

Home>Your rights>Defendants (criminal proceedings)

Defendants (criminal proceedings)

If you are suspected or accused of a criminal offence, these factsheets take you through the criminal process and the various steps involved. They explain your rights and obligations at each stage, from the time of pre-trial investigations, right through to after the trial. The factsheets also provide information on how minor offences, such as road traffic offences, are dealt with.

If you are suspected or accused of a crime, you have certain legally guaranteed rights that must be upheld. You need to know what these are and you will also want to be fully informed of what happens when during the various stages of the criminal process. The factsheets cover key areas including which authority carries out investigations, how to get legal advice, the roles and rights of the various entities and officials and information on any deadlines that may apply during the process and the assistance available to you. You will also find information on your obligations during the process.

As the situation varies from one country to another, it is important that you understand the process and are fully aware of your rights and obligations. Take note of the roles and any deadlines that apply as you read through these factsheets.

The following factsheets will guide you through the most important steps of criminal proceedings in each Member State, explaining the rights you have and the basic rules you need to follow to exercise them.

Please select the relevant country's flag to obtain detailed national information.

This information is not a substitute for legal advice and is intended to be for guidance only. If you need assistance, always check with a lawyer or other expert to establish what applies in your particular situation.

Any reference in these fact sheets to a person of the male sex shall be deemed also to constitute a reference to a person of the female sex, and vice versa, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.

Last update: 17/11/2021

This page is maintained by the European Commission. The information on this page does not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission. The Commission accepts no responsibility or liability whatsoever with regard to any information or data contained or referred to in this document. Please refer to the legal notice with regard to copyright rules for European pages.