These factsheets explain what happens when a person is suspected or accused of a crime which is dealt with by a trial in court.

Summary of criminal proceedings

Pre-trial / institution of criminal proceedings

This part of the process begins when the Prosecutor is notified that a crime has probably been committed. It continues with criminal proceedings being launched and ends either with the accused person being committed to stand trial or any charges being withdrawn.

This stage is aimed at clarifying the case as far as possible in order to determine whether there are strong indications that the defendant has committed the crime, so as to commit them or not for trial by the competent court.

Court hearing

At this stage, the case is tried until a verdict is reached and handed down.

Remedies

This refers to the legal means provided to a person to enable them to challenge a ruling of a criminal court.

Such means are:

an appeal, with a view to amending or quashing the disputed ruling on factual or legal grounds;

a fresh trial of the case, and a partial or full annulment of the disputed ruling on legal grounds.

You can find more detailed information on all of these stages in the process and on your rights in the following factsheets. This information is not a substitute for legal advice and is intended to be for general guidance only.

If you are the victim of a crime, you can find full information on your rights here.

Role of the European Commission

The European Commission plays no part in the procedures for criminal prosecutions adopted in the various Member States and cannot assist you if you wish to file a complaint. Information is provided in these factsheets on how to complain and to whom.

Click on the links below to find the information that you need.

1 - My rights during an investigation

2 - My rights during trial

3 - My rights after trial

Last update: 29/02/2024

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