



Judicial training structures in the EU

Bulgaria

Entity name: **National Institute of Justice (NIJ)**

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Target group

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is the public institution in Bulgaria responsible for the professional training of judges, prosecutors and investigating magistrates, the members of the Supreme Judicial Council, the Chief Inspector and the inspectors from the Inspectorate to the Supreme Judicial Council, public enforcement agents, registry judges, judicial and prosecutorial assistants, court administration, jurors, inspectors from the Inspectorate to the Minister of Justice and other employees from the Ministry of Justice. The NIJ implements the following activities:

- Initial and Induction Training
- Continuous Training and International Exchange

NIJ training concept

Integrating training into work and developing innovative learning solutions are main components of NIJ vision on training. We find that the transfer of knowledge, skills and competences of magistrates, clerks and other justice professionals needs to be done by trainers from the judicial system - judges, prosecutors and other practitioners. Sharing professional experiences is key factor in the process of craftsmanship. More than 200 trainers - magistrates and court clerks are seconded on temporary basis in the NIJ training teams. In addition, over 100 lecturers - experts outside the judiciary partake as trainers in seminars where such expertise is needed for developing specific skills.

The **elaboration of self-learning tools** - handbooks, manuals and reference guides, easily accessible and available in digital for all justice professionals, is crucial for the development of innovative and supportive learning environment. The self - learners are our new trainees, who upgrade knowledge, skills and competences using the NIJ e-tools.

Tailoring training according to procedural roles (judges, prosecutors, magistrate investigators), **level of competence** (supreme, appellate, district and regional level), and the **trainees' professional experience** is a targeted approach that we have been trying out when designing our training programs.

Language proficiency in English or French of magistrates, clerks and other justice professionals is

essential for strengthening mutual trust and judicial cooperation across Europe. A comprehensive language training scheme in English and French has been recently launched, which will serve as a basis for elaboration of follow-up linguistic legal trainings.

Analytical research in the field of justice is another strategic area that has been specifically fostered by the Institute since 2018 through a series of analyses focused on the inheritance law, the fraud offenses and the legal aspects of the Special Planning Act. The research community model has been leading in developing the analyses.

Initial and Induction Training

Compulsory initial training – nine-months training course designed for the candidates for junior judges, the candidates for junior prosecutors and for junior investigating magistrates, in accordance with art. 249, paragraph 1, item 1 of the Judicial System Act (JSA).

The objectives of the initial training are:

- Developing professional expertise and skills;
- Acquiring in-depth practical knowledge;
- Introduction to the working environment of the judicial authorities.

The training sessions are delivered by highly esteemed permanent and temporary trainers.

In the course of their training, candidates for junior judges, junior prosecutors and junior investigating magistrates are evaluated on a regular basis by the permanent trainers, based on the candidates' results during the classroom activities and at the written exercises and interim exams.

At the end of the training a final written and oral exams are organized. The candidates for junior judges, for junior prosecutors and for junior investigating magistrates are evaluated by examination commissions, appointed by the Supreme Judicial Council.

The candidates who pass successfully the final exams, are appointed by the Supreme Judicial Council to the position of junior judge, junior prosecutor and junior investigating magistrate respectively.

Compulsory Initial Qualification – Judges, prosecutors and investigating magistrates initially appointed to the judicial authorities undergo a mandatory induction training within the first year upon entry into office (Article 259 of the JSA); The length of the training is from three to seven weeks.

Programme for Mentor Magistrates – upon completion of the compulsory initial training course at the NIJ, the junior judges, junior prosecutors and junior investigating magistrates continue their professional development with the assistance of mentor judges, mentor prosecutors and mentor investigating magistrates, in accordance with article 242 JSA.

The judges, the prosecutors and the investigating magistrates who are appointed directly and for the first time to the judicial authorities shall work under the supervision of mentor magistrates during the the first year upon entry into office (Article 242 and 259, para 2 JSA).

The NIJ programme includes methodological assistance in the performance of their functions by means of tailor-made trainings, work meetings and discussion forums via the web-based portal of the NIJ website.

Mandatory Courses for Judges and Prosecutors are organized in case of promotion and specialisation

of judges and prosecutors who have been promoted from regional to district level.

Continuous Training of Magistrates and Court Staff

Training of magistrates and other justice professionals

The NIJ provides interactive and innovative training formats to build upon the knowledge and skills of magistrates, other justice professionals and court staff. A wide range array of e-learning courses are organised by the Institute both as stand-alone trainings, and as tools for developing blended-learning sessions.

Training on European Law is key in ensuring correct and unified application of the law of the European Union by all judges, prosecutors and legal practitioners across Europe. In line with the set objectives, the National Institute of Justice has integrated the training on EU law into the initial and continuous training programs for judges, prosecutors and other justice professionals.

A new horizontal approach is being applied recently in terms of fundamental rights, as they have been incorporated as an integral part of the standard trainings programs on substantive law and procedure.

Practitioners' soft skills such as ethics, deontology, resistance to stress, leadership, judge craft are adequately addressed. Trainings focused on management and administration of justice complement the wide array of activities.

A series of projects in the framework of the Good Governance Operational Program, co-financed by the European Union through the European Social Fund have been implemented by the Institute, paving the way for innovative methods, solutions and formats in training.

Court Staff Training

Since 2005 specialized trainings for court clerks are an integral part of NIJ's annual training curriculum. The continuing training programs include topics on management of the court administration, handling civil criminal and administrative files. The training offer is further complemented by workshops on classified information, team work, time and stress management.

International Commitment

The NIJ experience and know-how, accumulated over the years, have been put in place for fostering international cooperation and partnerships with judicial training institutions within and outside Europe.

As a member of the European Judicial Training Network the NIJ has been actively involved in the planning, designing and implementing phases of the training activities carried out by the Network.

The NIJ fosters long term cooperation with the Academy of European Law in implementing a rich array of projects, funded by the European Commission.

The cooperation with the Council of Europe is strategic for the enhancement of knowledge and skills of justice practitioners, to effectively apply the standards of the European Convention on Human Rights.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, the NIJ has been running various training projects in the framework of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, 2014-2021.

Regulatory Framework

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) was established by the Judicial System Act in 2003. The activity of the NIJ is regulated in the Constitution, the Judicial System Act, the Rules of Organization and Procedure of the National Institute of Justice and its Administration and other internal provisions, adopted by the NIJ Management Board.

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