the supporting study performed a cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA), which compares the relative costs of the outcomes of two or more courses of action. The CEA allowed to assess and compare the cost-effectiveness ratios (CERs) of the two justice programmes, according to three selected indicators, both individually across the yearly outcomes and in relation to each other. The CER was calculated using the formula $\text{Cost of intervention A} / \text{Outcome of intervention A}$. The three indicators were selected based on the objective they were associated with and comparability across both programmes, namely: (a) number of exchanges of information on the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS), (b) number of members of the judiciary and judicial staff trained by the justice programme, and (c) number of hits on the e-justice portal. Each indicator was evaluated against the total cost of the programme annually.

The results stemming from the various data collection activities and analysis were triangulated to develop robust answers to the evaluation questions. Several triangulation methods were used, including: triangulation of different types of data, data collection tools, types of stakeholders as well as data sources. Triangulation was carried out for each evaluation question separately.

Finally, the supporting study team organised a validation workshop with DG JUST aiming at discussing the draft conclusions and lessons learned.

II.2 Points of comparison

The points of comparison presented in the tables hereafter were established based on core performance indicators established by the respective regulations, previous evaluations and impact assessments as well as performance monitoring frameworks. Explanations are included in Section 2.3.

¹⁴⁰ A likert scale, or rating system, is a measurement method used in research to evaluate attitudes, opinions and perceptions.

Table 4. Justice programme 2014-2020: objectives, indicators and points of comparison

Indicator	Point of comparison (baseline)	Point of comparison (target 2020)	Achievement by end of programme
Specific objectives (indicators set out in Article 2 of the programme Regulation)			
The number and percentage of persons in a target group reached by awareness-raising activities funded by the programme ¹⁴¹	0	NA	10 200 000 EU citizens 90 202 judges and judicial staff 29 000 lawyers 14 000 other professionals
Number and percentage of members of the judiciary and judicial staff that participated in training activities, staff exchanges, study visits, workshops and seminars funded by the programme	0	16 000 (percentage target = 0.13, i.e. the ratio between the number of supported participants and the total number of legal practitioners)	109 796 (percentage = 0.18)
The improvement in the level of knowledge of Union law and policies in the groups participating in activities funded by the programme compared to the entire target group	0	NA	Over 60% of Europeans reports ¹⁴² being aware of EU laws, with the most recognised being the right of EU citizens to live freely within the EU (82%), Equal treatment in employment (78%), and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (77%). A minimum of three out of every ten Europeans was familiar with EU initiatives and tools including the Code of conduct for countering illegal hate speech (56%), the European Disability Card online (48%) the European Citizens' Initiative (41%), the European e-justice portal (31%), and the EU Justice Scoreboard (30%).
The number of cases, activities and outputs of cross-border cooperation, including cooperation by means of information technology tools and procedures established at Union level	0	NA	1000 cross-border tools and mechanisms
Participants' assessment of the activities in which they participated and of their (expected) sustainability	0	NA	Most beneficiaries (94%) considered the effects of their projects as long-lasting and

¹⁴¹ Data available for the period 2016-2020, as per findings of the first part *ex-post* evaluation.

¹⁴² Special Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2021 and 2024.

			sustainable, with examples particularly evident in the creation of tools, partnerships, capacity building through training and increased awareness. Involvement in project activities positively influenced participants' perceptions, knowledge, and to a lesser extent, behaviour. A significant majority (88%) reported a shift in their perception of the subjects they engaged with, while around half intended to apply their new knowledge in daily life and work.
The geographical coverage of the activities funded by the programme	0%	100% of the participating countries	100%
Additional indicators set out by the programme Regulation			
The perceived impact of the programme on access to justice based on qualitative and quantitative data collected at European level	NA	NA	According to the feedback from beneficiaries, the majority of projects (83%) under the justice programme reached their objectives.
The number and quality of instruments and tools developed through actions funded by the programme ¹⁴³	0	NA	191 instruments and tools
The European added value of the programme, including an evaluation of the programme's activities in the light of similar initiatives which have been developed at national or European level without support from Union funding, and their (expected) results and the advantages and/or disadvantages of Union funding compared to national funding for the type of activity in question	NA	NA	Overall, the programme provided value at the EU level, beyond what could have been achieved by Member States acting alone. Where projects could have been funded in the absence of the justice programme, they would have been implemented on a smaller scale (geographically or in terms of their content).
The level of funding in relation to the outcomes achieved (efficiency)	NA	NA	The programme was overall efficient, and the cost-effectiveness increased throughout its duration. Beneficiaries found the benefits of the programme outweighed the costs. Stakeholders mostly considered benefits resulting from the networking opportunities for which the effects

¹⁴³ Ibidem.

			materialised well beyond the original project timeframes.
The possible administrative, organisational and/or structural obstacles to the smoother, more effective and efficient implementation of the programme (scope for simplification)	NA	NA	The programme has generally improved its administrative process between the 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 programming periods. The simplification efforts were positively welcome by beneficiaries. Beneficiaries still report very heterogeneous effects of these measures on their workload and administrative burden, indicating how different organisations (not necessarily of the same size or type) have very different experiences in dealing with the changes to the administrative process (in particular those related to the introduction of unit costs).
Additional indicators reported in programme performance statements			
Cumulative number of legal professionals receiving training (not only through the programme) on EU law or law of another Member State, including Civil Justice, Criminal Justice and Fundamental Rights	239 000	700 000	371 000 (2014), 494 753 (2015), 638 000 (2016), 820 199 (2017), 1 023 919 (2018), 318 000 (2020)
Average time of the surrender procedure (time between the arrest and the decision on the surrender of the person sought) under the European Arrest Warrant in cases where the person consents to the surrender (SO1)	14-20 days	10 days	21.25 days (2020)
Number of exchanges of information in the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS) (SO1) ¹⁴⁴	300 000	3 500 000	4 136 249 (2020)
Number of hits on the e-justice portal (SO3) ¹⁴⁵	630 000	+20% per year	1 136 849 (2014); 1 751 180 (2015); 1 884 600 (2016), 2 690,574 (2017); 2 962 558 (2018); 4 343 547 (2019); 4 619 548 (2020)
Number of new psychoactive substances assessed (including through testing, if necessary) to enable the EU or the Member States to take appropriate action to protect consumers, depending on the type and level of risk that they may pose when consumed by humans (SO4)	68	95	46 (2020)

¹⁴⁴ Based on data from the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS) platform (DG JUST, 2024).

¹⁴⁵ Based on elaboration of data extracted from the e-justice portal (DG JUST, 2024).

Table 5. Justice programme 2021-2027: objectives, core performance indicators and points of comparison

Indicator	Point of comparison (baseline)	Point of comparison (target 2027)	Achievement 2021-2023
Facilitate and support judicial cooperation (JCOO)			
Number of exchanges via the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS) ¹⁴⁶	4 136 249 (2020)	Milestones: 4 400 000 (2023), 4 800 000 (2025) Target: 5 200 000 (2027)	4 047 463 (2021) 4 700 000 (2022) 4 900 000 (2023)
People reached ¹⁴⁷ by awareness raising, information and dissemination activities	0	Milestone: 164 250 (2024) Target: 285 748 (2027)	100 072
People reached by mutual learning and exchange of good practices activities	0	Milestone: 2 683 (2024) Target: 4 667 (2027)	21 253
Civil society organisations reached by support and capacity building activities	0	Milestone: 60 (2024) Target: 105 (2027)	66
Support and promote judicial training (JTJA)			
Number of members of the judiciary and judicial staff who participated in training activities	0	Target: 15 000 annually	12 700 (2021) 24 000 (2022)
People reached by awareness raising, information and dissemination activities	0	Milestone: 836 (2024) Target: 1451 (2027)	301
People reached by mutual learning and exchange of good practices activities	0	Milestone: 11 945 (2024) Target: 20 728 (2027)	5 270
Civil society organisations reached by support and capacity building activities	0	Milestone: 88 (2024) Target: 154 (2027)	91
Facilitate effective and non-discriminatory access to justice for all (JACC)			
Civil society organisations reached by support and capacity building activities	0	Milestone: 156 (2024) Target: 253 (2027)	106 ¹⁴⁸
Number of hits on the e-justice portal / pages addressing the need for information on cross-border civil and criminal cases ¹⁴⁹	1 430 000 (2020)	Milestone: 2 100 000 (2024) Target: 2 800 000 (2027)	1 280 000 (2021) 2 250 000 (2022)
People reached by mutual learning and exchange of good practices activities	0	Milestone: 2 627 (2024) Target: 4 574 (2027)	2 262 057
People reached by awareness raising, information and dissemination activities	0	Milestone: 160 881 (2024) Target: 280 075 (2027)	101 515

¹⁴⁶ Based on data from the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS) platform (DG JUST, 2024).

¹⁴⁷ Values for all indicators on people reached are based on data from eGrants, namely Part C, as presented in beneficiaries' applications. Values cover all projects awarded by 15 January 2024. The numbers were derived using the data point 'Activity Type' and relevant gender data points (male / female / non-binary).

¹⁴⁸ Data covers grants signed by December 2023, therefore CSOs reached by the JUST-2023-JACC-EJUSTICEcall are not included.

¹⁴⁹ Based on elaboration of data extracted from the e-justice portal (DG JUST, 2024).

ANNEX III. EVALUATION MATRIX AND DETAILS ON ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS (BY CRITERION)

The evaluation design relied on two evaluation matrices built along the five Better Regulation Guidelines' evaluation criteria that guided the evaluation process. Based on the programmes' intervention logics and the supporting study technical specifications, the matrices feature the key research questions, indicators and related judgement criteria. The data sources are included in the tables.

Justice programme 2014-2020

EFFECTIVENESS		
EQ1 To what extent did the programme achieve its general and specific objectives?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The final quantitative data for effectiveness indicators meet the targets Stakeholders confirm that the programme met its objectives Stakeholders confirm that the programme effects are sustainable and can identify examples of its long-lasting effects 	Quantitative indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Success rate (number of projects funded out of total proposals submitted) Percentage of projects that are a continuation of previously funded projects Number of long-lasting judicial cooperation extended beyond the project duration Number of projects for which activities continued beyond the project duration Cumulative number of legal practitioners who received training Number of exchanges of information in the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS) Number and percentage of members of the judiciary and judicial staff that participated in training activities, staff exchanges, study visits, workshops and seminars Number of hits on the e-Justice portal Number of new psychoactive substances assessed to enable the EU or the Member States to take appropriate action to protect 	Desk research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report of the first part <i>ex post</i> evaluation of the justice programme 2014-2020 Programme data Annual reports on European Judicial Training The European Criminal Records Information System Annual monitoring reports (reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes (AWP)) Database for the Justice programme 2014-2020¹⁵⁰ Justice programme - Performance¹⁵¹ The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)¹⁵² National reports to Council EAW annual statistics¹⁵³ European Commission databases (Programme data, Database for the Justice programme 2014-2020)

¹⁵⁰ European Commission Justice, Justice Programme 2014-2020. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants1/closed-calls/index_en.htm.

¹⁵¹ European Commission, Justice Programme – Performance. Available at: [Justice programme - Performance \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants1/closed-calls/index_en.htm).

¹⁵² EUDA, New psychoactive substances- the current situation in Europe. Available at: https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/european-drug-report/2023/new-psychoactive-substances_en#.

¹⁵³ Eurojust, Annual Report 2022 – European Arrest Warrant. Available at: <https://www.eurojust.europa.eu/annual-report-2022/judicial-cooperation-instruments/european-arrest-warrant>.

	<p>consumers, depending on the type and level of risk that they may pose when consumed by humans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average time of the surrender procedure under the European Arrest Warrant (in cases where the person consents to the surrender) • Number of funded projects per year (action grants and operating grants) • Number of procurement contracts signed per year and per type of project • Number of calls for proposals per specific objective <p>Qualitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders' assessment of the performance of the programme • Stakeholders' assessment on programme meeting its objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature and reports (e.g. the report of the first part <i>ex post</i> evaluation of the Justice programme 2014-2020, Annual monitoring reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes, national reports to Council EAW annual statistics, etc.) <p>Survey with Programme Committee Members</p> <p>In-depth interviews with the beneficiaries</p>
EQ2. To what extent are the effects of the programme long-lasting and sustainable?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders confirm that programme's effects have been sustainable • Stakeholders confirm that the tools used to share the results of the programme are sustainable • Stakeholders provide examples of long-lasting effects of the programme, such as partnerships, continuous activities 	<p>Qualitative indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders' assessment of the sustainability of the Programme • Stakeholders' assessment of the tools sharing the results of the programme • Examples of long-lasting effects of the programme 	<p>Desk research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eurobarometer data (2021 edition and 2024 edition) and EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Value <p>In-depth interviews with the beneficiaries</p> <p>In-depth interviews with the Programme Committee Members</p> <p>Survey with the beneficiaries</p> <p>Survey with the Programme Committee Members</p>
EQ3. If any, what were the unexpected or unintended effects (positive or negative) of the programme? What were the implications?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are examples of and trends in unexpected or unintended effects (positive or negative) of the programme 	<p>Qualitative indicator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of unexpected or unintended effects of the programme and their impact and the frequency of these examples 	<p>Desk research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project reports <p>Text mining</p> <p>In-depth interviews with beneficiaries and Programme Committee Members</p> <p>Surveys with beneficiaries</p>

		Surveys with Programme Committee Members
EQ4. How evenly are the effects observed so far distributed across the different target groups and participating countries? What are the likely reasons of variation in the programme's effects across target groups and Member States?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The final quantitative data confirm that the effects of the programme are evenly distributed across the different target groups The final quantitative data confirm that the effects of the programme are evenly distributed across participating countries Stakeholders confirm that the distribution of programme's effects has been evenly distributed 	<p>Quantitative indicators</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Number of applications and grants (action and operating) awarded by country and by year Number of applications and grants (action and operating) awarded by year per target group <p>Qualitative indicator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency of each target group mentioned in project application per specific programme objective Stakeholders' assessment on the distribution of programme's effects to different target groups and participating countries 	<p>Desk research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report of the first part <i>ex post</i> evaluation of the justice programme 2014-2020 Monitoring data from DG JUST Annual monitoring reports (reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes (AWP)) Database for the justice programme 2014-2020 European Commission databases (Programme data, Database for the justice programme 2014-2020) Literature and reports (e.g. the report of the first part <i>ex post</i> evaluation of the justice programme 2014-2020, Annual monitoring reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes) <p>Survey with the Programme Committee Members</p> <p>Survey with the beneficiaries</p> <p>Text mining: different target groups per specific objectives reflected in projects reports</p>
EFFICIENCY		
EQ5. Have the effects of the programme been achieved at initially expected costs or were these costs different? What could explain the differences (if any)?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The final financial data confirm that the programme effects have been achieved at initially expected (planned) costs There are factors identified that can explain the differences (if any) 	<p>Quantitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actual and planned costs of an of awareness raising, information and dissemination activities Actual and planned costs of a mutual learning and exchange of good practices activities Actual and planned costs of a training activities 	<p>Desk research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission databases (Programme data, Database for the justice programme 2014-2020) Literature and reports (e.g. the report of the first part <i>ex post</i> evaluation of the Justice programme 2014-2020, Annual monitoring reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actual and planned costs of 1 person/day/trainings Actual and planned costs of 1 person trained Actual and planned budget of procurement contracts Actual and planned budget per year and per specific objective 	<p>national reports to Council EAW annual statistics etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme original budget/budgetary assumptions <p>In-depth interviews with DG JUST staff</p>
EQ6. Was the implementation of the programme, including administrative costs, efficient or could the programme be implemented in a more efficient way?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders confirm that the benefits of the programme are higher than the costs incurred Stakeholders identify factors that influenced cost efficiency of the programme Stakeholders confirm that the simplification measures, including streamlining the application rules and procedures, increased cost-benefit ratio Evidence suggests that the programme suffered from underspending on projects There were irregularities or delays in programme implementation, e.g. in publishing calls Stakeholders confirm that cost-benefit ratio of the programme is higher than in case of other similar funding schemes 	<p>Quantitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The level of understanding on projects <p>Qualitative indicators</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identified examples of irregularities or delays in programme implementation Stakeholder feedback on cost-benefit ratio of the programme Stakeholder feedback on cost-benefit ratio of similar funding schemes Stakeholders feedback on factors influencing efficiency, including feedback on simplification measures 	<p>Desk research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report of the first part <i>ex post</i> evaluation of the justice programme 2014-2020 Project data (planned budgets against spendings) Programme <i>ex post</i> evaluation (first part) <p>Survey with the Programme Committee Members</p> <p>Survey with the beneficiaries</p> <p>In-depth interviews with DG JUST staff</p> <p>In-depth interviews with selected beneficiaries</p>
EQ7. How did the introduced simplification measures influence the cost-benefit ratio?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
	<p>Qualitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders feedback on factors influencing efficiency, including feedback on simplification measures 	<p>Case study 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The effects generated by the simplification efforts

RELEVANCE		
EQ8.1 How well did the objectives of the programme correspond to the needs of the different stakeholders?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders confirm that the design of the programme was adequate to meet their needs Extent to which there is flexibility in the programme to address emerging needs Stakeholders report the need to adapt the programme objectives or design to better address their needs 	<p>Quantitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of beneficiaries that are recurrent beneficiaries and/or in recurring consortia Distribution of funding by type of beneficiary Number of projects that are not in line with the core needs of the beneficiary out of the total number of funded projects (business opportunity) Number of final beneficiaries that confirmed that programme's objectives correspond to their needs <p>Qualitative indicator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders feedback on the adequacy of the programme design to meet their needs Examples of adapting the programme design to emerging needs and changing situation Stakeholders reporting the need to amend the programme objectives or design to better address their needs Evidence confirming that the recommendations regarding stakeholder needs from the <i>interim</i> evaluation were reflected in the programme implementation 	<p>Desk research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission databases (Programme data, list of calls of the justice programme 2014-2020) Literature and reports (e.g. the report of the first part <i>ex post</i> evaluation of the justice programme 2014-2020, Annual monitoring reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes) <p>Survey with Programme Committee Members</p> <p>Survey with beneficiaries and applicants</p> <p>In-depth interviews with selected beneficiaries</p> <p>In-depth interviews with other key stakeholders</p>
EQ 8.2 How relevant was the programme to its final beneficiaries?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders confirm that the design of the programme was adequate to meet the needs of the target groups Extent to which there is flexibility in the programme to address emerging needs Stakeholders report the need to adapt the programme objectives or 	<p>Quantitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of final beneficiaries that confirmed that programme's objectives correspond to their needs <p>Qualitative indicator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders feedback on the adequacy of the programme design to meet the needs of the targeted stakeholders 	<p>Desk research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission databases (Programme data, Database for the justice programme 2014-2020) Literature and reports (e.g. the report of the first part <i>ex post</i> evaluation of the justice programme 2014-2020, Annual monitoring reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes)

design to better address the needs of its target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of adapting the programme design to emerging needs and changing situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eurobarometer data (2021 edition and 2024 edition) and EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Value <p>Survey with Programme Committee Members</p> <p>Survey with beneficiaries and applicants</p> <p>In-depth interviews with selected beneficiaries</p> <p>In-depth interviews with other key stakeholders</p>
EQ 8.3 What, if any, are the key lessons that can be learnt?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which the recommendations of previous evaluations were used to amend the design of the programme 	<p>Qualitative indicator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence confirming that the recommendations regarding stakeholder needs from the <i>interim</i> evaluation were reflected in the programme implementation 	<p>Desk research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission databases (Programme data, Database for the justice programme 2014-2020) Literature and reports (e.g. the report of the first part <i>ex post</i> evaluation of the justice programme 2014-2020, Annual monitoring reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes) <p>Text mining</p> <p>In-depth interviews with the beneficiaries</p> <p>In-depth interviews with the Programme Committee Members</p> <p>Survey with the beneficiaries and applicants</p> <p>Survey with the Programme Committee Members</p>
COHERENCE		
EQ9. To what extent was the programme coherent with wider EU policies and priorities?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which the objectives of the programme were in line with wider EU policies and priorities, and international commitments, such as the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda Extent to which there are overlaps with other types of EC and other 	<p>Quantitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of projects that were in line with wider EU policies and priorities, and international commitments, such as the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda Number of projects that overlapped with other types of EC and other funding programmes that support similar projects/objectives 	<p>Desk research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report of the first part <i>ex post</i> evaluation of the justice programme 2014-2020 Monitoring data from DG JUST Annual monitoring reports (reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes (AWP))

funding programmes that support similar projects/objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which the beneficiaries managed to achieve synergies between their projects and other funding programmes 	Qualitative indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links between the programme objectives and wider EU policies and priorities, and international commitments Examples of overlaps with other types of EC and other funding programmes that support similar projects/objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Database for the justice programme 2014-2020 Programme <i>interim</i> evaluation Programme <i>ex post</i> evaluation (first part) Additional desk research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports of other EU instruments In-depth interviews with DG JUST staff
EQ10. To what extent are there synergies and/or complementarities between the programme and other EU instruments?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which the beneficiaries managed to achieve synergies between their projects and other funding programmes 	Quantitative indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number (share) of projects that develop synergies with projects financed by other EU sources Qualitative indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duplications of tasks and responsibilities between the Justice programme and wider EU policies and priorities Level of coordination between the programme and wider EU policies and priorities 	Desk research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report of the first part <i>ex post</i> evaluation of the justice programme 2014-2020 Monitoring data from DG JUST Annual monitoring reports (reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes (AWP)) Database for the justice programme 2014-2020 Programme <i>interim</i> evaluation Programme <i>ex post</i> evaluation (first part) Additional desk research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports of other EU instruments In-depth interviews with DG JUST staff
EU ADDED VALUE		
EQ11. To what extent could the impact of the programme have been achieved without it by the Member States acting alone?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which it is possible to define the elements that represent the added value of the programme compared to what could have been achieved by the Member States acting alone 	Quantitative indicator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of projects creating first time transnational partnerships Qualitative indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders' assessment of participating countries' capacity to achieve similar effects without the programme 	Survey with Programme Committee Members In-depth with selected beneficiaries In-depth with other key stakeholders

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which stakeholders confirm that similar effects, including implementation of transnational projects, would have been achieved by the Member States acting alone • Extent to which stakeholders identify negative consequences of potential limitation or withdrawal of the programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders' assessment of beneficiaries being able to implement their projects or similar actions without the funding provided by the Programme • Examples of existing alternative funding schemes • Examples of achievements of the Programme that would not have been possible without the EU-level intervention • Stakeholders' assessment of the consequences of potential limitation or withdrawal of the Programme 	
EQ12. To what extent did the programme help establish a level playing field between the Member States?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which it is possible to define a positive impact of the programme on establishing a level-playing field 	<p>Quantitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of victim support organisations with national coverage • Number of applications and grants (action and operating) awarded by country and by year • Number of collaborations and transnational networks that were developed under the programme <p>Qualitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders confirm that the programme helped establish a level playing field • Stakeholders identify specific outcomes that illustrate the positive impact of the programme on establishing a level-playing field 	<p>Desk research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission databases (Programme data, Database for the Justice programme 2014-2020) • Literature and reports (e.g. the report of the first part <i>ex post</i> evaluation of the Justice programme 2014-2020, Annual monitoring reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes, national reports to Council EAW annual statistics, etc.) <p>Survey with the Programme Committee Members</p> <p>In-depth interview with DG JUST staff</p> <p>In-depth interview with other key stakeholders</p> <p>In-depth interviews PCMs</p> <p>In-depth interviews with beneficiaries</p>
EQ13. Which were the most significant transnational/cross-border aspects the programme tackled? How could these be quantified?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
	<p>Quantitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of projects with good practice transfer from one country to another • Number of exchanges of information in the European Criminal Records Information System 	<p>Desk research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission databases (Programme data, Database for the justice programme 2014-2020) • Literature and reports (e.g. the report of the first part <i>ex post</i> evaluation of the justice programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of exchanges of professionals 	<p>2014-2020, Annual monitoring reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes, national reports to Council EAW annual statistics, etc.)</p> <p>Survey with Programme Committee Members</p> <p>In-depth interview with DG JUST</p> <p>In-depth interviews PCMs</p> <p>In-depth interviews with beneficiaries</p>
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Justice programme 2021-2027

EFFECTIVENESS		
EQ1. To what extent is the programme on track to meeting its objectives, including the general and specific objectives? How does it compare with the previous programme?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative data for effectiveness indicators meet the mid-term targets Stakeholders confirm that the programme is meeting its objectives 	Quantitative indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Success rate (number of projects funded out of total proposals submitted) Number of members of the judiciary and judicial staff who participated in training activities Number of people reached by mutual learning and exchange of good practices activities Number of exchanges via the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS) Number of hits on the e-Justice portal / pages addressing the need for information on cross-border civil and criminal cases Number of hits/number of visitors to the e-learning trainings in the European Training Platform 	Desk research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission data (Programme data) Literature and reports (e.g. Multi annual work programmes, monitoring reports, national reports to Council EAW annual statistics¹⁵⁴ etc.) Annual reports on European Judicial Training The European Criminal Records Information System Database for the Justice programme 2021-2027¹⁵⁵ Justice programme - Performance¹⁵⁶ Survey with Programme Committee Members (PCMs) In-depth interviews with the beneficiaries

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/just2027>.

¹⁵⁶ European Commission, Justice Programme – Performance. Available at: [Justice programme - Performance \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/justice/programmes/performance).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of hits on the guides and factsheets on the e-Justice portal • The average time of the surrender procedure (time between the arrest and the decision on the surrender of the person sought) under the European Arrest Warrant in cases where the person consents to the surrender • Number of visits to the pages dealing with criminal matters on the e-Justice portal • Number of funded projects per year (action grants and operating grants) • Number of procurement contracts signed per year and per type of project • Number of calls for proposals per specific objective • Annual number of legal practitioners participating in training on EU law in the EU <p>Qualitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders' assessment of the performance of the current programme • Stakeholders' assessment of the level of breaches of time limits in the procedures • Stakeholders' assessment of the number of reported crimes by victims • Stakeholders' assessment of the number of reported crimes by victims 	
EQ2. How likely is it that the actions implemented so far will generate long-term effects?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders confirm that the programme effects are sustainable and can identify any preliminary examples of its long-lasting effects There is evidence that the participants perception/behaviours/practice have changed due to participation in actions funded by the programme Stakeholders confirm that the tools used to share the results of the programme are sustainable 	Qualitative indicators Stakeholders' assessment of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in participants' perception Change in participants' behaviour Change in participants' practice Stakeholders' assessment of the sustainability of the programme Stakeholders' assessment of the tools sharing the results of the programme 	Desk research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eurobarometer data (2021 edition and 2024 edition) and EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Value In-depth interviews with the beneficiaries In-depth interviews with the Programme Committee Members Survey with the beneficiaries Survey with the Programme Committee Members Text mining
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EQ3. What external factors have influenced (positively and negatively) the effectiveness of the programme? What is the impact of the novelties introduced in the current programme?

<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are external factors that have influenced (positively and negatively) the effectiveness of the programme Stakeholders confirm there's an impact of the key novelties introduced in the current programme, more particularly: There is evidence of a more prominent role of the rule of law aspect There is evidence that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are targeted more explicitly There is evidence of enhanced focus on anti-discrimination in the access to justice 	Quantitative indicator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of civil society organisations reached by support and capacity building activities per specific objective Qualitative indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders providing examples of external factors influencing the effectiveness of the programme and their effects Rule of law aspect reflected in project applications Enhanced focus on anti-discrimination in the access to justice reflected in project applications 	Desk research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lists of beneficiaries A sample of projects applications Text mining In-depth interviews with beneficiaries and Programme Committee Members Surveys with beneficiaries Survey with Programme Committee Members

EQ4. How effective have the communication activities been in informing stakeholders about and engaging them in the programme as well as in increasing the programme's visibility?

<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative data confirms good performance per communication tool Stakeholders feedback confirms good performance per communication tool 	<p>Quantitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people reached by awareness raising, information and dissemination activities Number of visits to the pages dealing with criminal matters on the e-Justice portal Number of informational posts concerning awareness raising, information and dissemination activities available to the public on the e-Justice portal Other communication indicators, depending on the availability of data and tools used, based on the 2022 EC Communication Indicators¹⁵⁷ at output and result levels <p>Qualitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of communication about the programme by stakeholders Beneficiaries confirming the communication tool, which they were reached by, about the programme 	<p>Desk research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission databases Literature and reports (e.g. multi annual work programmes, monitoring reports etc.) Social media analytics, website performance data and other communication data of communication tools and channels related to the programme <p>Survey with the Programme Committee Members</p>
<p>EQ5. How evenly are the effects observed so far distributed across the different target groups and participating countries? What are the likely reasons of variation in the programme's effects across target groups and Member States?</p>		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>

¹⁵⁷ European Commission, 2022 EC Communication Indicators. Available at: <https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2023-02/2022%20EC%20Comm%20indicators.pdf>.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quantitative data confirm that the effects of the programme are evenly distributed across the different target groups • The quantitative data confirm that the effects of the programme are evenly distributed across participating countries 	<p>Quantitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of transnational networks • Funding distribution per country • Funding distribution per type of beneficiary • Number of projects with good practice transfer from one country to another • Number of projects creating first time transnational partnership • Number of applications and grants (action and operating) awarded by country and by year • Number of applications and grants (action and operating) awarded by year per target group <p>Qualitative indicator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency of each target group mentioned in project application per specific programme objective • Stakeholders feedback on identified reasons of beneficiaries from countries/target groups less often applying for funding under the programme 	<p>Desk research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission databases (Programme data) • Annual reports on European Judicial Training • The European Criminal Records Information System • Annual monitoring reports (reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes (AWP)) • Database for the justice programme 2021-2027 • Justice programme - performance <p>Text mining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different target groups per specific objectives reflected in project reports <p>Survey with the Programme Committee Members</p>
<p>EQ6. How effectively has gender equality been mainstreamed in the programme design and implementation? What is the (prospective) impact of the Programme on gender equality?</p>		
<p><u>Judgement criteria</u></p>	<p><u>Indicators</u></p>	<p><u>Sources</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data confirm that the gender equality has been effectively mainstreamed in the Programme design and implementation • Stakeholders confirm the (prospective) impact of the programme on gender equality 	<p>Qualitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which gender equality is mainstreamed in the projects • Promotion of gender equality as perceived by participants 	<p>Desk research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sample of project applications • Text mining <p>Case study 1: Evaluation of gender mainstreaming at the level of the programme and its activities</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact of the programme on gender equality 	Survey with Programme Committee Members
EFFICIENCY		
EQ7.1 To what extent has the programme been cost effective so far? Have there been any inefficiencies or unnecessary burden on the different stakeholders? EQ7.2 What internal and external factors have influenced (positively or negatively) the cost-benefit ratio of the programme?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The financial data confirm that programme's results will be achieved at initially expected (planned) costs The costs of the programme are similar or lower than in the previous funding period Stakeholders identify any inefficiencies or unnecessary burdens There are identified internal and external factors positively or negatively influencing the cost-benefit ratio of the Programme 	Quantitative indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of awareness raising, information and dissemination activities contracted Number of awareness raising, information and dissemination projects granted Number of mutual learning and exchange of good practices activities contracted Number of mutual learning and exchange of good practices projects granted Number of training activities contracted Number of training projects granted Number of analytical and monitoring activities contracted Number of analytical and monitoring projects granted Number of indirect management actions contracted Actual and planned cost of awareness raising information and dissemination activities Actual and planned cost of a mutual learning and exchange of good practices activities 	Desk research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission databases (Programme data) Literature and reports (Annual reports on European Judicial Training, The European Criminal Records Information System, Annual monitoring reports (reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes (AWP). Database for the justice programme 2021-2027, Justice programme - performance) Survey with the programme committee members In-depth interviews with DG JUST staff In-depth interviews with selected beneficiaries Survey with beneficiaries

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actual and planned cost of a training activities Actual and planned cost of 1 person/day/training Actual and planned budget of procurement contracts <p>Qualitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception on the administrative burden caused by the inefficiencies of the programme Stakeholders identify external factors influencing the cost-benefit ratio of the programme 	
EQ8.1. How timely and efficient is the programme's administrative process, including for reporting and monitoring?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders confirm that the programme's administrative process is timely and efficient, including for reporting and monitoring. 	<p>Qualitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timing of the programme calls/application process Examples of inefficiencies, delays administrative issues with calls/application process/reporting (at programme level) Stakeholders' assessment of the administrative process, including for reporting and monitoring 	<p>In-depth interviews with DG JUST staff In-depth interviews with the beneficiaries Survey with Programme Committee Members</p>
EQ8.2. To what extent have simplification measures introduced in the current programme influenced its cost efficiency?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which the simplification measures introduced in the current programme influenced its cost efficiency 	<p>Qualitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders' assessment of the impact of the simplification measures (standardised cost-options, results-based management to simplify reporting, etc.) 	<p>Case study 2: The effects generated by the simplification efforts</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders' comparative assessment of the administrative process of 2021-2027 programme with 2014-2020 Programme 	
RELEVANCE		
EQ9. To what extent is the programme still relevant to interested stakeholders and the citizens and how likely it is that it will continue being relevant in the near future? Is the programme addressed to relevant target groups?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is evidence in the external context that the programme objectives are still relevant Evidence that the programme and its objectives still meet the needs of the target audiences and address relevant issues. 	Qualitative indicators Stakeholders feedback on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants' overall assessment of activities Participants' awareness Participants' knowledge Participants' skills Participants' cooperation Target group of the participants 	Desk research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected projects where the evaluation of the project was carried out (e.g. survey of the participants of the project) Survey with Programme Committee Members Survey with beneficiaries and applicants In-depth interviews with selected beneficiaries In-depth interviews with other key stakeholders
EQ10. To what extent has the programme integrated lessons learnt from its predecessor?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which there are examples of recommendations from the previous programme evaluations being implemented and reflected in the current programme design 	Qualitative indicator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of recommendations being/not being implemented 	In-depth interviews with DG JUST staff Survey with Programme Committee Members Survey with the beneficiaries
EQ11. Since its introduction, how well does the programme adapt to the pace of progress generated by digital technologies?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which the programme has been able to adapt to the pace of progress generated by digital technologies 	Quantitative indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of ICT tools activities contracted 	Desk research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission databases (Programme data)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of ICT tools projects granted <p>Qualitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of Programme design being adapted to the pace of progress generated by digital technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature and reports (Annual monitoring reports (reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes (AWP), Database for the justice programme 2021-2027, Justice programme - performance) <p>In-depth interviews with DG JUST staff Survey with Programme Committee Members Survey with beneficiaries and applicants Case study 3: Adaptability and suitability of the programme for the combined impact of Covid-19 and new digital technologies</p>
COHERENCE		
EQ12.1 To what extent is the programme coherent and complementary with other EU and national policies and funding programmes that have similar objectives, as well as international commitments and objectives, including the Sustainable 17 Development Goals?		
EQ12.2 To what extent have the various components of the programme generated synergies and/or compensated possible trade-offs amongst them?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which the objectives of the programme are in line with the wider EU policies and priorities, and international commitments, such as the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda Extent that there are overlaps with other types of EC and other funding programmes that support similar projects/objectives Extent that the beneficiaries managed to achieve synergies between their projects and other funding programmes 	<p>Qualitative indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of establishment of the new European Rule of Law Mechanism in line with the Political Guidelines Number (share) of projects that develop synergies with projects financed by other EU sources Number of projects that are in line with wider EU policies and priorities, and international commitments, such as the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda Number of projects that overlap with other types of EC and other funding programmes that support similar projects/objectives 	<p>Desk research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission databases (Monitoring data from DG JUST) Literature and reports (Annual monitoring reports (reports on the implementation of the Annual Work Programmes (AWP), Database for the justice programme 2021-2027, Justice programme - performance) <p>In-depth interviews with DG JUST staff Survey with Programme Committee Members Survey with beneficiaries and applicants Text mining</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links between the programme objectives and wider EU policies and priorities, and international commitments • Examples of overlaps with other types of EC and other funding programmes that support similar projects/objectives 	
EU ADDED VALUE		
EQ13.1 To what extent does the programme provide additional value compared to what could have been reasonably achieved by Member States acting alone? What would be the most likely consequences of stopping the programme and what would be the most likely consequences of not proposing a follow-up programme under the next MFF?		
EQ13.2 Are the subsidiarity arguments put forward in the prior impact assessment still valid?		
<u>Judgement criteria</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which it is possible to define the elements that represent the added value of the programme compared to what could have been achieved by the Member States acting alone • Extent to which stakeholders confirm that similar effects, including implementation of transnational projects, would have been achieved by the Member States acting alone • Extent to which stakeholders identify negative consequences of potential limitation or withdrawal of the programme • Stakeholders confirm that subsidiarity arguments put forward in the prior impact assessment are still valid 	Qualitative indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiaries being able to implement their projects or similar actions without the funding provided by the programme (beneficiaries' counterfactual assessment) • Examples of existing alternative funding schemes • Examples of achievements of the programme that would not have been possible without the EU-level intervention (stakeholders' assessment) • Stakeholders' assessment of the consequences of potential limitation or withdrawal of the programme 	Survey with Programme Committee Members In-depth interviews with selected beneficiaries In-depth interviews with other key stakeholders

ANNEX IV. OVERVIEW OF BENEFITS AND COSTS, SIMPLIFICATION AND BURDEN REDUCTION

Justice programme 2014-2020

i. Overview of costs and benefits

		Citizens/consumers ¹⁵⁸		Businesses		Administration ¹⁵⁹		Other programme beneficiaries ¹⁶⁰	
		Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment
Direct compliance costs (administrative costs)	One-off (application procedure)	N/A		N/A		Average cost of preparing the application 41.7 man-days which amounted to 34% of the total administrative costs (defined as all costs excluding project implementation) ¹⁶¹ . A significant proportion of surveyed beneficiaries considered the application process to be challenging: 42% of public authorities and 50% of other beneficiaries highlighted in the online survey that preparing the application was time-consuming.			
	Recurring (reporting requirements)	N/A		N/A		Reporting costs (i.e. time and human resources spent to prepare progress and final reports) on average amounted to 53.6 man-days ¹⁶² (approximately 45% of the total administrative costs) ¹⁶³ . A portion of beneficiaries considered complying with the programme's reporting requirements was challenging (e.g. 26% of public authorities and 22% of other beneficiaries). It is important to note that these costs are partially covered by the EU contributions, which public authorities and other beneficiaries received.			

¹⁵⁸ Citizens and consumers include the general public as well as individuals who participated in activities of the projects funded under the programme.

¹⁵⁹ In this context public administrations may apply for funding and participate in the programme as beneficiaries.

¹⁶⁰ These stakeholders include beneficiaries of the programme except for public authorities.

¹⁶¹ Based on estimates provided in the first part of the *ex post* evaluation.

¹⁶² The calculation was derived from information available in the first part of the *ex post* evaluation. The formula used: (average man-days for preparing the application / proportion of application preparation in the total admin costs) x proportion of reporting costs in the total administrative costs.

¹⁶³ Other administrative costs reported by stakeholders included overheads, cost of external services, equipment costs and proposal preparation.

Indirect costs	One-off (opportunity costs)	No quantitative data available.	Opportunity costs of stakeholders participating in project activities opportunity	N/A		No quantitative data available. Public authorities incurred opportunity costs associated with applying to the justice programme and implementing projects in case of success. These opportunity costs also include the cost of co-funding the project. For the whole programme these costs ranged from EUR 3 025 099 to EUR 12 100 399 for grants (co-funding share of the eligible costs for grants estimated at 5-20%). ¹⁶⁴ .	No quantitative data available. Other beneficiaries incurred opportunity costs associated with applying to the justice programme and implementing projects in case of success. These opportunity costs also include the cost of co-funding the project. For the whole programme these costs ranged from EUR 12 197 008 to EUR 48 788 031 for grants (co-funding share of the eligible costs for grants estimated at 5-20%). ¹⁶⁵ .
	Recurring (opportunity costs)	N/A		N/A		No quantitative data available. Public authorities funded under the programme faced opportunity costs related to project implementation (i.e. time and Full Time Equivalents, FTEs) and benefits that could have resulted if an alternative action would have been taken.	No quantitative data available. Other beneficiaries funded under the programme faced opportunity costs related to project implementation (i.e. time and FTEs spent) and benefits that could have resulted if an alternative action would have been taken.
	Recurring (project coordination)	N/A		N/A		No quantitative data available. Coordination costs related to project implementation included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the project activities • Coordination of the project consortium • Travel costs related to project implementation. 	
Direct benefits							
	Recurrent	No quantitative data available. The direct benefits are estimated with qualitative information.	N/A			No quantitative data available. Direct benefits for public authorities funded under the stemming from project implementation include ¹⁶⁷ : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity-building through collaboration with project partners. • Integrating new experiences into daily practice 	

¹⁶⁴ Costs in this context cover the period of 2021 until the 20 December 2023.

¹⁶⁵ Costs in this context cover the period of 2021 until the 20 December 2023.

¹⁶⁷ Based on stakeholder consultation and desk research.

		<p>Findings from the stakeholder consultation indicate participants experienced several benefits, including¹⁶⁶:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased public awareness about rights, values and principles derived from EU law (reported by 65% of beneficiaries); • Increased skills and knowledge developed through the funded training activities (reported by 75% beneficiaries); and • More effective, comprehensive and consistent implementation of EU law (reported by 67% of beneficiaries). <p>Through the funded projects fundamental rights were promoted, including through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusivity and equal access: This programme targeted diverse and marginalised groups, 69% of projects focused on inclusivity. • Awareness raising efforts: This programme showed a focus on integrating anti-discrimination and awareness raising principles into training and campaigns. Awareness 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased visibility through networking and knowledge sharing Through building capacity and knowledge sharing, the beneficiaries contributed to facilitating judicial cooperation across the EU and to building mutual trust. Furthermore, by building their capacity and improving their daily practice, the beneficiaries contributed to promoting more effective application of EU law and protection of fundamental rights.
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¹⁶⁶ Based on feedback provided by beneficiaries in the online survey.

		<p>modules were included in 54% of 2014-2020 projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for vulnerable groups: The 2014-2020 period laid the groundwork for inclusive support services, with 54% of projects addressing these needs. 			
Indirect benefits	Recurrent	<p>The quantification of indirect benefits is not available. The previous justice programme reached its general and specific objectives, which translated in various benefits for the public, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to justice (e.g. improved support for victims of crime, better access to courts and alternative methods for dispute resolution) • Improved judicial cooperation facilitated mutual recognition of judicial decisions and contributed to a more consistent application of Union law in civil and criminal matters. These effects may have given citizens greater confidence in accessing legal support across different jurisdictions; and • Better protection under EU law facilitated through training and mutual learning 	N/A		<p>No quantitative information available.</p> <p>Indirect benefits reported by public authorities and other types of beneficiaries include formation of long-term partnerships (reported by 77% of beneficiaries) and up-take of digital tools (mentioned by 29% of beneficiaries).</p> <p>Formation of long-term partnerships was accomplished through networking activities and knowledge sharing which took place during the project implementation. Establishment of partnerships contributed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building mutual trust between judicial actors, • enhancing the implementation and application of the Rule of Law and • facilitating the protection of fundamental rights. <p>Project implementation (especially during the COVID-19 pandemic) further familiarised the beneficiaries with available digital tools such as websites, apps, and e-learning platforms. Implementation of various digital tools during the projects also contributed to the digitalisation of work in the long term. This, in turn, facilitated improvements of the IT infrastructure and interoperability of IT systems across the EU.</p>

		activities which helped legal practitioners develop a better understanding and awareness of EU legislation.				
Cost saving	Recurring (Digitalisation of the application procedure)	N/A		N/A		No quantitative data is available. Introduction of eGrants has produced significant cost savings for all types of beneficiaries participating in the programme.
	Recurring (Up-take of digital tools for project implementation)	N/A		N/A		No quantitative data available. Due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person events shifted online. According to the findings, this affected around 40% of the projects ¹⁶⁸ . Beneficiaries of these projects reported cost saving for travel and accommodation. However, it is challenging to estimate the exact effect the pandemic had on travel cost savings since it also caused delays and deviations which are harder to precisely quantify.
	Recurring (Extended duration of AGs)	N/A		N/A		No quantitative data is available. Extending the duration of AGs from 24 to at least 30 months enabled beneficiaries to better develop their projects ¹⁶⁹ .
	Recurring (Transition to 4-year FPAs ¹⁷⁰ for OGs)	N/A		N/A		No quantitative data is available. Introduction of 4-year FPAs and related annual operating grants increased the capacity of beneficiaries and enabled them to plan their activities and pursue funding opportunities within a more comfortable timeframe ¹⁷¹ . Two calls for 4-year FPAs were launched in 2017 covering both the JCOO and JACC objectives ¹⁷² . Under these calls 13 partnership agreements were signed 7 under the JACC objective, and 6 under the JCOO objective ¹⁷³ .

¹⁶⁸ Based on the results of the text-mining exercise which involved an analysis of a representative sample of 62 projects.

¹⁶⁹ According to the findings of the first *ex post* evaluation.

¹⁷⁰ Framework Partnership Agreements.

¹⁷¹ According to the findings of the first part *ex post* evaluation.

¹⁷² According to the Annual Work Programmes.

¹⁷³ Based on the programme data (2014-2020).

ii. Potential simplification and burden reduction

	Citizens/consumers		Businesses		Administration		Other programme beneficiaries	
	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment
Simplification of the application procedure, reporting requirements and financial rules	N/A		N/A		No quantitative data is available.	Participation in the programme involved significant administrative burdens for public authorities applying for funding or implementing projects. There is potential to streamline these processes through simplification measures.	No quantitative data is available.	Participation in the programme also involved significant administrative burdens for other types of beneficiaries indicating they could have also benefited from more streamlined procedures.
Improvements of the EU Funding & Tenders portal	N/A		N/A		No quantitative data is available.	Public authorities mentioned experiencing challenges when using the EU Funding & Tenders portal. Potential for cost savings by	No quantitative data is available.	Other types of beneficiaries also reported experiencing challenges with the Funding & Tenders portal. Potential for cost savings by making the portal more user-friendly.

						making the portal more user- friendly.		
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Justice programme 2021-2027

i. Overview of costs and benefits

		Citizens/consumers ¹⁷⁴		Businesses		Administration ¹⁷⁵		Other programme beneficiaries ¹⁷⁶	
		Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment
Direct compliance costs (administrative costs)	One-off (application procedure)	N/A		N/A		Cost of preparing the application: No quantitative data available. A high proportion of surveyed beneficiaries considered the application process to be time-consuming: 90% of public authorities ¹⁷⁷ and 88% of other beneficiaries ¹⁷⁸ highlighted in the online survey that preparing the application was time-consuming).			
	One off (reporting)	No quantitative data available.	Reporting costs (i.e. time spent by participants in project activities providing feedback - e.g. EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Values	N/A		N/A		N/A	
	Recurring (reporting requirements)	N/A		N/A		Reporting costs (i.e. time and human resources spent to prepare progress and final reports): No quantitative data available. Beneficiaries mentioned a significant amount of resources was invested to comply with the programme's reporting requirements (e.g. 80% of public			

¹⁷⁴ Citizens and consumers include the general public as well as individuals who participated in activities of the projects funded under the programme.

¹⁷⁵ In this context public administrations may apply for funding and participate in the programme as beneficiaries.

¹⁷⁶ These stakeholders include beneficiaries of the programme except for public authorities.

¹⁷⁷ Represents those who agreed fully (70%) and agreed to some extent (20%). 10% disagreed.

¹⁷⁸ Represents those who agreed fully (65%) and those who agree to some extent (23%). 13% disagreed.

						authorities ¹⁷⁹ and 63% of other beneficiaries ¹⁸⁰ highlighted in the online survey reporting requirements were resource-intensive). Half of the beneficiaries highlighted that a high amount of human resources was needed to comply with the reporting requirements ¹⁸¹ . It is important to note that these costs are partially covered by the EU contributions, which public authorities and other beneficiaries received.			
Indirect costs									
	Recurring (opportunity costs)	N/A		N/A		No quantitative data available. Public authorities funded under the programme faced opportunity costs related to project implementation (i.e. time and FTEs spent) and benefits that could have resulted if an alternative action would have been taken.		No quantitative data available. Other beneficiaries funded under the programme faced opportunity costs related to project implementation (i.e. time and FTEs spent) and benefits that could have resulted if an alternative action would have been taken.	
	Recurring (project coordination)	N/A		N/A		No quantitative data available. Coordination costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementation of the project activities• Coordination of the project consortium• Travel costs related to project implementation.			
Direct benefits	One-off (budget committed) ¹⁸²	N/A		N/A		EUR 25 821 817	Budget committed for public authorities until December 2023.	EUR 68 578 280	Budget committed for other beneficiaries excluding public authorities until December 2023.
	Recurrent	No quantitative data available. The direct benefits are estimated with qualitative information.		N/A		No quantitative data available. Thus far, direct benefits for public authorities funded under the stemming from project implementation include ¹⁸⁵ :			

¹⁷⁹ Represents those who agreed fully (40%) and those who agreed to some extent (40%). 20% disagreed.

¹⁸⁰ Represents those who agreed fully (40%) and those who agreed to some extent (40%). 20% disagreed.

¹⁸¹ Feedback provided during the in-depth interviews.

¹⁸² This estimate is based on the following: % share of the budget committed by beneficiary type was based on analysis of grants funded in 2014-2023. This % share was then calculated over the total amount committed in the period 2014-2023.

¹⁸⁵ Based on stakeholder consultation and desk research.

		<p>Through the funded projects approximately 850 events and activities were organised. These activities reached approximately 2 500 000 individuals, including 1 250 000 women.</p> <p>Findings from the stakeholder consultation indicate participants experienced several benefits, including¹⁸³:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of topics covered which was reported by 92% participants; • Increased knowledge of topics covered which was reported by 91% of participants; • Increased skills mentioned by 76%; and • Enhanced cooperation experienced by 83% of participants. <p>Through the funded projects fundamental rights were promoted, including through¹⁸⁴:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusivity and equal access: 35% of projects have been dedicated to ensuring that all legal professionals, regardless of background, have access to the latest 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity-building through collaboration with project partners. • Development of ICT and other tools • Increased visibility through networking and knowledge sharing <p>Through building capacity and knowledge sharing, the beneficiaries contributed to building effective judiciary, facilitating judicial cooperation across the EU and to building mutual trust. Furthermore, by building their capacity and improving their daily practice, the beneficiaries contributed to better enforcement of the Rule of Law and protection of fundamental rights.</p>
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¹⁸³ Based on feedback collected through the EU survey on Justice, Rights and Values.

¹⁸⁴ Based on findings from interviews and text mining of project documents.

		<p>technological tools and training opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness raising and sensitisation efforts: 32% of projects incorporated anti-discrimination training, whilst 24% of projects have launched public campaigns. • Support for vulnerable groups: 32% of projects addressed the needs of migrants, refugees, LGBTI individuals, and persons with disabilities. The programme demonstrates an improved ability to mainstream gender equality, with projects increasing the capacity of practitioners to support victims with gender-sensitive approaches. • Rights of the child: A focus on protecting children's rights in legal proceedings, with 13% of projects ensuring adherence to EU standards for child-friendly legal procedures. 			
Indirect benefits	Recurrent	<p>The quantification of indirect benefits is not available. The justice programme has made significant progress in reaching its general and specific objectives, which has manifested in various benefits</p>	N/A		<p>No quantitative information available.</p> <p>Indirect benefits reported by public authorities and other types of beneficiaries thus far include formation of long-term partnerships (reported by 92% of beneficiaries), fostering gender equality (36% of</p>

		for the general public, including: • Better access to justice (e.g. improved support for victims of crime, better access to courts and alternative methods for dispute resolution) • Improved judicial cooperation, the programme facilitates mutual recognition of and judicial decisions and contributed to a more consistent application of Union law in civil and criminal matters. These effects may have given citizens greater confidence in accessing legal support across different jurisdictions; and • Better protection under EU law facilitated through training and mutual learning activities which help legal practitioners develop a better understanding and awareness of EU legislation.				projects) ¹⁸⁶ and up-take of digital tools (mentioned by 29% of beneficiaries). Formation of long-term partnerships was accomplished through networking activities and knowledge sharing which took place during the project implementation. Establishment of partnerships contributed to: • building mutual trust between judicial actors, • enhancing the implementation and application of Union law and • facilitating the protection of fundamental rights. Project implementation (especially during the COVID-19 pandemic) further familiarised the beneficiaries with available digital tools such as websites, apps, and e-learning platforms. Implementation of various digital tools during the projects also contributed to the digitalisation of work in the long term. This, in turn facilitated improvements of the IT infrastructure and interoperability of IT systems across the EU.
Cost saving	Recurrent measures – lump sum	N/A		N/A		Introduction of lump sum budgets and the unit costs for travel and accommodation have contributed to simplifying the reporting requirements and the application procedure.

¹⁸⁶ According to the findings, 36% of projects received a score of 2 (3%) or a score of 1 (33%), which was an improvement since the previous funding period in which 15% of projects received a score of 1 or 2. For more details, see Case study 1 in Annex 2.

	budgets and standard unit costs)					<p>No quantitative data available, however consultation with both public authorities and other beneficiaries indicates that these measures contributed to reducing administrative burdens. However, beneficiaries do not master yet the new rules which increased the time needed by the beneficiaries to prepare their application forms.</p> <p>Since the new measures were introduced recently, it is still too early to fully assess their effect on administrative burdens.</p>
	Recurrent (Simplification of programme management)	N/A		N/A		<p>Simplification of programme procedures contributed to a reduction in the indicators time-to-inform, time-to-sign and time-to-grant. Although no quantitative estimations are available, these improvements have benefited both public authorities and other types of beneficiaries in terms of time savings.</p>
	Recurring (Uptake of digital tools for project implementation)	N/A		N/A		<p>No quantitative data available.</p> <p>Due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person events shifted online. According to the findings, this affected around 40% of the projects¹⁸⁷. Beneficiaries of these projects reported cost saving for travel and accommodation. However, it is challenging to estimate the exact effect the pandemic had on travel cost savings since it also caused delays and deviations which are harder to precisely quantify.</p>

ii. Potential simplification and burden reduction

	Citizens/consumers		Businesses		Administration		Other programme beneficiaries	
	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment
Guidance on the application process and reporting requirements	N/A		N/A		No quantification is available. Consulted beneficiaries highlighted more guidance on the use of unit costs and lump sum budgets would help further reduce administrative burdens.			

¹⁸⁷ Based on the results of the text-mining exercise which involved an analysis a representative sample of 62 projects (see Annex 11 for more details).

Guidance on the use of the EU Funding & Tenders portal	N/A		N/A		No quantitative data is available, however a significant portion of stakeholders raised concerns about the user-friendliness of the EU Funding & Tenders portal. More guidance on how to use the portal could further reduce administrative burdens.
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Objectives of the consultation

The 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 justice programmes are two consecutive funding programmes contributing to the development of a European area of justice based on the rule of law. As required by law¹⁸⁸, the European Commission conducted an evaluation in two parts: (1) an *ex post* evaluation of the 2014-2020 justice programme, assessing its longer-term impact and sustainability effects, based on the results of the first part¹⁸⁹ of the evaluation finalised in 2022; and (2) an *interim* evaluation of the 2021-2027 justice programme, assessing its preliminary achievements. The combined *ex post* and *interim* evaluation of the two programmes aimed to identify how the current programme took account of lessons learnt under its predecessor, and how results can be used for further improvement and to feed into the next funding cycle.

The purpose of the consultation was to strengthen the evidence base by gathering the views of all relevant stakeholders on the justice programmes' effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, and EU added value. Feedback was collected from a wide range of stakeholders including beneficiaries of both programmes, unsuccessful applicants, programme committee members (PCMs), civil society organisations, public administrations, and the public.

Consultation activities and tools

The consultation included three surveys (with beneficiaries, unsuccessful applicant and PCMs), follow-up interviews with a sample of stakeholders (representing beneficiaries and PCMs), an open public consultation, and a call for evidence.

For the **online surveys**, three separate sets of questions were developed to ensure a clear distinction between the evaluations of the two programmes. Since Programme Committee Members had already provided feedback on the 2014-2020 justice programme during the first part of the *ex post* evaluation, their survey focused on the current edition. The beneficiaries' and unsuccessful applicants' surveys covered both iterations of the programme. The surveys were launched on 29 March and closed on 24 May.

To maximise response rates, personalised email invitations were sent, followed by seven weekly reminders. The surveys were conducted using the Qualtrics platform. The data analysis was performed after the surveys closed, separated by funding period and stakeholder category, incorporating both quantitative (closed responses) and qualitative (open-ended feedback) insights.

The **interviews** were conducted between April 11 and July 31 with beneficiaries and Programme Committee Members. The aim of the interviews was to gather more in-depth views from these key stakeholder groups about their experiences with the justice programmes. The interviews followed a semi-structured guide, covering topics such as programme effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, added value, the impact of COVID-19, and digitalisation. The discussion also included topics such as gender mainstreaming and simplification, which were also further analysed through case studies.

A **Call for Evidence** and an **Open Public Consultation (OPC)** were launched by the European Commission:

- The call for evidence was launched on 22 August 2023 until 19 September 2023.
- The public consultation run between 3 April 2024 and 28 June 2024.

The consultations were published on the Commission's [Have your Say platform](#). The main objective of these consultations was to strengthen the evidence base of the evaluation by gathering the views of all relevant stakeholders for the justice programmes. However, only eight responses were collected through the OPC – from two EU citizens, five organisations and one national authority – across seven Member States (i.e. Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, the Netherlands and 2 from Spain). Due to this low response rate, the findings of the OPC are not considered to be a representative sample of the EU population. As such, while considered when triangulating the data and drafting the findings for the evaluation, care was taken not to artificially inflate the findings stemming from the analysis of the OPC.

¹⁸⁸ Regulation (EU) No 1382/2013 of 17 December 2013 and Regulation (EU) No 2021/693 of 28 April 2021.

¹⁸⁹ [COM/2022/121 final](#)

Overview on the number of stakeholders consulted by different consultation activities is available in the table below.

Table 1: Summary of the types of activities and feedback received¹⁹⁰

		Beneficiaries	Unsuccessful applicants	PCMs	Other ¹⁹¹
Survey	Contacted	274	454	78	N/A
	Responses	109	79	27	N/A
Interviews	Contacted	265	N/A	35	N/A
	Responses	33	N/A	5	N/A
OPC	Contacted	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Responses	0	0	0	8
Call for evidence	Contacted	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Responses	0	0	0	6

Main stakeholder feedback per consultation activity

This section presents the results of the stakeholder consultation. The stakeholder feedback is presented in four different sections including survey results, interview feedback as well as responses to the open public consultation and the call for evidence.

Surveys

The survey results are presented in two sections:

- Surveys for the beneficiaries and unsuccessful applicants
- Survey for the Programme Committee Members

Survey results are categorised by evaluation criteria (i.e. effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, and EU added value).

Survey of beneficiaries and unsuccessful applicants

Effectiveness

Contributions to programme objectives: In the 2014-2020 period, beneficiaries believed their projects contributed to key objectives such as training stakeholders (75%), improving EU law implementation (67%), increasing public awareness of EU rights and values (65%), and building mutual trust among Member States (62%). By the 2021-2027 programming period, the perceived contributions to the programme's objectives had become more widespread. While the same key objectives remained important, beneficiaries reported even higher contributions to improving access to civil society organisations' (CSO) services (46%) and enhancing cross-border system interoperability (46%), showing progress in areas that had previously been considered more challenging.

Application process: Both successful and unsuccessful applicants had similar experiences with the application process, with feedback suggesting it was a time-consuming task (reported by 91% of applicants for the previous programme and 89% for the current programme). A significant percentage of respondents found the administrative requirements burdensome – 74% in the 2014-2020 period and 71% in the 2021-2027 period. Despite these challenges, the majority of respondents appreciated that the conditions for receiving support were generally transparent, with roughly 85% agreeing that they had adequate information about funding opportunities in advance.

¹⁹⁰ In addition to consulting with external stakeholders, the consultation also involved interviews and an internal validation workshop with staff from DG Justice and Consumers (JUST).

¹⁹¹ The public, civil society organisations and national authorities.

Sustainability of project outputs beyond the funding period: Most beneficiaries across both programming periods believed their project results would last beyond the project timeframe (reported by 93% of respondents from the previous and 94% from the current programme). Sustainability was primarily linked to network-building, capacity-building, and the development of IT infrastructure¹⁹².

Information about the justice programme: Across both programming periods, the majority of stakeholders found out about the programme through the European Commission's website, followed by communication with peers, colleagues, or other networks. Interestingly, the 2021-2027 period saw a decline in the number of stakeholders learning about the programme through informal channels like peer recommendations, which decreased from 27.2% to 17.3%. Communication from national, regional, or local governments also decreased significantly. Nevertheless, stakeholders generally felt that the programme was well-known among potential applicants (reported by roughly 70%).

Efficiency

Cost-benefit ratio: Across both programming periods, the majority of beneficiaries felt that the benefits of participation outweighed the costs (75% of beneficiaries from the 2014-2020 period and 72% from the 2021-2027 period). Despite the positive feedback, differences were observed between stakeholder types. Public authorities, for example, were most likely to report that the costs outweighed the benefits.

External challenges: A significant factor affecting the efficiency of projects funded by the justice programme was the impact of external challenges, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic (identified by 36% in the previous programme and 34% in the current programme). The pandemic caused delays in the implementation of some projects, particularly those involving international cooperation, seminars, and conferences. As these activities were postponed or moved online, many beneficiaries faced difficulties adapting to the new formats, which in turn required additional resources and time¹⁹³. Other external challenges mentioned by beneficiaries included economic and political factors. For example, 11% of respondents in the 2014-2020 period and 5% in the 2021-2027 period cited economic issues, such as national budget constraints or changing funding priorities, as a limiting factor. Additionally, political instability was raised as a concern by 6% of respondents in the previous programme and 16% in the current programme.

Administrative processes: Efficiency in administrative processes was a concern for beneficiaries, with 49% of respondents reporting issues related to programme requirements, especially reporting and monitoring. Small and medium-sized NGOs struggled the most due to limited staff, while 64% of public authorities and 60% of international organisations reported administrative challenges. In contrast, 60% of CSOs and NGOs and 51% of higher education institutions faced no issues. Improvements were noted by 42% of beneficiaries, with 74% viewing lump-sum contributions positively, and 69% welcoming the e-Grants system. However, 38% found the standardised cost unit system complex, especially public authorities managing cross-jurisdictional projects. Still, 78% felt the changes simplified the funding process.

Relevance

When asked whether the objectives of the justice programme aligned with the needs of the justice sector in their country, beneficiaries from both programming periods responded positively. Specifically, 79.4% of respondents from the 2014-2020 period and 87.5% from the 2021-2027 period agreed that the programme's objectives corresponded well to sector needs. Nonetheless, some discrepancies emerged when disaggregating the data by organisation type. For instance, a minority of higher education institutions, CSOs and NGOs felt that the programme's objectives did not fully align with their needs. Additionally, the programme's alignment with the needs of target groups was largely positive. Only a small number of public authorities (8%) expressed concerns about the relevance of project outputs to their specific target groups.

Coherence and EU added value

A key measure of the programme's added value is whether beneficiaries could have secured funding from alternative sources if the justice programme were unavailable. Only 7% of respondents from the 2014-2020 period and 8% from the 2021-2027 period believed they could have accessed other EU financial instruments. Similarly, only 9%-10% thought they could have obtained funding from national sources. These figures underline the unique role the justice programme plays in supporting projects that might otherwise struggle to secure funding.

¹⁹² For example, the creation of cross-border cooperation networks supported the day-to-day functioning of justice systems, while IT infrastructure improvements facilitated the multiplication of project outcomes, such as better training dissemination and more efficient communication.

¹⁹³ For instance, some projects designed around in-person judicial training or cross-border legal cooperation had to be restructured, reducing the overall impact of their outputs.

Survey of the Programme Committee Members

Effectiveness

Achievements of the current programme: Out of the 58% of respondents who had an opinion, all of them agreed with the statement that the current programme is on course to achieving its objectives. Programme Committee Members (PCMs) believed that the current programme is significantly contributing to supporting and promoting judicial training (81%), followed by facilitating and supporting judicial cooperation (70%). With regards to facilitating effective and non-discriminatory access to justice, half (50%) of respondents believed that the programme is having a significant contribution, while 38% believed that it is having no contribution to this objective at all.

Current programme's performance: PCMs found that the justice programme managed to target the most relevant groups and policy areas (76% for each) and to meet its objectives (68%). However, fewer respondents (52%) thought the current programme contributed to simplifying procedures (including by reduction of overlaps, and duplications in requirements and necessary tasks).

Sustainability of the programme: The vast majority of PCMs believed that the current programme's results will be long lasting, including all the results listed in the survey, i.e. the creation of tools and procedures to be used beyond project completion (96%), partnerships that will continue operating beyond the funding period (92%), the definition of training and other activities that last or will last beyond project completion (92%), acquisition of new skills and knowledge (92%), increased awareness (88%).

Key outcomes of the EU justice programme: The majority of PCMs believed that the justice programme contributes to: (i) increasing mutual trust and cross-border cooperation (96%), (ii) enhancing cross-border interoperability of systems (96%), and (iii) training stakeholders on Union law and judicial instruments (92%). Fewer respondents believed that the programme focuses on: (i) improving the implementation of Union law (88%), (ii) raising public awareness of rights and principles under Union law (83%), and (iii) improving citizens' access to civil society services (82%).

Visibility of the programme: Regarding awareness among potential applicants, 36% of respondents found that the justice programme is well known in their country among eligible organisations. However, 48% believed that the programme is not well known among all eligible organisations and 16% of respondents thought that the programme is not known at all among the eligible organisations.

Barriers to applying for justice programme funding: Regarding the reasons why certain organisations are reluctant to apply for funding from the justice programme, respondents found that the main reasons are: (i) the complexity of the application process (33%), (ii) lack of awareness (16%), (iii) language barriers (14%), (iv) insufficient support for applicants (13%), and (v) perceived low success rates (10%).

Efficiency

PCMs saw efficiency improvements but noted ongoing challenges. The standardised unit costs caused issues, especially as inflation raised travel and accommodation costs. The EUR 350 000 cap on criminal justice projects limited their scope, restricting cross-border involvement. Some PCMs found the application process costly. A majority (52%) felt the 2021-2027 programme's benefits matched its costs, 40% said benefits outweighed costs, and 8% felt costs were higher.

Relevance

Programme's relevance to current needs was highly rated by most PCMs, with 67% indicating a high level of responsiveness and only 8% reporting low responsiveness. Several respondents highlighted the importance of continued funding for e-Justice and other digital infrastructure projects, reflecting the increasing role of technology in modernising the justice system.

Coherence and EU added value

Half of the PCMs surveyed felt that the justice programme was consistent with national policies in the justice sector, while 46% expressed no strong opinion on the matter. The programme was viewed as particularly coherent with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Agenda for Justice, aligning with broader EU objectives aimed at promoting judicial cooperation and ensuring access to justice for all.

As for EU added value, over 56% of PCMs believed that the outcomes achieved through the justice programme could not have been replicated by Member State's action alone. They believed this was especially true in smaller Member States, where resources for undertaking similar projects without EU support would have been insufficient.

Interviews

Interviews with the beneficiaries

Effectiveness

Successes and positive outcomes: Many beneficiaries reported their projects successfully met or exceeded objectives, particularly improving cooperation between organisations from different EU Member States in justice and probation services. Projects enhanced best practice sharing, interagency cooperation, data sharing, and trust on issues like radicalisation and extremism. Probation services benefited from shared knowledge, improving offender rehabilitation and promoting alternatives to pre-trial detention, reducing prison populations. Beneficiaries noted these efforts supported criminal justice systems and led to a safer Europe by addressing social issues. They also praised training guides and manuals, which continue to professionalise probation and justice systems and foster collaboration between court and community services.

Challenges encountered: While overall feedback was positive, some beneficiaries mentioned challenges affecting project progress. External factors like legislative and political changes caused delays or required adjustments. The COVID-19 pandemic was particularly disruptive, postponing face-to-face meetings and training events. Travel restrictions delayed activities, though this did not hinder progress overall. The shift to online training and hybrid events effectively addressed pandemic challenges, with beneficiaries praising the Commission's flexibility. Additionally, engaging participants, especially judges, proved difficult due to their busy schedules, highlighting the need for more flexible, remote participation options.

Unintended and long-term effects: Several beneficiaries noted positive unintended outcomes, such as deeper cooperation within consortia and stronger EU partnerships which were not originally envisaged. Many highlighted the creation of long-term professional networks that continue to deliver benefits. For example, a juvenile justice project produced practical guides still used in detention centres, shaping best practices and improving services for offenders and victims. The development of models and training tools has also ensured that project outcomes remain valuable for future initiatives.

Sustainability and future potential: Many beneficiaries expressed confidence in the projects' sustainability, noting that tools, methodologies, and materials will continue to support Europe's justice systems. Training programmes for legal professionals and probation officers were frequently cited as long-lasting resources. Beneficiaries also highlighted the projects' potential to influence future policies, laying the groundwork for reforms in areas like victims' rights and juvenile justice. They were optimistic that the outcomes could be integrated into wider European frameworks, promoting better standards continent-wide.

External factors and programme design: While beneficiaries were generally pleased with the outcomes, several noted external factors that had affected project implementation. Aside from COVID-19, which was seen as the most significant challenge, beneficiaries mentioned inflation related to global events like Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. These external issues led to increased costs and budgetary constraints, but beneficiaries appreciated the European Commission's flexibility in allowing budget adjustments where necessary.

Overall, beneficiaries found no major flaws in the programme design but suggested more flexibility in budget reallocation and planning to address unforeseen changes. Many also desired longer project durations, noting that two years was not enough for full implementation and evaluation. Longer timeframes, they noted, would allow for better advocacy, follow-up, and measurement of long-term impact.

Efficiency

Cost efficiency and allocation: Beneficiaries reported that the greatest programme costs were tied to human resources, especially for preparing applications, implementing projects, and reporting. Managing complex application systems and meeting reporting requirements also added financial strain. One organisation noted difficulties in accurately calculating budgets, particularly for research projects, with smaller institutions facing co-funding gaps of up to 20%. Larger institutions handled this better using national research funding. While beneficiaries appreciated salary support, many felt administrative tasks exceeded the funding provided. One noted that despite partial salary coverage, the burdensome paperwork, including documenting hours and signatures, outweighed the financial assistance received.

Cost-benefit ratio: Most beneficiaries felt the benefits of participating in the programme outweighed the costs. Many highlighted the long-term value of networking and professional relationships established through the projects. One participant noted that the programme's main advantage was fostering collaboration with European partners, increasing visibility, and advancing work in areas like restorative justice and victims' rights. Practical benefits included access to training resources and knowledge exchange with international counterparts. For some organisations, these intangible benefits were more valuable than financial gains, with one noting that the exposure

gained far exceeded financial costs. However, a few beneficiaries, particularly smaller organisations, expressed frustration with co-funding requirements, limiting their participation due to challenges in securing additional funding.

Administrative burden and challenges: A recurring theme in feedback was the administrative burden of the programme, especially during applications and final reporting. Beneficiaries highlighted the complexity and bureaucracy involved in financial reporting, with one participant noting the excessive paperwork and multiple signatures required for salary and time reporting. Others encountered difficulties with the EU's online portals, including login issues and inconsistent guidance from project officers. Many expressed a desire for greater flexibility in project timelines and reporting schedules, especially during unexpected delays, such as when deadlines coincided with holidays. They also suggested that project design should account for potential delays due to late funding.

Suggestions for improvement: Beneficiaries provided several suggestions for improving the efficiency of the programme. A common recommendation was to simplify reporting requirements, especially for financial documentation, by reducing paperwork and increasing the use of digital systems. They also advocated for more flexible budgeting rules that would allow fund reallocation without a full project amendment, saving time and reducing administrative burden. Another key recommendation was the introduction of a lump-sum budget model, which beneficiaries believed would alleviate administrative complexity in tracking expenses. Additionally, beneficiaries recommended greater flexibility in project timelines, including start dates and reporting periods, to better align activities with operational schedules and avoid rushed deadlines, particularly due to funding delays.

Relevance

Feedback from programme beneficiaries indicated a largely positive view of the justice programme's objectives, which align well with their needs. Some beneficiaries suggested the programme could better address specific needs by focusing more on emerging issues, like digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence (AI), while also supporting unresolved challenges, such as those related to child justice. There was a call for a better balance between new and ongoing issues. Several organisations recommended extending project cycle lengths to allow more time for successful initiatives and adapting to changes like new regulations. While the programme's objectives fit many, smaller organisations expressed concern over administrative and financial burdens, particularly co-funding requirements. Some suggested introducing smaller grants to make participation more manageable and beneficial.

EU added value

Beneficiaries view the justice programme as a vital funding source, especially for organisations working on transnational projects or niche areas like child justice. Many stated that without this support, they could not implement their projects on the same scale across multiple EU Member States. While other funding options exist, such as from private entities and national grants, these alternatives do not provide the same level of support. Smaller organisations, particularly those working on victim support or legal education, consider the justice programme essential, as other programmes often lack the necessary scope or focus. One beneficiary noted that while programmes like Erasmus+ or Horizon Europe offer some assistance, they tend to be more academic or restricted to smaller projects. A few highlighted that without the justice programme, funding specific activities, such as cross-border training, would have been challenging. For example, one organisation working with dogs in the justice system stated that training and placement costs would have been unfeasible without EU support.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on many projects, with most beneficiaries adapting to the challenges by transitioning to digital solutions. Online tools and virtual meetings became standard, enabling projects to continue despite restrictions on in-person interactions. Some organisations found unexpected benefits in reaching wider audiences, but many noted that online formats could not fully replace in-person engagement, especially for child participation or hands-on activities like training dogs. While digitalisation was seen as a by-product rather than a core objective, it became essential for project continuity. The justice programme was praised for its flexibility, offering contract extensions and allowing format adaptations. However, beneficiaries faced challenges, including funding delays and difficulties with grant amendments. Overall, while the pandemic forced organisations to innovate, the rapid shift to digital tools highlighted limitations in maintaining interaction quality and project outcomes. The justice programme's responsiveness and support during this time were greatly appreciated.

Gender mainstreaming

Feedback from beneficiaries on gender equality and mainstreaming reveals a mixed approach. Some projects actively integrate gender considerations, while others focus on their specific work areas where gender equality may not be central. For instance, organisations working with vulnerable groups like crime victims acknowledged that gender inequality is part of their focus, such as in intimate partner violence, but they may not explicitly frame their work as gender mainstreaming. Several beneficiaries highlighted their efforts to promote gender equality through internal policies and ensuring gender balance in project participation, including using gender lenses in proposal

writing and conducting gender-sensitive analyses. However, achieving gender balance can be challenging in fields like youth in conflict with the law, where over 90% of the population is male. Some projects do not prioritise gender equality as a core objective but maintain non-discriminatory activities. A few beneficiaries also noted difficulties in understanding the European Commission's gender mainstreaming approach, particularly in balancing gender participation and collecting gender-specific data due to privacy concerns. In conclusion, while gender mainstreaming is promoted in some areas, it is not universally prioritised. Nevertheless, there is a commitment to non-discriminatory practices, with some beneficiaries actively incorporating gender equality into their projects.

Simplification efforts

Beneficiaries' feedback on the justice programme highlights both positive changes and ongoing challenges. Many noted that reporting processes have become more streamlined compared to previous periods, particularly with the introduction of unit costs for travel and accommodation, although this posed challenges for organisations in smaller countries where travel costs may exceed fixed amounts. Beneficiaries appreciated the reduced administrative burden, especially in the final reporting phases, which have become less cumbersome while retaining necessary detail. Improved communication about calls for proposals has also helped organisations plan better. However, some beneficiaries felt the process is more anonymous due to less direct contact with project officers, with much communication now occurring digitally, making it feel impersonal at times. Additionally, the new budgeting methodology and unit cost rules have raised questions; the learning process is ongoing. While the programme has made strides in reducing administrative burdens and streamlining reporting, further clarity and personal interaction could enhance understanding and implementation of new processes.

Interviews with the Programme Committee Members

Effectiveness

PCMs provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of the justice programme, particularly regarding challenges in cross-border collaboration. Several PCMs highlighted the difficulty of identifying partners in other Member States, especially from less-represented countries. One PCM noted that they often worked with familiar partners to avoid the time-consuming process of explaining the application and reporting procedures to organisations that were new to the programme. This indicates that while the programme is effective in building networks among more experienced participants, it struggles to bring in new stakeholders from less-represented Member States, potentially limiting its broader impact. Another key point related to the sustainability of partnerships and projects. One PCM expressed concern over the EUR 350 000 cap on criminal justice projects, which they felt restricted the programme's ability to support larger-scale, multi-country initiatives. This limitation reduced the effectiveness of projects that aimed to involve more Member States or stakeholders, such as pilot projects that tested innovative tools like web radio for remote court hearings.

Efficiency

The interviews revealed that, despite improvements, the programme continues to face administrative challenges, especially in relation to the unit cost standardisation. Several PCMs mentioned that the unit costs were not reflective of real-world expenses, particularly given rising costs due to inflation. Public administrations struggled with the dual reporting requirements of actual costs and unit costs, adding complexity to the process. Furthermore, the application process was identified as a significant burden. One PCM quantified the internal cost of preparing a project proposal, which reached between EUR 20 000 and 30 000, a figure deemed high even for well-resourced organisations. The complexity and time involved in preparing cross-border applications were also noted, with one PCM mentioning that coordinating with authorities in multiple countries took considerable resources that were not always accounted for in initial budgets. While the high success rate of applications somewhat mitigated these concerns, the overall efficiency of the process remains an area for improvement.

Relevance

The programme's alignment with the needs of the justice sector was generally well-regarded by the PCMs. Many pointed out the growing importance of digitalisation in judicial cooperation, with specific emphasis on e-justice and digital architecture projects. PCMs recognised the need for continued funding in these areas, as the digital transformation of justice systems is critical for improving cooperation between Member States and increasing the efficiency of judicial processes.

Coherence

The interviews also touched on **the coherence of the programme, particularly in relation to its alignment with national policies**. Some PCMs found it challenging to involve partners from certain Member States, citing difficulties in identifying the appropriate contact persons within national Ministries of Justice. Even when the right contacts were found, further delays occurred as these individuals had to navigate their own internal procedures

before committing to the programme. This suggests a need for better integration and coordination between the justice programme and national-level actors to ensure smoother collaboration.

EU Added Value

The PCMs largely agreed on the added value of the justice programme, especially in areas where national resources alone would not be sufficient to achieve the same outcomes. One PCM specifically highlighted the visibility of the programme, noting a positive development in their Member State where a technical coordination role was created within the Ministry of Justice to act as a liaison between EU funding programmes and thematic departments. However, the overall visibility of the programme remained a concern, with several PCMs mentioning that there are eligible organisations still unfamiliar with the programme. PCMs also suggested that some eligible organisations may not apply since they perceive the barriers to entry high due to the complexity of the application process.

PCMs also emphasised the unique role the programme plays in fostering cross-border judicial cooperation. In smaller Member States, in particular, the programme's funding enables participation in projects that would otherwise be beyond their reach due to limited national resources. The ongoing support for building long-term partnerships and enhancing judicial cooperation between Member States was seen as a crucial benefit that national programmes could not replicate.

Open public consultation

Overall, respondents to the public consultation considered the justice programmes' overall and specific objectives to be highly relevant. Among their specific objectives, judicial training and access to justice were considered the most relevant:

- 75% of respondents considering them relevant to a very high extent, judicial cooperation to a lesser extent,
- while drugs policy, which was covered by one of the specific objectives of the 2014-2020 programme, was perceived as the least relevant, it was still considered relevant to a very or high extent by 50% respondents.

Similarly, most respondents considered the activities funded by the justice programmes to be relevant, in particular those related to developing and maintaining information and communication technology¹⁹⁴, with digitalisation perceived as an important dimension of the programme. The activities considered the least relevant were those targeted at supporting Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)¹⁹⁵.

Respondents considered the programmes effective in achieving their objectives and intended results. In particular, in improving access for all citizens to CSOs services, counselling activities and support activities (assessed as achieved to a very or high extent by 62%); training stakeholders (assessed as achieved to a very or high extent by 50%); and increasing cross border interoperability of systems (assessed as achieved to a very or high extent by 50%). In that regard, respondents highlighted the development of E-CODEX and ECRIS, as well as the training in the use of IT tools, as particularly relevant and effective. The areas where the programmes were considered to have been less successful concerned (increasing) mutual trust among Member States and (improving) the implementation of Union law instruments and policies (both assessed as achieved to a moderate or low extent by 50%). Generally, respondents were also less positive regarding the programme's visibility, considering that the programmes were not well-known (50%) among potential applicants.

In terms of coherence, most respondents were not able to compare the justice programme with other programmes (only three out of eight indicated that they were familiar with other similar EU initiatives and/or national initiatives in the field of justice). Two respondents considered the justice programmes to be complementary to other EU programmes or initiatives to a great extent, and one to a limited extent.

There was consensus among respondents regarding the EU added value of the programmes, with all considering that the EU was best placed to fund the type of activities under the justice programme as the EU involvement ensures that all Member States adhere to the same standards, resulting in more equal access to justice. As a result, most respondents considered that, if the current justice programme were to stop, Member States would not be able to achieve similar results at the national, regional, or local levels and technical cooperation would become limited to smaller-scale bilateral projects between neighbouring Member States, while some organisations would not be able to secure funding at all.

A summary report of the public consultation was published on the European Commission's Have your say platform¹⁹⁶ in August 2024.

¹⁹⁴ Considered highly relevant by 62% of respondents.

¹⁹⁵ Indicated by 62% of respondents.

¹⁹⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13930-Justice-programme-final-evaluation-of-the-2014-2020-programme-and-interim-evaluation-of-the-2021-2027-programme_en

Call for Evidence

The Commission received thirteen contributions to the Call for Evidence of which seven contributions were removed as not compliant with EC rules for publishing feedback and suggestions. Overall, the contributors acknowledged the positive impact of the justice programme in advancing legal cooperation, training, and access to justice across the EU. The programme was also seen as well-aligned with broader strategic goals. However, stakeholders also noted scope for improvement with calls for: simplification, more support for people with disabilities among other vulnerable groups, enhanced awareness and training, and reconsidering funding for drugs policy projects under the justice programme 2021-2027.

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

Term or acronym	Meaning
AGs	Action Grants
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
AWP	Annual Work Programmes
CEA	Cost-Effectiveness Analysis
CER	Cost-Effectiveness Ratio
CERV	Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (programme)
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DEP	Digital Europe Programme
DG BUDG	Directorate-General for Budget
DG COMM	Directorate-General for Communication
DG COMP	Directorate-General for Competition
DG CNECT	Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology
DG DGT	Directorate-General for Translation
DG DIGIT	Directorate-General for Digital Services
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
DG EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
DG ESTAT	Directorate-General for European Statistics
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DG JUST	Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations

DG OLAF	Directorate-General for Anti-Fraud / European anti-fraud Office
DG REFORM	Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
DG RTD	Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
DG SANTE	Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety
EAW	European Arrest Warrant
EC	European Commission
E-CODEX	E-Justice Communication via Online Data Exchange
ECRIS	European Criminal Records Information System
EJTN	European Judicial Training Network
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
EU	European Union
FPAs	Framework Partnership Agreements
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IO	International Organisation
ISF	Internal Security Fund
ISSG	Inter-Service Steering Group
IT	Information Technology
JAAC	Access to justice (specific objective)
JCOO	Judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters (specific objective)
JDRU	Drugs policy initiatives (specific objective)
JTRA	Judicial training (specific objective)
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual and Intersexual

MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MS	Member State
N/A	Not available
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NLP	Natural Language Processing models
OGs	Operation Grants
OPC	Open Public Consultation
PCMs	Programme Committee Members
REC	Rights, Equality and Citizenship (programme)
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
RSB	Regulatory Scrutiny Board
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SWD	Staff working document
ToR	Terms of Reference
TSI	Technical Support Instrument