In the field of civil justice, pending procedures and proceedings initiated before the end of the transition period will continue under EU law. The e-Justice Portal, on the basis of a mutual agreement with the UK, will maintain the relevant information related to the United Kingdom until the end of 2024.

Defendants (criminal proceedings)

Northern Ireland

These factsheets explain what happens when you are suspected or accused or a crime which is dealt with by a trial in court. For information on road traffic offences, which are usually dealt with by a fixed penalty (fine), see Factsheet 5. If you are the victim of a crime, you can find full information about your rights here. Please note that these factsheets apply only to Northern Ireland. If you want to know your rights in other parts of the United Kingdom, see the separate factsheets for England/Wales and Scotland.

Summary of the criminal process

The following is a very basic summary of the normal stages in the criminal process:
Investigation by the Police Service of Northern Ireland of whether a crime has been committed and who committed it;
Arrest, questioning and charging of the suspect;
Consideration of the evidence by the Public Prosecution Service with a view to determining whether the suspect will be prosecuted;
Preparation for court;
Trial of the issues or a plea of guilty by the defendant (in the Crown Court for more serious offences and in the Magistrates' Court for other offences);
Sentencing where the defendant has pleaded guilty or been convicted at trial;
Possible appeal.
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 general 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
Investigation and arrest
Interview and charge
Court appearance before trial
Preparation of case before trial
3 – My rights during the trial
4 – My rights after the trial
5 – Road traffic offences

Related links

Citizens Advice Bureau, Northern Ireland

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