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The Court of Justice of the European Union



[The CJEU](#)

As with some of the other institutions of the EU, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) has its roots in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). After continuing as the Court of Justice for the European Communities, it became the CJEU, a court giving rulings on EU law.



Composition

The CJEU consists of two courts: The Court of Justice and the General Court. The Court of Justice is made up of 27 judges, one per member state. Furthermore, there are 11 Advocates-General. In the General Court there are 54 judges, two per member state.

Each judge and advocate general is appointed for a renewable 6-year term, jointly by national governments. In each Court, the judges select a President who serves a renewable term of 3 years.

Powers and functions

The Court of Justice has multiple functions:

Firstly, it reviews the legality of the acts of the institutions of the European Union. Then, it ensures that the member states comply with obligations under the treaties. As a part of this, it also makes sure that the law is applied in the same way across the EU. Lastly, it interprets EU law at the request of national courts and tribunals.

It does this through giving rulings on cases that are brought before it. The Court of Justice concerns itself with requests for preliminary rulings from national courts, appeals and certain actions for annulment. The General Court rules on actions for annulment brought by individuals, companies and in some cases also member state governments.



Decision making

In the Court of Justice, each case is assigned 1 judge (the "judge-rapporteur") and 1 advocate general. Cases are processed in 2 stages:

Written stage

The parties give written statements to the Court - and observations can also be submitted by national authorities, EU institutions and sometimes private individuals.

All of this is summarised by the judge-rapporteur and then discussed at the Court's general meeting, which decides:

How many judges will deal with the case: 3, 5 or 15 judges (the whole Court), depending on the importance and complexity of the case. Most cases are dealt with by 5 judges, and it is very rare for the whole Court to hear the case.

Whether a hearing (oral stage) needs to be held and whether an official opinion from the advocate general is necessary.

Oral stage – a public hearing

Lawyers from both sides can put their case to the judges and advocate general, who can question them.

If the Court has decided an Opinion of the advocate general is necessary, this is given some weeks after the hearing.

The judges then deliberate and give their verdict.

The General Court procedure is similar, with the main differences being that most cases are heard by 3 judges and there are no advocates general.