

[Home](#) > ... > [Training, Judicial Networks and Agencies](#) > [Training of Justice Professionals](#) > [National Training Systems](#) > [Initial Training of Judges and Prosecutors In The European Union](#) > [Greece](#)

Initial training of judges and prosecutors in the European Union

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General description

In Greece, compulsory initial training for judges and prosecutors is offered by the [National School of Judges](#), which was founded in 1995 in Thessaloniki as a public entity, supervised by the Minister of Justice. There are four categories of trainees:

1. Administrative judges (Council of State, Court of Audit, administrative courts)
2. Civil/Criminal judges
3. Prosecutors
4. Justices of peace.

The current statutory basis of the training is art. 88 of the Constitution and [Law no. 4871/2021](#), that was adopted recently (10.12.2021), amending former legislation. The number of trainees in each category (one per year) varies depending on the number of judges expected to retire within the following year. Usually 130-200 trainees of all categories are trained per class (year).

Access to the initial training

Three different entry exams are organized every year, one for administrative judges, one for prosecutors and one for ordinary judges (a common exam for civil/criminal judges and justices of peace). Eligible to apply are:

1. lawyers having practiced law for at least 2 years, unless they hold a PhD in law, in which case only 1 year of practice is needed,
2. judicial staff holding a law degree and having served at least 3 years in courts,
3. members of the State Legal Service,
4. justices of peace (for any other category).

All candidates must be 28-40 years old (in the year of the exam) and must not have a criminal record.

Each exam is run by a panel of 5 (6 for administrative judges) members, the majority of which are senior judges and prosecutors, and comprises both written and oral exams. Written exams are conducted in 2 phases. In phase 1, candidates take a foreign language exam (choice between English, French, German and Italian). Those who have succeeded in this phase, take part in phase 2, that includes 4 tests in different areas of domestic law, relevant to each category. All written exams take place in Thessaloniki. Candidates who have succeeded in written exams take part in oral exams conducted on the same subjects as the written ones (plus EU law), in public before the respective panel. Oral exams take place in the Council of State (for administrative judges) and in the Supreme Civil and Criminal Court (for all other categories).

There are currently no alternative access routes to the Judiciary.

Format and content of the initial training

The duration of the training is 16 months and is structured in 2 phases. During the first phase (10 months), trainees undergo mainly theoretical training in the National School of Judges. This period is further divided in 2 parts. During the first 5 months, the trainees undergo a general training, while during the remaining 5 months, the trainees of each category are specialized in the object of the courts they are going to serve (based on the entry exam grade and the average grade of the first part of phase 1) and take their final exams. During the second phase (6 months) they undergo practical training in designated courts, depending on their category.

Training objectives include mastering case and time management, being up-to-date in (both domestic and EU) law and case-law and information technology issues (including AI), being able to work in an international environment, and also developing important soft skills, such as independence and adherence to the fundamental principles of the republic and judicial ethics, proper conduct towards colleagues, court staff, lawyers and parties, communication and cooperation skills etc. These objectives are attained, for example, via receiving linguistic training, participating -under the guidance of experienced trainers- in mock trials and deliberations, workshops, workgroups, educational visits, EJTN/ERA activities, exchange programs etc. Trainers include mainly judges, while academics and experts may also be involved, depending on the subject. During the second phase of the training (practical training), the trainers are judges who serve in the respective courts, supervised by a senior judge.

Termination of the initial training and qualification process

During the first phase of the initial training, trainees are evaluated by 7 trainers. At the end of the first phase, the successful trainees (those who achieve an average of 8/15) take a final written exam, run by a panel of 3 judges. This exam comprises 3 tests on 3 hypothetical cases (passing grade: average of 8/15).

At the end of phase 1, ranking in each category is based on

1. entry exam grade, accounting for 30% of the final grade,
2. first phase evaluation grade, accounting for 30% of the final grade and
3. final exam grade, accounting for 40% of the final grade.

Ranking at this stage is particularly important for the administrative judges, because depending on their ranking, the vacant positions in each court (Council of State and administrative courts) and their preference, trainees are placed in different courts for phase 2 of the initial training (practical training).

Evaluation during the second phase of the training is done by allocating each trainee in one of 4 tiers, depending on their performance. Those placed in tier 1 receive a 1,2 boost to their phase 1 grade, those placed in tier 2 receive a 1,15 boost, those placed in tier 3 receive a 1,1 boost and those placed in tier 4 don't receive any.

Thus, the final grade is calculated and the final ranking is determined.

Final ranking is important for the subsequent appointment of administrative courts judges, ordinary judges and prosecutors to First Instance Courts and courts of peace around the country for a trial period of 10 months (before they are appointed for life). All appointments are formally performed by a presidential decree following a decision of the Supreme Judicial Council (art. 90 of the Constitution, art. 67 and 78 of Law no. 1756/1988). The Council, in appointing judges and prosecutors, is bound by the above ranking.

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