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The following factsheets explain what happens when a person is suspected of or accused of a crime which is dealt with by a trial in court. For information on minor offences like road traffic offences - which are usually dealt with by a fixed penalty like a fine – go to Factsheet 5. If you are the victim of a crime, you can find full information about your rights here. The rights of those suspected or accused are essentially set out in the Code of the Portuguese Criminal Process.

Summary of the criminal process

The following is a summary of the normal stages in a criminal process:

The **investigation** establishes whether a crime has been committed and identifies who by, and ends with a decision to prosecute or to close the investigation;

The **"instruction" or inquiry** stage is optional, depending on the charge, the defendant, or the plaintiff or civil party in the criminal process. It ends with a decision by the Examining Magistrate whether or not to commit the suspect to trial;

The **trial** comprises the court hearing.

Details about all of these stages in the process and about your rights can be found in the factsheets. This information is not a substitute for legal advice and is intended to be for guidance only.

Role of the European Commission

Please note that the European Commission has no role in criminal proceedings in Member States and cannot assist you if you have a complaint. Information is provided in these factsheets about how to complain and to whom.

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

[1 – Getting legal advice](#)

[2 – My rights during the investigation of a crime](#)

General rights

Time limits

Searches, medical examinations and evidence

[3 – My rights during the trial](#)

[4 – My rights after the trial](#)

[5 – Road traffic and other minor offences](#)

Related links

[Ministry of Justice](#)

[Portuguese Bar Association](#)

[Association of Portuguese Judges](#)

[Portuguese Magistrates' Association](#)

[Portuguese Justice Portal](#)

Last update: 15/02/2012

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