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National justice systems

The Member State judicial systems are very diverse, reflecting differences in national judicial traditions.

Courts

In most Member States, there are different branches of courts. Generally, three main types of courts can be identified:

[ordinary courts](#),

[specialised courts](#), and/or

courts dealing with constitutional matters.

The ordinary courts usually deal with disputes in civil matters (i.e. disputes between citizens and/or businesses) and/or criminal matters. In addition, many Member States have established courts for specific matters, such as disputes between public authorities and citizens or businesses (administrative matters, etc.).

Moreover, various Member States have an institution or court to ensure that their constitution is respected. Many of these courts or institutions can be asked to verify whether a certain law or legislation is in line with the constitutional requirements. Some of them can hear individual cases, but usually only as a last resort.

Beyond the information provided in the country-specific pages (see the list of flags on the right side), you can find valuable information on the following European websites (the following list may not be exhaustive):

[European Judicial Atlas](#) - contains a search tool to identify the competent court,

[Association of Councils of State and Supreme Administrative Jurisdictions \(ACA Europe\)](#) - "Tour of Europe", particularly with a view to disputes in constitutional and administrative matters,

[Network of the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts](#) - information on the Member States' supreme courts.

Finding the right court

If you are involved in a judicial proceeding, or if you expect to be involved in one, you will need to identify the court that is competent to deal with your case or, in other words, which has jurisdiction. If you address the wrong court or if there is a dispute over the question of jurisdiction you run the risk of a considerable delay in the proceedings or even of a dismissal of your case because of a lack of jurisdiction.

If a court case has a cross-border dimension and involves, for example, parties living in different Member States, you will first have to identify in which Member State the proceedings should take place. The portal section "Going to Court" can guide you through this process.

Other judicial authorities and institutions

Beyond the courts, in most Member States, the judicial system comprises other judicial authorities and institutions that exercise public authority, such as public prosecutors or in certain cases state attorneys, public notaries or bailiffs. As for private lawyers, notaries and related professions with important functions in the judicial system, please see the page on [legal professions](#).

The public prosecutors' office or prosecution service, which is regarded as part of the judiciary in many Member States, plays an essential role in criminal proceedings. The responsibilities and status of public prosecutors vary considerably among Member States. Related information can be found by selecting a relevant Member State flag in the section on [ordinary courts](#), and also at the following websites:

The website of the [Consultative Council of European Prosecutors](#) within the Council of Europe offers country profiles regarding the EU Member States and other European countries,

[European Judicial Network in criminal matters](#).

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