

Appendix 1

INFORMATION FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

On training of justice professionals (including judges, prosecutors, investigators, inquiry officers, lawyers, judicial and administrative officers, trainees) in 2023

National Institute of Justice training activities focus on the formation and development of knowledge, skills and competences necessary for quality justice based on the protection of fundamental rights and the rule of law. Mandatory initial and ongoing training of judges, prosecutors and investigators is conducted in accordance with the adopted NIJ Judicial Training Standards, identifying the skills and competencies that ensure effective performance of judicial functions and quality of justice.

In 2023, 149 candidates for junior judges, prosecutors, and investigators completed the mandatory 9-month training; 58 newly appointed judges and prosecutors completed the mandatory induction training; and 227 judges and prosecutors participated in training for promotion from the district to the circuit level.

As of 1.12.2023, 322 in-person, distance and blended training sessions have been held in the framework of the ongoing training, in which 6192 judges, prosecutors, investigators, judicial officers and other representatives of the professional community participated. 752 users of the e-learning portal worked with 87 self-learning resources to upgrade professional competence and practical skills. Of the registered users, 112 attorneys used the NIJ resources available on the eLearning Portal.

A key tool for the effective planning and delivery of the Institute's overall training activities are the communities that function under the Human Rights Forum, established under the NIJ project "Modern Learning Environment for Judges, Prosecutors, Investigators and other members of the professional community" under the Justice Programme of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021:

- "Juvenile Justice";
- "Judicial Ethics"
- "Enforcement of Fundamental Rights"

The following sessions of the Human Rights Forum were held in 2023:

- The first session showcased the work of the Juvenile Justice community to develop training activities and resources that ensure the best interests of children in court cases. The Forum brought together 50 representatives from institutions and NGOs, court trainers, judges, prosecutors, lawyers and experts to discuss practical issues and challenges in court proceedings involving children. The forum highlighted the need for specialisation of judges and prosecutors dealing with cases involving children, as well as the need for appropriate practice-oriented training to ensure effective justice that takes into account the rights and interests of the child.

In connection with the amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure promulgated in SG, No. 48/02.06.2023 and the changes introduced in the regulation on criminal justice for minors (in force from 01.09.2023), members of the Juvenile Justice community developed a self-training course focused on the rights of minors involved in criminal proceedings. 861 eLearning Portal users took the course, and 587 successfully completed it with a certificate.

- The second session of the Human Rights Forum was dedicated to judicial ethics and the work of the Judicial Ethics Community, which built on the NIJ platform <http://judicialethicsplatform.nij.bg>. In addition to being a tool for the exchange of professional experience and best practices, the online platform has established itself as a valuable training resource in the field of judicial ethics.

Members of the community conducted a training for trainers on "Judicial Conduct and Ethics", which was attended by 24 members of professional ethics committees (12 judges, 8 prosecutors and 4 investigators).

- In 2023, a series of training activities on respect for fundamental rights were held, including with the participation of judges of the European Court of Human Rights – Judge Yonko Grozev, Judge Carlo Ranzoni and Judge Tim Eicke, in which 226 judges, prosecutors and investigators participated.

- The implementation of a model of in-service judicial training through the creation of shared learning spaces in the judiciary is an important part of the NIJ's targeted efforts to reach all Bulgarian judges, prosecutors and investigators and judicial officers. This is the implementation of a strategic project "NIJ

Ambassadors at the Workplace" and has created an environment to modernise the regional framework for NIJ cooperation with the judiciary. 394 judges, prosecutors and investigators participated in the on-the-job training and videoconference organized with the participation of all shared spaces.

- A constant focus of the Institute's training activities is the improvement of the skills and competences of judicial trainers. 93 judges, prosecutors and investigators – permanent and temporary trainers – participated in the NIJ train-the-trainer sessions as well as in the activities of the European Judicial Training Network.