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Civil and Patronage Service in the Judicial Authorities of Ukraine



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List of Abbreviations

HACC	High Anti-Corruption Court
AUACE	All-Ukrainian Association of Court Employees
HQCJ	High Qualification Commission of Judges of Ukraine
HCJ	High Council of Justice
VRU	Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine
HSPG	High School of Public Governance
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EU	European Union
UJITS	Unified Judicial Information and Telecommunication System
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
AFU	Armed Forces of Ukraine
CMU	Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Government
CCJE	Consultative Council of European Judges
MFU	Ministry of Finance of Ukraine
NAUCS	National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service
NSJU	National School of Judges of Ukraine
CJU	Council of Judges of Ukraine
CSS	Court Security Service
CEPEJ	European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice
EJTN	European Judicial Training Network
GRECO	Group of States against Corruption of the Council of Europe

Summary

This study is the result of a systematic analysis of the functioning of the civil and patronage service within the judiciary of Ukraine from 2020 to 2024. It covers key aspects of court administration, including human resources policy, recruitment system, remuneration, training, material and technical support, ethical culture, risks to independence and the impact of the legal regime of martial law. Within the framework of the paper, corruption risks, the legislative framework and practices that influence the institutional capacity of the civil and patronage service in the courts are also examined. Particular attention is paid to the context of martial law: increased workload on court staff, difficult working conditions, lack of safe infrastructure and unequal funding across courts.

The study revealed deeply rooted systemic issues that have developed over a prolonged period and have been exacerbated by martial law. The purpose of the study was not only to document current manifestations of inefficiency, but also to identify their root causes. Consequently, it was possible to systematise the key shortcomings that significantly reduce the efficiency of the civil and patronage service within the judiciary of Ukraine.

1. Critical Staffing Shortage

The staffing shortage in court administrations has become chronic, with the situation particularly acute in large regions: according to the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine (SJA), over 3,000 positions remained vacant at the beginning of 2025. The main causes include low salaries, lack of social guarantees and absence of career prospects. The situation is especially vulnerable for judges' assistants, who, lacking civil servant status, are not covered by the protection system — leading to high turnover, staffing instability and imbalance.

2. Unestablished Personnel Recruitment System

The recruitment system for employees in the judiciary is fragmented, non-transparent and lacks a unified strategy, which renders competition and candidate assessment formalistic or random. The absence of a centralised platform, clear selection criteria and a personnel reserve complicates the search for specialists, further deepening the staffing crisis.

3. Non-Competitive Remuneration

The level of remuneration for court staff does not reflect the level of responsibility and workload, as confirmed by survey results: 74% consider their salary demotivating.¹ Despite legislative changes introduced in 2025, actual salary increases remain symbolic, forcing professionals to leave the justice system. This situation undermines trust, development and staff retention within the judiciary. It also contributes to longer case processing times and a decline in the quality of judicial decisions.

¹ [Survey Results: Organisation of Work and Remuneration of Civil Servants under Martial Law. 2024. National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service.](#)

4. Inadequate Material and Technical Support for Courts

Between 2020 and 2024, the judiciary operated under conditions of chronic material and technical resource shortages. By the end of 2024, 68% of courts were functioning in inadequate premises, with space provision reaching only 58% of the required level.² Martial law has further aggravated the situation — power outages, shelling, and a lack of backup power and communication have made court operations critically difficult. Despite support from international partners, most courts have been left to face these challenges alone, without adequate centralised assistance.

5. Inequality in Working Conditions

The study revealed significant disparities in the provision of resources and working conditions between lower-level courts (particularly local ones) and higher or specialised institutions. While the latter benefit from access to resources and modern infrastructure, staff in local courts are forced to work in outdated premises with equipment that does not meet their needs. This fosters a sense of professional discrimination, diminishes motivation and undermines the moral climate within teams.

6. Challenges in Professional Development and Training of Court Staff

Despite the active role of the National School of Judges of Ukraine (NSJU) in organising training, the approaches to professional development for court staff do not always align with actual needs. Respondents noted formalism, a lack of practical focus and limited access to training due to workload and staffing shortages. Furthermore, there is no mechanism for internships in higher courts that could support professional adaptation and knowledge exchange.

7. Impact of the War and Lack of Adaptive Mechanisms

Under the extremely difficult conditions of martial law, Ukraine's judiciary has demonstrated its capacity to remain functional, administer justice and maintain institutional operations. This reflects the high personal responsibility and professional commitment of justice system staff. At the same time, the study's findings indicate that the institutional mechanism for adapting to crisis conditions has proven insufficiently flexible, slow, and poorly coordinated.

8. Corruption Risks and Lack of Adequate Oversight Mechanisms

There remain significant gaps in corruption prevention within the civil and patronage service in the courts: judges' assistants, despite playing a key role, are not subject to mandatory asset declarations, while ethical rules are largely formal and unsupported by enforcement mechanisms. The absence of institutional oversight, a conflict-of-interest management system and mandatory anti-corruption training increases corruption risks and reduces public trust in the judiciary. Addressing these challenges requires legislative amendments and the establishment of an internal integrity infrastructure.

Thus, the identified systemic shortcomings are both objective and managerial in nature. Some are driven by external factors — primarily the impact of martial law — while others are the result of the prolonged neglect of staffing policy and adequate funding.

The study outlines over 40 comprehensive recommendations for the legislative, executive and judicial branches. Thanks to the active participation of respondents — primarily specialists from first-instance courts, aged 25–45, with more than five years of work experience — it was possible to gain a deep understanding of the actual situation and the internal perceptions of staff. This contribution proved invaluable for forming an objective picture and developing relevant recommendations.

² [Summary of Activities of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine](#). Judiciary of Ukraine.

It is advisable to review the research findings in logical sequence: from an overview of the functioning of the civil and patronage service in the judicial authorities to an analysis of key challenges, and finally, the concluding recommendations. Such an approach provides a coherent understanding of the issues and possible ways to address them.

The study may be of use to judicial governance bodies, the SJA, the NSJU, government bodies responsible for staffing policy, funding and justice system reform, the expert and academic community, as well as all those working towards the development of an independent, professional and resilient judiciary in Ukraine.

The study has practical significance for strengthening the institutional capacity of Ukraine's judiciary under wartime conditions and during the forthcoming post-war transformation.

Introduction

The functioning of the civil and patronage service within Ukraine's judiciary has long required a systematic analysis. Unlike the judicial corps, which remains at the centre of ongoing reforms, attention to the court staff — who ensure the continuity of judicial proceedings — has been fragmented and largely limited to reactive responses to immediate challenges.

At the same time, it is court staff — civil servants, judges' assistants, and technical personnel — who are responsible for the daily organisation of court operations, case management, communication with the public and internal administrative stability.

Despite their essential role in ensuring the effective functioning of the justice system, this category of employees remains systematically undervalued — both in terms of legal regulation and in staffing policy, remuneration, professional development and public perception. The lack of a strategic vision for the development of the civil and patronage service in the courts leads to chronic instability: staff turnover, demotivation, shortage of qualified personnel, regional staffing failures and an inability to respond promptly to challenges related to security, digitalisation, or growing societal expectations.

The issue of the effective functioning of court administrations has become particularly important since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The conditions under which the justice system currently operates have changed drastically: many court staff continue to perform their duties amid constant shelling, power outages and in premises lacking proper shelters and a minimum level of security. Some courts have been forced to evacuate or temporarily suspend their operations.

At the same time, the functional workload on the judiciary has increased significantly. Ensuring the uninterrupted operation of the Unified Judicial Information and Telecommunication System (UJITS), implementing digital initiatives and maintaining communication with the public — all of this requires additional effort on the part of court staff. Under such extraordinary conditions, it is precisely the civil and patronage service staff who remain the key stabilising element that ensures the continuity of justice and the functioning of the judiciary.

The aim of this study is not merely to describe the existing problems over the period 2020–2024, but to comprehensively assess the effectiveness of the civil and patronage service in the courts based on empirical data, practices, regulatory analysis and European approaches.

The approach adopted in this study is grounded in the recognition of the key role that court staff play in ensuring the effectiveness of justice. After all, it is impossible to imagine high-quality adjudication without motivated, professionally trained, and consistently employed court staff.

This study aims to view court administration not as a secondary component, but as a core mechanism within Ukraine's justice system.

Within the impact of this study, it is anticipated that a broad discussion will commence among all branches of power, academics, and civil society in relation to the formation of a new staffing, ethical, and managerial culture within the overall court system.

Methodology

The study was prepared by experts from the CSO 'Agency for Legislative Initiatives' (ALI) with the aim of conducting a comprehensive assessment of the functioning of the civil and patronage service within Ukraine's judiciary, identifying key issues and developing practical recommendations for their resolution. Work on the study took place between February and June 2025.

The focus of the study is a comprehensive assessment of the functioning of the civil and patronage service in Ukrainian courts, with particular emphasis on first-instance and appellate courts across all jurisdictions.

The research activities were aimed at:

- › identifying and analysing existing issues in the specified instances, including institutional capacity, staffing, systems of training and professional development for court employees, their competence and ethical standards, as well as the material, technical, and financial support of courts;
- › assessing the impact of the legal regime of martial law on the functioning of the civil and patronage service within Ukraine's judiciary and the adaptability of court staff to new challenges;
- › evaluating the compliance of Ukrainian legislation with international standards in the context of the functioning of the civil/patronage service in the judicial system of Ukraine, as well as the potential corruption risks stemming from the status of civil/patronage service employees, their positions, differences in remuneration, requirements for income and asset declarations, etc.

The conclusions and recommendations outlined as a result of this study will be valuable for first-instance and appellate courts and will also be relevant to all bodies of judicial authority in Ukraine.

The study is based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis:

- › **In-depth interviews:** Between February and April 2025, **42 semi-structured interviews** were conducted with representatives of the judiciary. These made it possible to gain a deeper understanding of the current state of court administrations and to identify structural and regional specificities.
- › **Survey of court staff:** Between February and April 2025, **a questionnaire was administered to over 1,000 civil and patronage service employees** in first-instance and appellate courts. The survey covered all regions of Ukraine. Respondents included courtroom secretaries, chief specialists, judges' assistants, court ushers, consultants, and others. The majority work in local courts, with more than half having over five years of service. Most survey participants belong to the active professional group aged 25 to 45. The survey addressed topics such as working conditions, remuneration, workload, ethics, motivation, training, and interaction with judges, etc. (the survey findings are provided in the Annexe).
- › **Study of legal regulation, organisational approaches and funding:** The research is based on analysis of current legislation (the Constitution of Ukraine, the laws of Ukraine 'On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges', 'On Civil Service', 'On Prevention of Corruption', etc.), government resolutions, decisions of judicial self-governance bodies, statistical data, as well as recommendations of international organisations (in particular, GRECO, CEPEJ, the Venice Commission). Trends in funding

for court administrations from the state budget over recent years, including under martial law, have also been analysed.

- › **International context:** The study analyses models of judicial administration and career development for court staff in European countries (Spain, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and others) as well as non-European jurisdictions (the United States, Canada, Mexico). Comparative analysis was used to formulate realistic recommendations relevant to the Ukrainian context.
- › **Problem identification and development of proposals:** Based on analysis of respondents' answers, interviews, and collected documents, a list of key problems and challenges has been framed. Each relevant section of this paper provides reasoned recommendations for the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

The research findings are structured into several sections addressing recruitment, funding and remuneration, training, internal cooperation, risks to independence, corruption-related factors, and the impact of martial law. Strategic recommendations are presented in the final sections of the study.

Section 1

Civil and Patronage Service in the Judiciary: Stages of Development, Current State and International Experience

1.1. Historical Overview of Development

At the current stage of Ukrainian statehood, amid war and ongoing shifts in the global political landscape, enhancing the effectiveness of the civil and patronage service system is possible only through a combination of the best international practices and Ukraine's own historical experience.

The institution of civil and patronage service in Ukraine has undergone significant transformations at various stages of its development and is today in a state of evolution, continuous improvement and reform in response to present-day challenges. For this reason, the issue of its development and establishment remains highly relevant and requires ongoing study to effectively reform the civil and patronage service on Ukraine's path toward European integration and in overcoming the difficulties it faces both those stemming from the war, now in its fourth year and from internal and external geopolitical challenges.³

Given the objective of the study, it is appropriate to examine the main stages in the historical development of civil and patronage service in Ukraine. This will not only allow for an assessment of the progress achieved but also help to account for past mistakes in building a professional and transparent system for the future.

History of the development of civil service. Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1991 marked a turning point in the formation of civil service, opening the path to the creation of a national public administration system that would reflect national interests and meet European standards.

In what may be considered the first stage (1991–1993), the primary task was to establish the regulatory and legal framework for civil service, to draw on the experience of other countries, and to create a system of bodies responsible for managing civil service.

³ Y. Ivanov, *The Origins and Development of the Civil Service in Ukraine in the Context of Contemporary Challenges. Theory and History of Public Administration*. 2021. Vol. 32 (71), No. 2, pp. 7–11.

An important step was the adoption of the Law of Ukraine 'On Civil Service' in 1993, which defined the main principles, foundations and mechanisms for the functioning of civil service.⁴

Starting in 1993, attempts were made to reform the civil service aimed at enhancing its professionalism, efficiency and transparency. Specifically, in 1994, the CMU Resolution No. 209 'On the Management of Civil Service', established the Main Department of Civil Service under the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (Main Civil Service Department under the CMU, MCSD under the CMU).⁵ The staff of the MCSD actively contributed to the development of the regulatory framework to ensure the effective operation of the civil service institution.⁶

In 1999, the MCSD under the CMU was renamed the Main Department of Civil Service of Ukraine (MCSD) and was granted special status as a body accountable and subordinated to the President of Ukraine.

In 2011, the Main Civil Service Department of Ukraine was reorganised, and the National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service (NAUCS) was established.⁷ These institutional transformations strengthened the independence and institutional capacity of the responsible authority, which had a positive impact on the civil service sector as a whole.

The NAUCS is the central executive authority responsible for shaping and implementing state policy in the field of civil service and human resources management in public authorities. It carries out functional management of the civil service and leads the reform of the public administration system in Ukraine in accordance with European standards.⁸

To provide informational, analytical, expert and organisational support for the development of public administration, to strengthen the institutional capacity of the civil service in Ukraine and to facilitate its alignment with EU standards, the Centre for Adaptation of the Civil Service to the Standards of the European Union was established under the NAUCS (from its founding in April 2004 until June 2008, known as the Center for Support of the Civil Service Institutional Development).⁹

This institution serves as a government analytical centre for preparing civil service reform.¹⁰

Legislative changes in the current period. By Presidential Decree No. 599/2000 of 14 April 2000, the Strategy for Reforming the Civil Service System in Ukraine was approved.¹¹

⁴ On Civil Service: Law of Ukraine No. 3723-XII of 16.12.1993 (no longer in effect, except for Article 37).

⁵ On Civil Service Management: Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 209 of 02.04.1994, as of 28.08.2002.

⁶ Y. Ivanov, The Origins and Development of the Civil Service in Ukraine in the Context of Contemporary Challenges. Theory and History of Public Administration. 2021. Vol. 32 (71), No. 2, pp. 7–11.

⁷ On Civil Service Management in Ukraine: Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 769/2011 of 18.07.2011, as of 22.06.2019.

⁸ On Approval of the Regulation on the National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service: Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 500 of 01.10.2014.

⁹ On Establishment of the Centre for Institutional Development of the Civil Service: Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 485 of 14.04.2004, as of 17.06.2008.

¹⁰ On the Centre for Institutional Development of the Civil Service: Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 528 of 04.06.2008, as of 16.06.2017.

¹¹ On the Strategy for Reforming the Civil Service System in Ukraine: Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 599/2000 of 14.04.2000.

On 17 November 2011, a new version of the Law of Ukraine 'On Civil Service' was adopted to replace the 1993 law. It provided for radical and necessary changes in the legal regulation of civil service relations.¹²

However, in practice, this law never came into force and was officially repealed on 31 December 2015.¹³

Its entry into force was repeatedly postponed. At the time of adoption, it was planned to take effect on 1 January 2013. This date was later deferred to 2014–2016. The postponement was explained by a lack of funds to raise the salaries of civil servants, as required by the new provisions.¹⁴

Eventually, on 10 December 2015, another Law of Ukraine No. 889-VIII 'On Civil Service' (Law No. 889-VIII) was adopted, repealing the 2011 law before it came into effect.¹⁵

Law No. 889-VIII, which entered into force on 1 May 2016, defines the principles, legal and organisational foundations for ensuring a public, professional, politically impartial, effective, citizen-oriented civil service that functions in the interests of the state and society. It also sets out the procedure for Ukrainian citizens to exercise their right to equal access to civil service based on their personal qualities and achievements.¹⁶

History of patronage service. Until 1 May 2016, the legal regulation of patronage service was generally conducted within the framework of overall civil service legislation. This changed with the adoption of Law No. 889-VIII and its subsequent entry into force.

This law was the first to define the concept of 'patronage service' at the legislative level, marking an important step in distinguishing between positions requiring political trust and those filled through competitive procedures.¹⁷ Currently, under paragraph 18, Part 3, Article 3, the provisions of this law do not apply to employees of patronage services.¹⁸

However, it was not possible to fully exclude patronage service from the regulation of Law No. 889-VIII, as a number of provisions remain directly related to patronage service. Some provisions that define the interrelation and interdependence between civil and patronage service also remain in force (Part 2 of Article 9, Paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Article 46, and Article 92 of the Law).¹⁹

According to Article 92 of the Law No. 889-VIII, positions within the patronage service include, among others, the posts of assistants and scientific advisers to judges of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine and judges' assistants. The specific features of patronage service in the courts, as well as in justice sector bodies and institutions, are defined by the legislation on the judiciary and the status of judges.²⁰

¹² On Civil Service: Law of Ukraine as of 17.11.2011 No. 4050-VI (no longer in effect).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Conclusion of the Committee on the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law of Ukraine. Committee on State Building, Local Governance, Regional and Urban Development.

¹⁵ On Civil Service: Law of Ukraine No. 889-VIII of 10.12.2015, as of 01.01.2025.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

In the courts of general jurisdiction in Ukraine, the position of judges' assistant was introduced pursuant to the Law of Ukraine 'On the Judiciary of Ukraine' (2002).²¹ The need to establish such an institution arose as a result of the so-called 'minor judicial reform' of 2001, which led to a significant increase in the workload of courts in general and judges in particular. The main purpose of introducing the position of judges' assistants in Ukrainian courts was to relieve judges of routine technical tasks during the preparation and consideration of cases.²²

At present, the specific features of patronage service in the courts, as well as in justice sector bodies and institutions, are defined by the Law of Ukraine 'On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges' of 2016²³ and the Regulation on the Judges' Assistant, approved by the Council of Judges of Ukraine (CJU).²⁴

Judges' assistants play an important role in organising the judicial process: they provide judges with the necessary information, assist in case preparation, analyse case law and draft judicial decisions. Their work contributes to greater efficiency and quality of justice, as well as a reduced workload for judges.

According to Article 157 of the Law of Ukraine 'On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges', each judge has one or more assistants, whose status and working conditions are defined by this Law and the Regulation on the Judges' Assistant approved by the CJU.²⁵

A judge's assistant may be a citizen of Ukraine who has a higher legal education and is fluent in the state language. Assistants to judges of the Supreme Court must also have at least three years of professional experience in the field of law.²⁶

Judges independently select their assistants. A judge's assistant is appointed to and dismissed from the position by the head of the court administration based on the judge's submission. In matters related to case preparation, judges' assistants are accountable only to the respective judge.²⁷

Challenges and prospects for the development of civil and patronage service in the context of contemporary Ukraine. The events unfolding on the territory of our country have undoubtedly posed a serious test of the resilience and loyalty of public administration and the entire civil service.

The full-scale invasion by Russia, the annexation of parts of Ukrainian territory and systematic attempts to undermine trust in state institutions have challenged all areas of public governance. These events have once again demonstrated that building an effective civil service — including within the justice system — is a strategically important process that determines the state's ability to function under extraordinary circumstances and maintain legitimacy.

²¹ [On the Judiciary of Ukraine: Law of Ukraine No. 3018-III of 07.02.2002 \(no longer in effect\).](#)

²² [Radchenko, O. Judge's Assistant in a Court of General Jurisdiction: Ways to Improve the Legal Status. Judicial Appeal. 2014. No. 3\(36\), pp. 11–16.](#)

²³ [On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges: Law of Ukraine No. 1402-VIII of 02.06.2016, as of 25.04.2025.](#)

²⁴ [On Approval of the Regulation on Judges' Assistants: Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 21 of 18.05.2018.](#)

²⁵ [On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges: Law of Ukraine No. 1402-VIII of 02.06.2016, as of 25.04.2025.](#)

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Civil servants face numerous internal and external threats, yet they have by no means abandoned the performance of their official duties. At the same time, European integration remains a crucial factor for Ukraine, not only in ensuring internal stability but also in promoting economic development.²⁸

At the current stage of development, Ukraine is striving to establish an effective system of public administration that meets European standards.²⁹ In this context, particular attention is being paid to reforming the civil and patronage service, enhancing its professionalism and transparency.³⁰

Nevertheless, despite active reform efforts, the field of civil and patronage service within the judiciary has faced a number of challenges, including staffing shortages, insufficient remuneration for court staff, the need to improve professional competence and the ongoing fight against corruption risks.³¹

Conclusions. Summarising the historical development of civil service in Ukraine, it is important to note its close connection to the processes of state-building. At each stage in the evolution of the Ukrainian state, changes occurred in the organisation and functioning of the civil and patronage service, reflecting the needs and challenges of the respective period.

Despite the progress already made, Ukraine now faces the task of establishing a professional, transparent and effective system of public administration capable of ensuring European integration and safeguarding national interests.

Meeting this objective requires a comprehensive approach, taking historical experience into account, focusing efforts on key areas of reform, securing political will, gaining public support, and ensuring effective coordination among all stakeholders.

1.2. State of Play

The current state of the civil and patronage service within the judiciary of Ukraine reflects the complex reform processes that have been ongoing in the justice system for many years.

These processes are aimed at aligning with European standards and ensuring transparency and efficiency in the operation of the courts. However, despite significant progress in legislative regulation, particularly following the adoption of Law No. 889-VIII,³² the judicial system continues to face numerous challenges. These are especially evident in staffing, social protection of court employees and the effective organisation of civil and patronage service operations.

Under martial law, these challenges have become even more pressing. The increased workload on the courts, the need to ensure the uninterrupted functioning of justice even in crisis conditions and adaptation to new realities require a high level of professionalism and resilience from civil and patronage service staff.

In this context, the issues of staff motivation, professional development, and the creation of appropriate working conditions are of particular importance.

²⁸ [Public Administration in Ukraine: Assessment of Compliance with the Principles of Public Administration](#). Sigma.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ [Nataliia Aliushyna: The introduction of a new remuneration model based on job classification is an international commitment of Ukraine in the context of European integration](#). National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service.

³¹ [Key Trends in the Functioning of the Judiciary Discussed at the Supreme Court](#). Supreme Court.

³² [On Civil Service: Law of Ukraine No. 889-VIII of 10.12.2015, as of 01.01.2025](#).

An analysis of the current state of play makes it possible to outline the key problems and identify directions for further improvement of the civil and patronage service in the judiciary of Ukraine.

Staffing of court administrations. One of the longstanding key problems facing the judiciary of Ukraine is the shortage of personnel in the administrations of local and appellate courts.

As of 31 December 2024, the established number of staff positions in the administrations of local and appellate courts was 27,654 (compared to 27,528 as of 31 December 2023). The actual number of employees in these court administrations as of 31 December 2024 was 22,781 (compared to 22,959 as of 31 December 2023).³³

The number of positions for judges' assistants nationwide did not exceed the number of judicial posts (7,976) and stood at 6,785 positions. As of 31 December 2024, 5,509 judges' assistants were employed in local and appellate courts (compared to 5,499 as of 31 December 2023).³⁴

According to data from the SJA, as of 5 February 2025, there were 2,444 vacant positions in the administrations of local first-instance courts and 585 vacancies in appellate courts. The highest numbers of vacancies were recorded in Dnipropetrovsk region (235), Kharkiv region (194), Odesa region (147), Donetsk region (143) and the city of Kyiv (196).³⁵

In the appellate courts, there are 585 open vacancies in court administrations, with the largest number in the Northern Commercial Court of Appeal (50 vacant positions).³⁶

Information on current vacancies in the administrations of appellate and local courts is regularly updated on the website of the SJA.³⁷

The vacancies span a wide range of positions, including those within the civil service (court secretaries and courtroom secretaries, court ushers, specialists, inspectors, consultants, etc.) and the patronage service (judges' assistants).

These figures clearly demonstrate a critical staffing shortage, which slows down case consideration and significantly increases the workload on existing employees.

The main causes of the staffing deficit are non-competitive salaries compared to other public institutions and the private sector, inadequate social protection and the high workload placed on staff.³⁸

Specifically, judges' assistants — who perform important functions related to case preparation and legal analysis — do not have civil servant status and are deprived of many social guarantees.

This creates a significant imbalance in the motivation of court administration staff compared to employees of other public authorities.

Judicial authorities are responding to this issue. The High Council of Justice (HCJ) has repeatedly appealed to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (CMU) and the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (VRU),

³³ [Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 11 of 18.03.2025.](#)

³⁴ [Ibid.](#)

³⁵ [Indicative List of Positions in the Staff of Local Courts.](#) Website of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine.

³⁶ [Indicative List of Vacant Positions in the Staff of Appellate Courts.](#) Website of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine.

³⁷ [Current Vacancies in the Staff of Appellate and Local Courts of Ukraine.](#) Website of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine.

³⁸ [Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 11 of 18.03.2025.](#)

emphasising the need to ensure adequate funding to increase the remuneration of court administration staff. It has also stressed the importance of creating conditions for their professional development and of accounting for actual workload when planning the budget and staff structure.³⁹

The situation is further complicated by the uneven distribution of workload across courts.⁴⁰ In some courts, the number of cases per staff member may exceed the average several times over. As a result, employees are often forced to perform the duties of multiple individuals simultaneously, which negatively affects both work quality and the psychological well-being of staff.⁴¹

Under martial law, the issue of staffing has become even more critical. The evacuation of some employees from active combat zones, further dismissals due to emigration, the lack of opportunities for remote work and the increasing burden on existing personnel present serious challenges for the justice system.

Motivation among court staff. One of the key obstacles to ensuring the effective functioning of court administrations is the low level of staff motivation, largely caused by inadequate remuneration. According to a survey conducted by the NAUCS among approximately 40,000 civil servants, 74% of court administration staff did not consider their salary sufficiently motivating to perform their duties effectively, based on 2024 results. This was the lowest score across all areas of civil service.⁴²

The main cause of dissatisfaction among staff is the low level of remuneration, particularly in 'B' and 'C' category positions. The average salary for a courtroom secretary or archivist is approximately UAH 8,000–10,000, which is significantly below the market rate. Combined with a high workload and a lack of career development opportunities, this has led to a substantial outflow of personnel from the judicial system.⁴³

Low motivation among court staff has a direct impact on the quality of justice. The number of errors in documents is increasing, case consideration times are lengthening, and the overall efficiency of court operations is deteriorating. In some courts, the workload per employee exceeds the norm several times over, creating additional stress and contributing to professional burnout.⁴⁴

The issue of low motivation among court staff has become the focus of a public initiative: in April 2023, electronic petition No. 22/189076-ep was submitted to the President of Ukraine, gathering over 25,000 signatures. The authors of the petition highlighted the critical outflow of personnel caused by the low salaries of courtroom secretaries and judges' assistants, which at the time averaged UAH 7,586

³⁹ [The HCJ Appeals to the CMU and the Ministry of Finance Regarding Adequate Funding of the Judiciary.](#) Judiciary of Ukraine.

[The HCJ Appeals to the CMU and the Ministry of Finance Regarding Adequate Funding of the Judiciary.](#) High Council of Justice.

[Appeal of the High Council of Justice to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine with Proposals on Priority Objectives for the Financial Support and Independence of the Judiciary for 2026–2028.](#) High Council of Justice.

⁴⁰ [Interactive Map of Court Workload.](#) Council of Judges of Ukraine.

⁴¹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 12, 20, 29 and 30 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 03.04.2025, 08.04.2025 and 10.04.2025.

⁴² [Survey Results: Organisation of Work and Remuneration of Civil Servants under Martial Law. 2024.](#) Website of the National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service.

⁴³ The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study.

⁴⁴ Information provided by respondents Nos. 8, 15, 21 and 29 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 10.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

(net: UAH 6,107).⁴⁵ In the response of the President of Ukraine dated 4 August 2023, it was stated that salary increases require legislative regulation and that Draft Law No. 6311 (submitted in 2021) was already under consideration in Parliament but had not been adopted.

However, in March 2025, the VRU adopted Law No. 4282-IX,⁴⁶ which provides for an increase in the base salaries of court administration staff effective from 1 April 2025: by 20% for local general courts and by 46–87% for appellate and specialised courts.

Even though Law No. 4282-IX was signed by the President in June 2025 and came into effect on 1 April 2025, the average salaries of court administration staff remain below market levels.

According to the results of interviews and surveys conducted among staff of local courts, preliminary assessments indicate that even after the implementation of the legislative changes, the salary increase will not be sufficient to make remuneration in local and appellate courts competitive in comparison with the private sector and several other public institutions.⁴⁷

Thus, despite the legislative initiatives, the remuneration system for court administration staff remains ineffective. The salary increase planned for 2025 is a step forward, but its impact on staffing stability can only be assessed after the full implementation of the proposed changes.

Working conditions: the need to establish equal standards for all courts. The Supreme Court sets a positive example in organising working conditions, with 84% of its administrative staff expressing satisfaction with their working environment (according to a 2024 survey).⁴⁸

By contrast, the situation in local and appellate courts is significantly more challenging. According to the survey conducted as part of this study, only 7.6% of court administration staff in these courts are fully satisfied with their working conditions, 26.6% are mostly satisfied, 42.8% are somewhat satisfied, and 13.3% are mostly dissatisfied.⁴⁹

This contrast is explained by several key factors:

1. **Funding:** The Supreme Court receives separate funding, which allows it to offer higher salaries, modern office premises and the necessary technical equipment.⁵⁰
2. **Social guarantees:** Employees of the Supreme Court have access to additional benefits, such as medical insurance. These advantages are not yet extended to local and appellate courts.⁵¹
3. **Staff stability:** The level of staff turnover in the Supreme Court is significantly lower than in local and appellate courts. Such stability enables a relatively consistent workload for administrative staff,

⁴⁵ [Petition No. 22/189076-ep Regarding the Critical Situation with Remuneration of Court Staff](#). Official Internet Representation of the President of Ukraine.

⁴⁶ [On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Concerning the Introduction of Unified Approaches to the Remuneration of Civil Servants Based on Classification of Positions: Law of Ukraine No. 4282-IX of 11.03.2025](#).

⁴⁷ The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study. Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 14 and 15 during interviews conducted on 04.03.2025, 08.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

⁴⁸ [Supreme Court. Plenary Session of the Supreme Court, 07.02.2025](#). YouTube.

⁴⁹ The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study.

⁵⁰ Information provided by respondents Nos. 16 and 28 during interviews conducted on 18.03.2025 and 08.04.2025.

⁵¹ Ibid.

avoiding the sharp fluctuations caused by constant changes in personnel, which are common in other courts.⁵²

The Supreme Court serves as an example of how proper working conditions can contribute to retaining qualified staff and improving operational efficiency. This highlights the need to develop systemic changes aimed at establishing similar standards in local and appellate courts. Ensuring equal working conditions for all employees of the judiciary will help improve motivation, reduce staff turnover and strengthen trust in the judicial system overall.

Reserving court staff. The current state of staffing in the court administration system of Ukraine is also marked by significant difficulties related to the reservation of conscription-eligible employees. Despite official statements by the SJA claiming the absence of systemic issues,⁵³ practice indicates the contrary. This matter is examined in detail in [subsection 3.2 of section 3](#) of this study.⁵⁴

Restrictions on reservations lead to an increased workload for the remaining staff, longer case processing times and a decline in the quality of justice. Judges report that intensified mobilisation measures affect the stability of court administration operations.⁵⁵

Thus, staffing of court administrations remains one of the central issues facing Ukraine's modern justice system. Resolving this requires a comprehensive approach, including improving remuneration levels, strengthening social protection, optimising the recruitment process and addressing the pressing issues surrounding the reservation of court staff.

In this context, it is worth noting that the planned reforms are to be implemented as part of Ukraine's commitments to the EU. According to the Rule of Law Roadmap, starting from the second quarter of 2025, the state must ensure a competitive level of judicial remuneration and salaries for court administration staff. This should reflect their workload, the significance and responsibility of their work and be in line with the standards required for the proper functioning of the judiciary in a democratic state.⁵⁶

The Roadmap also stipulates that courts, bodies and institutions within the justice system must be consistently provided with adequate financial and human resources. Responsibility for fulfilling these obligations lies with a number of institutions: the HCJ, the SJA, the VRU, the CMU, and the Ministry of Finance of Ukraine (MFU). The implementation of these measures is not only expected to address current systemic issues but also serve as an important step towards European integration.⁵⁷

1.3. Comparative Analysis of the Institution of Judicial Assistants: The Experience of Ukraine, Europe and Other Countries

This segment of the study summarises the approaches to organising the work of judicial assistants in European countries and beyond. The study is based on the article by A. Sanders in the International

⁵² Information provided by respondents Nos. 16 and 28 during interviews conducted on 18.03.2025 and 08.04.2025.

⁵³ [Judiciary. Meeting of the Working Group on Ensuring Adequate Funding of the Judiciary, 10.07.2024.](#) YouTube.

⁵⁴ [Functioning of the Civil and Patronage Service in the Judicial Authorities of Ukraine. Subsection 3.2: 'Impact of the Legal Regime of Martial Law', Section 3: 'Provision of Civil and Patronage Service in the Judiciary: Challenges and Key Aspects'.](#)

⁵⁵ [Judiciary. Meeting of the Working Group on Ensuring Adequate Funding of the Judiciary, 10.07.2024, 2024.](#) YouTube.

⁵⁶ [Rule of Law Roadmap.](#) Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Journal for Court Administration (2020)⁵⁸ and Opinion No. 22 of the Consultative Council of European Judges (CCJE) (2019),⁵⁹ considering the author's interpretation, adaptation to the national context, and expansion through comparison with practices in countries outside Europe.

In modern judicial systems of most countries around the world, judges no longer work in isolation — their activities are actively supported by specially trained assistants.

According to a survey conducted by the CCJE in 2019, judges in 36 out of 37 Council of Europe member states receive assistance from judicial assistants (the only exception being Liechtenstein).⁶⁰

The widespread presence of the institution of judicial assistants is, on the one hand, driven by the increasing workload of courts and the need to improve the efficiency of justice and, on the other, by the successful experience of countries where this practice has existed for a long time. For example, in some states, the introduction or expansion of judicial assistant programmes was a direct response to judicial backlogs (such as in Slovenia, Croatia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). In common law countries, the role of judicial clerks (equivalents of judicial assistants) has long been the subject of academic research, and this interest is now spreading to countries of continental Europe. In response to these trends, the CCJE adopted Opinion No. 22 (2019), dedicated to the role of judicial assistants in courts and their relationship with judges, which highlights the importance of this issue at the international level.

Typology and models of judicial assistants. Although the specific titles and powers of judicial assistants differ from country to country, researchers broadly distinguish several core models: 'trainees', 'career assistants' (scribes) and 'seconded judges'.⁶¹

Traineeship Model. Under this model, young lawyers work as judicial assistants shortly after completing their studies, typically for a relatively short period (usually up to five years). The goal is to gain behind-the-scenes experience of judicial work before continuing their careers in another legal field. This approach originated historically in the United States: since the late 19th century, the top graduates of law schools have undertaken one-year clerkships at the US Supreme Court. Today, the 'law clerk' practice is widespread across various levels of courts in the United States and Canada and has become a prestigious career starting point for young legal professionals. Gradually, other countries have adopted this model: for instance, judicial assistant programmes in Ireland, South Africa and the United Kingdom were introduced following the American example. Although the role is not considered as prestigious in Britain as in the US, it is gaining popularity because it allows young lawyers to observe the work of leading barristers and judges in action. In other European countries, the short-term traineeship model has also taken root. In Austria, Germany, Finland, Slovenia and Switzerland, working at a court can form part of a lawyer's training or serve as a step towards appointment as a judge. Although not formally required for future judges, in many countries it is effectively seen as a standard part of the career path for judicial candidates. Thus, 'trainees' are judicial assistants serving for a limited period who view the role as a stepping stone to another position (such as barrister, prosecutor or judge) rather than a long-term career.⁶²

⁵⁸ [Judicial Assistants in Europe — A Comparative Analysis](#). International Journal for Court Administration.

⁵⁹ [Opinion No. 22 \(2019\) of the Consultative Council of European Judges for the Attention of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the Role of Judges' Assistants](#). Council of Europe.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ [Judicial Assistants in Europe — A Comparative Analysis](#). International Journal for Court Administration.

⁶² Ibid.

‘Scribe’ model (career assistant). Assistants of this type regard court service as a standalone professional career that can span decades and involve opportunities for promotion. In many European legal traditions, the role of such *‘court secretaries’* has long been established. For example, in countries of the Romance legal family, there is a historic institution of the *gréffier* (secretaries/gréffiers) — court officials responsible for recording hearings, maintaining case registers, issuing certain procedural decisions and even drafting judgments, akin to notaries or court clerks. Examples include the *gréffier* in Belgium or the *Letrado de la Administración de Justicia* (LAJ) in Spain; personnel in these roles carry out primarily administrative and procedural functions as ‘judicial notaries’. At the same time, in the same countries, there are also other assistants focused specifically on supporting the administration of justice — for instance, in Belgium, this is the *référéndaire* (referent) and in Spain, the specialist advisers to the Supreme Court (*Letrados del Gabinete Técnico del Tribunal Supremo*). In the Netherlands and Switzerland, the role of career assistants is even broader: local *griffiers* and *Gerichtsschreiber* not only take minutes but also prepare analytical memos for judges, draft the texts of judgments and in some cases even participate in their deliberation. In Switzerland, in particular, the *Gerichtsschreiber* (court secretary) has an advisory vote during judges’ deliberations and, in some cantons (such as Zurich), may even submit a separate opinion on the court’s decision. Thus, ‘scribes’ are highly qualified legal professionals working in courts on a permanent basis who may be entrusted with a very broad range of tasks. Although their position is *de jure* not that of a judge, *de facto*, in certain jurisdictions, they participate so extensively in the administration of justice that they approach the status of a judge (albeit under judicial supervision). However, surveys show that even in countries with a well-developed ‘career’ model, many young assistants still do not intend to remain in the role for life — for most, it is a way to gain experience until the opportunity to become a judge arises. For instance, both Swiss and Slovenian assistants stated in interviews that they viewed their work as a useful but temporary stage on the path to the bench. Most of the judges surveyed agreed with this: one judge of the Swiss Federal Supreme Court said outright that he could not imagine their career without spending several years as a *Gerichtsschreiber*, as it was during that time that ‘they managed to learn a great deal without bearing full responsibility for the case’. Thus, although the ‘scribe assistant’ model formally allows for a lifelong career, in practice it often also serves as a ‘social elevator’ for young legal professionals aspiring to become judges, who for various reasons (such as lack of vacancies, family circumstances or even political loyalty requirements — as in Switzerland) temporarily hold an assistant position.⁶³

Seconded judge model. The third approach involves a sitting judge, seconded from a lower court to a higher court for a certain period, taking on the role of an assistant. These ‘trainee judges’ have more experience and a higher status than regular legal assistants, and their secondment serves a dual purpose: they not only learn from colleagues in the higher court but also bring valuable practical experience from their work at the first-instance level. This model is typical of countries with a career-based judiciary, where lawyers become judges at a young age and gradually progress by learning from senior colleagues. A classic example is Germany, where junior judges, after several years at first-instance courts, may be seconded as *Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiter* (research associates) to the Federal Court of Justice or the Constitutional Court, gaining experience necessary for further career advancement. A similar approach is applied in some South-East European countries (such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania) and partially in Slovenia and Spain. By contrast, in countries with a professional judicial model, where appointments are made from among already experienced legal professionals (such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the Scandinavian countries), it is difficult to imagine a sitting judge acting as an assistant to another judge. Seconded judges usually serve in the

⁶³ [Judicial Assistants in Europe — A Comparative Analysis](#). International Journal for Court Administration.

assistant role for a short period (often a fixed term at the higher court), after which they return to their original position, having acquired new knowledge and established valuable professional connections.⁶⁴

Organisational models: cabinet, pool, and panel. No less significant is the issue of organising interaction between judicial assistants and judges. Across various countries and courts, three main organisational models have emerged.

Cabinet system. One assistant, or several, is assigned to a specific judge on an individual basis. The judge works consistently with the same assistants and often selects them personally for their ‘cabinet’. In some cases, two judges may share one assistant, but the principle remains the same — a personal attachment of the assistant to the judge. This model is historically typical of courts where assistants serve as trusted advisers to judges. For example, in the United Kingdom, each Justice of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal has a personal Judicial Assistant (usually for a one-year judicial term). A similar system operates in European institutions — notably, at the Court of Justice of the European Union, each judge and Advocate General heads their own cabinet (chambers) of *référéndaires*. Germany also follows the cabinet approach in its higher courts: Justices of the Federal Constitutional Court personally select a team of research associates for the duration of their 12-year term, who work exclusively with them. Ukraine and Poland, as countries with a continental legal tradition and large judicial systems, have also adopted the model of assigning assistants individually to judges. Ukrainian national legislation explicitly states that a judge’s assistant is a member of the patronage service and is accountable solely to the judge they serve.⁶⁵

The cabinet model fosters the development of trust-based relationships between a judge and their assistant. According to reports, judges often act as mentors to their assistants, support their professional development, and, even after their collaboration ends, follow their subsequent career successes. In the United Kingdom and the German Constitutional Court, informal communities of ‘former’ assistants exist, with judges periodically meeting with them — similar to the practice of US Supreme Court Justices maintaining contact with their former clerks. At the same time, such close attachment has its drawbacks: the assistant’s dependence on their judge. Frequently, the assistant’s term of service is tied to the judge’s term of office or limited to a few years. Under such conditions, the assistant’s position can become unstable. For example, in Ukraine in 2015, judicial assistants were removed from the civil service staff and effectively turned into advisers working on the basis of the judge’s personal trust. This deprived them of certain social guarantees. In Opinion No. 22, the CCJE warned that inadequate pay and insecure working conditions for assistants increase corruption risks and endanger the quality of justice. Thus, when adopting the cabinet model, it is essential to maintain a balance between the assistant’s trust and loyalty towards the judge and their sufficient independence as an employee of the judiciary.⁶⁶

Pool system. The opposite approach is the creation of a single pool of assistants at the court (or at a specific chamber or division of the court), who are not assigned to any particular judge but are engaged by court management as needed to work with different judges. In this case, assistants report to the court administration or the head of the relevant structural unit, rather than to an individual judge. This type of system is characteristic of countries with a longstanding bureaucratic tradition in their court administration, where assistants are viewed more as part of a collective court resource. Switzerland and the Netherlands, both of which follow the ‘scribe’ model of career assistants, most

⁶⁴ Judicial Assistants in Europe — A Comparative Analysis. International Journal for Court Administration.

⁶⁵ [On the Approval of the Regulation on Judges’ Assistants: Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 21 of 18.05.2018.](#)

⁶⁶ [Judicial Assistants in Europe — A Comparative Analysis.](#) International Journal for Court Administration.

commonly employ the pool-based approach. In Belgium, too, *référéndaires* often work with several judges simultaneously or for the institution as a whole. The advantage of the pool model lies in its flexibility: the court president can more easily redistribute assistant resources where the workload is heaviest, and judges can receive support from the assistant with the relevant specialisation or experience. Young assistants in such systems acquire a broader range of skills by working with different judges and in different types of cases. Among the drawbacks is the potential absence of a stable ‘team’: some judges report that not all assistants are interchangeable, and constant rotation hinders the development of well-coordinated collaboration. As a result, much depends on the individual style of the judge: even in pooled systems, some become de facto mentors to a group of assistants, while others interact with them minimally.⁶⁷

Panel system. An intermediate approach involves assigning assistants to a panel of judges (a chamber or senate). In this case, a group of assistants serves a permanent composition of judges who jointly consider cases. This model combines features of the two previous ones: on the one hand, judges within a panel have a shared team of advisers with whom they build trust-based relationships; on the other, these advisers function as a collective resource for the entire panel. Germany often applies the panel-based model in its supreme courts of general jurisdiction. For example, at the Federal Court of Justice, each senate (a panel of several judges) has a designated number of research associates who prepare materials for all judges within the senate. Several other continental European countries have followed a similar path. At the same time, in Slovenia — as previously mentioned — different formats coexist at its Supreme Court; some matters are handled by assistants assigned to individual judges, while others are dealt with by a shared pool, depending on the category of the case.⁶⁸

The choice of organisational model often correlates with the type of assistant. Countries employing the trainee or seconded judge model (short-term assistants focused on learning) tend to favour the *cabinet* or *panel* approach, as it is more appropriate to attach a junior lawyer to a specific mentor (whether a judge or a panel of judges). In contrast, states that rely on career ‘scribes’ more frequently establish court-based *pools* to allocate work more efficiently (as in Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Belgium). Still, this is not a rigid rule: different courts within the same country may apply different arrangements depending on their needs and traditions.

Functions and degree of involvement in the administration of justice. One of the key questions is what exactly judicial assistants do and how deeply they are involved in the decision-making process. The range is very broad — from purely auxiliary research tasks to the actual consideration of minor cases.⁶⁹ In general terms, the duties of assistants can be ranked by increasing levels of responsibility:

- › **Legal research and preparation of materials.** This is the basic function common to all systems that employ assistants. Assistants analyse legislation and case law, identify relevant precedents and prepare memos and briefing notes for the judge. In many countries (especially those with common law traditions), this defines the full scope of the assistant’s role. For example, in the courts of England and Wales, it is traditionally accepted that researching legal issues is the maximum level of assistance an assistant may provide; everything else must be done by the parties or the judge themselves. In contrast, the continental tradition is more open to a broader set of responsibilities.
- › **Participation in drafting judgments.** In many jurisdictions, assistants not only conduct legal research but also draft documents: preliminary rulings, final judgments, court orders and so on. Of course, the final decision always rests with the judge, but the assistant often handles the

⁶⁷ [Judicial Assistants in Europe — A Comparative Analysis](#). International Journal for Court Administration.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

initial formulation of both the reasoning and operative parts. For instance, in the Netherlands and Switzerland, legal assistants frequently prepare the full draft of a judgment, which the judge then reviews and approves. In some countries, assistants are also responsible for keeping the official record of the hearing, organising case materials and conducting a preliminary review of incoming correspondence related to the case. Assistants may also oversee the technical preparation of the decision for publication: proofreading the text, checking references and anonymising personal data prior to release. A distinct type of preparatory function involves the selection of cases to be heard by higher courts. In supreme and constitutional courts, which receive hundreds of applications, assistants often prepare brief summaries of new complaints for judges and make recommendations on which ones to accept for review and which to dismiss. This role is particularly important for filtering out clearly unmeritorious complaints and expediting proceedings. However, the CCJE has cautioned that it must be the judge who makes the final decision on whether to admit a case, so that assistants do not wield decisive influence over access to justice.

- › **Procedural tasks and resolution of minor matters.** In some countries, assistants are authorised to carry out certain procedural actions on behalf of a judge. These involve relatively simple decisions that the court may *formally* adopt during proceedings, but which are in practice delegated to an assistant. For example, appointing an expert, returning documents or resolving costs — all these procedural rulings may, in certain jurisdictions, be drafted and processed by the assistant, with the judge providing only formal approval. According to the CCJE, such authorisations are provided for in the legislation of several European countries, including Finland, Sweden, Slovenia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Iceland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and others. Naturally, all such actions must be carried out under judicial supervision and subject to subsequent approval, and core decisions in a case must not be delegated to assistants.⁷⁰
- › **Handling minor cases.** The highest level of delegation occurs when an assistant effectively considers certain categories of cases independently or conducts proceedings in a simplified manner. This practice is rare, but there are precedents. In Slovenia, for example, experienced judicial assistants may act as a ‘second instance’ in minor civil cases that do not require a full hearing — they prepare a draft decision, which the judge then formally approves with their signature. In Croatia and several other states, there are also opportunities for assistants to act as a judge’s authorised representative in minor matters or to conduct specific hearings (such as preliminary hearings) on the judge’s behalf. These cases are exceptional and always require a specific legal mandate, along with ongoing judicial oversight. The CCJE emphasises that where a system allows assistants to come so close to performing judicial functions, it is especially important to ensure that the judge retains full control over the decisions and bears ultimate responsibility for them.⁷¹

In summary, it can be stated that judicial assistants participate in the administration of justice in almost all jurisdictions, though the degree of their involvement ranges from auxiliary to very extensive. In all cases, one principle remains constant: the final decision in a case is the prerogative of the judge. As emphasised in Opinion No. 22 of the CCJE, delivering a substantive ruling is the core of judicial activity and must always remain with the judge or panel of judges. An assistant may contribute to this process but cannot replace the judge.

Requirements for candidates, selection and career prospects. Regardless of the model, all countries agree that a judicial assistant must be a highly qualified legal professional. As a rule, a higher legal education (a Master of Laws degree or equivalent) is required. In many states, additional qualifications

⁷⁰ Judicial Assistants in Europe — A Comparative Analysis. International Journal for Court Administration.

⁷¹ Ibid.

include passing specific legal exams or holding the right to practise as a lawyer or judge. For example, in Germany, research associates at higher courts may only be those who have passed the second state examination and are already appointed as judges (in the case of secondment), or top scorers of the first state examination, for temporary research traineeships prior to judicial appointment. In France, the *assistant de justice* institution was introduced in 1998 to bring talented graduates into the courts: candidates must hold a *maîtrise* in law and pass a competitive selection process, after which they sign a contract with the Ministry of Justice for up to four years to serve as assistants within the judiciary. In Ukraine, according to the law, a judicial assistant must be a citizen with a higher legal education and fluent in the state language. Additionally, for assistants to the Supreme Court, a confirmed record of professional legal experience is required. Thus, in all cases, the assistant is a legal professional — often young, but with a solid foundation of training.

Appointment procedures. Procedures for appointing judicial assistants vary depending on the model and the country. In systems using the cabinet model, the personal choice of the judge plays a significant role. For example, in the United Kingdom, candidates for the position of Judicial Assistant submit applications and undergo a selection process conducted by the court’s registry, but the final decision rests with the judge they will be assigned to; the judge conducts an interview and selects their assistant from among the top candidates. At the Court of Justice of the European Union, each judge personally selects members of their cabinet based on trust, often choosing lawyers from their own country or those they have worked with previously. In countries with a pool system, however, assistants are selected through a centralised process — via open competitions for civil service positions. In the Netherlands, the position of judicial clerk is a regular staff role at the court, so candidates participate in an open competition, and the court’s leadership (or a panel of senior judges) makes the hiring decision. Mexico offers a notable example from outside Europe: there, *secretarios de estudio y cuenta* (case analysis and record-keeping secretaries) are appointed to the Supreme Court and collegiate tribunals. These are highly qualified lawyers selected directly by Supreme Court judges to serve on their teams.⁷² The CCJE emphasises that it is optimal for the judiciary — rather than the executive — to be responsible for selecting assistants, based on transparent procedures and objective criteria of professional suitability. Such an approach minimises the risk of political influence over the court administration.⁷³

Career advancement for assistants depends on the model. In the case of ‘trainees’ and seconded judges, long-term career progression is not an issue — the role is designed to be temporary. By contrast, for ‘career’ assistants, there are usually opportunities for further qualification and promotion to higher positions. In many jurisdictions, a hierarchy exists — for example, junior assistant, senior assistant, team leader or court session secretary and so forth. In Spain, the *Letrados* have their own hierarchy and may eventually be eligible for appointment to senior roles in judicial administration. In Ukraine, the position of judicial assistant falls under the patronage service and therefore does not formally include classic civil service ranks. However, an assistant may eventually move into an administrative role within the court system (such as head of the court office) or — with sufficient experience and successful completion of the qualification exam — become a candidate for judicial appointment. In practice, working as an assistant often serves as a springboard to a judicial career: both in Europe and beyond, a significant proportion of young judges are former assistants with several years of experience. The CCJE even recommends encouraging the best assistants to become judges, where possible — for example, by creating opportunities for further training, internships or simplified

⁷² [Secretarías de Estudio y Cuenta, y Auxiliares Jurídicos. Tribunal Electoral del Estado de Sinaloa.](#)

⁷³ [Opinion No. 22 \(2019\) of the Consultative Council of European Judges for the Attention of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the Role of Judges’ Assistants. Council of Europe.](#)

access to selection processes. At the same time, the CCJE in Opinion No. 22 warns against *over-reliance* on assistants as a form of cheap labour in lieu of appointing a sufficient number of judges. States must strike a balance between the benefits of short-term engagement of young professionals and the need for experienced, long-term staff within the judiciary. Where court workloads are particularly high, expanding the number of judges should be the priority; assistants are intended to complement, not replace, new judicial appointments.⁷⁴

Ethical and institutional aspects. The special status of judicial assistants — positioned, so to speak, ‘behind the throne’ — raises several ethical and governance questions. On the one hand, assistants are deeply involved in the functioning of the court; on the other, they do not hold judicial powers *ex officio*. In Opinion No. 22, the CCJE outlined several core principles for the proper regulation of this institution.⁷⁵

- › **Judicial assistants must support judges in their role, not replace them.** The main role of an assistant is to support the judge in carrying out their functions, not to perform those functions in their place. The judge must remain fully responsible for judicial decisions and actions in the case. As emphasised in the CCJE’s conclusions, the involvement of assistants must not come at the cost of reducing the number of judges — states must prioritise staffing the judicial corps and only in addition provide for assistants.
- › **Supervision and oversight by the judge.** The more responsibility an assistant is given, the more important it is that the judge provides continuous supervision and guidance. The assistant effectively works under the direction of the judge and therefore cannot be considered independent in the same way that a judge is. The assistant is obliged to follow the judge’s instructions within the scope of their duties. A balance must be maintained in the delegation of tasks: a judge may ease their workload by assigning preparatory work to an assistant, but must not distance themselves from the proceedings to the point of losing full understanding of the case. Caution is required in situations where excessive workload creates the temptation to shift part of the judge’s duties to assistants — it is essential to remember the permissible limits and the parties’ right to have their case heard by a judge.
- › **Clear definition of powers.** For the sake of transparency, it is recommended that legislation or subordinate legal acts clearly define which tasks may be delegated to assistants. Such regulations help to prevent abuse and ensure accountability: the public and parties to proceedings should understand the extent to which assistants are involved in drafting decisions. For example, in some countries, procedural legislation explicitly lists the types of rulings that may be prepared by an assistant or stipulates that draft decisions prepared by assistants cannot be issued in the name of the court without judicial review.
- › **Status and conditions of service.** The CCJE recommends that states regulate the status of assistants — from selection criteria, remuneration systems and performance evaluation to training and long-term employment opportunities. Ensuring decent conditions and social guarantees is not only a matter of fairness but also a safeguard against corruption risks. Assistants who feel financially secure and have career prospects are less susceptible to external pressure or the temptation to influence case outcomes improperly. It is also advisable to provide continuous training and professional development for assistants (a task undertaken, for example, by the NSJU).

⁷⁴ [Opinion No. 22 \(2019\) of the Consultative Council of European Judges for the Attention of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the Role of Judges’ Assistants](#). Council of Europe.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

If a system includes both long-term and short-term assistants, a balance should be struck between them so that courts can benefit from the advantages of both approaches.

- › **Ethics and confidentiality.** An assistant's close working relationship with the judge means they must be aware of and adhere to high ethical standards. All official information obtained in the course of their work (including draft decisions, judges' positions, internal discussions, etc.) must remain confidential. Like judges, assistants must avoid conflicts of interest: if a case involves the assistant personally, their close relatives, or if the assistant has another source of bias, this must be disclosed, and the assistant must be removed from the case. The CCJE advises states to introduce provisions for recusal of assistants, similar to those applied to judges. Some countries already have codes of ethics in place for judicial assistants or court staff more broadly, which govern integrity, loyalty, political neutrality, relations with lawyers, and related matters.
- › **Guarantees of judicial independence.** An assistant does not wield judicial authority, but their position can affect the independence of the judge. In particular, the CCJE stresses that an assistant's proximity to the judge must not be exploited by third parties as a means of exerting pressure on the court (for example, by attempting to 'negotiate' with the assistant or intimidate them). Nor should there be abuse within the judicial system itself — for instance, a court president must not interfere in the administration of justice by an individual judge through an assistant under their authority. The CCJE states clearly that the close relationship between assistants and judges must never become a channel of influence that undermines judicial independence — whether from outside or within the judiciary. This is precisely why transparent rules on hierarchy, ethics and confidentiality, as discussed above, are necessary.

In conclusion, international standards require that the institution of judicial assistants be properly integrated into the justice system: assistants must provide effective support to judges, while ensuring the continued independence and authority of the judiciary and maintaining public trust.

Comparison with non-European countries. The experience of non-Eastern European countries adds valuable perspectives to this analysis. The United States of America — the birthplace of the law clerk institution — exemplifies the trainee model in its purest form. Every federal judge (at all levels — from district courts to the Supreme Court) has 2 to 4 clerks, typically top law school graduates with outstanding academic performance. They work with the judge for only one year, conducting research, preparing memoranda and drafting judgments, after which they move on to other legal careers (such as advocacy or subsequent clerkship roles). The culture surrounding American clerks involves a strong mentor-mentee bond with the judge, which often continues thereafter: many former clerks maintain professional relationships with 'their' judge and other members of the team, forming a kind of alumni fraternity. Canada follows a similar model: the Supreme Court of Canada and provincial Courts of Appeal recruit top young lawyers to serve as assistants, usually also for one year. In both countries, the clerkship is regarded as a prestigious training ground that significantly enhances career prospects. In their courts, assistants primarily perform analytical and advisory functions and are in no way permitted to administer justice independently. However, their names sometimes appear in draft judgments, which has led to scholarly research into the influence of clerks on judicial decisions.

Mexico and other Latin American countries are notable for combining elements of the models described above. In Mexico's higher courts, career assistants (*secretarios or secretarias de estudio y cuenta*) serve as full-time legal staff, similar to European *référéndaires*. Each judge of the Mexican Supreme Court has several such secretaries in their cabinet, who assist with casework: they review applications, draft admissibility rulings, prepare draft judgments and may even present their drafts during deliberations of the judicial panel.⁷⁶ These assistants are not appointed for a single year but

⁷⁶ Secretarías de Estudio y Cuenta, y Auxiliares Jurídicos. Tribunal Electoral del Estado de Sinaloa.

serve on a permanent basis — selected by the judge on the basis of trust, though formally part of the court's staff. Studies outline the typical profile of a court secretary in Mexico as a lawyer with several years of experience, often holding a master's or doctoral degree, frequently with a background in academia or legal practice, and specifically chosen by the judge for their team⁷⁷. Career advancement for such assistants may lead either to senior administrative roles within the judiciary or even to judicial office — some of them eventually become judges of collegiate courts themselves. Thus, Mexico embodies a model close to the European 'scribe' approach: the assistant is a well-paid adviser to the judge who may remain in the role long term and plays a significant part in drafting judicial decisions. Unlike in the United States, however, such advisers in Mexico are less publicly visible and their work is less studied in academic literature, despite their considerable contribution to the functioning of the court.

Ukraine as a separate example. In Ukraine, the institution of judicial assistants is relatively new, yet already a well-established element of the judicial system. The legislative framework includes a specific provision on assistants in the Law of Ukraine 'On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges',⁷⁸ and in 2018, the High Council of Justice approved the *Regulation on the Judicial Assistant*, which sets out in detail their status and duties. According to this Regulation, a judicial assistant is a member of the court's patronage service, subordinate solely to the respective judge and tasked with supporting that judge in the exercise of their judicial powers.⁷⁹ Each judge of a general court in Ukraine typically has one staff assistant, while court presidents and judges with the heaviest workloads may have two. The assistant is appointed by the head of the court office upon nomination by the judge (in practice, the judge selects the candidate personally).

The powers of a Ukrainian judicial assistant combine administrative and analytical functions. The assistant supports the judge in the exercise of judicial powers and provides organisational and legal assistance in court proceedings. Key responsibilities include selecting legislative acts and case law relevant to specific cases, participating in the preliminary preparation and processing of case files, drafting judgments, requests, letters, and other materials at the judge's instruction. The assistant monitors the timely preparation, dispatch and delivery of court decisions to the parties and other participants in the proceedings. They also oversee the execution of expert assessments and the enforcement of court rulings by law enforcement bodies, preparing relevant reminders if needed. Duties also include drafting international requests, assisting with the execution of requests from foreign courts in accordance with Ukraine's international treaties, and carrying out other tasks assigned by the judge that are related to the organisation of case proceedings. The judicial assistant coordinates the work of the courtroom secretary, contributes to the preparation of statistical and analytical materials, summarises case law, monitors media coverage of judicial activity and adheres to ethical standards, confidentiality and legal restrictions applicable to their role.⁸⁰

A judicial assistant does not have the right to administer justice independently or to publicly represent the judge, but may be present during court hearings, take informal notes and advise the judge on legal issues during case discussions.

⁷⁷ Cortez J. Secretarios de Estudio y Cuenta en la Suprema Corte de México. Un actor esencia pero olvidado. *Política y Gobierno*. 2019. V. 2, No. 26. PP. 219–236.

⁷⁸ On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges: Law of Ukraine No. 1402-VIII of 02.06.2016, as of 04.06.2025.

⁷⁹ On the Approval of the Regulation on Judges' Assistants: Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 21 of 18.05.2018.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Importantly, unlike other court staff who are civil servants, Ukrainian assistants are not bound by a professional oath but are required to comply with the Code of Conduct for Court Employees, which obliges them to maintain the confidentiality of information and to avoid any conduct that may damage the authority of the court.⁸¹

Challenges and development potential in Ukraine. Despite being regulated by legislation, this area still faces challenges in Ukraine. One of the most pressing issues is the low level of remuneration for judicial assistants, particularly in first-instance courts. Their salaries often do not match the high qualification requirements imposed on them, leading to staff turnover as experienced assistants move to higher-paying positions. This, in turn, reduces the efficiency of the courts, as new staff require time to adapt.⁸² In its Opinion No. 22, the CCJE specifically emphasised that inadequate funding for assistants undermines the resilience of the judicial system and may give rise to corruption risks.⁸³

Another issue is the lack of a clear long-term career model: assistants have no guaranteed prospects for advancement, and their status as part of the patronage service means they may lose their job if the judge changes. A step towards improvement would be reforming the status of assistants — for example, restoring their civil servant status (which they lost in 2015 with the adoption of Law of Ukraine No. 889-VIII) while preserving the principle that judges choose their own assistants. This would offer greater social protection without dismantling the cabinet model.⁸⁴

Given global trends, the role of assistants in Ukrainian courts is likely to continue expanding. Ukraine should therefore follow the CCJE's recommendation to develop internal guidelines for judges and their assistants — for example, clarifying which types of draft documents assistants may prepare independently and which actions must be performed exclusively by the judge. This matter is covered in point 20 of the Regulation on the Judicial Assistant,⁸⁵ which states, among other things, that a judicial assistant participates in the preliminary preparation of cases for consideration, processes case files and, at the judge's instruction, prepares drafts of judicial decisions, requests, letters and other materials related to a specific case. Thus, the assistant may prepare drafts of any materials related to a particular case, but only on the judge's instruction.

It is precisely this structure that enhances greater transparency and trust in the institution of judicial assistants within the country and reduces the risks of corruption and abuse — both on the part of judges and their assistants.

Conclusions. The institution of judicial assistants has become an integral part of modern justice systems both in Europe and beyond. Historically, various models have developed — from short-term trainees to career *référéndaires* — as well as different approaches to organising their work, including cabinet, pool and panel systems. Each country, considering its legal tradition and specific needs, has formed its own combination of these approaches. Comparative analysis shows that there is no universal 'best' solution: the effectiveness of a model depends on context. For instance, in countries with a

⁸¹ [On Approval of the Code of Conduct for Court Employees: Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 33 of 06.02.2009, as of 01.01.2021.](#)

⁸² Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 8, 14, 20, 26 and 29 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 08.04.2025 and 10.04.2025.

⁸³ [Opinion No. 22 \(2019\) of the Consultative Council of European Judges for the Attention of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the Role of Judges' Assistants.](#) Council of Europe.

⁸⁴ Information provided by respondents Nos. 1–3, 10 and during interviews conducted on 18.03.2025, 21.03.2025, 09.04.2025, 11.04.2025 and 21.04.2025.

⁸⁵ [On the Approval of the Regulation on Judges' Assistants: Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 21 of 18.05.2018.](#)

large number of young lawyers and limited judicial vacancies, the trainee model appears attractive, whereas courts dealing with highly complex cases may benefit more from experienced, permanent assistants. What all systems have in common is the goal of improving the efficiency and quality of justice by supporting judges with qualified assistants. Research indicates that assistants can indeed accelerate case handling while contributing to more thorough legal analysis, which positively affects the quality of judicial decisions. At the same time, assistants are not a remedy for judicial overload: where there is a severe shortage of judges, even an army of assistants cannot guarantee compliance with reasonable timeframes. Countries must therefore carefully consider how best to integrate assistants into their systems — defining their functions, status, lines of accountability and ethical boundaries in a way that strengthens rather than undermines judicial independence. International standards — such as CCJE Opinion No. 22 — serve as a guide in this process, emphasising the need for adequate funding, transparent selection and appropriate supervision of assistants' work. Ultimately, effective collaboration between judge and assistant can enhance public trust in the judiciary, as it ensures faster, higher-quality, and more professional delivery of justice. That is why the experience of different countries in this field is immensely valuable: it allows us to learn from best practices and avoid potential risks, thereby ensuring the sustainable development of judicial systems in the interests of the rule of law.

Section 2

The Justice Team: Prestige, Recruitment, Independence and Development

2.1. Professional Prestige

Professional prestige refers to the public perception of the importance, authority and social value of a particular occupation. It is often associated with levels of education, qualification, income and social recognition. For the judiciary, as the third branch of power, the prestige of working in the civil and patronage service is directly linked to the authority of the court as a whole.

When considering the **current state of prestige** associated with working in court administration in Ukraine, it may initially appear that employment in the courts is prestigious, as it is tied to significant legal processes and the pursuit of justice. However, this perception of prestige is quite ambivalent, as the reality often proves disappointing — low salaries, lack of career prospects and heavy workloads undermine the motivation of even the most dedicated professionals.⁸⁶

The results of a survey of staff in the civil service and patronage service in courts confirm that employees themselves hold conflicting views regarding the prestige of their profession.

Only 2.5% of respondents consider the profession to be ‘very prestigious’, while 31.7% describe it as ‘rather not prestigious’ and 29.2% as ‘not prestigious at all’.

Surveyed employees emphasise that the prestige of working in the judicial system — traditionally associated with justice and fairness — is increasingly losing its appeal due to economic and social factors. *As one respondent put it, ‘With such a salary, it’s hard to consider this job prestigious — it feels more like survival’.*⁸⁷

At the same time, employees point to a significant gap between the public perception of working in the courts as a prestigious profession and the actual working conditions, which include very low pay, excessive workloads due to understaffing, lack of social guarantees and limited career prospects.⁸⁸

The issue of prestige in civil and patronage service in the courts was the first topic raised in a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews with representatives of the judiciary as part of this study, as

⁸⁶ Information provided by respondent No. 40 during interview conducted on 15.03.2025.

⁸⁷ The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

professional prestige largely determines whether qualified, responsible and ethically resilient individuals are willing to enter the judicial system. It also affects the system's ability to retain skilled personnel, build a committed team and ensure the quality of justice. When court staff and judicial assistants feel that their work is meaningful and valued by society and the state, it strengthens their intrinsic motivation, sense of responsibility and resilience — even in times of extraordinary challenge such as war, legal uncertainty or excessive caseloads. Therefore, perceptions of prestige are not merely emotional impressions, but a reflection of the overall condition of the judiciary and the effectiveness of state personnel policy in this field.

In their interviews, respondents identified two main factors shaping perceptions of prestige:

- › **The external image of the profession:** court work is perceived as socially important due to its association with justice.⁸⁹
- › **The internal reality of the profession:** low salaries, lack of technical support and absence of social guarantees create a sense that employees are undervalued.⁹⁰

As one respondent noted, *'In the past, every law student dreamed of working in a court, but today young people choose the commercial sector because that's where the opportunities are.'*⁹¹

Economic factor. Financial disadvantage is one of the key reasons for the decline in prestige. Salaries of employees in civil and patronage service within the courts do not match current economic realities. According to respondents, a judicial assistant earns **14–16 thousand UAH**, whereas the average income in the private legal sector for young professionals is **28–35 thousand UAH**.⁹²

Results from the anonymous survey of court staff indicate that the primary reason for the low prestige of civil and patronage service roles in the courts is the inadequate level of remuneration. Most respondents stated that their salary does not reflect the volume of responsibilities, the heavy workload or the qualifications required.⁹³

Following the reclassification of positions (in implementation of Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 1109 of 23 October 2023, 'On Preparations for Introducing a Position-Based Remuneration System for Civil Servants in 2024')⁹⁴ salaries in local courts did not increase significantly. This situation creates financial instability and demotivates employees, driving them to leave the judicial system in search of better opportunities.

Insufficient financial support not only leads to staff attrition but also shapes public opinion — people do not believe that anyone can work honestly in the courts for such low pay.⁹⁵

Career prospects as a factor of prestige. Respondents to the anonymous survey noted that the lack of real opportunities for career advancement negatively affects the prestige of the profession. As one

⁸⁹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 11, 26, 27, 32-37 and 40 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 15.03.2025, 20.03.2025, 03.04.2025, 08.04.2025, 09.04.2025, 10.04.2025 and 29.04.2025.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Information provided by respondent No. 4 during interview conducted on 08.04.2025.

⁹² Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 14 and 26 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025 and 08.04.2025.

⁹³ The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study.

⁹⁴ On preparations for the introduction of remuneration conditions for civil servants based on the classification of positions: Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1109 dated 23 October 2023.

⁹⁵ Information provided by respondent No. 12 during interview conducted on 03.04.2025.

participant remarked: *'A judicial assistant is like a glass ceiling that cannot be broken, because the next step — becoming a judge — is far removed, both in time and in process.'*⁹⁶

In addition, employees of the patronage service feel discriminated against compared with other civil servants, particularly because they do not enjoy the same social guarantees or opportunities for professional development.

Despite economic challenges, experienced court staff remain in their roles due to their dedication to the profession. Courtroom secretaries with 20–30 years of service continue working *'solely because they believe in the importance of justice.'*⁹⁷

At the same time, young professionals mostly join the courts to gain experience but quickly leave the system due to low salaries and the lack of prospects. *'The court is a school of practical law. But when you realise that your salary doesn't cover basic needs, it becomes very difficult to stay.'*⁹⁸

Interview respondents emphasised that most young lawyers move to the private sector or other state institutions after working in the courts for a few years. *'Judges train future lawyers, prosecutors and notaries, but end up without qualified staff themselves.'*⁹⁹

Lack of a motivating environment. In their survey responses, participants stressed that court employees often face the absence of incentives for effective work. *'There's a lot of work, but the pay is low. No motivation or encouragement to do the job.'*¹⁰⁰

Such conditions lead to professional burnout, high staff turnover and reduced efficiency within the justice system.

Workload and technical support. Survey results also indicate that the heavy workload in courts is often a result of understaffing and insufficient technical support.

Issues such as the lack of proper storage facilities for case files and archives, or inadequate office space for staff, create additional difficulties in performing duties and worsen overall working conditions — which also negatively affects the prestige of the profession.¹⁰¹

Reputational challenges. Public perception of the court profession largely depends on the quality of information disseminated in the media. Courts are now taking steps to improve communication with the public, particularly in certain courts located in Kyiv and its surrounding areas, as well as in other regional and district centres. There, press offices, in cooperation with the press centre of the HCJ, are actively working to highlight key aspects of the judicial system's work.¹⁰²

However, in most local courts, due to the absence of specialised press officer positions, responsibilities for communication with the media and the public are delegated to other court staff who lack the appropriate training or experience in public communications. This results in ineffective efforts to ensure transparency in court operations, shape public image and respond promptly to information

⁹⁶ The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study.

⁹⁷ Information provided by respondent No. 23 during interview conducted on 10.04.2025.

⁹⁸ Information provided by respondent No. 38 during interview conducted on 11.04.2025.

⁹⁹ Information provided by respondent No. 1 during interview conducted on 18.03.2025.

¹⁰⁰ The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Information provided by respondents Nos. 20, 22, 25, 29 and 36 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 10.04.2025 and 21.04.2025.

requests. Such a situation also negatively affects the prestige of working in the judicial system, as the absence of proper communication structures signals a lack of attention to essential aspects of public engagement.¹⁰³

Moreover, the vast majority of judges interviewed noted that the media tend to focus primarily on corruption scandals, while positive outcomes in the courts' work often go unnoticed by journalists. This creates a distorted view of the profession for those working in civil and patronage service in the judiciary. Society often lacks a clear understanding of the role of such staff, the importance of their work, the level of responsibility involved and the difficult conditions in which they operate.¹⁰⁴

Social guarantees. Most survey respondents stressed the need to introduce social guarantees for court staff. These include health insurance, access to preferential housing loans and compensation for overtime work. As indicated in the responses, *providing court employees with a high salary (from 30,000 UAH per month) and comfortable working conditions would contribute to staff retention and enhance the prestige of the profession.*¹⁰⁵

To retain highly qualified personnel within the justice system, it is essential to introduce comprehensive social guarantees. Without career development, health insurance and other basic entitlements, it is impossible to keep the best employees who ensure the functioning of the courts. Social support programmes should become part of a broader national policy to strengthen the judiciary.¹⁰⁶

Respondents also highlighted the challenges faced by justice system employees under martial law, despite their continued commitment to their duties. Even under conditions of war or a state of emergency, the operation of the courts cannot be suspended, and citizens' constitutional right to access justice and judicial protection must not be restricted.

In addition to their professional responsibilities, employees of civil and patronage service in the courts — alongside judges — actively contribute to supporting the country during wartime. Many serve in the military, donate funds for military and humanitarian needs and help sustain volunteer initiatives.¹⁰⁷

According to judges, such actions reflect the high moral standards of court staff and enhance the prestige of the profession. 'When our court employees leave their desks and, in the evening, provide humanitarian aid or take part in volunteer initiatives, it shows their strength of spirit. These are people the country should be proud of.'¹⁰⁸

The prestige of the profession during wartime should be reinforced by public recognition of the contribution made by court staff to the common good. This would further emphasise the importance of their work — both at the local level and in the broader defence of the state.

Some court staff who were forced to leave their homes due to active hostilities or occupation face numerous difficulties after relocating. The state does not provide them with job security or assistance in finding employment in their new location. The lack of support mechanisms forces such staff to

¹⁰³ Information provided by respondents Nos. 20, 23 and 26 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025 and 10.04.2025.

¹⁰⁴ Information provided by respondent No. 29 during interview conducted on 19.03.2025.

¹⁰⁵ The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study.

¹⁰⁶ Information provided by respondent No. 34 during interview conducted on 20.03.2025.

¹⁰⁷ Information provided by respondents Nos. 12, 25, 30, 34 and 36 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 20.03.2025, 03.04.2025 and 10.04.2025.

¹⁰⁸ Information provided by respondent No. 12 during interview conducted on 03.04.2025.

seek new employment independently, often without any guarantee of retaining their previous status or salary level.¹⁰⁹

The situation is further complicated by the absence of government housing programmes for displaced court employees. In most cases, these issues are addressed individually or with the help of judges who assist in securing temporary accommodation or facilitate job searches. This places an additional burden on court staff and negatively affects their motivation and professional stability.¹¹⁰

Conclusions. The prestige of civil and patronage service in Ukrainian courts depends on improving several key aspects. It is essential to increase salaries, introduce social guarantees and career development opportunities, ensure adequate material and technical support, and strengthen efforts to build a positive public image of the judiciary.

*'Prestige depends not only on salaries but also on how court staff are treated as an essential part of the justice system. If society sees that the state values the judiciary, everything changes.'*¹¹¹

2.2. Recruitment and Appointment of Staff

The system of recruitment and appointment of civil and patronage service staff in Ukrainian courts is a key element in ensuring the efficiency of the judicial system. However, due to a number of systemic issues — such as the absence of a personnel reserve, low wages and the lack of centralised recruitment mechanisms — courts regularly face staff shortages.¹¹²

International standards. According to international standards, professional recruitment in the judiciary must be based on the principles of transparency, equal access, objectivity, competence and ethical conduct. These principles are elaborated in the recommendations and opinions of the Council of Europe, the CCJE and the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ).¹¹³

Specifically, an effective system for recruiting judicial staff must ensure:

- 1. Clearly defined qualification requirements for candidates:** selection should be based on professional training, experience, knowledge and skills appropriate to the position. The criteria for candidates must be transparent, clear and consistent for all applicants, thereby preventing favouritism and subjectivity in the recruitment process.¹¹⁴
- 2. Transparent competitive procedures:** all stages of recruitment must be open to public oversight, with decisions that are reasoned and accountable.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 10 and 35 during interviews conducted on 11.03.2025 and 09.04.2025.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Information provided by respondent No. 40 during interview conducted on 15.03.2025.

¹¹² Information provided by respondents Nos. 1, 4–6, 12, 13, 20, 22, 23, 29, 32, 33, 38 and 40 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 12.03.2025, 15.03.2025, 18.03.2025, 03.04.2025, 08.04.2025, 09.04.2025, 10.04.2025 and 21.04.2025.

¹¹³ [European judicial systems CEPEJ Evaluation Report. Sistema penale. CEPEJ tools on quality of justice.](#) Council of Europe.

¹¹⁴ [CCJE Opinions. High Council of Justice. Recommendation CM/Rec\(2010\)12 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to Member States on Judges: Independence, Efficiency and Responsibilities: Recommendation of the Council of Europe No. \(2010\)12 of 17.11.2010.](#)

¹¹⁵ [CCJE Opinions.](#) High Council of Justice.

- 3. Mechanisms for adaptation and professional development:** continuous education and training of judicial personnel is a crucial element. Judicial assistants and court staff must have access to training programmes, internships and mentorship opportunities to support their adaptation and improve the quality of their work.¹¹⁶
- 4. Conditions for professional growth and staff motivation:** international standards require that recruitment systems be integrated with mechanisms for career advancement, performance evaluation and encouragement of professional development. This helps attract and retain the most motivated and qualified specialists within the system.¹¹⁷
- 5. Adequate remuneration and social guarantees:** decent pay, social protection, health insurance and pension provision are essential for attracting and retaining professional personnel in the judiciary. Insufficient financial support leads to staff turnover and a decline in the quality of justice.¹¹⁸

Current recruitment system. The process for recruiting civil and patronage service staff in the courts differs significantly depending on their status:

- › **Civil service:** appointments are made based on the results of competitive procedures in accordance with the Law of Ukraine No. 889-VIII 'On Civil Service'.¹¹⁹ However, during martial law, competitions have been suspended, which significantly complicates the filling of vacancies. The absence of competition affects both the speed of recruitment and the quality of court operations.¹²⁰
- › **Patronage service:** judicial assistants are appointed by the head of the court office upon nomination by the judge.¹²¹ This procedure is less formalised and often depends on the judge's personal contacts or recommendations from other court staff.¹²²

In practice, the search for candidates involves all available channels: announcements are posted not only on official court websites but also in professional groups on social media, messaging platforms, legal organisation pages, student associations and are actively promoted during judges' visits to educational institutions.¹²³

Judges and court office managers are forced to use both personal and public resources to at least partially meet the staffing needs of the court. In addition, certain positions are filled or rotated by reallocating existing court staff: when a post is vacated, management may offer a 'promotion' or transfer to an employee who already has court experience and has demonstrated reliability and professionalism.¹²⁴

¹¹⁶ [CCJE Opinions](#). High Council of Justice.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ [On Civil Service: Law of Ukraine No. 889-VIII of 10.12.2015, as of 04.06.2025.](#)

¹²⁰ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 8, 10, 20, 29, 34, 38 and 41 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 20.03.2025, 24.03.2025, 08.04.2025, 09.04.2025, 10.04.2025 and 11.04.2025.

¹²¹ [On the Judiciary and Status of Judges: Law of Ukraine No. 1402-VIII of 02.06.2016, as of 04.06.2025.](#)
[On Approval of the Regulation on Judges' Assistants: Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 21 of 18.05.2018.](#)

¹²² Information provided by respondents Nos. 14, 16, 17, 20, 28 and 33 during interviews conducted on 04.03.2025, 10.03.2025, 18.03.2025, 08.04.2025 and 09.04.2025.

¹²³ Information provided by respondents Nos. 1,3, 5,7, 9,21, 22, 25 and 37 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 17.03.2025, 18.03.2025, 09.04.2025, 10.04.2025, 11.04.2025 and 21.04.2025.

¹²⁴ Information provided by respondents Nos. 2,4, 6, 26, 35, 40 and 41 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 15.03.2025, 21.03.2025, 24.03.2025 and 08.04.2025.

However, even such measures do not ensure enough candidates, due to the low level of pay and the high demands of the work. The recruitment process often comes down to a short interview, after which it becomes clear that the candidate does not meet expectations.¹²⁵

The shortage of young professionals is particularly acute: whereas previously courtroom secretaries sought professional advancement and viewed court work as the start of a legal career, today even law graduates show little interest in employment in the courts. This contributes to even higher staff turnover and makes it more difficult to build stable and professional court teams.¹²⁶

Thus, staff recruitment in Ukrainian courts is currently an extremely challenging and resource-intensive process that does not guarantee a high-quality renewal or replenishment of personnel but instead highlights deeper systemic problems.

At the same time, there are exceptions. Interviews with judges from regional city and district courts show that in a number of courts in smaller towns and rural areas, the staffing situation is significantly better. There, court staff, having fewer professional alternatives, begin working as young specialists and remain in their roles until retirement age. Life is more affordable in such regions, and competition from other legal professions is minimal. In these courts, 90% of staff have worked for over 10 — and in some cases 15 — years, which fosters stable, cohesive teams. This has been made possible by sound personnel policies of court leadership, employees' personal motivation and support from experienced court office managers.¹²⁷

Judges emphasise that it is thanks to personal motivation, patriotism, mutual support and a flexible approach to work organisation that courts have managed to retain professional teams even under the difficult conditions of martial law.¹²⁸

By contrast, in large cities and regional centres — where the labour market is more competitive and salaries do not match living costs and workload — recruitment and retention of staff remains an especially urgent issue.¹²⁹

Thus, these positive examples are rather exceptions and do not reflect the general state of the Ukrainian judiciary, where staff shortages, low motivation and the absence of a systematic recruitment approach remain key challenges.

Key issues in court staff recruitment. A professional approach to the recruitment of court staff is a fundamental condition for ensuring the efficiency, impartiality and stability of the judicial system. The quality of the personnel determines not only the organisation of court proceedings but also the level of public trust in justice and the adherence to standards of ethics, transparency and judicial independence.

International practice shows that a systematic, transparent and competitive recruitment process — focused on professional competence, motivation and integrity — is the cornerstone of effective judicial institutions and contributes to raising the overall prestige of public service.

¹²⁵ Information provided by respondents Nos. 8,10, 11, 13, 24, 27 and 29 during interviews conducted on 11.03.2025, 12.03.2025, 03.04.2025, 09.04.2025, 10.04.2025 and 29.04.2025.

¹²⁶ Information provided by respondents Nos. 20, 30, 31, 36, 39, 40 and 41 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 12.03.2025, 15.03.2025, 19.03.2025 and 24.03.2025.

¹²⁷ Information provided by respondents Nos. 12, 14, 18-20, 22, 23, 27 and 36 during interviews conducted on 04.03.2025, 17.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 03.04.2025, 21.04.2025, 10.04.2025 and 29.04.2025.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 15, 20, 29, 32, 35 and 36 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 08.04.2025, 10.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

At the same time, an analysis of the current situation in Ukraine, particularly based on interviews with judiciary staff, reveals a number of key issues that significantly hinder the formation of a professional workforce. As already noted, these include low salaries and inadequate material and technical support, lack of motivation, and prospects for young professionals and, as a result, high staff turnover.¹³⁰

However, the core problem remains the **absence of a centralised and formalised recruitment system.**

At present, the process of searching for candidates for civil and patronage service positions in the courts takes place in an unsystematic manner, without clearly established procedures or unified standards — making it difficult to ensure transparency and efficiency in recruitment.¹³¹

The competitive procedures provided for by current legislation are, in most cases, largely formal and do not guarantee the objective selection of the most suitable candidates. This is particularly true in the recruitment of judicial assistants, where the decision on appointment is made at the judge's discretion, without the application of transparent criteria or standardised assessment procedures. Such an approach reduces the openness and fairness of staffing decisions within the judiciary¹³² and requires revision.

Limited opportunities for career advancement are one of the key reasons for low candidate interest in working within the court apparatus. Judicial assistants often view their role as a temporary stage, since the system does not provide clear and transparent mechanisms for professional progression or for moving into other responsible positions within the judiciary.¹³³

Especially demotivating is the fact that the competitive selection process for judicial appointments is extremely lengthy and unpredictable. Judicial assistants have no advantages or preferences when participating in such competitions, and the lack of guarantees regarding their implementation and timing deprives the role of its status as a genuine entry point for a judicial career. As a result, many professionals do not consider the position of judicial assistant as a promising path for professional development within the court system.¹³⁴

The preparation and adaptation of new staff is insufficient: the requirements for candidates (education, knowledge of the state language) are minimal, yet even under these conditions, it is difficult to find qualified professionals. The system of traineeships and professional development is fragmented, and training often takes place on the job, which does not always allow for the rapid adaptation of new staff to the specific nature of judicial work.¹³⁵

Formation of a personnel reserve. Building a personnel reserve is an important element in ensuring the stability of the judicial system. At present, such reserves are virtually non-existent in local courts due to a shortage of applicants and available positions.¹³⁶ At the same time, the experience of the

¹³⁰ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 15, 20, 29, 32, 35 and 36 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 08.04.2025, 10.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

¹³¹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 2, 3, 6, 9, 11, 13, 20, 29, 31, 40 and 41 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 12.03.2025, 15.03.2025, 17.03.2025, 21.03.2025, 24.03.2025, 03.04.2025, 08.04.2025, 10.04.2025 and 11.04.2025.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 14, 20, 21, 26, 29, 32, 33 and 40 during interviews conducted on 04.03.2025, 15.03.2025, 08.04.2025, 09.04.2025 and 10.04.2025.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Information provided by respondents Nos. 1–3, 6–10, 13, 20–22, 29–30, 32–33, 35–36, 38 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 12.03.2025, 17.03.2025, 18.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 21.03.2025, 08.04.2025, 09.04.2025,

High Anti-Corruption Court of Ukraine (HACC) demonstrates the effectiveness of a modern approach to forming a personnel reserve for the prompt and high-quality staffing of the court's administrative apparatus.¹³⁷

In March 2025, the HACC announced the formation of a personnel reserve for 110 positions, including 50 judicial assistant posts, 24 courtroom secretary positions, 7 court usher roles and 29 other administrative posts. This large-scale recruitment effort is driven by the significant expansion of the HACC's judicial corps — the appointment of 25 new judges is expected.¹³⁸

Selection for the personnel reserve is carried out through submission of a CV, testing and interviews, with appointments to be made following the completion of competitive procedures for judicial positions at the HACC and its Court of Appeal.¹³⁹

It is worth noting that the HACC is able to conduct such a large-scale reserve formation campaign thanks to the significantly higher level of remuneration for court staff compared to other courts. According to the MFU, in January 2025, the average salary of a judicial assistant at the HACC was 51,800 UAH, a department head earned 67,400 UAH, a specialist received 40,400 UAH, and a support staff member earned 33,100 UAH.¹⁴⁰ By comparison, in local and appellate courts — even after the pay rise on 1 April 2025 — the average salary of court staff is projected to range from 17,000 to 23,000 UAH and in some regions even lower.¹⁴¹

It is precisely this competitive level of remuneration at the HACC that is one of the key factors enabling the court to attract and retain qualified professionals, as well as to build a high-quality personnel reserve. This is clearly reflected in the recruitment results: during the application period from 17 March to 17 April 2025, the HACC received 1,036 CVs from applicants. The greatest interest was shown in judicial assistant positions — 448 applications were submitted for these roles. The overall distribution of applications was as follows: 43% for judicial assistant posts, 23% for courtroom secretary roles and 34% for other positions within the court's apparatus.¹⁴²

At the same time, despite the significant difference in remuneration, the HACC's experience in forming a personnel reserve is extremely valuable and could be successfully adapted for local and appellate courts. Introducing similar mechanisms would enhance the flexibility, responsiveness and quality of staff recruitment, as well as ensure the stability of the judiciary even under crisis conditions.

Moreover, the creation of a transparent and centralised personnel reserve system would provide potential candidates with access to up-to-date information on opportunities to participate in competitions for vacant positions. The current information available on the website of the SJA, judging by the scale of the staffing shortage,¹⁴³ is not an effective tool for attracting or recruiting personnel.

10.04.2025, 11.04.2025 and 21.04.2025.

¹³⁷ Information provided by respondent No. 17 during interview conducted on 10.03.2025.

¹³⁸ [HACC Launches Recruitment of Candidates for the Staffing Reserve of the Court Administration](#). High Anti-Corruption Court.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ [Number and Remuneration of All Employees of State Authorities in 2025](#). Ministry of Finance of Ukraine.

¹⁴¹ [Press Service of the CJU. Meeting of the Council of Judges of Ukraine, 18.03.2025](#). YouTube.

¹⁴² [Formation of the Staffing Reserve of the HACC Administration: 1,036 Applicants for 110 Posts](#). High Anti-Corruption Court.

¹⁴³ [Current Vacancies in the Staff of Appellate and Local Courts of Ukraine](#). State Judicial Administration of Ukraine.

The introduction of a unified platform for building a personnel reserve would make the recruitment process more transparent, accessible and appealing to a wider range of qualified professionals.

Court-based internships. By Decision No. 22 of 1 May 2025, the HCJ approved the draft Model Programme for Internships in Courts for Students of Higher Legal Education and recommended its implementation by higher education institutions and judicial bodies.¹⁴⁴ Under this programme, universities will enter into agreements with the SJA and individual courts and students will gain experience working within court administrations and acquire skills in drafting judicial decisions.

In the context of a significant staffing shortage in the judiciary, the introduction of such a programme is timely and should serve as an important tool for replenishing the personnel reserve. The practical competencies acquired by students and the unified approaches to evaluating internship outcomes will contribute to preparing more qualified and motivated future court staff.¹⁴⁵

Organised **internships** for current court employees in higher-instance courts could serve a similarly valuable purpose. For example, the HACC operates the internship programme '#KROKUVACS', which offers participants the opportunity to 'familiarise themselves with the activities of the HACC and gain knowledge and practical skills' in the field of court administration.¹⁴⁶ According to the programme's terms, participants over the course of their internship [...] develop professional and communication skills,¹⁴⁷ creating a foundation for launching a career in the courts.

Introducing similar internships for staff of local and appellate courts would support the enhancement of their qualifications and the broadening of their competencies, and could also serve as an effective mechanism for selecting promising professionals to work in higher courts.

Conclusions. An analysis of the current system for recruiting civil and patronage service staff in Ukrainian courts reveals a number of deep structural problems that significantly affect the efficiency, stability and quality of judicial functioning.

The recruitment of court staff remains an unreformed component of the system, operating without unified standards, transparent procedures or strategic vision. Staffing decisions are often made on an ad hoc basis, without proper assessment of candidates' professional and ethical qualities, which reduces the calibre of personnel and undermines the potential of the court apparatus. The recruitment of judicial assistants is particularly problematic, as it is conducted without competitive procedures, legal clarity regarding status or adequate social guarantees.

Low attractiveness of service, the absence of a personnel reserve system, weak coordination at the level of the SJA and public distrust in the profession pose serious risks to the stability and effectiveness of the justice system. Recruitment in its current form is unable to provide for the renewal of the court apparatus in response to contemporary challenges — particularly in the context of war and increasing workload.

2.3. Independence and Interaction

¹⁴⁴ Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 22 of 01.05.2025.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Regulations on the Internship Programme at the High Anti-Corruption Court '#KROKUVACS', approved by Order of the High Anti-Corruption Court No. 29-a dated 18.08.2021.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

Court staff play a key role in ensuring the day-to-day functioning of the judiciary. Their independence is no less important a component of fair justice than the independence of judges themselves. This refers to the ability of court employees to perform their duties objectively, impartially and without external pressure — whether from parties to legal proceedings, court management or other bodies. At the same time, effective court operations require well-coordinated interaction between judges and administrative staff, built on mutual respect, legality and a clear delineation of responsibilities.

Empirical Findings on the Independence of Court Staff: Survey and Interview Analysis

Level of independence and influencing factors. According to the results of a survey of staff in local and appellate courts, assessments of their independence vary significantly. Only around 17.3% of respondents consider court staff to be ‘fully independent’, with a further 26.6% saying they are ‘rather independent’. At the same time, a considerable share of respondents (nearly one-third) were unable to clearly assess the level of independence or described the issue as difficult to interpret. Another 22.6% indicated that court staff were dependent on external factors (14.1% said ‘rather dependent’ and 8.5% said ‘fully dependent’). Some respondents provided detailed comments clarifying on whom the court apparatus depends. Specifically, it was noted that judicial assistants (patronage service) are ‘entirely dependent on the judge, while civil servants are independent’.¹⁴⁸

Thus, the institutional position of a staff member (whether a civil servant or a judge’s assistant as a patronage service employee) influences their sense of independence: permanent administrative staff tend to feel more autonomous than assistants, whose careers are directly tied to a specific judge.

Surveyed staff also identified the key factors influencing their independence.¹⁴⁹ The most significant, in their view, are: low salary levels (65.3%), dependence on judges (within the patronage service, 36.9%) and pressure from court management (23.4%). Other frequently mentioned factors included ‘personal connections and acquaintances’ and the inadequacy of legislation governing the status of court staff.¹⁵⁰ These findings are consistent with expert interviews. One judge, for example, remarked that direct external pressure on court staff is unlikely, as ‘justice... lies in the judges’ hands’, meaning that outside actors have little incentive to target court personnel. According to this judge, the only real threat to staff independence stems from internal factors — above all, the potential for leaks of official information due to corruption: ‘a person earning 7,000 UAH... someone might [offer them] 500 dollars — and they might not resist’.¹⁵¹ In other words, financial insecurity and susceptibility to corruption undermine the independence of court staff more than formal administrative pressure.

Court employees themselves also emphasise the material factor: ensuring decent salaries and transparent conditions for career advancement is often cited as a prerequisite for strengthening both the independence of the administrative apparatus and the effectiveness of its work.¹⁵²

Ethical standards and a professional atmosphere. Overall, survey respondents gave a positive assessment of compliance with ethical norms in the courts. Approximately 82% reported that civil and patronage service employees in their court mostly or always adhere to ethical standards.¹⁵³ A

¹⁴⁸ The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Information provided by respondent No. 39 during interview conducted on 39.12.03.2025.

¹⁵² The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

further 11.8% noted that ‘occasional breaches’ of ethics occur, but almost no one reported systematic or serious violations (only 2% selected the option indicating frequent breaches).¹⁵⁴ This suggests that internal culture largely supports professional conduct within the court apparatus.

In interviews, court office managers emphasised the importance of fostering an atmosphere of trust and security for staff. Management should not abuse disciplinary measures, as a sense of safety is seen as ‘a trump card in the hands of a court office manager who unites the team’. As one court office head put it, staff should not be afraid to admit mistakes; otherwise, ‘this is not management at all’.¹⁵⁵ Thus, a democratic leadership style — where the court office head supports staff and allows them to correct mistakes without unwarranted punishment — promotes openness and mutual trust. This, in turn, strengthens both the independence of staff and the quality of their work by reducing internal fear and dependence on the ‘mood’ of management.¹⁵⁶

At the same time, certain ethical issues were identified during the study. Interviews revealed informal practices that may be perceived as biased. For example, in some specialised courts there is an unwritten rule not to hire courtroom secretaries from local courts of general jurisdiction¹⁵⁷ — a practice that court office managers and judges referred to as a kind of ‘positive discrimination’ aimed at preserving a ‘client-oriented’ work culture.¹⁵⁸ While this is explained as an effort to raise standards of public service, such an approach is questionable from the standpoint of personnel ethics. It indicates the presence of bias in staffing decisions, which may affect the moral climate within court teams.

Discrimination and harassment: staff experience. Most court staff reported no experience of workplace discrimination — 66.5% stated they had never encountered it.¹⁵⁹ However, one in six or seven employees (15.2%) reported experiencing biased treatment. The most frequently cited grounds for discrimination were age (targeting both younger and older staff) and financial status. Some respondents pointed to bias related to marital or family status (such as having children), slightly over 2% experienced gender-based discrimination, and a few isolated cases concerned political beliefs. It is worth noting that 18.3% of respondents were unsure how to answer — they may have encountered ambiguous situations but were unable to clearly classify them as discrimination.¹⁶⁰

Direct sexual harassment or inappropriate sexual behaviour, according to the survey results, are rare occurrences. The overwhelming majority of court staff (around 93%) stated that they had never encountered such behaviour at work.¹⁶¹ Only 4.7% acknowledged that such incidents had occurred (with fewer than 0.5% reporting them as happening ‘fairly often’ or ‘very often’). This indicates that sexual harassment is not a systemic issue within court administrations, although isolated cases do exist. In interviews, judges and court office managers did not report any such incidents, which indirectly supports the conclusion that such behaviour is not typical. At the same time, respondents

¹⁵⁴ The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study.

¹⁵⁵ Information provided by respondent No. 15 during interview conducted on 30.04.2025.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ As the interviews reveal, employees from local courts of general jurisdiction are often avoided in hiring due to the skills they have developed, which do not align with client-oriented standards. This refers to formalistic or indifferent attitudes towards citizens and insufficient flexibility in responding to individual requests — behaviours that, in specialised courts, are perceived as signs of professional deformation.

¹⁵⁸ Information provided by respondents Nos. 39 and 42 during interviews conducted on 12.03.2025 and 30.04.2025.

¹⁵⁹ The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

stressed the importance of ethical standards and mutual respect, so that no form of harassment or abuse is tolerated within court teams.¹⁶²

Although the overall level of satisfaction with the ethical climate is high, some troubling accounts emerged in open-ended responses to the questionnaire and interviews. For example, one judicial assistant reported pressure from a judge after refusing to carry out tasks outside their official duties. In particular, the assistant referred to being asked to handle personal errands for the judge: ‘...I refused to do work that was not part of my job responsibilities: filling in the judge’s declaration, drafting claims for the judge, washing the judge’s car, writing full texts of judgments from scratch...’¹⁶³ This example represents a striking case of unacceptable conduct, in which the judge clearly abused their authority over the assistant. It illustrates how personal factors (such as the authoritarian style of an individual supervisor) can undermine principles of equal treatment and professional ethics. At the same time, such cases appear to be isolated; their identification in the course of the study serves to highlight the need for vigilance and prevention of such abuses.

Mobbing and psychological climate. The issue of mobbing (psychological pressure or bullying in the workplace) appears somewhat more frequently in courts than overt discrimination or harassment. Only 64.9% of respondents stated that they had never encountered mobbing.¹⁶⁴ The remaining third reported some experience of bullying: approximately 14% had experienced it occasionally, a further 11.4% very rarely, and around 5.5% said mobbing occurred fairly or very frequently in their workplace.¹⁶⁵ This is cause for concern, as sustained psychological pressure negatively affects both staff wellbeing and the overall effectiveness of the court administration.

The most common forms of mobbing experienced by court staff include verbal insults, humiliation, the spreading of rumours or false information, as well as excessive criticism or unfounded accusations from management or colleagues.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, 5.4% of those who had experienced mobbing reported threats or intimidation, and nearly the same share (4.7%) noted social isolation (such as being ignored or excluded from the team).¹⁶⁷ The responses indicate that verbal aggression and reputational attacks are the primary forms of workplace bullying in courts. At the same time, physical aggression or direct sexual harassment in the context of mobbing was virtually never mentioned — the issue is specifically one of psychological pressure.

Interviews with heads of court administrations revealed differing approaches to team management, which directly influence the presence or absence of a mobbing culture. A positive example is when leadership deliberately fosters a collaborative atmosphere. For instance, the head of administration in one court consciously avoids petty disciplinary measures and encourages open dialogue with subordinates: ‘*Don’t be afraid to admit you made a mistake. My job is to help, not to drown people*’.¹⁶⁸ This approach helps minimise the conditions that give rise to mobbing, as staff do not live in constant fear of making a mistake or being publicly humiliated. By contrast, in teams where authoritarian or ‘Soviet-style’ management prevails, situations may arise in which some employees feel like outsiders, as they are subjected to disproportionate criticism or pressure. Some employees directly pointed to the

¹⁶² Information provided by respondents Nos. 1–41 during interviews conducted from 03.03.2025 till 30.04.2025.

¹⁶³ The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Information provided by respondent No. 15 during interview conducted on 30.04.2025.

lack of objectivity among certain managers, which manifests as favouritism: *'a division between "their own", who can get away with anything... and "outsiders", who... may face... bullying'*.¹⁶⁹ This highlights underlying problems in internal workplace relations that warrant attention from judicial leadership.

Alongside mobbing, nepotism remains a relevant issue — that is, the employment of judges' relatives in the same court. This can create a potential conflict of interest and influence the objectivity of court staff.¹⁷⁰ The presence of such family ties calls into question the principle of equal access to public service and may lead to corporatism within the team. In this context, internal restrictions or policies should be developed to prevent such situations, in particular by introducing transparent competitive selection processes even for patronage positions.

Awareness of protection mechanisms. Finally, the study examined whether court staff knew where to turn in cases of discrimination, harassment or mobbing and whether they were willing to use available mechanisms.¹⁷¹

Most respondents are aware of protection options: 43.7% know where to turn and would be willing to do so if needed, while a further 17.1% are aware but unsure whether they would file a complaint. However, a significant proportion of *staff lack confidence in these mechanisms*. 20.7% admitted that they do not know where to report a violation of their rights, and 17.2% believe that 'there's no point in reporting it'. This scepticism is supported by direct comments: *'None of this works. "...Don't like it? Fine — there's a queue of people waiting to take your place..."'*¹⁷² one employee said emotionally. Another respondent, employed in an appellate court, noted that the administration uses short-term contracts as a tool of pressure, meaning that complaints simply lead to non-renewal at the end of the contract.¹⁷³

The low level of trust in mechanisms for protecting staff rights signals the need to improve them. In formal terms, procedures do exist in courts for addressing cases of discrimination or harassment (such as appeals to the HCJ, court management or authorised bodies). However, as the findings of the study show, a significant number of staff are not confident in the impartiality or effectiveness of these procedures. Notably, none of the respondents cited an example of a successfully resolved conflict through an official complaint — instead, individuals either silently tolerate the problem or rely on informal solutions (such as reassignment or resignation).¹⁷⁴

International standards. The independence of the judiciary is a cornerstone of the rule of law, and its effectiveness directly depends on the professionalism and coordinated interaction of all participants in the judicial process, including court staff.

Employees in both civil and patronage service (in particular judicial assistants) play a key role in providing the organisational support that enables judges to focus on delivering reasoned and fair decisions. At the same time, their work must be based on principles of professional ethics, transparency and impartiality, to prevent any risks to the independence of justice.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁹ The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study.

¹⁷⁰ Information provided by respondent No. 42 during interview conducted on 30.04.2025.

¹⁷¹ The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Information provided by respondent No. 42 during interview conducted on 30.04.2025.

¹⁷⁵ Opinion No. 22 (2019) of the Consultative Council of European Judges for the Attention of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the Role of Judges'. Council of Europe.

Courts must be staffed with a sufficient number of judges and qualified support personnel. To prevent and reduce excessive workloads in courts, appropriate measures must be taken to safeguard judicial independence, including the delegation of non-judicial tasks to other suitably qualified individuals.¹⁷⁶

International standards — particularly, the CCJE recommendations — emphasise the importance of a clear division of functions and the need to provide appropriate working conditions for these categories of staff.¹⁷⁷

General Principles of Independence and Interaction for Judiciary Staff

- 1. Division of functions.** A key principle is the clear division of functions between judges and court staff. Court staff (civil service) and judicial assistants (patronage service) must perform support functions such as document preparation, organising hearings and managing case files, but must not participate in the adoption of judicial decisions. This ensures compliance with the principle of judicial independence and helps avoid conflicts of interest.¹⁷⁸
- 2. Ethical standards.** Court staff are required to adhere to high ethical standards, including confidentiality, impartiality and professional communication with parties to proceedings.¹⁷⁹
- 3. Provision of resources.** Effective work by court staff requires sufficient financial and material resources. Inadequate funding, outdated equipment or the lack of training programmes lead to a decline in the quality of justice.¹⁸⁰
- 4. Training and professional development.** Ongoing training for court staff in case management, use of IT tools and communication is essential. The CCJE recommends implementing professional development programmes tailored to the needs of the judiciary.¹⁸¹
- 5. Interaction with judges.** Interaction must be based on transparency and professional responsibility. Court staff must not influence judges' decisions, while judges are obliged to oversee the quality of their staff's work.¹⁸²

Specifics of the work of judicial assistants (patronage service). On 7 November 2019, at its 20th meeting, the CCJE adopted Opinion No. 22, dedicated to the role of judicial assistants. In this document, drawing on European experience, the CCJE outlined the functions performed by judicial assistants, defined their main duties, the nature of their relationship with the judge and examined the question of assistants' influence on the independence of the judiciary as a whole and of individual judges in particular. Special attention was given to the procedures and safeguards for the appointment of judicial assistants, which are of critical importance to the judicial system as a whole.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁶ Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)12 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to Member States on Judges: Independence, Efficiency and Responsibilities: Recommendation of the Council of Europe No. (2010)12 of 17.11.2010.

¹⁷⁷ CCJE Opinions. High Council of Justice.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Victor Horodovenko, Ukraine's Representative to the CCJE, Judge of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine. The Role of Judges' Assistants: Key Messages from the CCJE Opinion. Judicial and Legal Newspaper.

The CCJE noted that among Council of Europe member states, various approaches exist regarding the organisation of assistants' work¹⁸⁴ — as described in detail in [subsection 1.3 of Section 1 of this study](#).¹⁸⁵

With regard to assistants' involvement in drafting procedural documents or even judgments, the CCJE views this practice positively for European countries: the involvement of assistants enhances the efficiency of courts and strengthens judicial independence, particularly in the context of protecting human rights and freedoms in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights.

At the same time, the CCJE emphasises that the final decision and responsibility for it remain the exclusive prerogative of the judge, while the role of the assistant is supportive and carried out under the judge's constant supervision. This ensures a balance between efficient court organisation and the principle of judicial independence.

In its opinions, the CCJE clearly states that regardless of workload or the specifics of national legislation — the judge bears full responsibility for issuing a judicial decision. If a judge is not fully acquainted with the details of the case, lacks the relevant legal knowledge or is unfamiliar with international and European law, no assistant can substitute for them in the exercise of judicial functions. An assistant may carry out supporting tasks — organising workflow and preparing materials — but the decision-making remains the sole responsibility of the judge. Responsibility for the content and issuance of a judicial act always lies with the judge, as it is the judge who carries out the mission of justice. The line between appropriate legal support and interference with judicial independence is extremely delicate.¹⁸⁶

In the context of the staffing shortage in Ukrainian courts, the question arises as to whether increasing the number of assistants can compensate for the lack of judges. The CCJE, in paragraph 14 of its Opinion, states clearly that expanding the number of assistants must not come at the expense of appointing a sufficient number of judges.¹⁸⁷

As for the career development of assistants, the authors of the CCJE Opinion highlight the importance of supporting their professional growth. In particular, it is recommended that in countries where it is feasible, the most experienced judicial assistants be given opportunities and support to move into judicial positions, thereby encouraging their continued professional advancement.¹⁸⁸

State of play in Ukraine. The independence of court staff in Ukraine has both external and internal dimensions: protection from political influence and protection from undue pressure within the court itself. During the study period (2020–2024), there were virtually no recorded cases of external interference with the independence of court staff. However, insufficient guarantees of social and professional status have created a number of vulnerabilities — from low salaries to ineffective internal protection mechanisms.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ Opinion No. 22 (2019) of the Consultative Council of European Judges for the Attention of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the Role of Judges' Assistants. Council of Europe.

¹⁸⁵ Functioning of the Civil and Patronage Service in the Judicial Authorities of Ukraine. Subsection 1.3: Comparative Analysis of the Institute of Judges' Assistants: Experience of Ukraine, Europe and Other Countries, Section 1: Civil and Patronage Service in the Judicial Authorities: Evolution, Current State and International Experience.

¹⁸⁶ Victor Horodovenko, Ukraine's Representative to the CCJE, Judge of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine. The Role of Judges' Assistants: Key Messages from the CCJE Opinion. Judicial and Legal Newspaper.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 1–41 during interviews conducted from 03.03.2025 till 30.04.2025.

External factors influencing the independence of court staff include issues of funding and staffing. Low pay remains a chronic problem: the average salary of a court employee is significantly lower than in many other state bodies. During wartime, this has resulted in an outflow of personnel from the courts.¹⁹⁰ While the state has attempted to respond to this crisis, the impact so far has been limited.¹⁹¹

Appointment to the position of assistant judge is conducted without competitive selection. Judges choose their own assistants, and the head of the court office simply formalises the appointment. This guarantees trust from the judge but reduces the assistant's protection, as they are deprived of official status guarantees. The term of office of an assistant is tied to the judge's tenure — if the judge resigns or is dismissed, the assistant leaves their post as well. In addition, judicial assistants are not subject to anti-corruption legislation (they are not required to file electronic declarations¹⁹²), which significantly increases corruption risks.

Thus, staff in the patronage service remain less protected professionally compared to civil servants in the courts, creating inequality in the legal status of individuals performing similar functions.¹⁹³

In 2020, the HCJ approved updated Rules of Conduct for Court Staff,¹⁹⁴ aimed at ensuring political neutrality, respect for the rights of parties to proceedings and adherence to standards of integrity. These rules include the duty to avoid conflicts of interest, refrain from expressing political or ideological preferences while performing official duties and preserve the confidentiality of official information. Compliance with these norms is essential both for professional ethics and for the practical independence of court staff.¹⁹⁵

Interaction and internal independence. Overall, the interaction between judges and court staff is based on professionalism and mutual respect — the staff conscientiously carry out their support functions, and judges do not interfere with their work.¹⁹⁶ However, conflicts do sometimes arise. Judges or court office managers may behave unethically or issue instructions that exceed their authority.^{197,198} Such incidents undermine internal independence: when a subordinate is afraid to refuse a superior or experiences mobbing, they lose independence in their work.

According to survey data, court staff have little trust in official protection procedures.¹⁹⁹ There are no known successful precedents of complaints against managerial pressure — none of the respondents could recall a case in which a complaint against leadership resulted in any concrete outcome. Typically,

¹⁹⁰ Bohdan Monich: 'The Salary of Court Staff Should Be "Linked" to Judicial Remuneration'. Council of Judges of Ukraine.

¹⁹¹ Ways to Improve Regulation of Judges' Assistants' Remuneration Discussed at the Supreme Court. Council of Judges of Ukraine.

¹⁹² On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges: Law of Ukraine No. 1402-VIII of 02.06.2016, as of 04.06.2025.
On Approval of the Regulation on Judges' Assistants: Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 21 of 18.05.2018.

¹⁹³ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 14, 26, 28, 40 and 41 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025, 15.03.2025, 24.03.2025 and 08.04.2025.

¹⁹⁴ On Approval of the Code of Conduct for Court Employees: Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 33 of 06.02.2009, as of 01.01.2021.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Information provided by respondents Nos. 1–41 during interviews conducted from 03.03.2025 till 30.04.2025.

¹⁹⁷ Information provided by respondent No. 38 during interview conducted on 11.04.2025.

¹⁹⁸ The data was obtained from a survey of over 1,000 court staff in Ukraine in the framework of this study.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

such problems are either left unspoken or resolved informally (through resignation or transfer). This indicates that internal oversight is effectively non-functional, leaving staff unprotected.

Given the internal hierarchy within courts, it is important to strike a balance between structured leadership and maintaining the self-respect of employees. Judges have the authority to manage the work of their assistants, and court office managers supervise the rest of the staff — but any instructions or demands must not contradict job descriptions or exceed legal authority. If an employee receives a questionable instruction, they have the right to request written confirmation and, in case of refusal, report the matter to the SJA or judicial governance bodies. Such procedures do exist, but they require practical modernisation and greater trust from staff.

A notable example of the challenges facing the independence of court staff is the incident involving the High Qualification Commission of Judges (HQCJ) and its member, Judge Oleksii Omelian. In August 2024, acting head of the HQCJ Secretariat Nataliia Kidina filed a complaint accusing the newly appointed Deputy Head of the HQCJ, Oleksii Omelian, of sustained psychological pressure and workplace bullying (mobbing).²⁰⁰ In her written report, she stated that during meetings, Omelian accused her of incompetence, failure to perform her duties and threatened to withhold bonuses — using a disparaging tone throughout.

The source of the conflict was Kidina's refusal to carry out instructions, which, in her view, did not align with the official duties of court staff — specifically, attempts to compel civil servants of the Secretariat to perform functions not appropriate to their roles. The complaint was submitted to the Disciplinary Chamber of the HCJ. This was the first case in the HCJ's practice in which a complaint concerning mobbing within the justice system was formally reviewed. In January 2025, the HCJ's Third Disciplinary Chamber, after hearing statements from both parties and witnesses, found no sufficient evidence of intentional bullying and concluded that the matter concerned a workplace conflict over duties, rather than a case of formally recognised mobbing.²⁰¹

As a result, the chamber unanimously declined to hold Omelian disciplinarily liable, citing a lack of grounds for disciplinary misconduct. The decision effectively closed the case (with no right of appeal for the complainant).²⁰²

This case demonstrated the judiciary's willingness to respond to complaints from court staff, while also highlighting the challenges of proving psychological pressure. It underscores the importance of clear internal procedures for addressing workplace conflicts and the need to ensure respectful and ethical interaction between management and personnel within the judicial system. It also shows that even senior staff in judicial governance bodies may struggle to distinguish mobbing from ordinary workplace conflict — pointing to the need for leadership to pay closer attention and ensure appropriate training for personnel.

Conclusions. At the institutional level, judicial governance bodies — in particular the SJA, HCJ and the CJU — play an important role in shaping protection policies for court staff. The SJA approves standard regulations for court administration; the CJU oversees ethical standards and internal workplace culture. The HCJ reviews disciplinary complaints, including those related to violations of staff rights. However,

²⁰⁰ [On the Opening of Disciplinary Proceedings Against Judge Omelian O. S. of the Commercial Court of Zhytomyr Region: Ruling of the Third Disciplinary Chamber of the High Council of Justice No. 2644/3dp/15-24 of 11.09.2024.](#)

²⁰¹ [On the Refusal to Hold Judge Omelian O. S. of the Commercial Court of Zhytomyr Region Disciplinarily Liable and on the Closure of Disciplinary Proceedings: Decision of the Third Disciplinary Chamber of the High Council of Justice No. 102/3dp/15-25 of 22.01.2025.](#)

²⁰² *Ibid.*

the effectiveness of these mechanisms remains inconsistent and further strengthening is needed — along with public communication to ensure that staff are aware of available protection channels.

External independence of court staff is generally ensured — no political interference or pressure was identified during the study period. Internal independence and proper working conditions, however, remain problematic. Low pay, understaffing, disparities in the regulation of civil service and patronage roles (not always justifiable) and isolated cases of disrespect toward personnel all contribute to an environment in which court employees may not feel secure or independent in carrying out their duties.

The independence and effective interaction between civil service and patronage service staff are vital elements of the stable functioning of Ukraine's judicial system. Eliminating the existing inconsistencies in the regulation of their roles will help improve the efficiency of court operations, strengthen trust in the justice system and create conditions for the professional development of personnel in this field.

2.4. Training and Professional Development

Professional training and development of civil and patronage service staff within the judiciary is a prerequisite for the effective functioning of the justice system. The quality of case hearings, the efficiency of judicial procedures and the level of public trust in the courts largely depend on the proper training of judges and court personnel.

International standards emphasise that continuous education of the judiciary is an essential element of judicial independence and professionalism. This applies not only to judges themselves but also to court staff, particularly judges' assistants, whose competence is key to the organisational support of justice.

For the Ukrainian judicial system, staff training is of particular importance in the context of ongoing legal reforms, the introduction of information technologies, heightened anti-corruption integrity requirements and challenges posed by martial law. Accordingly, the system of training and professional development for civil and patronage service staff in Ukrainian courts requires a detailed analysis — in terms of its actors, formats, survey and interview results, existing problems and best international practices.

Training actors. The role of the NAUCS in training court staff. The NAUCS is responsible for developing a national system of professional training for civil servants, which includes the training of court staff.²⁰³

Specifically, the High School of Public Governance (HSPG) — a state institution of postgraduate education — operates under the management of the NAUCS and conducts professional development courses for officials of central and local government bodies.²⁰⁴ The NAUCS also carries out annual monitoring of the professional training system in the public sector: it collects data from all state authorities regarding courses and programmes conducted and prepares analytical reports based on the SIGMA methodology.²⁰⁵ These reports include, among other things, recommendations for improving training programmes and optimising financial expenditure on professional development. As part of ongoing reforms, the NAUCS is currently implementing new educational projects (such as courses on

²⁰³ Professional Training. National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service.

²⁰⁴ Higher School of Public Administration. Knowledge Management Portal.

²⁰⁵ NAUCS Conducted a Monitoring Study of the Professional Training of Civil Servants Using the Sigma Methodology in 2023. Knowledge Management Portal. 2024.

European integration and English language training) for civil servants.²⁰⁶ However, the training of court staff via the NAUCS is indirect — they may participate in general HSPG programmes or online modules available on the Knowledge Management Portal.²⁰⁷

The role of the NSJU. The main institutional provider of staff training within Ukraine's justice system is the NSJU. The status of the NSJU is defined by the Law of Ukraine 'On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges'. It is a state institution with a special status within the justice system, responsible for training personnel for the judiciary and carrying out research activities. The NSJU is established under the HQCJ, which appoints the School's Rector.²⁰⁸

The special status means that the legislation on higher education does not apply to the NSJU; it operates independently of the Ministry of Education of Ukraine and is subordinated to judicial governance bodies. The leadership and staff of the NSJU are not civil servants and are appointed without open competition, which is why the School's staffing policy is frequently criticised by the public.²⁰⁹

The functions of the NSJU cover the full spectrum of professional education within the judiciary. First, the NSJU conducts mandatory specialised training for newly appointed judges (judicial candidates) before they begin administering justice. Second, the NSJU is responsible for the periodic professional development of judges, which, according to the law, must take place at least once every three years. Third, an important area of the NSJU's work is the **training of court staff and judges' assistants**. Each year, the NSJU organises numerous training sessions, seminars, and courses specifically for these categories — civil servants of the courts, patronage service employees, and personnel of the Court Security Service (CSS).²¹⁰

Scope and formats of NSJU training. Despite significant challenges (the pandemic, suspension of the HQCJ's operations from 2019 to 2021 and the full-scale war since 2022), the NSJU continues to deliver a substantial volume of training activities. In 2023, 24,789 court staff members (some of them multiple times) and 5,286 CSS personnel completed professional development programmes.²¹¹

In 2024, more than 43,000 participants took part in training activities. Of these, approximately 9,900 were judges, for whom 205 dedicated events were held. The largest group — nearly 28,500 participants — consisted of court staff and judges' assistants, for whom 492 events were organised. Additionally, separate training sessions were conducted for 5,500 CSS employees.²¹² These figures reflect the broad coverage of training not only for judges but also for court staff.

Digital platform and distance learning. A key feature of the NSJU's work over the past decade has been its active use of **distance learning technologies**. As early as 2014, the NSJU introduced a distance learning system.²¹³ With the support of international partners, online courses were developed

²⁰⁶ Richelieu Forum 2023. Institutional Resilience of the Public Service in Wartime (Video Recording).

²⁰⁷ Professional Training. National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service.

²⁰⁸ On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges: Law of Ukraine No. 1402-VIII of 02.06.2016.

²⁰⁹ Shadow Report on Chapter 23 'Justice and Fundamental Rights' of the 2023 European Commission Report on Ukraine. Agency for Legislative Initiatives.

²¹⁰ National School of Judges of Ukraine.

²¹¹ Information and Analytical Report on the Activities of the National School of Judges of Ukraine in 2023 (excerpt). National School of Judges of Ukraine. 2024.

²¹² Report on the Activities of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine for 2024. Judiciary of Ukraine. 2025.

²¹³ Distance Learning at the National School of Judges of Ukraine. National School of Judges of Ukraine.

for various categories of judiciary staff — from judges to court personnel and CSS employees. The NSJU's digital platform offers several advantages as an asynchronous learning format: all materials are available online around the clock, allowing participants to study at a convenient time and comfortable pace, integrating the learning modules into their work schedules. This approach is especially valuable given the constantly increasing workload on the courts — staff can enhance their qualifications without being removed from their core duties or having to travel for training. The NSJU's distance learning courses cover a wide range of topics, including the development of professional competencies (ethics, time management, communication, psychological aspects, etc.) and specialised skills.²¹⁴

Evolution of NSJU's approaches in recent years. According to the respondents surveyed, the NSJU has significantly changed its working approaches over the past decade. Previously, court staff training was episodic ('to obtain a professional development certificate'), whereas now it is conducted much more frequently and with a more flexible schedule.²¹⁵ Interviews with respondents²¹⁶ indicate that today, nearly every court staff member receives several certificates each year for completing various training courses. The training topics have also evolved: in addition to traditional legal subjects, new trainings have been introduced focusing on the development of 'soft' skills — leadership, effective communication, strategic planning, working with vulnerable participants in proceedings, etc., often supported by international technical assistance.

Forms of learning. The system of judicial staff training in Ukraine currently combines various forms of learning. The traditional format is in-person training — including seminars, lectures, and workshops held at NSJU regional branches or other venues. In-person learning enables live interaction between trainers and participants, as well as peer exchange. Experience shows that informal communication among colleagues during such events significantly contributes to a deeper understanding of the material and mutual learning across court staff.²¹⁷

Until 2020, the majority of training sessions at the NSJU were held offline — at the Kyiv Centre and regional branches (in cities such as Lviv, Dnipro, Odesa, Kharkiv, etc.). These in-person sessions often lasted several days and took the form of intensive courses.²¹⁸

Since the onset of the pandemic and the full-scale war in 2022, distance learning has come to the fore. Many training activities were shifted to online conference formats using Zoom and other platforms. These remote formats have made training resources more accessible to court staff from all regions — especially important given travel safety concerns — although they also introduced new challenges for teaching methods (such as maintaining audience engagement and the lack of personal contact between colleagues).²¹⁹

Based on interviews with judges who also serve as NSJU trainers, several critical remarks were made regarding mass online lectures. Respondents noted the low level of participant engagement

²¹⁴ [Distance Learning at the National School of Judges of Ukraine](#). National School of Judges of Ukraine.

²¹⁵ Information provided by respondents Nos. 9, 14, 19, 22, 26 and 33 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025, 17.03.2025, 09.04.2025 and 21.04.2025.

²¹⁶ Ibid

²¹⁷ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 14, 15, 26, 28 and 38 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025, 18.03.2025, 08.04.2025, 11.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

²¹⁸ Information provided by respondents Nos. 20, 30, 32 and 34 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 20.03.2025 and 08.04.2025.

²¹⁹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 4, 5, 9, 19, 22, 26, 28, 33, 35, 38, 40 and 42 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 15.03.2025, 17.03.2025, 18.03.2025, 08.04.2025, 09.04.2025, 11.04.2025, 21.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

in such formats: large audiences, lack of feedback, cameras turned off and a merely formal interest in obtaining a certificate.²²⁰ They emphasised the need to reduce group sizes and to transition to interactive training formats based on discussion, practical tasks, and moderation. In their view, this training-centred approach is far more effective than the outdated lecture-based model the NSJU had used for years.²²¹

Training sessions and practical workshops are increasingly replacing purely lecture-based classes. According to the NSJU, the vast majority of training courses for court staff are now designed and delivered by judge-trainers, while NSJU staff act as moderators.²²² This format encourages interactivity: case analysis, group discussions and debates on problematic issues from practical experience. For example, for courtroom secretaries, relevant training includes document handling and time management; for judges' assistants — seminars where experienced judges from higher courts explain the nuances of legal application and share the latest legal positions of the Supreme Court.²²³

Respondents also suggested introducing intensive courses — short-term, focused training programmes on specific, professional, practice-oriented topics (e.g. specialised courses delivered by Supreme Court judges).²²⁴ A well-structured day of intensive learning for a small group of participants could include peer exchange, joint discussion of complex cases and collaborative problem-solving. This would be far more beneficial than formal lectures. Such an approach boosts the motivation of both trainers and participants, transforming the training process into a two-way collaborative experience.²²⁵

Assessment of the quality, effectiveness and accessibility of training. To assess the actual impact of the professional development system, a survey was conducted among court staff of first-instance and appellate courts across Ukraine.²²⁶ The results of this research provide insight into both the achievements and the problematic aspects of the existing training system.

The first issue highlighted by respondents is the frequency and accessibility of training. Most of those surveyed acknowledged that in recent years there have been more opportunities for training — a positive trend. The survey also confirms that a significant number of court staff participate in at least one NSJU training or seminar per year.²²⁷ Remote training formats have greatly expanded the geographical reach of participants, making courses accessible even during wartime. The NSJU regularly announces new events, and interested staff generally have the opportunity to attend (the exception being in-person offsite sessions, which may have limited capacity). As previously noted, the main problem is often the physical impossibility of leaving one's duties to attend training.²²⁸

²²⁰ Information provided by respondents Nos. 4, 5, 9, 19, 22, 26, 28, 33, 35, 38, 40 and 42 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 15.03.2025, 17.03.2025, 18.03.2025, 08.04.2025, 09.04.2025, 11.04.2025, 21.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² [Judicial Training for Maintaining Qualifications](#). National School of Judges of Ukraine.

²²³ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 14 and 26 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025 and 08.04.2025.

²²⁴ Information provided by respondent No. 28 during interview conducted on 18.03.2025.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ As part of this study, a survey was conducted involving over 1,000 court administration staff from across Ukraine.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 14, 20, 26 and 29 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025, 08.04.2025 and 10.04.2025.

In response to the question on the usefulness of training for court staff, respondents' answers were distributed as follows:

- › 21.9% rated the training as very useful and believed it significantly improved their work performance;
- › 37.6% noted that training was generally useful but did not always correspond to actual needs;
- › 11.9% selected the option 'partially useful' and pointed to the need for programme improvement;
- › 13.2% responded that training was of little use and largely formal in nature;
- › 3.8% stated that the training was not useful at all and a waste of time.²²⁹

Thus, only around one in five respondents considers the professional development system *genuinely effective*. The remainder either critically assesses its quality or holds a reserved and cautious view regarding its benefits. This situation indicates substantial potential for improving the programmes and better aligning them with the needs of court staff.²³⁰

A more detailed analysis revealed specific shortcomings identified by court staff.

Respondents emphasised the issue of motivation: participation in seminars is often perceived as a routine requirement simply to 'tick a box' to obtain a certificate, without genuine interest. The reasons for this include excessive workload, lack of time and energy for self-development and the absence of direct incentives. In some courts, staff are so overburdened that they cannot even find time for mandatory training.²³¹ Thus, even when training is formally available, court staff often cannot take full advantage of it due to a heavy workload and staffing shortages in the courts.

Another aspect of motivation is the link between training, career advancement, and recognition. At present, for civil servants working in court administration, professional development is a duty, but it has no real impact on promotion or salary levels. During the survey, suggestions were made to revise this approach: 'conduct training for civil servants with the aim of enabling career growth'. Staff members expressed the desire for acquired competencies to pave the way for promotion or other benefits. As it stands, they do not perceive a direct link between additional knowledge and their own career prospects, which undermines their motivation to engage in training.²³²

Almost 38% of respondents reported no significant issues with the organisation of the training process — this indicates a generally positive perception of the current professional development system. At the same time, 43% of respondents identified a number of substantial shortcomings (multiple response options were allowed). The most common criticism was the insufficient practical orientation of training programmes, noted by 31.8% of those surveyed.²³³ This suggests that many participants would like to receive more applied knowledge and skills during the courses — content that would directly assist them in their day-to-day court work.

²²⁹ The data were obtained from a survey conducted within the framework of this study, involving over 1,000 court administration staff across Ukraine.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 24 and 25 during interviews conducted on 04.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 03.04.2025, 08.04.2025, 09.04.2025 and 10.04.2025.

²³² Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 15, 22, 27, 31 and 42 during interviews conducted on 12.03.2025, 08.04.2025, 21.04.2025, 29.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

²³³ The data were obtained from a survey conducted within the framework of this study, involving over 1,000 court administration staff across Ukraine.

Respondents also highlighted, among the shortcomings, the inconvenient format or schedule of training sessions (mentioned by 23.2% of respondents). The fixed timetable of training does not always take into account the actual workload of court staff, and they are often required to interrupt their duties to attend webinars, online training or seminars. This issue is partly addressed by the asynchronous distance learning format, but it is not a universal solution, as it does not cover all the topics needed for comprehensive training and professional development of court personnel.²³⁴

The responses to other survey questions are also indicative. It was found that less than half of court staff had received training on anti-corruption topics: only 43.2% of respondents stated that they had attended specialised anti-corruption training sessions, while 37.2% said they had never taken part in such training and the remaining 19.6% could not recall whether they had or not.²³⁵ This low rate of participation in anti-corruption programmes is concerning, as all personnel within the judiciary should have a clear understanding of integrity standards.

At the same time, an analysis of the frequency of professional development shows that opportunities to train at the NSJU are generally accessible: over half of respondents (54.4%) had attended NSJU training more than three times in the past five years, while a further 24.1% had participated once or twice. However, 13.2% of court staff reported that they had not attended any professional development courses organised by the NSJU between 2020 and 2024.²³⁶ This may indicate unequal access to professional development opportunities: some staff remain outside the training system due to time constraints, staffing shortages or a lack of effective communication.

Some court leaders interviewed noted that they are not always satisfied with the level and variety of the NSJU's educational programmes.²³⁷ In particular, the NSJU had a desire for greater flexibility in responding to the needs of specific courts. Courts often have to independently initiate the development of specialised training tailored to their own needs and even involve their own judges as trainers.²³⁸ This practice points to the need for improved feedback mechanisms: the NSJU should be more proactive in collecting requests and suggestions from courts and more responsive in adapting its training plans to new demands so that courts do not duplicate the work of the training institution.

As for the quality of the training content, feedback is mixed. Courses involving international experts and training delivered through international technical assistance projects are generally well received, as they introduce new knowledge and formats. At the same time, the NSJU's standard courses are sometimes criticised for being formulaic.²³⁹ It should be noted, however, that perceptions of quality also depend on expectations. For junior court staff, even the basic knowledge gained through such courses can be useful. By contrast, more experienced staff expect something more advanced. As respondents commented, there is a desire for 'access to up-to-date knowledge' and fresh ideas, as many training materials simply repeat what is already known from practice.²⁴⁰

²³⁴ The data were obtained from a survey conducted within the framework of this study, involving over 1,000 court administration staff across Ukraine.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Information provided by respondents Nos. 12, 21, 34 and 39 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 12.03.2025, 03.04.2025 and 20.03.2025.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 15, 28, 38 and 42 during interviews conducted on 18.03.2025, 11.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

²⁴⁰ Information provided by respondent No. 15 during interview conducted on 30.04.2025.

Based on survey and interview data, the professional development system for court staff in Ukraine currently fulfils a basic function but requires substantial improvement. There is a broad consensus on the need to update training methods and content, better incentivise staff to participate in learning and link the training process with career advancement opportunities. One positive aspect of this situation is that the NSJU — at least in its public communications — acknowledges these challenges and declares its orientation towards the practical needs of the judiciary.²⁴¹

Applying successful training models: the example of AUACE. One example of successfully applying best practices in the professional development of court staff is the work of the AUACE,²⁴² which has already established partnerships with the SJA, the NSJU and international donors. In April 2025, the ‘Court Administration School’ was held in Lviv as part of the CourtUP project, organised by AUACE in cooperation with the NSJU and with the support of the EU. The programme covered modern topics such as leadership, conflict management and the use of AI and generated considerable interest among heads of court staff.²⁴³ This format of content-rich, practice-oriented training should be viewed as an effective model for systematic integration into the NSJU’s activities.

Court staff internships in higher instance courts. Internships for civil servants are provided for in Ukrainian legislation as a form of practical training away from their primary place of work, lasting from one to six months.²⁴⁴ In the context of the judiciary, this offers an opportunity for court staff — both civil and patronage service employees — to familiarise themselves with the functioning of higher instance courts, adopt best management and procedural practices, improve their skills and enhance their professional qualifications. However, Ukraine still lacks a unified, formalised internship programme specifically for court staff, even though its necessity is acknowledged both within the judicial community and by policy analysts.²⁴⁵

Survey results indicate strong support for this idea among court employees themselves. Specifically, 18.3% of respondents consider internships in higher courts to be essential, while a further 58.6% view them as desirable or necessary. Only 22.6% of respondents stated that they see no need for such internships.²⁴⁶ In practice, however, opportunities to undertake internships in appellate or cassation courts are not currently available: to date, this form of professional development is implemented only in isolated cases, typically in the form of visits during training events.²⁴⁷

In semi-structured interviews, respondents noted that internships could not only improve the quality of procedural documents and work organisation, but also positively influence motivation, confidence in one’s professional abilities and career advancement.²⁴⁸ Gaining experience in another court — particularly at the appellate or cassation level — allows for a better understanding of the quality

²⁴¹ ‘Today, Judicial Education Is Oriented Towards the Practical Needs of Judges’ — Mykola Onishchuk. Pravo. 2024.

²⁴² Civic Organisation ‘All-Ukrainian Association of Court Employees’. Judiciary of Ukraine.

²⁴³ Facebook Page of the All-Ukrainian Association of Court Employees.

²⁴⁴ What You Need to Know About the Secondment of a Civil Servant to Another Public Body. National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service.

²⁴⁵ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 14, 26 and 42 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025, 08.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

²⁴⁶ The data were obtained from a survey conducted within the framework of this study, involving over 1,000 court administration staff across Ukraine.

²⁴⁷ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 14, 15, 26 and 42 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025, 08.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

requirements for case materials, fosters inter-institutional cooperation and generally enhances the effectiveness of duties performed. This is especially relevant for patronage service staff, who often remain outside the scope of systematic professional development mechanisms.²⁴⁹

At the same time, there are significant barriers hindering the practical implementation of internships. These include staffing shortages in first-instance courts, the reluctance of court leadership to release experienced employees for extended periods and the lack of proper funding for secondments and related expenses. Another systemic barrier is the lack of regulatory clarity: current legislation contains no explicit provisions regarding internships for patronage service staff in another state body, including higher instance courts.²⁵⁰

In a number of interviews, possible formats for addressing this issue were proposed. For example, the introduction of short-term (1–2 week) internships without requiring staff to leave their workplace, or rotation schemes within a single region. An alternative approach would be to pilot exchanges between courts of different levels — supported by the SJA or within the framework of partnerships with international organisations. Similar to the existing practice of seconding judges to the NSJU, a flexible mechanism could be created for the temporary transfer of court staff for educational and practical purposes.²⁵¹

There is a clear and current demand for dynamic forms of professional training, including internships. In the survey, court staff expressed a desire to supplement traditional seminars with hands-on experience in higher-level courts. This approach aligns with modern professional development practices and could serve as a tool for strengthening professional capacity, the quality of duty performance and internal motivation among court staff at all levels.

Comparative experience of other countries in staff training. To better understand the prospects for developing the court staff training system, it is useful to examine **international experience**. European countries have established various models for the professional training of judicial personnel — from dedicated training institutions to integrated programmes within courts. Several examples are particularly relevant for Ukraine:

- › **Poland.** In Poland, the National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution (Krajowa Szkoła Sądownictwa i Prokuratury) is responsible for training not only candidates for judicial and prosecutorial positions but also court administrative staff. According to the European e-Justice Portal, the training of judicial employees in Poland is organised by the courts themselves in cooperation with the National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution.²⁵² In other words, a central institution provides unified programmes, while implementation takes place in partnership with local courts. This allows theoretical instruction to be combined with practical training without requiring staff to leave their workplace.
- › **Czech Republic.** The Czech Republic has a dedicated **Judicial Academy** (Justiční akademie) — an institution responsible for training judges, prosecutors and court personnel alike. According to official information, the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with the courts and the prosecution service, organises training for **judicial assistants, senior court clerks and judicial candidates**,

²⁴⁹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 9, 14, 15, 19 and 42 during interviews conducted on 04.03.2025, 17.03.2025, 08.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

²⁵⁰ Information provided by respondents Nos. 13–15, 26 and 40 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025, 12.03.2025, 15.03.2025 and 30.04.2025.

²⁵¹ Information provided by respondent No. 42 during interview conducted on 30.04.2025.

²⁵² Court staff training systems. European justice.

with the Judicial Academy acting as the provider.²⁵³ This is an example of a centralised approach: a single academy with regional branches ensures uniform training standards across the country, and different categories of personnel (including junior staff) undergo courses corresponding to their roles.

- › **France.** In France, the training of judicial administration personnel is handled by a specialised institution — the **National School for Court Clerks (École Nationale des Greffes)**. It operates under the coordination of the Ministry of Justice and provides both basic and advanced training for various categories of court staff: heads of registries, court clerks, technical personnel and others. This approach reflects the view that judicial administration requires professional education no less than judges. Newly appointed staff are required to complete a course at the School before starting work in the courts, and promotion requires completion of additional training and examinations. This ensures a high level of competence within the court administration.²⁵⁴
- › **Other countries.** In many EU member states, the training of court staff is integrated into the national professional development system for civil servants. For example, in Germany, the training of judicial personnel (registry staff, legal clerks) falls under the competence of the Justice Ministries of the Länder, many of which have their own Justice Academies. In Croatia, court staff training is the responsibility of the Judicial Academy of Croatia. In Spain, the Ministry of Justice, through its subordinate body — the Centre for Legal Studies — provides training for **LAJ** (court clerks) and other administrative personnel. Across all these systems, the need for specialised training for judicial administration is clearly recognised.²⁵⁵

At the **supranational level**, attention is also increasingly being paid to this area. The European Judicial Training Network (EJTN), of which the NSJU is a member, had previously focused solely on judges and prosecutors. However, in 2021, the EJTN adopted its **Strategic Plan 2021–2027**, which broadened its target audience to include court and prosecution service staff.²⁵⁶ Since then, the network has been implementing the principle of ‘inclusion of judicial staff’, meaning the needs of these professionals are now taken into account in all training programmes alongside those of judges. The European Commission welcomed this decision by the EJTN, emphasising the importance of training court personnel to improve the quality of justice across the EU. Under the EJTN framework, exchange programmes have been launched: Ukrainian court staff (like those from other countries) can now participate in short-term placements in European courts, seminars on European law and similar activities. The trend, therefore, is that **judicial training is evolving towards inclusion of all participants in the judicial process**, not just judges themselves.

For Ukraine, this experience presents valuable opportunities for adaptation and adoption. In effect, the NSJU already performs the role of such an institution that trains all categories of court personnel. However, it would be beneficial to incorporate certain **best practices**: to make training programmes more specialised for different staff categories (separately for courtroom secretaries, consultants, assistants, etc.); to establish a **mentoring system** for new employees (as in France); and to integrate training with career development prospects (as in Poland). It would also be useful to expand Ukraine’s participation in European exchange networks — sending court staff on short-term internships abroad and hosting colleagues from other countries in Ukrainian courts. International exchange of experience will contribute to the introduction of new standards in judicial administration.

²⁵³ [Court staff training systems](#). European justice.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ [Court staff integration](#). European justice Training Network.

Conclusions and Recommendations for the Civil and Patronage Service in Courts

For the civil service (court staff): Court personnel currently have access to basic opportunities for professional training, primarily thanks to the activities of the NSJU and the support of international projects. Positive practices include the regular delivery of online courses, training sessions on current topics (including those involving foreign experts) and the legally established obligation to undertake professional development. Many staff members conscientiously participate in these activities, enhancing their knowledge and skills. At the same time, a number of shortcomings have been identified:

- › First, training programmes often do not fully meet modern needs: they lack interactivity, practical tasks and training focused on the development of managerial skills.
- › Second, there are no adequate incentives for training, particularly in terms of career advancement (promotion is scarcely linked to training completion).
- › Third, the heavy workload and staff shortages in courts complicate participation in lengthy training programmes or internships.

To improve the organisation and delivery of professional training for court staff who are civil servants, we recommend:

- › introducing motivational mechanisms (e.g. taking training results into account during staff appraisal and participation in recruitment competitions);
- › developing flexible work schedules that allow staff to allocate time for training (including through redistribution of duties within the team while one staff member is undergoing training);
- › modernising teaching methods by expanding the use of small-group training and facilitating peer exchange between courts;
- › developing a mentoring system by assigning more experienced colleagues to newly appointed courtroom secretaries or consultants to provide on-the-job internal training.

It is also advisable to strengthen cooperation between the SJA and the NSJU in the planning of training activities — specifically, the development of annual professional development plans that reflect the actual needs of specific courts and categories of personnel.

For the patronage service (judges' assistants): This category of staff has its own particular characteristics, which also influence training-related issues. Positive aspects: judges' assistants, especially those working in higher courts, generally acquire high-level practical knowledge directly through their work with a judge. In effect, the patronage service functions as a school for the judicial reserve; as respondents noted, 'any assistant to a judge of the Supreme Court or an appellate court is 99% likely to become a first-instance judge'.²⁵⁷ Many assistants do indeed go on to become successful judges, applying the experience gained in their position. Thus, the institution of judicial assistants plays an important role in replenishing the judiciary. The NSJU also provides them with access to training opportunities on par with civil servants in the court system — assistants attend the same courses and training sessions, often together with the judges they support. In addition, standardised training programmes for judges' assistants have been developed for different types of courts, which is a positive practice as it considers the specific nature of patronage service work.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Information provided by respondents Nos. 16, 17, 21 and 28 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 10.03.2025, 18.03.2025 and 08.04.2025.

²⁵⁸ Standardised Programmes for Judges' Assistants for 2025. National School of Judges of Ukraine.

However, there are also drawbacks. The main issue is the instability of status, as assistants are directly dependent on the judge's career. If a judge resigns or is transferred, the assistant automatically loses their position, which discourages staff from investing time in long-term training. They lack employment continuity guarantees, making career prospects uncertain (apart from attempting to become a judge through open competition). Another problem is that assistants are not civil servants and therefore certain social guarantees and statutory requirements do not apply to them. For example, civil servants are legally required to undertake regular professional development, whereas for judges' assistants this is not obligatory — participation depends largely on the goodwill of the judge and the assistant's personal initiative. In practice, most judges' assistants do participate in training activities, but there is no mechanism for external monitoring or assessment of their qualifications. Moreover, there are no specialised career development programmes for judges' assistants. Although many of them aspire to become judges, the state has not yet created fast-track mechanisms to support this pathway. Existing proposals to give judges' assistants (at least those working in appellate, higher specialised courts and the Supreme Court) priority in judicial appointment competitions have not yet been implemented.

Recommendations for the patronage service aim to better integrate these staff members into the overall system of professional training and formally recognise their role in the functioning of the judiciary. At the legislative level, it would be appropriate to consider measures to ensure continuity of employment for judges' assistants — for example, in the event of a judge's departure, provision could be made for the assistant to be temporarily transferred to a reserve pool or reassigned to another judge, rather than being automatically dismissed. This issue was raised repeatedly by respondents during interviews.²⁵⁹ Such a change would create an incentive for assistants to continue developing their qualifications, knowing they would not be suddenly left without employment. It would also be reasonable to establish certain training standards for judges' assistants, such as introducing a mandatory induction course for newly appointed assistants (similar to orientation training for judges). Judges, as supervisors of their assistants, should actively encourage participation in training and allow time for courses and internships — ideally, this should be reflected as a performance indicator for the judge-mentor as well.

In addition, initiatives aimed at career development deserve support. It would be appropriate to grant judges' assistants — at a minimum, those working in appellate courts, higher specialised courts and the Supreme Court — preferential consideration during selection processes for judicial positions or court management roles (as an intermediate step in their career). Already, many former assistants hold positions such as department heads or deputy chiefs of staff in courts — a form of horizontal transition into the civil service. This should be recognised as a positive practice and relevant training modules should be developed to support transitions 'from patronage to civil service' within the judiciary.

In summary, the system of training and professional development for court staff in Ukraine is currently undergoing development and reform. There has been substantial progress towards greater openness and diversity of training formats, yet challenges remain regarding the substantive quality of training programmes and the lack of motivation to participate in them. The civil service in courts requires a more modern and incentive-based approach to staff training, while the patronage service needs recognition of its contribution and appropriate conditions for professional growth. Implementation of the above recommendations — from updating the content of NSJU programmes to introducing internships and drawing on international experience — will help strengthen the institutional capacity of the courts and promote high standards of justice in Ukraine.

²⁵⁹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 7, 8, 10, 18, 21 and 25 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 09.04.2025, 10.04.2025 and 11.04.2025.

Section 3

Ensuring Civil and Patronage Service in the Judiciary: Issues and Key Aspects

3.1. State of Play and Issues of Funding

Adequate funding of the judiciary is recognised as one of the key factors in ensuring its independence and effectiveness. This principle is enshrined both in the Constitution of Ukraine (Article 130) and in international legal standards, which Ukraine is committed to upholding. According to European standards, funding must not only be sufficient but also protected from political influence, stable and aimed at providing proper working conditions for judges and court staff.

International standards on the financial support of the judiciary. The core principles developed by international organisations — particularly the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers and the CCJE — require that the material and financial support of courts correspond to the level of their responsibility and public trust. CCJE opinions stress that courts cannot function effectively without adequate staffing and sufficient resources to perform their functions. Special attention is given not only to judges' remuneration but also to ensuring proper pay for court staff, including judges' assistants, courtroom secretaries and other professionals who directly influence the quality of justice.

The European Charter on the Statute for Judges (1998), CCJE Opinions Nos. 1, 2, 10, 11 and 22 and Recommendation No. R (94) 12 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe consistently emphasise that an adequate level of funding is a safeguard of judicial independence and that no budgetary decisions should be made without taking into account the position of the judiciary. This means that, in the process of adopting the judiciary's budget, the reasoned proposals of judicial governance bodies — in particular the HCJ — must be duly considered.

In its appeal to the Government dated 25 February 2025, the HCJ specifically underlined that providing an appropriate level of financial resources for the maintenance of the courts, in accordance with European standards and national priorities, is the foundation of public trust in the justice system. A lack of funding negatively affects not only the organisation of court operations but also the quality of justice, staff retention and employee motivation. Particular attention is drawn to the need to finance the work of judges' assistants and court staff who play a crucial role in the functioning of the courts.²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ On the Submission by the High Council of Justice to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of Proposals on Priority Objectives for Financial Support and Judicial Independence for 2026–2028: Decision of the High Council of Justice No. 326/0/15-25 of 25.02.2025.

Thus, as Ukraine strives to integrate into the legal framework of the Council of Europe, it is obliged to ensure compliance with international standards for the financing of the justice system. This is not only a legal requirement but a practical necessity for the effective operation of the courts under current conditions.

The role of the SJA. According to Part 1 of Article 151 of the Law of Ukraine ‘On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges’, the SJA is defined as a state body within the judiciary system authorised to provide both organisational and financial support for the functioning of judicial authorities, within the scope of powers established by law.

Accordingly, the SJA plays a key role in ensuring the proper organisation of court operations, financing the activities of judicial institutions, bodies of judicial self-governance and other entities operating in the field of justice. It is important to emphasise that the functions of organisational and financial support are carried out by this body as an institution with a special legal status, acting as the principal administrator of budgetary funds in the relevant sector.

Thus, the SJA functions as a full-fledged participant in legal relations concerning the organisational support of judicial activity and is also engaged in financial and public legal relations governed by the legislation on the judiciary and financial administration. Its competence is defined by the Law of Ukraine ‘On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges’ and the Regulation on the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine, approved by the decision of the HCJ dated 17 January 2019, No. 141/0/15-19 (as amended).²⁶¹

Current state of judiciary funding (2020–2024).²⁶² Between 2020 and 2024, funding for Ukraine’s judiciary remained one of the most pressing issues. Annual reports of the SJA show systematic underfunding of justice institutions, delays in salary payments, insufficient resources for court needs and uneven workloads among staff. Despite some efforts to increase funding, chronic budget shortages, low levels of capital expenditure, and unequal salary distribution across regions have created conditions in which the effective functioning of the judicial system remained problematic.

In 2020, the total amount of cash expenditures for funding the judiciary amounted to UAH 15.704 billion, of which approximately UAH 3.034 billion came from the special fund. This covered only about 64.8% of the stated need of UAH 24.37 billion. More than 90% of expenditures were allocated to salaries (91%), while only around 1% was earmarked for the development of material and technical infrastructure. Due to the funding shortfall, the SJA was forced to optimise expenditures, including through the reduction of certain budget lines. An additional allocation of UAH 1.2 billion did not significantly improve the budget deficit situation.²⁶³

In 2021, cash expenditures increased to UAH 17.338 billion (of which UAH 15.747 billion went to salaries), representing a rise of approximately 10.4% compared to the previous year, while the official inflation rate exceeded 8%. The total funding need amounted to UAH 40.755 billion, meaning that actual coverage reached only 42.5%. The slight increase in funding allowed for the average salary of court staff to be raised to UAH 10,900, though this was clearly insufficient to ensure adequate

²⁶¹ Regulation on the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine, approved by Decision of the High Council of Justice No. 141/0/15-19 of 17.01.2019.

²⁶² All statistical data cited in this subsection are based on official reports of the SJA for the years 2020–2024, which include information on cash expenditures — actual budget spending. Data published on the OpenBudget.gov.ua portal may reflect planned budget allocations, which do not always correspond to actual execution. For this reason, figures from open sources may differ from those presented in this analysis.

²⁶³ Information on the Activities of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine Regarding Organisational and Material Support of Courts in 2020. State Judicial Administration of Ukraine.

motivation. Over 90% of total expenditure was again directed mainly towards salary payments. Notably, the budget increase only partially addressed the real needs of the judiciary.²⁶⁴

The year 2022 proved particularly difficult due to the onset of full-scale war. Although an initial UAH 19.035 billion was allocated for judiciary funding, the budget was subsequently adjusted through sequestration: funding was reduced by more than UAH 2.1 billion, including nearly UAH 1.42 billion from the salary allocation. As a result, actual cash expenditures totalled UAH 16.319 billion, and the plan under the special fund was fulfilled at only 90.5%. While the declared average rate of incentive payments for court staff ranged between 33% and 45% of base salary, depending on the type of court, in practice, these payments varied considerably. In many regions, bonuses were minimal or entirely absent.²⁶⁵

In 2023, the situation remained tense. Actual cash expenditures amounted to UAH 18.095 billion, covering only around 52.7% of the total need. The level of underfunding remained critical. Expenditures for local and appellate courts were reduced by more than 10% and for other judicial bodies — by up to 20% compared to 2022. This had a significant impact on salaries, triggered a mass exodus of qualified personnel, and severely hindered the uninterrupted functioning of the courts. Reports by the European Commission stressed that Ukraine's judicial system suffers from chronic underfunding, further exacerbated by the effects of martial law.²⁶⁶

In 2024, total funding needs exceeded UAH 36 billion, but the state was only able to provide UAH 9.867 billion, covering approximately 58.5% of total requirements. According to separate estimates, social expenditure was financed at approximately 71%. Capital expenditure, as in previous years, remained low — funded at only 14.2%, while expenditure on enforcement of court decisions reached just 1.2%. The lion's share of the budget — 88.1% — was allocated to the salary fund. Despite a modest increase in funding (+10% compared to 2023), Ukraine's judicial system remained socially oriented but extremely resource-constrained. The budget shortfall continued to hinder development, modernisation, the implementation of digital solutions and the maintenance and development of human capital.²⁶⁷

In summary, funding for the judiciary in Ukraine over the past five years reveals deep-rooted systemic problems. Budget expenditures have been concentrated primarily on maintaining the basic functioning of the courts, while capital needs, infrastructure development, technical upgrades and other key areas have remained significantly underfunded. Particularly acute is the uneven distribution of funding across courts of different levels and regions, which creates imbalances in access to resources. This situation negatively affects working conditions, reduces motivation among court staff and, as a result, undermines the judiciary's capacity to perform its functions effectively.

Thus, despite the strategic importance of the judiciary in a rule-of-law state, civil and patronage service employees in the courts have remained, for years, a vulnerable category in terms of fair remuneration. Between 2020 and 2023, publicly available data on the salary levels of this category of employees were limited and fragmented. The most reliable figures are found only in the reports of the SJA, whereas the dashboards of the Ministry of Finance do not provide separate data for judicial institutions during this period, which significantly complicates comparative analysis.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁴ Report on the Activities of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine for 2021. State Judicial Administration of Ukraine.

²⁶⁵ Report on the Activities of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine for 2022. State Judicial Administration of Ukraine.

²⁶⁶ Report on the Activities of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine for 2023. State Judicial Administration of Ukraine.

²⁶⁷ Report on the Activities of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine for 2024. State Judicial Administration of Ukraine.

²⁶⁸ Summary of the Activities of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine. Judiciary of Ukraine.

In contrast, the situation changed in 2024. With the abolition of the Unified Tariff Scale and the introduction of a grade-based pay system, it became possible to obtain detailed data on average base salaries and total remuneration in public institutions. According to the Ministry of Finance, as of March 2024, the average base salary for court staff was approximately UAH 25,000–27,000, while the average total remuneration ranged from UAH 40,000 to 45,000.²⁶⁹

A comparative analysis with other state bodies shows that court staff earn, on average, 10–15% less than civil servants in central executive bodies. For example, in March 2024, the average total salary in the public sector was around UAH 43,000, and the base salary was UAH 25,000, while the corresponding figures in the judiciary remained lower.²⁷⁰

In addition, according to official statistics, in 2023, the number of employees in local and appellate courts decreased by more than 770 people. This took place against the backdrop of an overall reduction in the number of staff in central government bodies, which amounted to over 6,800 people.²⁷¹ Such reductions, in conditions of martial law and limited funding, point to systemic difficulties in maintaining the human resource capacity of the judiciary.

Court Infrastructure: Between Reform, War and Reality (2020–2024)

2020. As of early 2021, 78% of courts were housed in premises that did not meet state construction standards. The total area of court facilities covered only 56% of the minimum required. In 2020, the SJA implemented 93 reconstruction and capital repair projects, marking a noticeable step towards the gradual improvement of infrastructure.

In the area of digitalisation, the judicial system achieved some progress: 94% of courts were equipped with personal computers and 89% with servers. More than 60,000 court hearings were conducted via videoconference. However, due to limited funding, most capital repairs were carried out partially or with delays, and the systemic modernisation of infrastructure remained incomplete.²⁷²

In **2021**, material and technical support for the judicial system remained a pressing issue. Despite efforts to establish a regulatory framework for court digitalisation, practical steps to upgrade infrastructure were limited to immediate operational needs. The main focus was on the implementation of the UJITS: standard contracts for digitalisation were approved, and training programmes for court staff were coordinated.

However, due to budget constraints, the renewal of computer equipment, building repairs and modernisation of technical infrastructure proceeded slowly. The SJA was unable to go beyond maintaining a functional minimum.²⁷³

In **2022**, in the context of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the SJA shifted its focus to ensuring the uninterrupted operation of the courts. International technical assistance was received in the amount of UAH 35.965 million, including laptops, routers, data storage devices, bulletproof vests, helmets and other equipment. This equipment was distributed to courts and the CSS.

²⁶⁹ Ministry of Finance Publishes Data on Salaries in State Bodies for January–May 2024. Ministry of Finance of Ukraine. 2024.

²⁷⁰ Number and Remuneration of All Employees of State Authorities in 2024–2025. Ministry of Finance of Ukraine.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Information on the Activities of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine Regarding Organisational and Material Support of Courts in 2020. State Judicial Administration of Ukraine.

²⁷³ Report on the Activities of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine for 2021. State Judicial Administration of Ukraine.

A critical shortcoming, however, was the failure to address threats from energy infrastructure attacks — the SJA did not take measures to procure generators or backup power supplies. The CJU also noted the failure to submit a list of courts as critical infrastructure facilities, which made it impossible to ensure protection of these institutions at the state level.²⁷⁴

In **2023**, the SJA intensified efforts to provide courts with sources of autonomous power supply. A total of UAH 54.94 million was allocated for the purchase of generators and related equipment. By the end of 2023, 482 courts had been equipped with alternative energy sources, of which 274 were connected to power grids. However, a significant number of institutions remained vulnerable during prolonged power outages.

As a result of the war, 132 judicial system facilities were damaged. At the same time, 63 courts were left without security. The SJA implemented accessibility programmes: entrance areas were modernised, ramps were installed, and, in some courts, information displays and call buttons were introduced. While there was progress, needs significantly exceeded available resources.²⁷⁵

Material and technical support for the courts in **2024** remained critical. Only 32% of court premises met building standards. During the year, 2,783 units of equipment were procured, including 378 laptops, 465 items of office equipment, and 1,591 units of communication hardware. The overall level of technical equipment in the courts rose to 90%.

Thanks to state and international resources, 603 courts received alternative energy sources. Over UAH 21 million was spent on generators, boilers and other equipment. In 2024, furniture and alarm systems were partially renewed, 57 new archives were established, and 10 facilities were adapted for accessibility. However, 93 buildings remained unfit for use due to damage.²⁷⁶

Position of judicial self-governance bodies and civic initiatives. The HCJ has repeatedly appealed to the Government regarding the critical state of funding for the judiciary, emphasising the need to ensure proper financial and infrastructure support for the courts.

In its appeal dated 25 February 2025, particular attention was drawn to the dire state of remuneration for court staff and personnel of justice sector bodies and institutions. The HCJ stressed that these employees, despite extremely difficult conditions — including risks associated with the full-scale war — continue to ensure the stable functioning of the judiciary. They conscientiously perform their duties, often in life-threatening circumstances, without receiving adequate financial motivation or institutional support.

At the same time, the HCJ emphasises that such dedication shown by court staff requires an appropriate response from the state, including the establishment of a fair level of remuneration. The appeal stresses that ‘the guaranteed portion of wages, as determined by the state, is set at a low level and cannot ensure adequate compensation, while the awarding of bonuses — due to the current state of budget allocations — is either not possible or provided in only minimal amounts.’²⁷⁷

The HCJ further highlights that ensuring decent pay for court staff is not only a matter of social justice but also a key element of the institutional resilience of the judiciary and of public trust in judicial authority. Accordingly, the appeal includes a call for the Government to take urgent action to conduct

²⁷⁴ Report on the Activities of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine for 2022. State Judicial Administration of Ukraine.

²⁷⁵ Report on the Activities of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine for 2023. State Judicial Administration of Ukraine.

²⁷⁶ Report on the Activities of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine for 2024. State Judicial Administration of Ukraine.

²⁷⁷ Statement of the High Council of Justice to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine with Proposals on Priority Objectives for Financial Support and Judicial Independence for 2026–2028. High Council of Justice. 2025.

a systemic review of the principles for funding remuneration in the justice sector, particularly in light of the increased risks and workloads under martial law conditions.

Despite the absence of formalised workload standards for court staff, statistics from 2020 to 2024 reveal a concerning trend. In 2021, the number of court staff in local and appellate courts remained relatively stable, but by 2023, as previously mentioned, staffing had decreased by more than 770 positions, as recorded in SJA reports and confirmed by Ministry of Finance dashboard data for 2024.²⁷⁸

At the same time, the volume of cases submitted to the courts remained high and, in some regions, even increased. According to the interactive workload map,²⁷⁹ the CJU updated its workload standards for the first half of 2024, considering the actual increase in incoming cases and the number of sitting judges. The map shows that in one third of courts, actual judicial workload significantly exceeded the established norm. When a judge is overburdened, the staff supporting that judge (responsible for registering cases, managing documentation, and preparing materials) work no less intensively. Thus, even in the absence of officially established standards, the combined factors — reduction in personnel, a stable or growing volume of cases and judicial overload — clearly indicate excessive workload for court staff.

The CJU has repeatedly emphasised in its decisions that the funding of court staff by the SJA is uneven and that the allocation of funds is often non-transparent.

The CJU noted in its rulings that in certain regions, court staff received significantly lower bonuses and incentive payments compared to their counterparts in other oblasts. The differences in financial support lack clear justification and raise questions about the fairness of budget distribution. Such disparities lead to staff demotivation, worsen the staffing crisis and undermine the authority of the judiciary in the eyes of the public.²⁸⁰

Accordingly, the SJA's policy on salary calculation and distribution of the wage fund is ineffective and lacks transparency, which runs counter to the principles of fairness and equal access to public service.

Other problems persist: delays in wage indexation, underfunding of first-instance courts, the absence of mechanisms to monitor effective use of funds and the neglect of court staff needs during budget planning. These circumstances point to systemic imbalances in the financial administration of the judiciary.

These problems are further exacerbated by the growing staff shortage in the courts and the increasing workload on employees who continue to perform their duties. There is a long-overdue need for a systemic reform of court staff remuneration — one based on uniform conditions for all and reflecting the complexity of the tasks performed.

During the period of martial law, the issue of low salaries for court staff has become particularly acute. Their pay remains lower than that of civil servants in other branches of government. This has led to a mass outflow of qualified personnel²⁸¹ and has jeopardised the stable functioning of judicial institutions. In response, the CJU has, for at least the past four years, consistently advocated for the

²⁷⁸ [Interactive Map of Court Workload. Council of Judges of Ukraine and Remuneration of All Employees of State Authorities in 2024–2025. Ministry of Finance of Ukraine.](#)

²⁷⁹ [The CJU Updates the Map of Ukrainian Courts with Caseload Norms for Courts and Judges for the First Half of 2024. Council of Judges of Ukraine. 2024.](#)

²⁸⁰ [Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 36 of 30.08.2023.](#)

²⁸¹ [‘Dashboard’ on Salaries in Public Authorities: Updated Data for March 2024. Ministry of Finance of Ukraine.](#)

introduction of a mechanism for setting court staff salaries as a percentage of judicial remuneration — as the most effective solution to this issue.²⁸²

Throughout the reporting period, the CJU repeatedly assessed the performance of the SJA in terms of organisational and financial support for the judiciary as unsatisfactory. In particular, appeals were initiated to the HCJ regarding possible disciplinary violations by the SJA leadership; instances were recorded of providing inaccurate information, failure to implement decisions of the Congress of Judges of Ukraine and the CJU, and breaches of administrative discipline. The issue of conducting a performance audit of the SJA's use of budgetary funds by the Accounting Chamber was also raised separately.²⁸³

Despite these systemic concerns, the current level of remuneration for court staff remains inadequate to ensure a decent standard of living and does not correspond to either the complexity of their duties or the scale of their workload.

In its reports, the SJA presents salary figures for civil and patronage service staff that do not correspond to the actual amounts received by employees 'in hand'. This discrepancy arises from the fact that SJA financial reporting reflects gross figures, without deducting mandatory contributions — such as taxes, levies and other payments — and without accounting for one-off payments such as leave allowances or financial assistance for social or domestic needs. This practice distorts the true picture of remuneration levels within the judicial system.

The CJU has repeatedly raised this issue and, in its decisions, has recommended that the SJA, in the interest of transparency and objectivity, publish remuneration data broken down by main positions and indicate separately the amounts actually paid to employees after all required deductions. This should apply both to the average level of judicial remuneration and to salaries and incentive payments for court staff, so that the public and professional community can access accurate information about the real level of pay within the justice system.

The decisions of the CJU have also repeatedly raised concerns about the SJA's failure to utilise all funds allocated to the judiciary, along with the associated risks to the functioning of the judicial system.

In particular, CJU Decision No. 47 of 9 December 2024 on court financing directly highlights the existence of a carry-over balance in the special fund of the state budget amounting to approximately UAH 1.9 billion — that is, unspent funds remaining at the end of the budget period. The CJU emphasised that while such a balance may be used as a reserve to meet urgent needs, its presence is a signal that the reasons behind it must be analysed and budget planning optimised, to avoid situations where resources go unused while critical needs remain unmet. The CJU also recommended that the SJA prepare proposals for reallocating these funds to address current social and financial issues within the judicial system and stressed the need for efficient and complete utilisation of allocated resources to ensure the stable operation of the judiciary.²⁸⁴

²⁸² Bohdan Monich: 'The Salary of Court Staff Should Be "Linked" to Judicial Remuneration'. Council of Judges of Ukraine. 2024.

²⁸³ Council of Judges of Ukraine Publishes Decision of the 30 August 2023 Meeting. Council of Judges of Ukraine. Discussion on the Feasibility of the Activities of Regional Offices of the SJA of Ukraine — Meeting with Representatives of Volyn, Donetsk and Zhytomyr Regions. Council of Judges of Ukraine. CJU Initiates Discussion in the Judicial Community on the Activities of Regional Offices of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine. Council of Judges of Ukraine. Head of the Council of Judges of Ukraine Bohdan Monich Holds Fifth Session of Discussion on the Feasibility of Activities of Regional Offices of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine. Council of Judges of Ukraine.

²⁸⁴ Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 47 of 09.12.2024.

Cancellation of SMS notifications. a case of poor managerial foresight and its consequences for the judicial system. In April 2025, the State Judicial Administration initiated the discontinuation of SMS notifications in cases concerning administrative offences. According to a letter dated 14 April 2025 (No. 15-7331/25), the SJA instructed the State Enterprise ‘Judicial Information Systems’ to deactivate the functionality for sending such messages, citing the need to save budgetary funds.

However, this decision — made without consultation with the courts — sparked a wave of criticism from both the judiciary and legal experts.

The Pecherskyi District Court of Kyiv publicly opposed the move,²⁸⁵ formally stating that it would have catastrophic consequences for the organisation of court proceedings, create financial risks, and significantly delay case consideration. Other courts quickly joined this position, emphasising that a return to postal notifications would result in additional expenses, prolonged case timelines and the risk of violating participants’ procedural rights.²⁸⁶

Under pressure from the judicial community, the SJA withdrew its letter on 16 April 2025 and authorised the reinstatement of SMS notifications through the judicial information systems. It was officially announced that efforts would be made to legislate for electronic notification methods to prevent similar situations in the future.²⁸⁷

However, this incident illustrates a case of uncoordinated managerial decision-making, which led to a significant disruption of court operations, increased financial burden and risk of violating the procedural rights of participants.

Civic initiatives. As noted in [subsection 1.2 of Section 1 of this study](#),²⁸⁸ in April 2023, court staff launched an electronic petition highlighting the critical issue of staff outflow due to low wages, which quickly gathered over 25,000 signatures. The President acknowledged the problem and instructed the Government to address it. However, in its response, the MFU — citing an average salary of UAH 14,800 — effectively failed to propose a systemic solution, which triggered public criticism due to the discrepancy between official figures and actual take-home pay.²⁸⁹

Job classification and its impact on remuneration. Cabinet Resolution No. 1109²⁹⁰ of 23 October 2023 launched a reform of public service remuneration through the introduction of a job classification system. A Catalogue of Typical Civil Service Positions and an Algorithm for Job Classification under Martial Law were approved. This approach has been implemented across 32 state bodies, including the judiciary, as confirmed by a publication on the website of the NAUCS.²⁹¹

The SJA carried out the relevant classification of positions for local and appellate courts, as well as its territorial offices, with approval from NAUCS. As of 2024, new staffing tables have been approved

²⁸⁵ [Publication by the Press Service of the Pechersk District Court of Kyiv on the social media Facebook.](#)

²⁸⁶ Information provided by respondents Nos. 20, 22, 29, 30 and 38 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 10.04.2025, 11.04.2025 and 21.04.2025.

²⁸⁷ [SMS Notifications in Administrative Offence Cases Restored — SJA. Judiciary of Ukraine.](#)

²⁸⁸ [Functioning of the Civil and Patronage Service in the Judicial Authorities of Ukraine. Subsection 1.2: ‘Current State of Affairs’, Section 1: ‘Civil and Patronage Service in the Judicial Authorities: Evolution, Current State and International Experience’.](#)

²⁸⁹ [Information on Actual Labour Expenditures for 2023. Annexe. State Judicial Administration of Ukraine.](#)

²⁹⁰ [On Preparations for the Introduction of a Position-Based Remuneration System for Civil Servants: Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1109 of 23.10.2023.](#)

²⁹¹ [Classification of Positions Under Martial Law: Useful Information \(Updated\). National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service.](#)

in accordance with the salary structure set by Cabinet Resolution No. 1409 of 29 December 2023. The classification considers the complexity of responsibilities, the level of accountability, the type of institution and its jurisdiction.

At the same time, despite the structural changes, the increase in remuneration for court staff did not occur in all cases. According to NAUCS, the reform is being implemented in phases, and a full increase in pay will only be possible after the classification system is fully adapted and overall funding for the civil service is increased.²⁹² In practice, this means that a significant portion of court staff have not experienced a substantial improvement in remuneration, as salary increases were often offset by low bonus coefficients or limited wage fund budgets in specific courts.

In addition, the issue of unequal base salaries persists. A reclassification of positions conducted throughout 2024 was prompted by documented cases of differing pay for identical positions within the same institution or between courts with equivalent structures. This highlights the need to refine the classification mechanisms and establish a centralised system for monitoring its implementation.

On 4 June 2025, the Law of Ukraine 'On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on the Introduction of Unified Approaches to the Remuneration of Civil Servants Based on Job Classification' No. 4282-IX of 11 March 2025 entered into force.²⁹³

This is an important step toward building a transparent, predictable and competitive remuneration system in the civil service, based on job classification.²⁹⁴ Job classification will make it possible to understand which professional areas exist within the civil service and allow for meaningful comparisons between public sector salaries and those in the wider Ukrainian labour market — comparing accountants with accountants, lawyers with lawyers, HR specialists with their counterparts, rather than comparing civil servants as a whole with an undifferentiated market. In this way, the introduction of the new pay system is expected to gradually strengthen the state's position as a competitive employer in the labour market.²⁹⁵

According to Law No. 4282-IX, the components of a civil servant's salary are as follows:

Fixed salary (a fixed payment and the main remuneration for the performance of official duties):

- › Base salary (from 1 January 2026, the minimum base salary for civil service positions may not be lower than 2.5 times the subsistence minimum for able-bodied persons).
- › Seniority allowance (2 per cent of the civil servant's base salary for each calendar year of civil service, but not exceeding 30 per cent of the base salary) — effective from 1 April 2025.
- › Rank allowance (set by the Government when approving the salary structure for civil service positions) — in 2025, the amounts are expected to remain unchanged.

²⁹² Status of Implementation of the Position-Based Remuneration System (Based on Results of the First Half of 2024). National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service.

²⁹³ On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Regarding the Introduction of Unified Approaches to the Remuneration of Civil Servants Based on Job Classification: Law of Ukraine No. 4282-IX of 11.03.2025.

²⁹⁴ Volodymyr Zelenskyy Signed the Law of Ukraine 'On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Regarding the Introduction of Unified Approaches to the Remuneration of Civil Servants Based on Job Classification'. National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service. 2025.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

Variable salary:

- › Monthly bonus (may not exceed 30 per cent of the base salary for the actual time worked during the month).
- › Quarterly bonus (may not exceed 90 per cent of the civil servant's base salary for the actual time worked during the quarter).
- › Performance bonus based on the results of the annual performance evaluation.

The law also provides for additional guarantees and compensations, namely:

- › Leave allowance, paid at the start of annual leave. It is equal to the sum of the base salary, seniority allowance and rank allowance of the civil servant.
- › Material assistance for addressing social and domestic needs.²⁹⁶

For the duration of martial law and for six months after its termination, additional adjustment coefficients may be applied to the remuneration of civil servants, taking into account the specific circumstances of administrative-territorial units.²⁹⁷

At the same time, changes in salary levels do not apply to patronage service staff.²⁹⁸ Therefore, according to the SJA,²⁹⁹ a strategic objective is to legislate, within the Law of Ukraine 'On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges', the specifics of remuneration for civil servants working in court administrations (secretariats) and in other bodies and institutions of the justice system (as outlined in the adopted Law No. 4282-IX). This includes the implementation of the mechanism proposed in draft law No. 6311,³⁰⁰ which would ensure the institutional independence of the judiciary and strengthen the confidence of parties in this independence and in the high qualifications of the staff involved in adjudicating court cases.

Mobilising local community resources to support the judiciary. One example of this approach is the implementation of special programmes for the organisational support of courts funded from local budgets. A notable case is the Programme for the Organisational Support of Courts in the Vinnytsia Municipal Territorial Community for 2024–2026, approved by the Vinnytsia City Council.³⁰¹ The programme provides for over UAH 4.6 million in funding to improve the material and technical base, promote digitalisation of judicial processes and create proper conditions for citizens' access to justice.

This is the second such programme implemented in the city of Vinnytsia. During the previous three-year cycle (2021–2023), over UAH 2.7 million was allocated from the local budget. These funds

²⁹⁶ [On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Regarding the Introduction of Unified Approaches to the Remuneration of Civil Servants Based on Job Classification: Law of Ukraine No. 4282-IX of 11.03.2025.](#)

²⁹⁷ [Volodymyr Zelenskyy Signed the Law of Ukraine 'On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Regarding the Introduction of Unified Approaches to the Remuneration of Civil Servants Based on Job Classification'. National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service. 2025.](#)

²⁹⁸ [Will the Salaries of Court Staff Change if the Adopted Law Comes into Force? — Comment by SJA Head Maksym Pampura. Judiciary of Ukraine. 2025.](#)

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ [On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine 'On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges' Regarding the Regulation of Court Staff Remuneration: Draft Law, Reg. No. 6311 of 16.11.2021.](#)

³⁰¹ [On the Implementation of the 'Programme for the Organisational Support of Courts in the Vinnytsia City Territorial Community for 2021–2023' in 2023 and the Approval of the 'Programme for the Organisational Support of Courts in the Vinnytsia City Territorial Community for 2024–2026': Decision of the Vinnytsia City Council No. 2191 of 29.03.2024.](#)

enabled the upgrading of equipment, provision of technical resources to courts and improvement of infrastructure — all particularly important under wartime conditions and unstable power supply.

At the same time, legislation explicitly obliges local authorities to promote proper conditions for the functioning of justice. Practice shows that such decisions are often made during times of crisis — in periods of emergency, heightened security risks or resource shortages.

Results of the court staff survey. A survey of court staff at first-instance and appellate courts, conducted as part of this study, confirmed a critical situation in terms of financial, material and technical support. The questionnaire covered key issues relating to salaries, bonuses, wellness allowances and subjective factors influencing employee motivation to remain within the judicial system.

In response to the question regarding whether their salary corresponds to the volume of duties performed, 85.6% of respondents indicated that it does not (with 66% stating they were completely dissatisfied and 19.6% somewhat dissatisfied).³⁰² This is a direct indication of a crisis in staff motivation. Under conditions of martial law and economic instability, low salaries are pushing court staff to seek alternatives outside the judicial system.

According to respondents,³⁰³ actual monthly salaries in 2024 ranged between UAH 12,000 and 15,700, which is an unacceptable level of remuneration for professionals responsible for the daily functioning of the justice system. At the same time, only 6.3% of those surveyed felt their salary was fair and adequate.

The situation with incentive payments is even more concerning. Regarding bonuses, 73.5% stated that their average monthly amount was no more than UAH 1,500.³⁰⁴ Moreover, around 15.4% of respondents reported that bonuses were often determined by the subjective judgment of court leadership, particularly the head of the court office, undermining the principles of fairness and transparency in remuneration.³⁰⁵

A total of 11.1% of respondents stated that they were aware of cases of informal financial incentives being provided to court staff by judges or institutional management.³⁰⁶ Although such practices may carry a risk of being perceived as non-transparent, in reality, they reflect desperate attempts by judges to retain qualified personnel amid extremely low official pay. In the absence of a functioning state mechanism for incentivising staff, judges are left to find their own ways of motivating employees to prevent a staffing collapse.

Most respondents pointed to emotional burnout, reduced work efficiency, high staff turnover and a loss of professional motivation as direct consequences of underfunding. Court staff feel undervalued, which affects both their level of engagement and their trust in the system overall.³⁰⁷

The survey data once again confirm the urgent need for remuneration reform in the judiciary — in particular, a review of base salaries, the introduction of a transparent bonus system and the provision of adequate social protection. Combined with official report data, the survey clearly shows that the

³⁰² The data were obtained from a survey conducted within the framework of this study, involving over 1,000 court administration staff across Ukraine.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

financial vulnerability of court staff is not only holding back the development of the system but also poses a real threat to the stable functioning of the judiciary in Ukraine.

Financial and Material Support Through the Eyes of Justice System Employees: Reality as Seen Through Experience (Based on the Results of In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews)

As part of the study, a series of anonymous in-depth interviews was conducted with representatives of the judiciary, including civil servants, patronage service staff and judges. The focus was on assessing the level of financial support and the material and technical condition of courts over the past five years, as well as the real challenges employees face in their day-to-day work.

The vast majority of respondents unequivocally stated that the salaries of court staff are critically low and do not reflect their workload, level of responsibility or expectations. Virtually all interviewees confirmed high staff turnover, which has increased under martial law. Younger employees are leaving the courts due to financial instability, while more experienced staff see no prospects for professional growth within the system. As noted in several interviews, employees in regions with lower bonuses or without incentive payments feel like ‘second-class’ staff within the same judiciary, since the level of bonuses varies significantly even between courts of the same instance across different oblasts of Ukraine.³⁰⁸

Particular concern was expressed regarding the uneven distribution of material and technical support. According to many respondents, even basic equipment — such as computers, printers or software — is often outdated or entirely unavailable. In many cases, staff are forced to carry out their duties manually or using personal devices. During prolonged power outages, some courts were left completely paralysed due to the lack of generators or backup power sources. As noted in the interviews, in some courts, judges and secretaries have to work in effectively hazardous conditions, without proper facilities for storing case files or maintaining uninterrupted judicial proceedings.³⁰⁹

Most interviewees observed that the reforms introduced — including job classification and changes to the remuneration system — have so far yielded no tangible results. Some viewed these reforms as largely declarative in nature, as they are not supported by adequate funding. Attention was also drawn to the issue of double standards in funding: for instance, courts located in major cities or the capital often have greater access to supplementary funds through special budgets (court fees), whereas peripheral courts are left with minimal allocations and staff shortages.

Among the proposals voiced by interview participants were: the urgent standardisation of salary levels by linking them to judicial remuneration, the provision of stable baseline funding for court infrastructure that is not dependent on court fee revenues and the creation of centralised standards for material and technical equipment for all courts in Ukraine. Respondents repeatedly stressed that without resolving the issue of proper working conditions, improvements in the performance of the judicial system should not be expected.

The scope and depth of the problems outlined directly by representatives of the judiciary highlight the urgent need not only to review approaches to funding and material support but also to rethink the role of court staff as a vital pillar of the justice system.

³⁰⁸ Information provided by respondents Nos. 5, 6, 12, 13, 20, 26, 32 and 38 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 12.03.2025, 03.04.2025, 08.04.2025, 09.04.2025 and 11.04.2025.

³⁰⁹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 2, 5, 7, 15, 20, 23, 29 and 32 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 21.03.2025, 08.04.2025, 09.04.2025, 10.04.2025, 11.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

Despite the achievements declared in SJA reports concerning material and technical provision, the actual state of court infrastructure — especially in frontline regions — raises serious concerns. Many courts completely lack accessible shelters necessary to ensure the safety of court users and staff during air raids, which occur daily in those areas.

Particularly egregious and entirely unacceptable are cases in which local self-government bodies — which hold court premises on their balance sheets — deny court staff access to available protective shelters. Such actions effectively deprive court employees of the basic ability to protect themselves during air raids, constituting a direct violation of their constitutional right to life. In these circumstances, staff are left without proper protection, which is wholly unacceptable in a democratic rule-of-law state — especially given the crucial societal role the judiciary plays under martial law conditions.³¹⁰

Alongside these safety issues, technical equipment remains a critical concern; for instance, devices for video recording of court proceedings are often faulty or outdated. Due to excessive bureaucratisation and insufficient funding, court employees are frequently forced to ensure the functioning of the courts at their own expense. This situation not only calls into question the effectiveness of the SJA's performance, but also poses real threats to the life, health and legal security of those who ensure the daily operation of the justice system.³¹¹

The financial, material, and technical support of the justice system directly affects the level of public trust in the courts, as it determines the institutions' ability to perform their functions efficiently, promptly and impartially. Between 2020 and 2024, public trust in the judiciary remained critically low. According to research by the Razumkov Centre, in 2023, 68% of citizens expressed distrust in the courts, and by June 2024, this figure had risen to 73%. This trend coincides with periods of chronic underfunding, staff reductions and increasing workloads on court personnel. Against this backdrop, the judiciary ranks among the lowest in public trust compared to other state institutions — significantly trailing behind local self-government bodies and the police.³¹²

Conclusions

1. Between 2020 and 2024, Ukraine's judicial system operated under conditions of chronic underfunding, which undermined its institutional capacity and resilience. State budget expenditures covered only around half of the judiciary's actual needs. As a result, nearly the entire budget was allocated to the salary fund, while infrastructure development, digitalisation and the renewal of material and technical resources remained outside the core priorities.
2. Material and technical support for courts, despite some improvements, remains critically insufficient and uneven across regions. In 2024, only one-third of court premises met construction standards and a significant number of institutions operated in outdated buildings that were either unsafe or unsuitable for use due to their technical condition. In frontline and other regions, shelters were entirely absent, and backup power systems were installed in only a portion of facilities. Digital infrastructure is being updated in a piecemeal manner, primarily with the support of international technical assistance.
3. The salary levels of court staff do not correspond to their workload or qualification requirements, resulting in a deep staffing crisis. The average take-home pay received by employees does not

³¹⁰ Information provided by respondent No. 23 during interview conducted on 10.04.2025.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Assessment of the Situation in the Country and the Performance of Authorities, Trust in Social Institutions, Politicians, Officials and Public Figures, Faith in Victory (September 2024). Razumkov Centre. 2024.

cover basic needs and serves as a demotivating factor at all levels. In addition, the bonus system is non-transparent and, in some cases, discriminatory. This contributes to staff attrition, reduces the prestige of the profession and increases internal tension.

4. The SJA, as the principal budget holder, has demonstrated limited capacity for effective planning and transparent resource administration. In recent years, both underutilisation of allocated funds (including a special fund balance of UAH 1.9 billion in 2024) and a lack of flexibility in responding to new challenges have been documented. Several decisions (such as the cancellation of SMS notifications) were made without consultation with the courts, resulting in systemic disruptions and a loss of trust in managerial decisions.
5. Judicial system employees have demonstrated strong dedication, yet the absence of adequate social protection and professional prospects poses risks to the continued functioning of the judiciary. The results of surveys and interviews indicate widespread burnout, devaluation of labour and disillusionment with the justice system. At the same time, public distrust in the judiciary is growing, fuelled by a lack of transparency, institutional instability and, at times, the perception of clear injustice.

3.2. The Impact of Martial Law

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia on 24 February 2022 posed an unprecedented challenge to all branches of state power, including the judiciary. According to the Constitution of Ukraine, the administration of justice is an inherent function of the state and cannot be suspended, even under martial law.³¹³ Under these difficult conditions, the judiciary not only maintained its functionality but also demonstrated a high level of civic responsibility. Judges and court staff actively contributed to the defence of the state — both as members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) and through volunteer efforts.³¹⁴

Organising Judicial Operations: The Role of the Highest Judicial Self-Governance Body

In the first hours of the Russian aggression, courts were confronted with tasks that went far beyond routine legal practice: ensuring the safety of people, preserving documents and equipment and maintaining the continuity of justice in the face of threats of physical destruction of court buildings and loss of personnel. In response to these challenges, the CJU adopted a series of strategically important decisions that became a roadmap for all judicial institutions during the full-scale war.

The first response was CJU Decision No. 9 of 24 February 2022,³¹⁵ which initiated urgent organisational measures to stabilise the work of the judiciary amid the suspension of the HCJ and the outbreak of armed aggression. Already on 14 March 2022, by Decision No. 10, the CJU approved detailed recommendations on court operations under martial law, including provisions for relocating courts, using alternative premises, organising remote work and safeguarding documents and archives.³¹⁶

³¹³ Constitution of Ukraine of 28.06.1996 No. 254k/96-VR.

³¹⁴ Information provided by respondents Nos. 1, 6, 12, 20, 25, 28–30 and 36 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 18.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 03.04.2025, 08.04.2025 and 10.04.2025.

³¹⁵ Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 9 of 24.02.2022.

³¹⁶ Selected Recommendations on the Organisation of Courts' and Judges' Work Under Martial Law, approved by Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 10 of 14.03.2022.

In August 2022, the CJU adopted Decision No. 23, which provided additional recommendations on the functioning of courts, including technical and security-related aspects.³¹⁷ On the same day, Decision No. 24 established the procedure for granting judicial leave and paying remuneration in cases where courts could not operate normally due to hostilities or occupation.³¹⁸ These documents formed the foundation for an adaptive response mechanism under wartime conditions.

In 2022, the issue of changing the territorial jurisdiction of court cases became particularly acute due to the temporary occupation of certain areas or the physical impossibility of administering justice. CJU Decision No. 5 of 3 February 2023 provided courts with an algorithm for handling unassigned cases affected by jurisdictional changes.³¹⁹ Decision No. 31 of 17 August 2023 outlined the challenges faced by courts that had temporarily received transferred jurisdiction and included recommendations for receiving and processing such cases.³²⁰

Alongside fulfilling its core responsibilities, the judiciary continued to resist the aggressor not only through legal means. Hundreds of court personnel — including judges, court staff, and members of the CSS — were mobilised into the AFU, joined territorial defence units, and participated in volunteer and humanitarian efforts.³²¹ There have been instances of court employees being killed while performing their duties,³²² as well as of judges and court staff — and their family members — who voluntarily joined the armed forces and lost their lives.³²³ One particularly painful example of the trials faced by members of the judiciary is the captivity of Judge Yuliia Matvieieva in Russian detention.³²⁴

Despite threats to life, shelling, power outages and communication blackouts, most courts continued to operate. Court staff reported that they were working on time despite air raid sirens, ensuring case management, maintaining communication with case participants, and carrying out electronic document processing.³²⁵

In its Decision No. 52 of 20 November 2023, the CJU recognised that periods of military service should be counted towards judicial tenure.³²⁶ Against the backdrop of mobilisation and staff shortages in the courts, the CJU raised the issue of reserving judicial personnel from conscription. By Decision No. 2 of 30 January 2025, it proposed granting priority reservation rights to civil servants and patronage service employees of the courts, given the essential nature of their roles in maintaining continuity of

³¹⁷ [Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 23 of 05.08.2022.](#)

³¹⁸ [Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 24 of 05.08.2022.](#)

³¹⁹ [Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 5 of 03.02.2023.](#)

³²⁰ [Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 31 of 17.08.2023.](#)

³²¹ [‘They Exchanged Their Judicial Robes for Military Uniforms’.](#) Council of Judges of Ukraine. 2023.

³²² [Missile Strike on Administrative Building in Kryvyi Rih Kills Judge’s Assistant.](#) Council of Judges of Ukraine. 2024.
[Commercial Court of Donetsk Region Appeals to Heads of Judicial Bodies for Assistance.](#) Council of Judges of Ukraine. 2015.

³²³ [‘First with Honour’: In Memory and Respect for Our Fallen Colleague.](#) Council of Judges of Ukraine. 2024.
[Judge Killed While Clearing Mines in Kharkiv Region.](#) Council of Judges of Ukraine. 2022.
[Two Employees of the Commercial Court of Mykolaiv Region Killed in Missile Strike on Mykolaiv Regional State Administration.](#) Judiciary of Ukraine. 2022.

³²⁴ [Judge Yuliia Matvieieva: ‘Delivering Justice During War Is More Than Fulfilling Duties’.](#) Council of Judges of Ukraine. 2025.

³²⁵ [Bohdan Monich on Administering Justice in Ukraine During the War.](#) Council of Judges of Ukraine. 2022.
[Supreme Court Judge Ivan Mishchenko, aka ‘Dredd’: ‘I See No Critical Problems in the Judicial System — It Has Never Stopped Working’.](#) Council of Judges of Ukraine. 2022.

³²⁶ [Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 52 of 20.11.2023.](#)

justice.³²⁷ It also initiated the inclusion of court employees in the eOselia housing programme (CJU Decision No. 45 of 9 December 2024) to help address housing needs.³²⁸

In April 2024, the CJU adopted Decision No. 5 on the organisation of court operations in temporarily occupied territories.³²⁹ The document addressed the preservation of guarantees for judges and staff who were forced to relocate or are unable to perform their duties. The CJU also emphasised the need to develop legal mechanisms to address liability for potential collaboration with occupying authorities.

Activities of the High Council of Justice under Martial Law

Following the dismissal of most members of the HCJ in January and February 2022, the HCJ temporarily lost its authority.³³⁰ However, in January 2023, new members were elected, enabling the HCJ to resume its full functions.³³¹ This included the appointment of members to the HCJ and the reinstatement of judicial selection processes — developments that are critically important in the context of the judiciary's staffing shortages.³³²

The HCJ supported draft laws aimed at adapting judicial procedures to martial law conditions. In particular, amendments to procedural codes were proposed to allow remote court hearings, the use of electronic communication tools to notify participants and the implementation of other measures to ensure the continuity of justice.³³³

The HCJ also initiated actions to provide housing for judges and court staff who lost their homes as a result of hostilities.³³⁴

Challenges faced by the civil and patronage service in the judiciary under martial law (based on the results of in-depth semi-structured interviews). In-depth interviews with representatives of the judiciary revealed an overall picture of resilience and dedication among staff, despite systemic challenges exacerbated by the conditions of martial law. All respondents noted that the key factors negatively affecting service efficiency were low salaries, excessive workloads and the lack of compensation for overtime work.³³⁵ At the same time, the war has intensified long-standing structural

³²⁷ [Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 2 of 30.01.2025.](#)

³²⁸ [Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 45 of 09.12.2024.](#)

³²⁹ [Decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine No. 5 of 11.04.2024.](#)

³³⁰ [Ten Members of the High Council of Justice Resigned.](#) Slovo i Dilo. 2022.

³³¹ [XIX Extraordinary Congress of Judges of Ukraine Elected All 8 Members of the HCJ.](#) Council of Judges of Ukraine. 2023.

³³² [HCJ Appointed Members of the High Qualification Commission of Judges of Ukraine.](#) High Council of Justice. 2023.

³³³ [Decisions of the High Council of Justice in 2023.](#) High Council of Justice.

³³⁴ [On the Public Appeal of the High Council of Justice to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Ministry of Finance of Ukraine: Decision of the High Council of Justice No. 2585/0/15-24 of 29.08.2024.](#)

[On Providing an Advisory Opinion on Draft Law No. 12000: Decision of the High Council of Justice No. 2878/0/15-24 of 01.10.2024.](#)

[On the Public Appeal of the High Council of Justice to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine: Decision of the High Council of Justice No. 3734/0/15-24 of 24.12.2024.](#)

[On the Appeal of the High Council of Justice to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine with Proposals on Priority Objectives for Financial Support and Judicial Independence for 2026–2028: Decision of the High Council of Justice No. 326/0/15-25 of 25.02.2025.](#)

³³⁵ Information provided by respondents Nos. 1–41 during interviews conducted between 03.03.2025 and 30.04.2025.

problems within the judiciary. Some institutions came under fire; employees lost their homes or were forced to evacuate — yet they continued to fulfil their official duties.³³⁶

Court staff and members of the patronage service — including judges' assistants — consistently work overtime, including evenings, weekends and public holidays. The lack of compensation mechanisms for such work was mentioned in nearly every interview. As one respondent noted: 'civil service in the judiciary should not be a punishment — it should encourage and motivate'.³³⁷ Under martial law, the disproportion between workload and remuneration has become even more pronounced: staff, especially those from de-occupied or frontline territories, have been left without housing or social protection, forced to rebuild their lives while continuing to serve within the judicial system.³³⁸

In several interviews, it was emphasised that it was precisely under wartime conditions that the judiciary demonstrated exceptional adaptability and the ability to operate independently under critical circumstances. In some cases, court offices — despite complete evacuation from their premises — managed to organise remote work and continue document processing.³³⁹

Thus, in wartime, civil and patronage service staff remain the foundation of the judiciary's functioning. However, in the absence of proper state policy — financial, staffing and legal — the system relies solely on the personal responsibility and commitment of its employees. This is a resource that cannot be limitless and requires an immediate policy-level response from the state.

Survey results of court staff. An anonymous survey of over one thousand court staff from first-instance and appellate courts made it possible to build a comprehensive picture of the impact of martial law on the judiciary's operations, as well as to assess the effectiveness of digital solutions introduced in crisis conditions. The data collected indicate that the vast majority of respondents experienced negative effects of the war on their working conditions — both physical and psychological. 71.5% of those surveyed reported sustained emotional stress, increased anxiety and psychological exhaustion. Nearly half (48.5%) indicated a noticeable increase in workload due to staff reductions, as well as an expansion in technical and organisational responsibilities.³⁴⁰

A significant share of respondents (37.6%) noted that staff numbers in their courts had decreased — either due to voluntary resignations or because colleagues were unable to perform their duties due to relocation, occupation or the destruction of court buildings.³⁴¹ This staff turnover, combined with limited opportunities to replenish court personnel during wartime, has placed considerable pressure on those who remain in the system. The lack of incentives, the complexity and shortcomings of reservation procedures or targeted protection mechanisms for court employees have only deepened the staffing crisis.

Only around one third of survey participants reported that their courts had received additional resources from the state due to the war — in the form of equipment, software or support from local

³³⁶ Information provided by respondents Nos. 2, 4, 12, 23, 32 and 33 during interviews conducted on 21.03.2025, 03.04.2025, 08.04.2025, 09.04.2025 and 10.04.2025.

³³⁷ Information provided by respondent No.34 during interview conducted on 20.03.2025.

³³⁸ Information provided by respondents Nos. 23 and 38 during interviews conducted on 10.04.2025 and 11.04.2025.

³³⁹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 26 and 35 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025 and 11.03.2025.

³⁴⁰ The data were obtained from a survey conducted within the framework of this study, involving over 1,000 court administration staff across Ukraine.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

authorities. Some staff also indicated they were not informed about the distribution or receipt of such assistance, highlighting a lack of communication between court leadership and administrative staff.³⁴²

Despite this, the survey results show clear momentum in the digital transformation of the judiciary. The majority of respondents confirmed that over the past two years there has been increased implementation of electronic document management systems (77.1%), video conferencing tools (70.7%) and other instruments of the UJITS.³⁴³ Under wartime conditions, these innovations have become not merely convenient but critically necessary to preserve access to justice and maintain the court's core functions.³⁴⁴

It is worth noting that these changes were introduced largely without corresponding staff training or updates to material and technical infrastructure. Court staff had to master new tools independently, often under conditions of overload and without clear guidance.³⁴⁵ This reflects the high flexibility and adaptability of personnel, but also the lack of adequate support from the institutions responsible for organising such training.

Overall, the survey demonstrated that the war has radically changed the working conditions of court staff: alongside loss, stress and overwork, significant changes have also emerged — including the implementation of digital tools, the remote organisation of work processes and increased autonomy in making organisational decisions.³⁴⁶ However, the effectiveness of these changes is constrained by limited resources, staffing instability and the absence of a coherent state policy to support court personnel. Under increasing workloads, court staff are often left to familiarise themselves with new tools without appropriate methodological or technical assistance. This highlights the need for the introduction of flexible professional development programmes focused on practical skills, digital literacy, stress resilience and crisis management.³⁴⁷ Such an approach should become part of state policy to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of justice under wartime conditions.

Social guarantees. As noted in subsection 2.1 of section 2 of this study,³⁴⁸ under martial law, the issue of ensuring social guarantees for judiciary staff in vulnerable circumstances — particularly those affected by the temporary occupation of territories — has become especially urgent. At present, there is no systemic state mechanism in place to support such individuals: there are neither targeted employment programmes nor guaranteed social payments.³⁴⁹

This creates a risk of losing qualified personnel and requires immediate resolution through appropriate state programmes. Particular attention should be given to the issue of housing provision for court

³⁴² The data were obtained from a survey conducted within the framework of this study, involving over 1,000 court administration staff across Ukraine.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Information provided by respondents Nos. 12, 15, 23, 32, 37 and 39 during interviews conducted on 12.03.2025, 03.04.2025, 08.04.2025, 10.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

³⁴⁵ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 26 and 42 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 08.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

³⁴⁶ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 8, 12, 13, 22, 23, 26, 30, 34, 36, 39 and 40 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 15.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 20.03.2025, 03.04.2025, 08.04.2025, 10.04.2025 and 21.04.2025.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Functioning of the Civil and Patronage Service in the Judicial Authorities of Ukraine. Subsection 2.1: 'Professional Prestige', Chapter 2: 'The Justice Team: Prestige, Recruitment, Independence and Development'.

³⁴⁹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 7, 9, 10, 26, 35 and 40 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 15.03.2025, 17.03.2025, 09.04.2025 and 11.04.2025.

staff who have been forced to leave their homes — such guarantees must become part of the broader policy on restoring judicial infrastructure in de-occupied territories.³⁵⁰

In a context where court employees perform their duties under conditions of high stress, instability and professional burnout, the introduction of a state medical support programme for court staff is especially relevant.³⁵¹ This must include not only basic healthcare but also mandatory psychological support and measures to prevent occupational exhaustion. Given the critical role of court staff in ensuring the continuity of justice, their physical and mental well-being must be a priority of civil policy.³⁵² The adoption of decisions on creating a comprehensive medical and social protection system for court staff is not a gesture of goodwill — it is a timely necessity aimed at preserving human capital, without which the judiciary cannot function effectively.

Reservation of court staff under martial law. The issue of reserving military-liable court staff in Ukraine remains critical under martial law, directly affecting staffing stability and the effective functioning of the judiciary. Although the SJA publicly claims that there are no systemic problems in this area, the practical experience of the courts and survey results suggest otherwise.³⁵³

According to CMU Resolution No. 650 of 5 June 2024,³⁵⁴ courts are permitted to reserve only up to 50% of military-liable civil servants in categories 'B' and 'C'. This restriction creates situations in which courts are unable to hire qualified candidates due to having exhausted their reservation quotas. Furthermore, the reservation procedure has become more time-consuming and bureaucratic, hindering the prompt filling of vacancies. The situation is particularly difficult for employees with 'scarce' military specialisations — such as reserve officers — who are practically ineligible for reservation.³⁵⁵

These limitations lead to increased workloads for remaining staff, longer case consideration times and a decline in the quality of justice.³⁵⁶ Respondents surveyed for this study noted that intensified mobilisation measures are negatively impacting the stability of court office operations.³⁵⁷

In response to these challenges, the CJU initiated a revision of the approach to reserving justice system personnel. Specifically, it proposed increasing reservation quotas to 100% for CSS employees and to no less than 80% for court staff, the SJA and its territorial branches.³⁵⁸ These proposals are aimed at ensuring the proper functioning of the judiciary under martial law and preventing a staffing crisis that could lead to significant delays in case hearings and undermine public trust in the judiciary.

³⁵⁰ Information provided by respondents Nos. 7, 9, 10, 26, 35 and 40 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 15.03.2025, 17.03.2025, 09.04.2025 and 11.04.2025.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 14, 23, 30, 32, 36, 39 and 41 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025, 12.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 24.03.2025, 08.04.2025 and 10.04.2025.

³⁵⁴ Certain Issues Regarding the Deferral from Military Service During Martial Law: Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 650 of 05.06.2024.

³⁵⁵ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 14, 23, 30, 32, 36, 39 and 41 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025, 12.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 24.03.2025, 08.04.2025 and 10.04.2025.

³⁵⁶ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 14, 20, 22, 29 and 30 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 08.04.2025, 10.04.2025 and 21.04.2025.

³⁵⁷ The data were obtained from a survey conducted within the framework of this study, involving over 1,000 court administration staff across Ukraine.

³⁵⁸ The CJU Initiates a Review of Approaches to the Deferral from Military Service for Justice System Employees. Council of Judges of Ukraine. 2025.

As of June 2025, the issue of reserving court staff remains unresolved, despite repeated appeals and proposals from the professional community.³⁵⁹ The provisions set out in Government Resolution No. 650,³⁶⁰ as well as the imposed reservation limits, fail to reflect the specific operational nature of the judiciary as a critically important element of public administration during wartime. The actual loss of human resources, the inability to fill vacancies promptly and the refusal of qualified candidates to accept employment due to a lack of guarantees — all of this threatens the continuity and quality of justice.³⁶¹

Against the backdrop of increasing mobilisation pressures and heightened demands on the judicial system, resolving the issue of reservation is not only important but urgent. It requires a systemic approach and a revision of the regulatory framework. This is not about privileges or special treatment but about safeguarding the institutional capacity of the judiciary in wartime — a matter directly linked to national security, the stability of law and order and citizens' trust in the state.³⁶²

Conclusions. Ukraine's judiciary has demonstrated the ability to adapt quickly, remain mobile and function under extreme conditions, ensuring the continuity of justice even in frontline and temporarily occupied regions (including through the reassignment of territorial jurisdiction and the relocation of judges).³⁶³

At the same time, martial law has exacerbated a number of long-standing issues within the judiciary — such as inadequate material support, staffing instability, the absence of mechanisms to compensate for overtime work and unequal resource distribution between courts in different regions. Digital transformation has, on the one hand, been a necessary response to new challenges and, on the other, has been implemented largely through the efforts of the staff themselves, without sufficient technical or methodological support. A particularly vulnerable group is court employees who lost their positions due to occupation — they lack guaranteed state support, which poses a risk of losing valuable professional capacity within the justice system.

3.3. Corruption Risks and Anti-Corruption Measures

The problem of corruption within the judiciary has traditionally remained in the public spotlight and presents an ongoing challenge to the institutional capacity of the state. In peacetime, it undermines public trust in justice; in wartime, it poses a direct threat to national security. Given the role of civil and patronage service staff in maintaining the operation of the courts, the study of corruption risks within this category of positions becomes especially relevant. Under martial law, as the judiciary operates under peak pressure and with limited resources, the issue of integrity and the prevention of abuse becomes critically important.

³⁵⁹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 6, 14, 20, 22, 29 and 30 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 08.04.2025, 10.04.2025 and 21.04.2025.

³⁶⁰ Certain Issues Regarding the Deferral from Military Service During Martial Law: Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 650 of 05.06.2024.

³⁶¹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 1, 2, 6, 10, 14, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 29, 30 and 36 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025, 18.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 21.03.2025, 08.04.2025, 09.04.2025, 10.04.2025 and 21.04.2025.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Order on Determining the Territorial Jurisdiction of Cases. Supreme Court. Judiciary of Ukraine.

The judiciary as a high-risk sector for corruption. Ukraine's Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2021–2025 identifies the judiciary as one of the areas of public administration most vulnerable to corruption.³⁶⁴ This vulnerability is driven not only by the high societal sensitivity of judicial decisions, but also by the fact that — despite formal independence — the judiciary remains susceptible to external influence and political pressure.

Court staff, who provide administrative, technical and organisational support to judicial processes, represent an essential but often underappreciated part of the judicial system's operation. It is through them that a large volume of communications, documentation and internal procedures pass — and therefore, potentially, corruption risks as well.³⁶⁵

Corruption offences in the judiciary. Official public sources — such as the statistical reports of the National Agency on Corruption Prevention³⁶⁶ or the Unified State Register of Persons Who Have Committed Corruption Offences³⁶⁷ — do not contain detailed data on the number of offences committed specifically by court staff or members of the patronage service.

In this context, alternative sources of information play an important role — including media reports, data from the Unified State Register of Court Decisions³⁶⁸ and in-depth interviews with representatives of the judiciary. These sources suggest that corruption offences committed by court staff are exceptions rather than evidence of a systemic problem.³⁶⁹

Most identified cases are related primarily to the late submission of declarations, inaccuracies or technical errors in the data provided. In general, there is no indication of deliberate concealment of income, expenses or assets by court staff — pointing more to flaws in the declaration procedures than to intentional breaches of the law.³⁷⁰

This suggests an overall high level of legal discipline among civil and patronage service staff in the courts, though it does not eliminate the need to improve preventive mechanisms.

Key risk areas for court staff. The results of the survey of court staff from first-instance and appellate courts highlight several key factors affecting integrity and vulnerability to corruption risks in their work. Respondents placed particular emphasis on circumstances that undermine independence and professional autonomy.³⁷¹

The most significant factor, according to 680 respondents (65.3%), was the low level of remuneration. This indicates that financial insecurity remains the primary stressor that may create conditions conducive to tolerating or accepting improper offers.³⁷² The second most frequently cited factor was

³⁶⁴ [On the Principles of State Anti-Corruption Policy for 2021–2025: Law of Ukraine No. 2322-IX of 20.06.2022.](#)

³⁶⁵ Information provided by respondents Nos. 17, 40 and 42 during interviews conducted on 10.03.2025, 15.03.2025 and 30.04.2025.

³⁶⁶ [Anti-Corruption Statistics Guide.](#) National Agency on Corruption Prevention (NACP).

³⁶⁷ [Unified State Register of Persons Who Have Committed Corruption or Corruption-Related Offences.](#) NACP.

³⁶⁸ [Unified State Register of Court Decisions.](#) Judiciary of Ukraine.

³⁶⁹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 2, 3, 8, 9, 14, 15, 17, 23, 26, 30, 38, 40 and 42 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 04.03.2025, 10.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 7.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 21.03.2025, 10.04.2025, 11.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ The data were obtained from a survey conducted within the framework of this study, involving over 1,000 court administration staff across Ukraine.

³⁷² Ibid.

the dependence of patronage service staff on judges — selected by 384 respondents (36.9%).³⁷³ This figure points to an imbalance in internal subordination and often informal hierarchies, which increase the risk of abuse of influence.

The third most frequently mentioned factor affecting integrity and vulnerability to corruption risks was pressure from court leadership, cited by 244 respondents (23.4%). This may indicate unethical management practices in certain institutions, as well as the lack of mechanisms to protect staff in conflict situations.

Additionally, 214 survey participants (20.6%) identified fear of losing their job as a strong deterrent factor — reflecting a climate of instability and inadequate protection of labour rights.³⁷⁴

These findings confirm that corruption risks in the work of court staff are linked not only to the personal integrity of individuals but also to structural issues — financial, staffing and managerial. Additionally, a portion of respondents (21.3%) stated that they found it difficult to identify factors influencing integrity and vulnerability to corruption risks. This may indicate a general lack of clarity in how these issues are perceived, a low level of anti-corruption culture or the absence of open dialogue within teams.³⁷⁵

Martial law remains a particularly important contextual factor. When combined with staff shortages, personnel rotations, changes in work organisation and insufficient institutional support, vulnerability to abuse increases — both from external actors and within the system itself. Under such conditions, the balance between oversight and trust is disrupted, which may contribute to the legitimisation of informal practices, particularly in personnel decisions or communication with stakeholders in the judicial process.³⁷⁶

Lack of anti-corruption training as a hidden risk for court staff. In addition to structural challenges — such as financial instability and staff dependency — one of the key factors increasing vulnerability to corruption is the insufficient level of anti-corruption training among court staff. As previously discussed in [subsection 2.4 of section 2](#) of this study, fewer than half of respondents (43.2%) confirmed participating in specialised training or courses on anti-corruption topics.³⁷⁷ In contrast, 37.2% openly stated that they had never taken part in such training, while nearly 20% could not recall whether they had done so.³⁷⁸ These figures are a concerning signal for institutions responsible for ensuring integrity and professionalism in public service within the judiciary.

Insufficient coverage by anti-corruption programmes poses serious risks:

- › First, without systematic training, staff may fail to recognise situations that involve conflicts of interest or signs of corrupt conduct.
- › Second, a lack of knowledge about the legal consequences of offences reduces the effectiveness of preventive measures — staff may not understand the seriousness of liability and may rely on ‘traditions’ or informal practices.

³⁷³ The data were obtained from a survey conducted within the framework of this study, involving over 1,000 court administration staff across Ukraine.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Information provided by respondents Nos. 35 and 42 during interviews conducted on 11.03.2025 and 30.04.2025.

³⁷⁷ The data were obtained from a survey conducted within the framework of this study, involving over 1,000 court administration staff across Ukraine.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

- › Third, the inability or fear to report violations (due to unfamiliarity with procedures or a lack of whistleblower protection mechanisms) only reinforces a closed cycle of tolerance towards unethical behaviour.

Thus, anti-corruption training is not merely a component of general professional development, but an essential part of a comprehensive anti-corruption policy within the judiciary. Its insufficient development directly increases the risk of abuse — especially under conditions of heavy workloads, limited transparency and significant emotional exhaustion caused by the war. Both the substantive and motivational components of such programmes must be strengthened — they should be integrated into the human resources strategy and institutional culture of the courts.³⁷⁹

Electronic declaration: issues and gaps. An electronic declaration is a core instrument for ensuring transparency and preventing corruption in public service. In accordance with the Law of Ukraine ‘On Prevention of Corruption’,³⁸⁰ civil servants, including court staff, are required to submit declarations (on assets, income, expenses and financial liabilities). This enables public oversight of the lifestyles of officials and helps to identify signs of illicit enrichment or conflicts of interest.

However, this requirement does not apply to members of the patronage service, in particular to judges’ assistants. Despite having access to confidential information, being involved in the drafting of judicial decisions and being part of a judge’s immediate professional circle, their exclusion from the list of declarants remains one of the most vulnerable areas in terms of integrity and transparency.³⁸¹

Within the framework of the conducted survey, respondents’ opinions on whether members of the patronage service should be required to submit declarations were almost evenly divided.

461 respondents (44.3%) believe that such employees should be required to declare their financial status, similarly to civil servants.³⁸² At the same time, 423 individuals (40.6%) do not support this requirement, while a further 157 respondents (15.1%) were unable to determine their answer.³⁸³

This distribution reflects not only the existence of an institutional debate on the issue but also the absence of a clear regulatory approach that would be comprehensible and convincing to the professional community itself. A significant share of those in favour of declarations indicates an awareness that access to confidential information, involvement in the preparation of decisions and proximity to the judge create heightened corruption risks that cannot be ignored merely due to the absence of formal civil servant status.³⁸⁴

An analysis of the CCJE Opinion No. 22 also highlights this issue.³⁸⁵ In particular, the CCJE notes that judges’ assistants have a high degree of influence on the efficiency and organisation of the court’s work and therefore, states must ensure appropriate oversight of their integrity. In circumstances where assistants effectively perform analytical functions — including drafting decisions — but remain outside the scope of mandatory accountability mechanisms, there is a risk of covert influence on the

³⁷⁹ Information provided by respondent No. 42 during interview conducted on 30.04.2025.

³⁸⁰ [On Prevention of Corruption: Law of Ukraine No. 1700-VII of 14.10.2014.](#)

³⁸¹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 5, 26, 27, 30 and 42 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 09.04.2025, 29.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

³⁸² The data were obtained from a survey conducted within the framework of this study, involving over 1,000 court administration staff across Ukraine.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Information provided by respondents Nos. 21 and 42 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025 and 30.04.2025.

³⁸⁵ [CCJE Opinion No.22 \(2019\). The Role of Judges’ Assistants.](#) High Council of Justice.

administration of justice.³⁸⁶ Such a regulatory imbalance undermines both internal trust within the system and the external legitimacy of judicial proceedings.

Thus, despite the formal exclusion of the court patronage service from the civil service, the very nature of the powers exercised by patronage staff and their access to information requires heightened standards of integrity. Mandatory asset declaration should be introduced for patronage service employees. This would not only align with international transparency standards but also contribute to strengthening internal trust in the justice system and preventing corruption and conflicts of interest.

The introduction of mandatory declarations for patronage staff requires amendments to anti-corruption legislation, which is in line with the overall direction of the state's anti-corruption policy. The absence of such requirements appears contradictory in light of efforts to ensure transparency and impartiality of the judiciary. The exclusion of judges' assistants from the list of declaration subjects creates a gap in the system of oversight and integrity. Expanding the obligation to submit declarations to include judges' assistants is a justified and necessary step towards reinforcing anti-corruption safeguards in the judiciary and strengthening public trust in the justice system.

Findings of in-depth interviews: subjective perception of corruption risks. The analysis of in-depth interviews conducted within this study demonstrated that the issue of corruption risks within the court administration is not exaggerated — on the contrary, it emerged directly or indirectly in most conversations. Respondents noted that although direct instances of corruption among court staff are relatively rare, the system creates favourable conditions for the emergence of such risks due to a range of structural and managerial factors.

One of the clearest messages was a critical assessment of material provision. Judges repeatedly pointed out that low salaries, combined with high demands, the complexity of tasks and the absence of effective motivation mechanisms, create a 'corruption trap'. This applies in particular to young professionals who, having access to confidential information or influencing the organisation of court proceedings, find themselves in a vulnerable position.³⁸⁷

The interviews also confirmed that the lack of clearly defined ethical standards and internal integrity rules in many courts increases corruption risks. Patronage service staff — in particular, judges' assistants — are often left 'unmonitored', as they are not subject to declaration requirements, lack job descriptions with an anti-corruption focus and are not covered by systematic training.³⁸⁸

Some respondents directly pointed to the existence of a practice of 'informal services', which manifests, for example, in the expedited handling of cases or giving priority in document acceptance. While such actions may appear minor, they contribute to an atmosphere of tolerance towards abuses — one that is later difficult to eliminate.³⁸⁹

Considerable attention was devoted to the issue of conflict of interest, particularly in courts with a small number of staff, where familial or friendly ties affect the transparency of managerial decisions,

³⁸⁶ CCJE Opinion No.22 (2019). *The Role of Judges' Assistants*. High Council of Justice.

³⁸⁷ Information provided by respondents Nos. 29, 35 and 39 during interviews conducted on 11.03.2025, 12.03.2025 and 10.04.2025.

³⁸⁸ Information provided by respondents Nos. 22, 29, 33, 38, 39 and 41 during interviews conducted on 12.03.2025, 24.03.2025, 09.04.2025, 10.04.2025, 11.04.2025 and 21.04.2025.

³⁸⁹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 39 and 42 during interviews conducted on 12.03.2025 and 30.04.2025.

the distribution of workload, or even competition for career advancement. One respondent described this as ‘a quiet systemic problem that is not recorded but is constantly present’.³⁹⁰

Several respondents expressed doubts about the effectiveness of the National Agency on Corruption Prevention in the judicial sphere, noting that most identified violations are of a formal nature and do not concern substantive instances of abuse within the courts. In this context, the idea was raised of strengthening internal anti-corruption control at the court level — including the introduction of risk indicators, mandatory integrity consultations and an institutional policy of zero tolerance towards corruption.³⁹¹

At the same time, it is important to emphasise that all judges and court staff who took part in the interviews demonstrated a clear intolerance towards any manifestations of corruption. It was repeatedly noted that tolerating violations — even minor ones — undermines the authority of the judiciary.³⁹² Respondents stressed that the fight against corruption must begin within the system itself, and its effectiveness depends on the personal responsibility of each employee. The need to cleanse the judicial service of unscrupulous staff who discredit the institution as a whole was also emphasised.³⁹³ This sentiment indicates that the system contains not only problems but also a strong internal potential for self-purification and the development of standards of integrity.

Compliance of anti-corruption mechanisms in courts with the recommendations of the Council of Europe’s Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) and the Venice Commission. The study revealed that basic anti-corruption mechanisms in courts do in fact exist in Ukraine. These include the obligation to submit declarations for civil servants, anti-corruption legislation, and the work of relevant state and law enforcement bodies in identifying violations.³⁹⁴ However, the effectiveness of these tools in the area of civil and patronage service within the judiciary remains limited — due to fragmented implementation, the absence of specialised internal procedures and weak institutional integration of preventive measures at the level of individual courts.³⁹⁵

As noted in the Fourth Evaluation Round Report of GRECO³⁹⁶ and in the Venice Commission’s Rule of Law Checklist (CDL-AD(2016)007),³⁹⁷ a system for preventing corruption in the judiciary must be based not only on criminal law instruments, but on a comprehensive model of institutional integrity. This includes: transparent human resources policy; effective mechanisms for monitoring conduct; mandatory ethics training; and accountability for breaches of standards.

³⁹⁰ Information provided by respondents Nos. 29, 35, 39 and 42 during interviews conducted on 11.03.2025, 12.03.2025, 10.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

³⁹¹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 28, 29 and 42 during interviews conducted on 18.03.2025, 10.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

³⁹² Information provided by respondents Nos. 1, 2, 6, 8, 15, 17, 20, 24–27, 29–31, 36, 37 and 40 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 10.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 12.03.2025, 18.03.2025, 19.03.2025, 21.03.2025, 08.04.2025, 10.04.2025, 29.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ On the Principles of State Anti-Corruption Policy for 2021–2025: Law of Ukraine No. 2322-IX of 20.06.2022.

³⁹⁵ Information provided by respondent No. 42 during interview conducted on 30.04.2025.

³⁹⁶ Fourth Evaluation Round: Prevention of Corruption Among Members of Parliament, Judges and Prosecutors. Evaluation Report. Ukraine. Council of Europe. 2017.

³⁹⁷ Rule of Law Checklist. Council of Europe. 2016.

In this context, the current model of administrative governance in courts only partially meets these standards. In particular:

- › most courts lack internal anti-corruption programmes;³⁹⁸
- › independent internal monitoring of integrity is not conducted;
- › anti-corruption training is irregular and limited;
- › judges' assistants, despite having real influence over the administration of justice, are not subject to declaration requirements, which increases corruption risks.

Expert analysis indicates that the anti-corruption infrastructure in Ukrainian courts is predominantly geared towards external oversight, whereas GRECO and the Venice Commission emphasise the need for internal self-regulation and the development of a culture of integrity. In most courts, such a culture is not institutionally supported: safe reporting channels are absent, staff are unaware of whistleblower protection mechanisms, and ethical standards remain declarative.³⁹⁹

Particular concern is caused by the lack of attention to the 'grey area' — that is, actions which do not constitute serious violations but reflect a tolerance for informal practices. The absence of an internal monitoring system allows such actions to go unnoticed, even though they contribute to an environment of corruption vulnerability.⁴⁰⁰

Conclusions. Thus, although the general foundations of anti-corruption policy have been established at the legislative level, their insufficient adaptation to the specific nature of court administration and the lack of practical implementation call not only for improvement of the regulatory framework, but also for profound changes in the managerial culture within the judicial system — with a focus on daily prevention, the formation of behavioural standards and the development of internal mechanisms of accountability and responsibility.

Corruption risks in the work of court administrations are part of the broader challenges facing Ukraine's justice system. Under martial law, this issue is further exacerbated — both due to objective difficulties and the state's limited response to the fundamental needs of the judiciary.

However, anti-corruption policy in courts must not be limited to external oversight — it must be **embedded in the daily functioning of institutions**, integrated into personnel management, communications and training systems. Its effectiveness depends not only on the legislative framework but also on the presence of professional ethics, a culture of transparency and the system's real capacity to respond to risks before they materialise.

It is precisely now that there is an opportunity to reconsider the role of civil and patronage service within the courts and to implement effective integrity mechanisms that will form the foundation of a resilient and efficient justice system.

³⁹⁸ Anti-Corruption Programmes. List of Public Authorities. NACP.

³⁹⁹ Information provided by respondents Nos. 21, 29, 35, 38 and 42 during interviews conducted on 03.03.2025, 11.03.2025, 10.04.2025, 11.04.2025 and 30.04.2025.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

Section 4

Assessment of Effectiveness and Recommendations for Improvement

The study enabled a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the civil and patronage service functioning within the judicial authorities of Ukraine. Based on the analysis of the current state of the justice system, in-depth interviews, surveys and a comparative analysis of practices in other countries, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of civil and patronage service in courts of first and appellate instance remains insufficient. However, the existing resources and the potential of court staff create the prerequisites for a gradual improvement in the quality and stability of this sector's functioning — provided that comprehensive reforms are implemented.

For the purposes of this study, the ALI experts understood the effectiveness of civil and patronage service in courts as the ability of court administration to act in a coordinated, stable and result-oriented manner, ensuring continuous and high-quality support for the exercise of judicial powers, adherence to the rule of law, judicial independence and access to justice.

Based on the results of the study, in-depth semi-structured interviews, surveys, analysis of the legislative framework and management approaches, the following key criteria were identified:

- › staff stability and level of staffing;
- › the system for recruitment, adaptation and training of personnel;
- › level of motivation and fair remuneration;
- › quality of courts' material and technical resources;
- › managerial and organisational capacity;
- › internal independence of court staff and protection from administrative pressure;
- › ability to function under emergency conditions (in particular martial law);
- › level of ethics and integrity within the administration, including anti-corruption safeguards.

These criteria enable a comprehensive assessment of effectiveness not only in terms of formal outcomes but also through indicators such as continuity, resilience to external challenges, public trust, and the prospects for further development.

Based on this analysis, specific recommendations have been developed, the implementation of which will contribute to improving the effectiveness of the civil and patronage service within Ukraine's judiciary and serve as the foundation for a sustainable, people-centred and functionally capable justice system during wartime and the post-war period.

Recommendations for Improving the Effectiveness of Civil and Patronage Service in the Judicial Authorities of Ukraine by Relevant Areas

I. Reform of the remuneration system and material and technical support

- 1. Introduce a new model for financing the judiciary, based on guarantees of institutional independence and stability.** The budget process should involve the HCJ, the CJU and the SJA in coordinating priorities. A statutory minimum level of funding for the judicial system should be established — both for salaries and infrastructure development — in line with international standards. In addition, a special reserve fund should be created to respond to emergency challenges (war, natural disasters, man-made catastrophes).
- 2. Develop and enshrine in law a unified and transparent remuneration system for court staff.** Introduce a mechanism for determining court staff salaries by setting them as a percentage of judicial remuneration. It is also necessary to standardise approaches to bonuses, ensure regular indexation of wages and include guarantees of social protection (supplements for working in high-risk conditions, support for displaced persons, medical insurance). This will support not only staff retention but also the restoration of the prestige of service in the courts.
- 3. Develop a mechanism for compensating overtime work.** Legislation should include clear provisions on bonuses, time off or other forms of compensation for court staff working during evenings, weekends or under emergency conditions. This will help increase staff motivation, prevent professional burnout and foster a sense of fairness in remuneration.
- 4. Create a unified national strategy for the development of the material and technical infrastructure of courts for the next 5–7 years.** This strategy should include a clear list of needs, standards for court equipment (hardware, software, infrastructure), a schedule for modernising facilities and a system for annual monitoring of implementation. Particular attention should be paid to courts in frontline regions, where the risks to staff lives are greatest and working conditions are the most challenging.
- 5. Strengthen financial oversight and the accountability of the SJA as the main administrator of budgetary funds in the justice sector.** An audit of the SJA's activities should be carried out with the involvement of the Accounting Chamber, regular public reporting introduced, and planning and budget execution mechanisms improved. Representatives of the judicial community should be involved in making key management decisions (e.g. regarding the reallocation of budget surpluses).
- 6. Ensure effective protection for court system employees under wartime conditions and heightened risks.** Funds should be urgently allocated for the installation of shelters, purchase of alternative power sources and autonomous communication systems. Special supplements for work in dangerous conditions should be provided, along with the creation of a legal mechanism to protect employees' rights in cases where local authorities refuse to provide access to protective facilities.
- 7. Institutionalise dialogue between the authorities and court system staff.** The results of petitions, surveys and public appeals indicate a sustained demand for the participation of court staff in shaping justice policy. A consultative body should be established under the Government or the HCJ on matters concerning the support of the judiciary, comprising not only heads of judicial institutions but also representatives of court staff, the expert community and civil society initiatives.

II. Improvement of the current recruitment system for civil and patronage service staff in judicial bodies

- 1. Introduce the formation of a staffing reserve at the legislative level.** Make it mandatory for all courts in Ukraine to establish a staffing reserve using modern approaches tested by the HACC. Transparent procedures for selecting candidates for the reserve should be provided, with regular updates to the lists and priority consideration of reserve candidates when filling vacancies. This will allow for a prompt response to staff losses and reduce periods of understaffing in courts
- 2. Create a unified electronic platform for recruitment.** Develop and implement a centralised electronic system for submitting applications for court administration vacancies, with the publication of job requirements, recruitment procedures, results and feedback. This will enhance transparency, broaden the pool of applicants and ensure equal access to vacancies across the country.
- 3. Increase candidate awareness of employment opportunities in court administration.** Ensure prompt and wide dissemination of information on open vacancies and competitions via the unified electronic platform, official websites of courts and other judicial bodies, professional communities and other modern communication channels. This will help reach young people and legal professionals who lack personal connections within the judicial system.
- 4. Reform recruitment procedures.** Ensure the genuine independence of selection committees and standardise candidate assessment criteria for civil and patronage positions in courts. For the recruitment of judges' assistants, develop specialised evaluation procedures that consider not only legal knowledge but also motivation, ethical standards and teamwork skills.
- 5. Introduce a probationary period for judges' assistants.** Implement a probationary period for judges' assistants with full remuneration, allowing the suitability of a candidate for the position to be assessed without the risk of abuse during the recruitment process. This will also help avoid appointments based on personal loyalty rather than merit.
- 6. Introduce internship, mentorship and continuous learning programmes.** Develop internship opportunities for law students — including under the Model Programme of the CJU — with a view to potential inclusion in the staffing reserve. Establish a mentorship system for newly hired employees, which will support better adaptation and improve the quality of performance. Ensure regular professional development and ongoing training for court administration staff.
- 7. Integrate recruitment with career and motivation policy.** Ensure a real connection between recruitment to court administration positions and opportunities for future professional growth, including promotion to managerial roles within court staff and eligibility to apply for judicial positions. Consider the feasibility of introducing a simplified recruitment procedure for candidates with experience as a judge's assistant (as was done during the recruitment of local judges in 2017). This will enhance motivation among young legal professionals to pursue careers in the judiciary, support staffing stability and help develop a corps of judges who are professionally trained and practically experienced.

III. Ensuring internal independence and effective interaction

- 1. Legislative regulation of the status of judges' assistants and the introduction of accountability mechanisms.** Judges' assistants should be granted a clearly defined legal status, including a social benefits package, appropriate working conditions and transparent rules for employment and dismissal. They should be added to the list of persons required to submit annual electronic declarations (following the example of judges), considering the scope of their powers, access to

internal information and involvement in the preparation of judicial decisions. Such regulation would reduce the risk of administrative pressure, strengthen the integrity and professional protection of this category of staff and ensure equal legal status with civil servants. It would also contribute to the fight against corruption within the judiciary.

- 2. Introduction of internal procedures to protect court staff from pressure and ethical violations.** Standardised guidelines should be developed and approved for courts concerning the procedure for recording and reviewing complaints from court staff regarding breaches of ethical standards, psychological pressure, mobbing or abuse of authority. These procedures must guarantee confidentiality and ensure the protection of the employee. This will create the conditions for safe reporting of misconduct and contribute to a healthy internal environment.
- 3. Defining the boundaries of official duties and preventing informal pressure.** Internal regulations should be developed to govern the interaction between court staff, judges and court leadership. These should include a clear delineation of official functions, definitions of acceptable formats for service instructions and standards for internal communication. A safe mechanism should be provided for court staff to report instructions that exceed the limits of official authority, with guarantees of confidentiality and protection. This approach will help foster respect for professional boundaries, minimise the risk of informal pressure or misuse of staff for inappropriate functions and enhance internal independence and organisational discipline in courts.
- 4. Developing internal communication and organisational culture.** Introduce training on team interaction, non-violent communication, professional ethics and leadership culture within court teams. Such initiatives should involve not only court administration staff but also judges and court managers. Building trust, mutual respect and partnership-based relations improves communication effectiveness, helps prevent conflicts and reduces staff turnover.
- 5. Preventing conflicts of interest in the recruitment process.** Establish restrictions on the employment of close relatives of judges within the same court and introduce ethical standards for staff recruitment. Ethical risks should be considered. This will help avoid allegations of favouritism or nepotism, ensure equal access to employment in the judiciary and enhance the reputation of institutions.
- 6. Systematic monitoring of compliance with ethical standards.** Internal staff surveys should be conducted regularly to assess adherence to professional ethics, the emotional climate within teams and incidents of misconduct. The results should be analysed by the relevant management bodies (HCJ, SJA, NJC, CJU) with a view to preparing recommendations for court leadership. This will support not only the prevention of violations but also the prompt response to problems within staff collectives.

IV. Improving the Professional Training System for Court Administration Staff

- 1. Modernisation of teaching methods and training content.** It is advisable to update NSJU training courses with a focus on applied skills, practical case studies, and soft skills (communication, time management, and working with vulnerable participants in proceedings). Training formats should be interactive, involving discussion of real-life situations and group tasks, rather than being limited to lecture-based learning. This will make training more useful and applicable in the daily work of court employees.
- 2. Establishing a link between training and career advancement.** It is recommended to integrate training results into promotion and bonus competitions for court staff. This will stimulate interest in upskilling and provide direct motivation for professional development.

- 3. Introduction of flexible schedules and conditions for training participation.** Opportunities should be provided to attend training without compromising core duties — for example, through partial workload reduction, redistribution of responsibilities or individualised course timetables. This will enable even heavily burdened staff to take part in training.
- 4. Development of internships as a form of professional improvement.** A formalised national programme of short-term internships for court staff in higher instance courts should be established, with financial and organisational support. This will promote the exchange of experience, a better understanding of the justice system, motivation and the formation of a professional culture.
- 5. Expanding access to international educational programmes.** Court staff should be given more opportunities to participate in training activities of the EJTN, short-term internships in EU courts and joint training sessions with international colleagues. This will facilitate the adoption of best European practices and improve the quality of professional training for court staff.
- 6. Introduction of mandatory anti-corruption training.** Given that fewer than half of court employees have participated in anti-corruption training, such training should become a systematic and mandatory component of professional development programmes. This will raise legal awareness, foster a culture of integrity and help prevent corruption risks.
- 7. Improving communication between courts and the NSJU.** Regular surveys of the training needs of staff in specific courts should be introduced to develop flexible and adaptive annual training plans. This will ensure better consideration of the specificities of different courts' work and keep training programmes up to date. Communication may take place via a dedicated online platform.

V. Enhancing the effectiveness of civil and patronage service in judicial bodies under martial law

- 1. Development of a unified crisis plan for court operations.** A national crisis strategy for the judiciary should be introduced, providing a clear response protocol in the event of hostilities, evacuation, communication or power outages, temporary occupation and other emergencies. This will ensure a more prompt and coordinated reaction of the justice system to threats, improve organisation and reduce the burden on individual courts.
- 2. Urgent regulation of the issue of reserving court staff.** The reservation limit should be raised to 100% for the CSS and for court administration staff. This will help preserve the human resource capacity in critical justice system functions and ensure its continuity.
- 3. Introduction of a state support programme for displaced court staff.** A targeted programme should be established for the temporary and permanent employment, housing and targeted assistance of court employees who have lost their jobs due to occupation or hostilities. This will help preserve professional staff, prevent their departure to other sectors and reduce social tension.
- 4. Provision of psychological and medical support.** A state programme of psycho-emotional assistance should be introduced for judiciary staff, including consultations with psychologists, training on burnout prevention and regular wellbeing initiatives. This will improve the system's resilience to stress, enhance employee welfare and reduce emotional exhaustion.
- 5. Strengthening communication with court administration staff regarding available resources and decisions.** A transparent internal communication system should be implemented within courts — including regular information bulletins, weekly email updates from leadership and notifications about new technical tools and changes to work schedules. This will foster trust in managerial decisions and reduce staff's sense of isolation.

- 6. Development of training programmes focused on crisis-related competencies.** Professional training modules should be developed for court staff on topics such as digital literacy, crisis management, remote proceedings, working under occupation or evacuation and stress resilience. This will help the justice system adapt to emerging challenges and strengthen its human resource capacity under difficult conditions.

VI. Reducing corruption risks in the civil and patronage service of courts

- 1. Regulation of declaration requirements for judges' assistants.** Mandatory electronic asset declarations should be introduced for patronage service staff, including judges' assistants, through amendments to the Law of Ukraine 'On Prevention of Corruption'. This decision would address the current regulatory gap concerning integrity, raise levels of accountability and public trust in the judiciary and ensure compliance with international standards of transparency and ethical conduct.
- 2. Development of standard anti-corruption programmes for courts.** A unified model for anti-corruption programmes should be developed and made mandatory for all courts. These should include codes of conduct, third-party interaction policies, procedures for identifying conflicts of interest and mechanisms for responding to violations. This will promote uniform ethical standards across the justice system and reduce the risk of abuse.
- 3. Strengthening the role of the SJA in coordinating anti-corruption policy.** The SJA should be assigned responsibility for developing and disseminating methodological guidance on corruption prevention, organising monitoring activities and supporting the implementation of internal integrity practices. This will ensure institutional continuity of anti-corruption policy and support its effective implementation at the level of individual courts.
- 4. Introduction of internal control tools.** Systematic anonymous staff surveys on ethical climate should be launched, risk assessments conducted across operational areas, and internal audits introduced in courts. These measures will help identify hidden risks, reduce tolerance for informal practices and foster a culture of zero tolerance for violations.
- 5. Institutional establishment of safe channels for whistleblowers.** Each court should establish anonymous and secure channels for reporting corruption risks — such as dedicated electronic platforms, trust boxes and internal procedures for whistleblower protection. This will encourage court staff to be more open in responding to violations and will allow potential abuses to be prevented in a timely manner.
- 6. Systematic anti-corruption training.** Mandatory training on anti-corruption legislation should be introduced for all court staff (not only newly appointed employees), with a focus on identifying and preventing conflicts of interest, conducting in crisis situations, and ethically interacting with parties to proceedings. This will raise staff awareness, foster a preventive culture and reduce the risk of unethical behaviour.
- 7. Ensuring transparency in staffing procedures.** Recruitment, transfer and promotion procedures for court staff should be standardised and made public. It is recommended that information about competitions and internal appointments be published on the courts' official websites. This will support personnel selection based on transparency and equal opportunities, reduce the risk of conflicts of interest and increase trust in HR procedures within the judiciary.

Annexe

Results of a Survey of Employees of the Civil and Patronage Service in the Judicial Authorities of Ukraine

Age of respondents

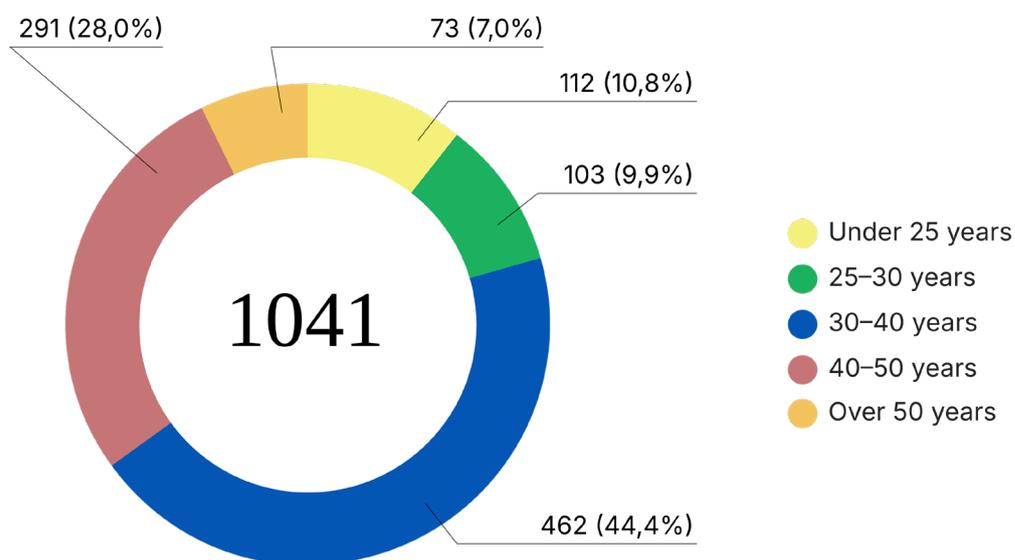


Diagram 1

Gender of respondents

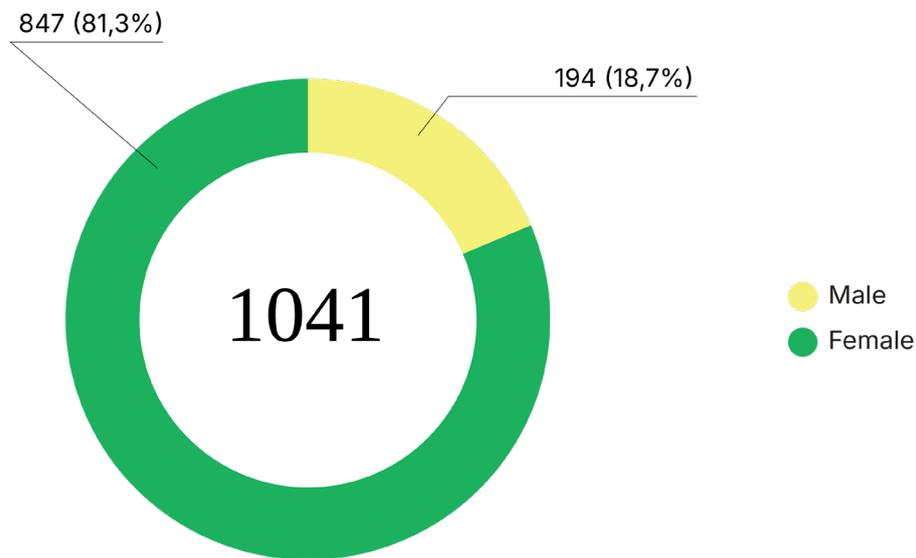


Diagram 2

Overall work experience of respondents in the judicial sphere

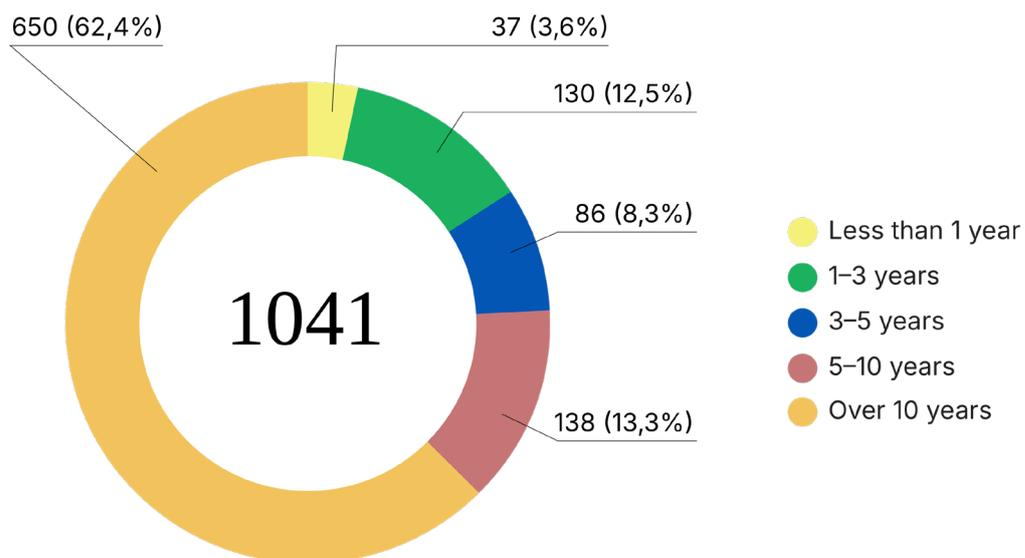


Diagram 3

Work experience of respondents in their current position within the judicial system

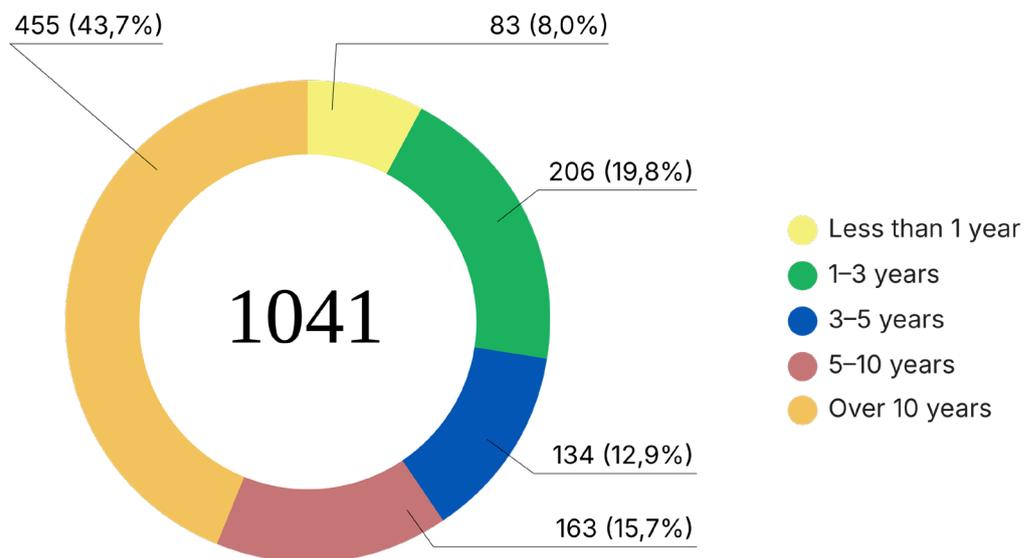


Diagram 4

Respondents who are currently employed

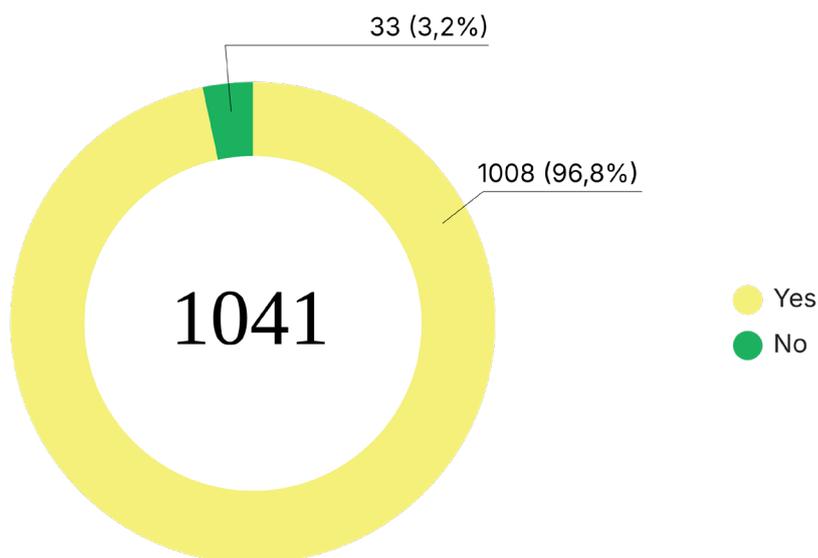


Diagram 5

Education of respondents

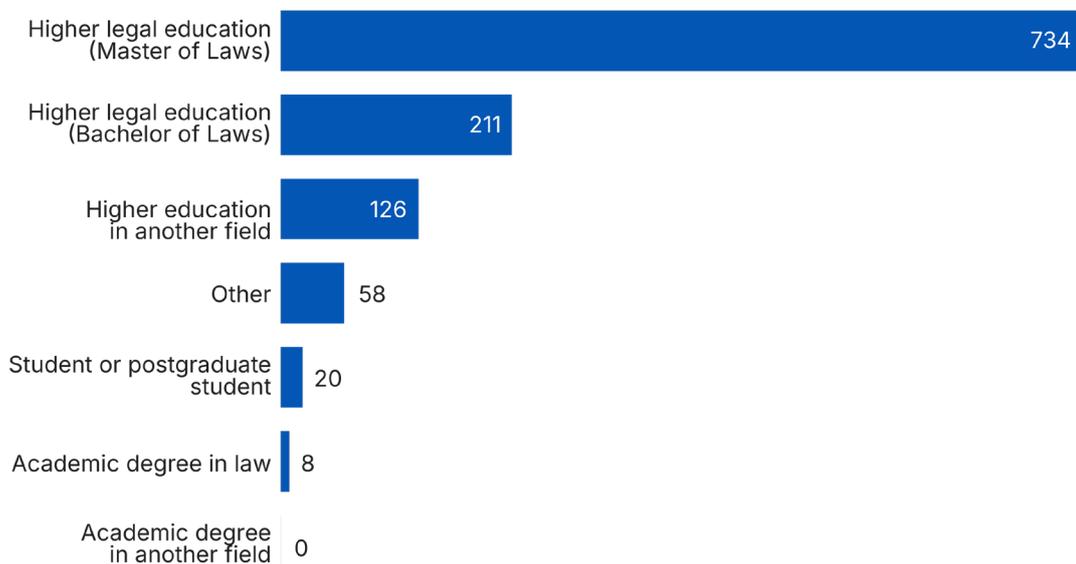


Diagram 6

Ratio of respondents working in the civil service and the patronage service

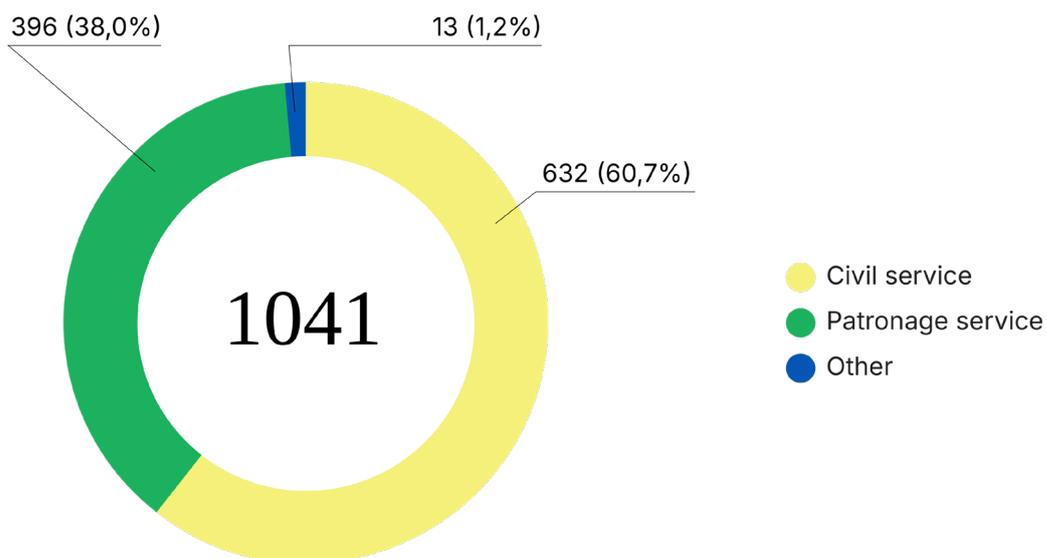


Diagram 7

Respondents' access to state secrets

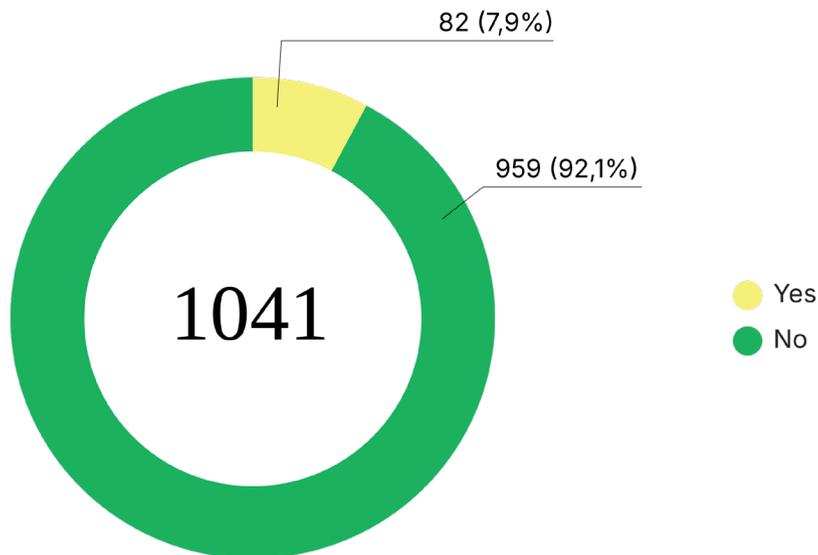


Diagram 8

Regions covered by the jurisdiction of the courts where respondents work

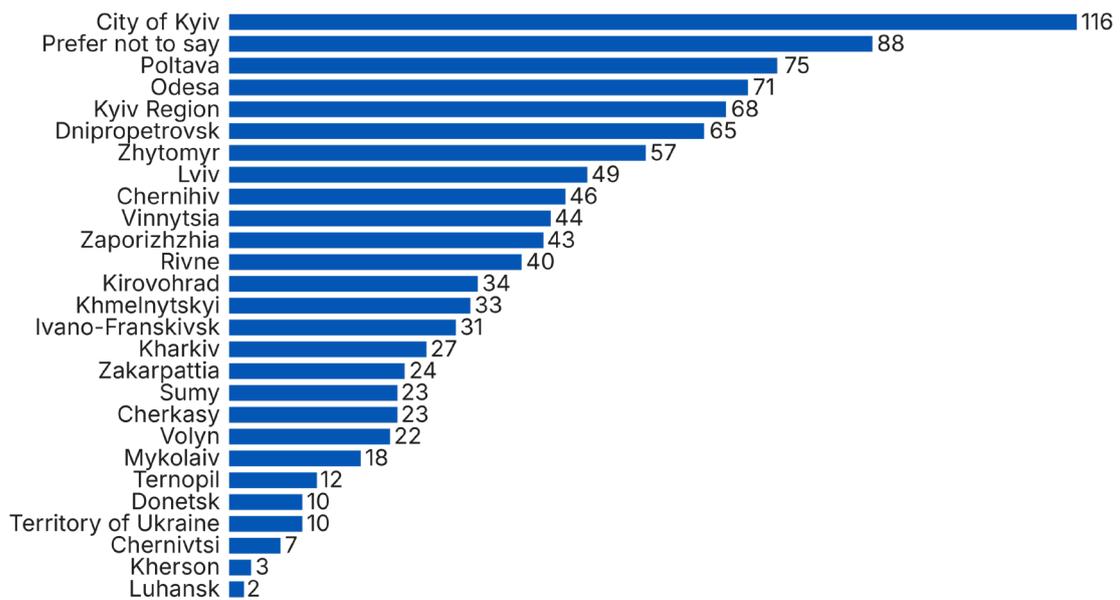


Diagram 9

Jurisdiction of the courts where respondents work

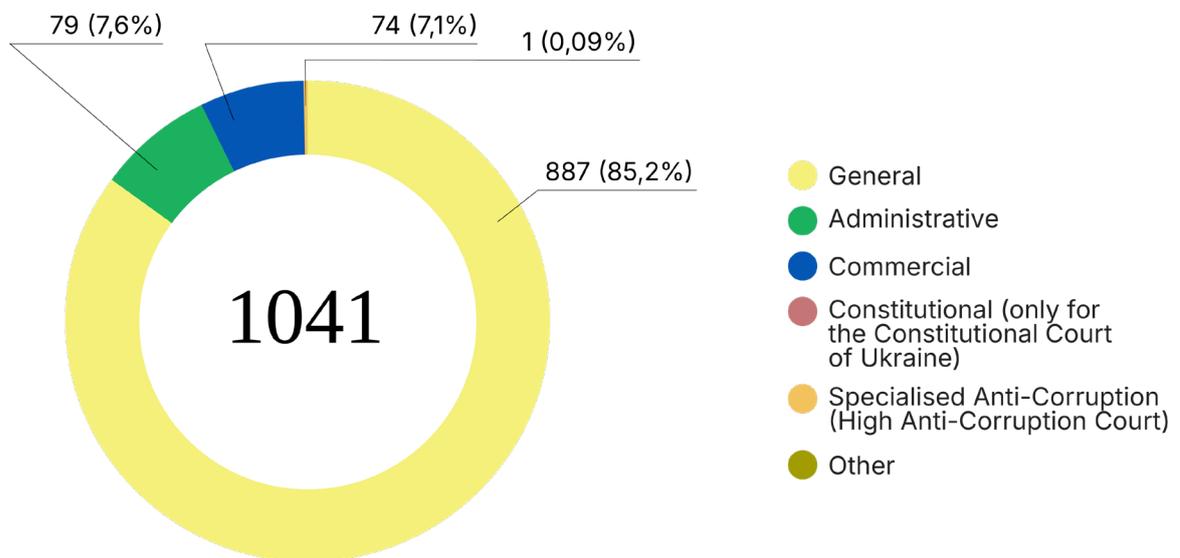


Diagram 10

Instance (level) of the courts where respondents work

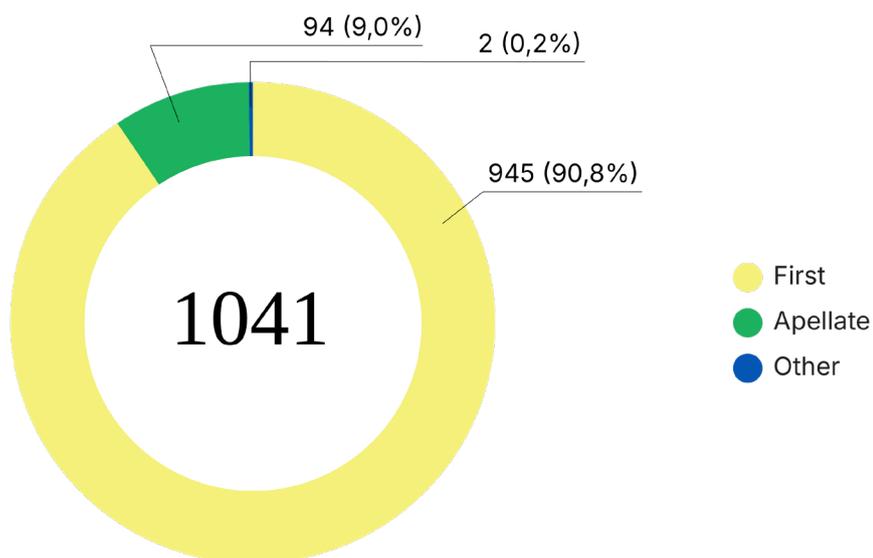


Diagram 11

Positions held by respondents in the court

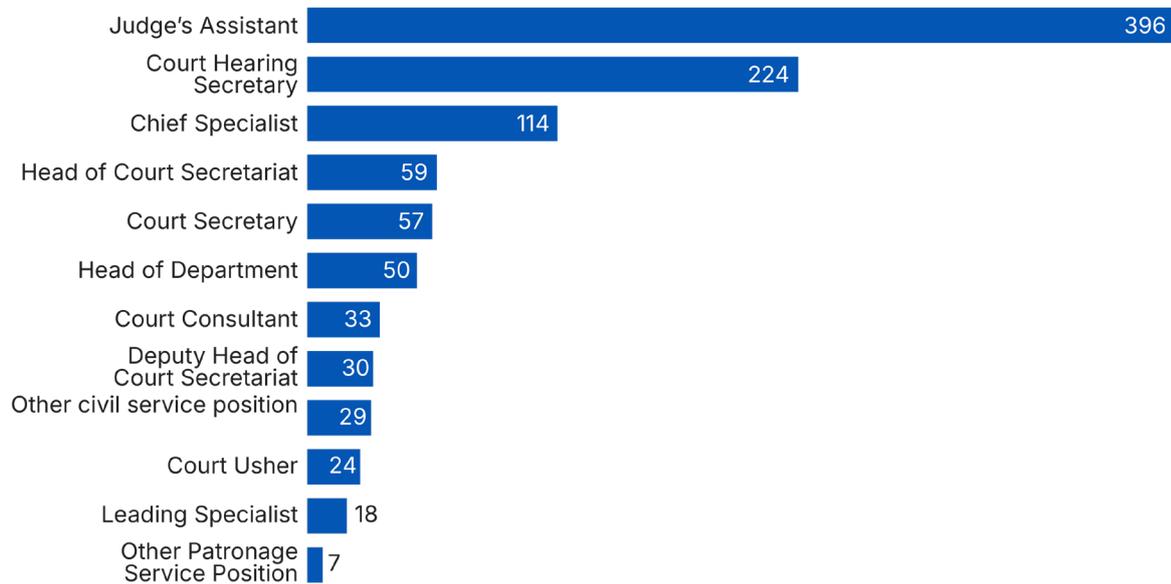


Diagram 12

Respondents' motivation in choosing the profession

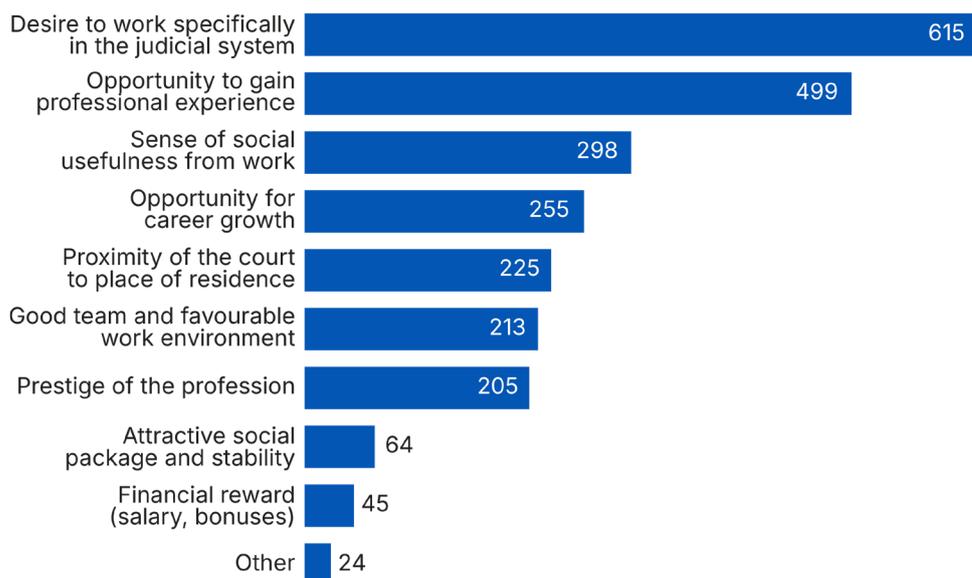


Diagram 13

Respondents' assessment of material and technical working conditions

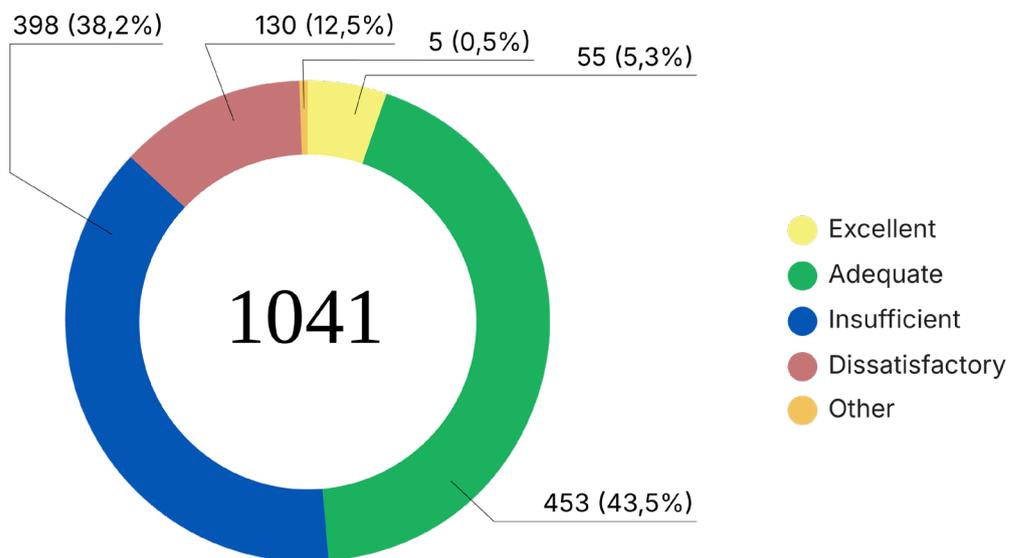


Diagram 14

Investments in the court made by respondents at their own expense

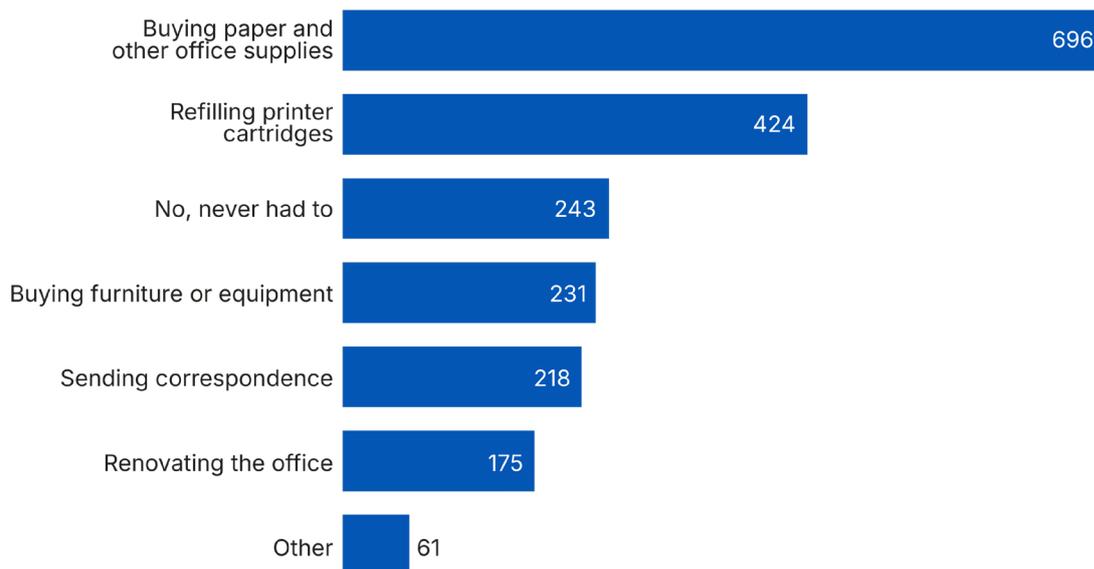


Diagram 15

Frequency of overtime work

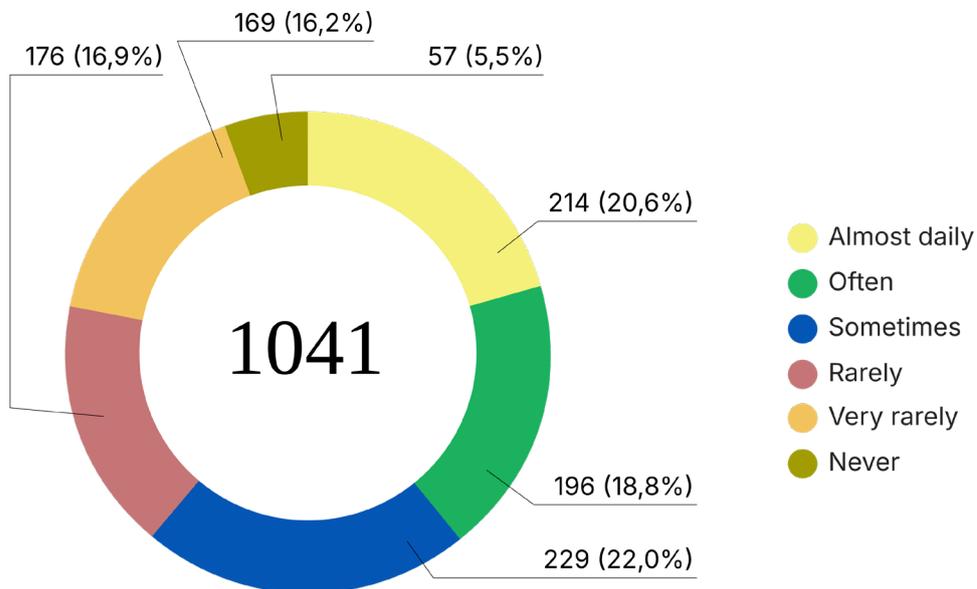


Diagram 16

Respondents' opinion on the prestige of civil and patronage service in courts

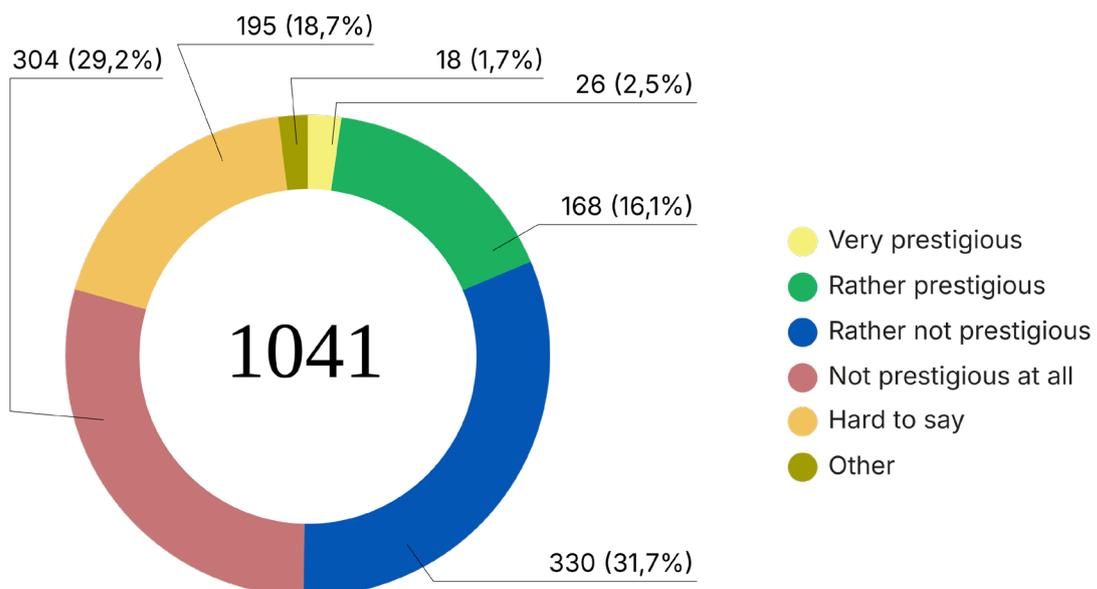


Diagram 17

Factors of dissatisfaction with work in the court

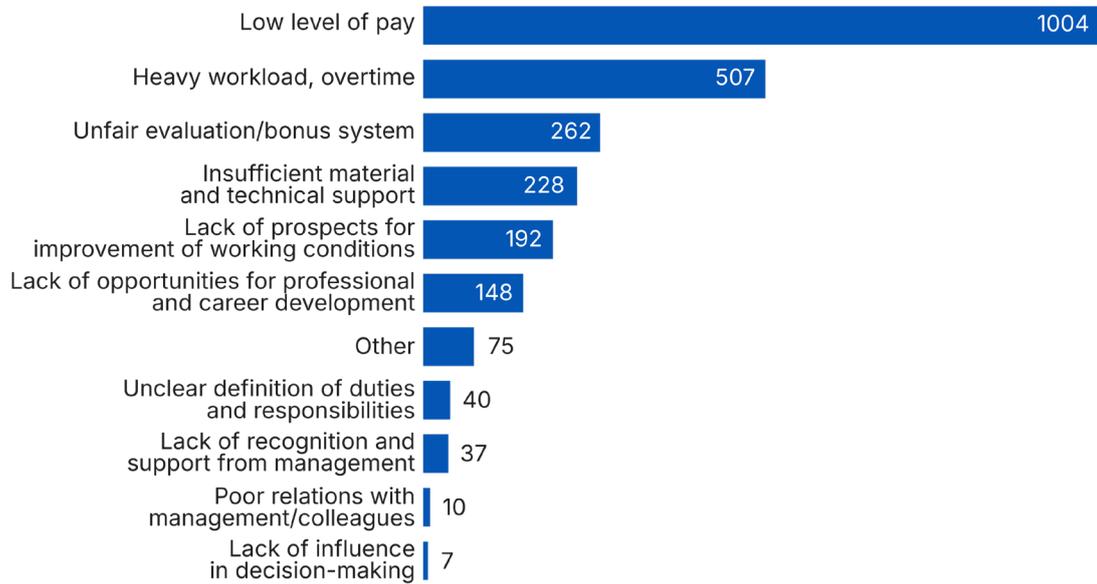


Diagram 18

Respondents' level of satisfaction with work in the court

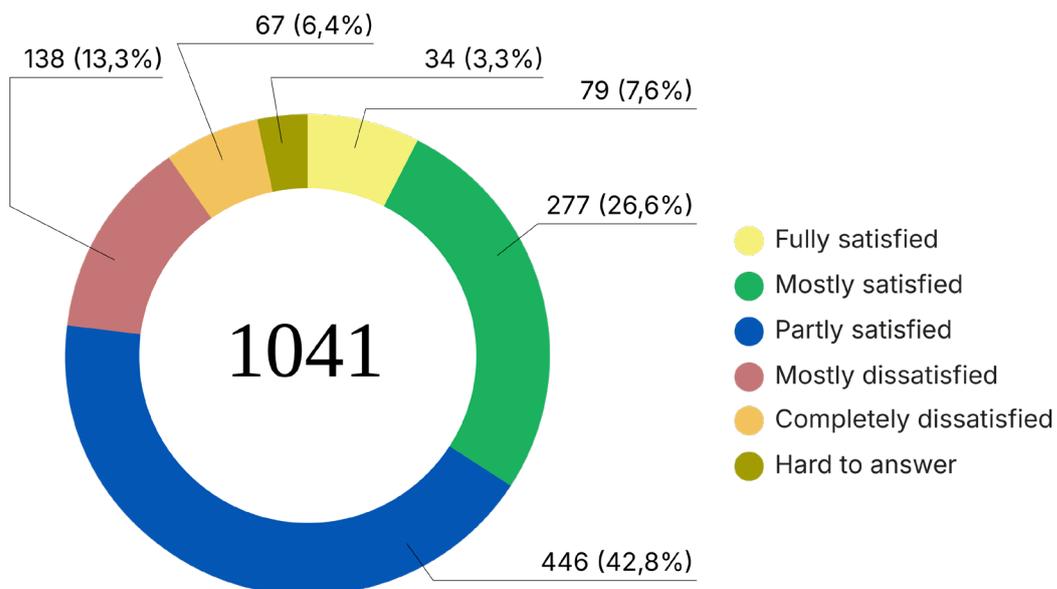


Diagram 19

Level of teamwork within the staff

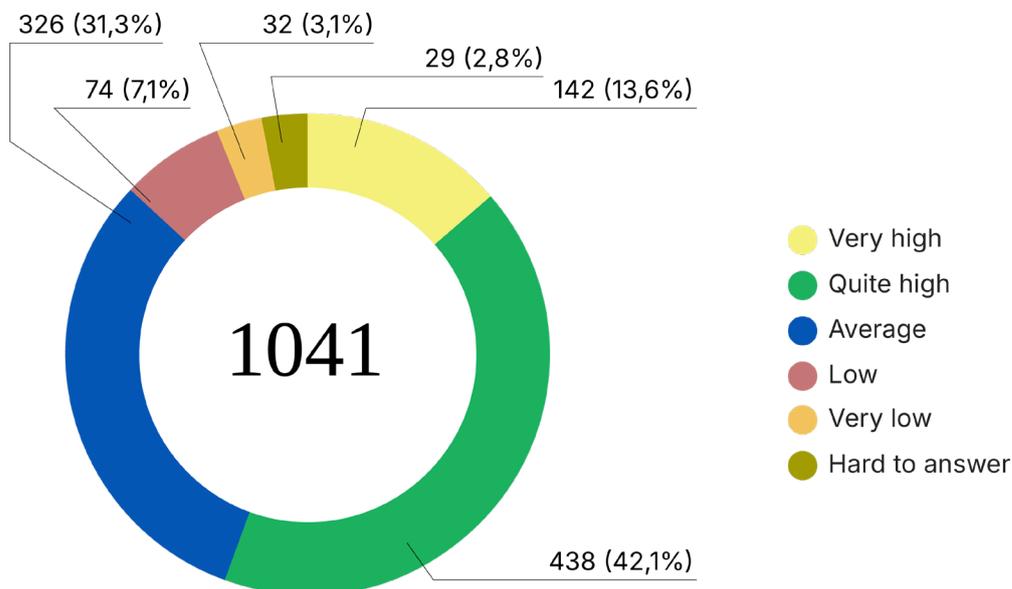


Diagram 20

Disciplinary sanctions applied to respondents during the past 12 months

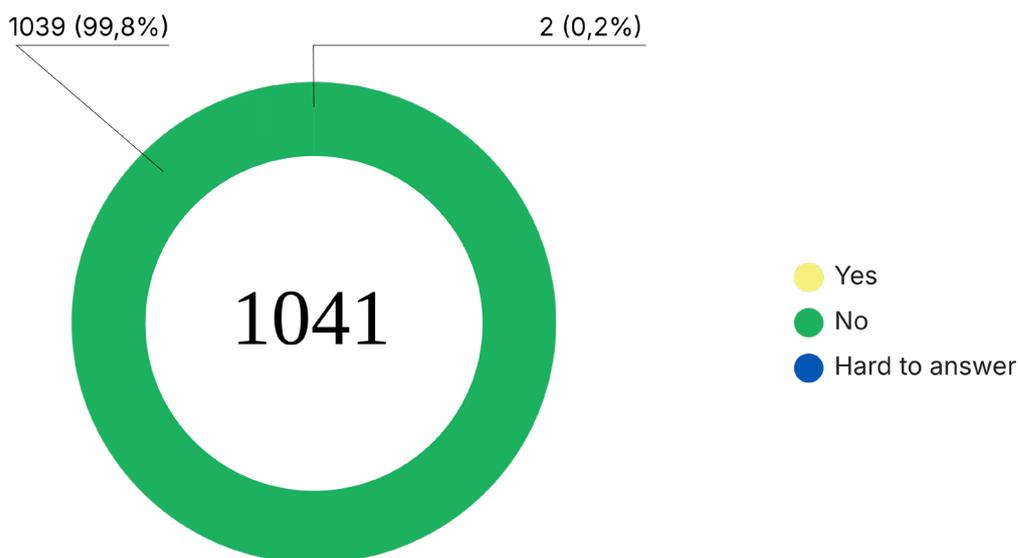


Diagram 21

Types of disciplinary sanctions applied to respondents during the past 12 months

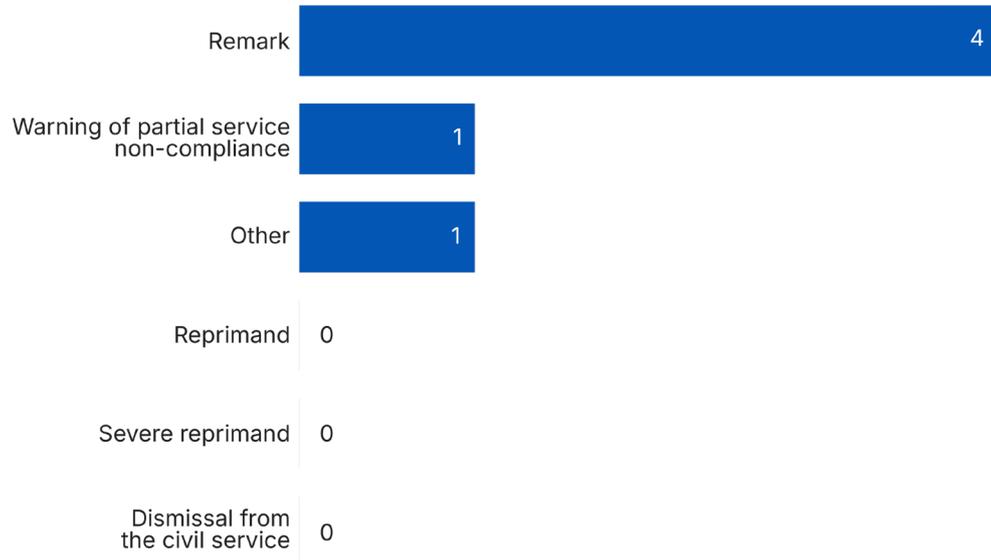


Diagram 22

Respondents' level of satisfaction with pay

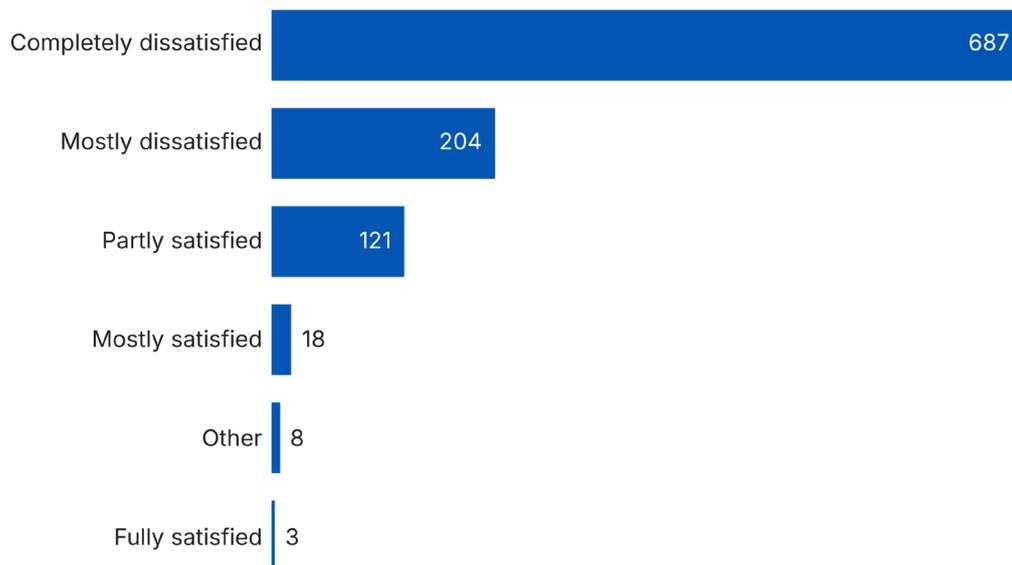


Diagram 23

Receipt by respondents of health recovery assistance in 2024

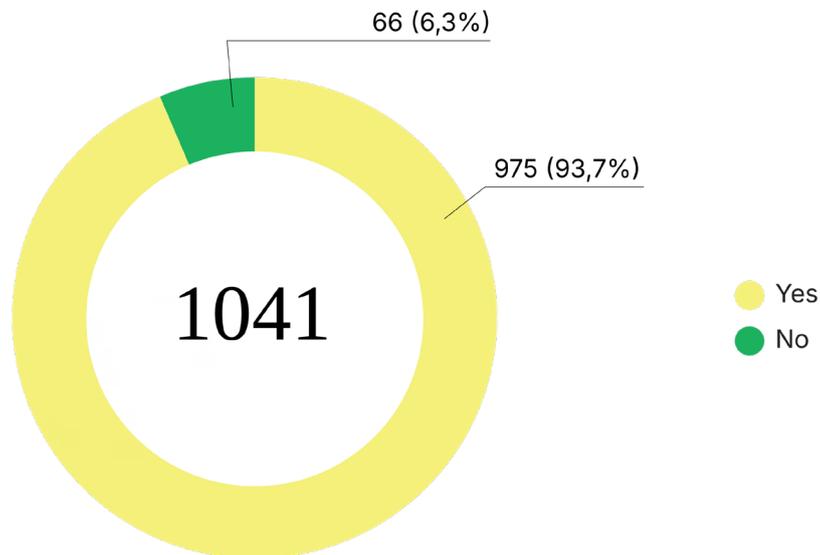


Diagram 24

Average level of bonuses in 2024

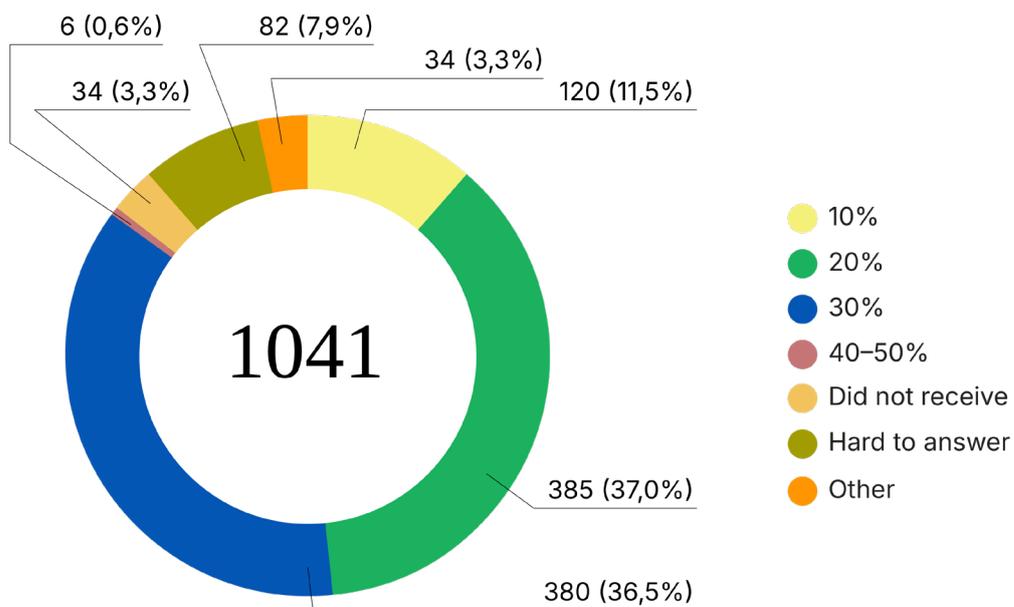


Diagram 25

Factors determining the monthly bonus

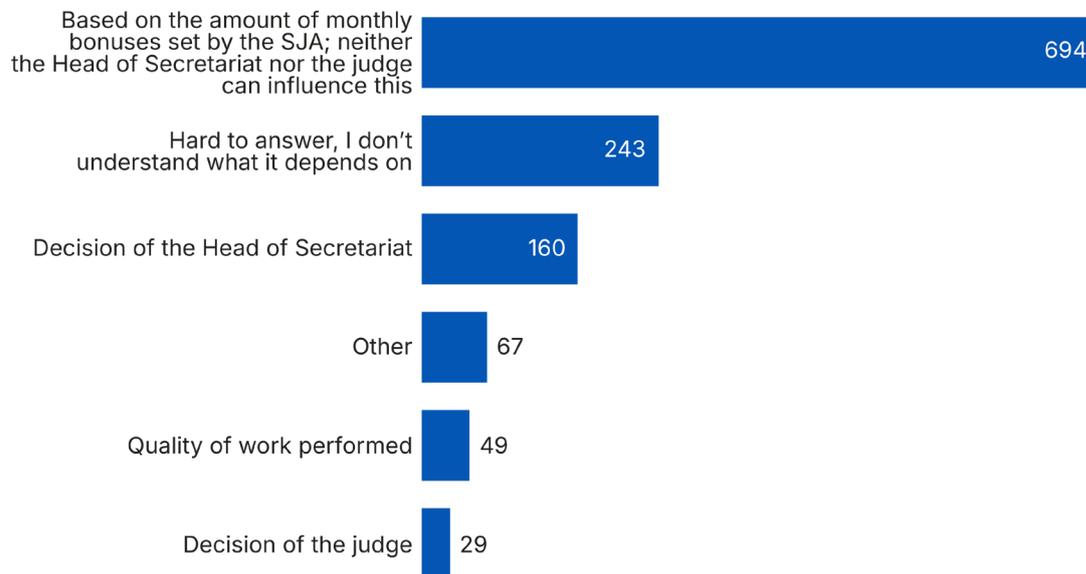


Diagram 26

Respondents' awareness of employees receiving additional payments from judges or court management

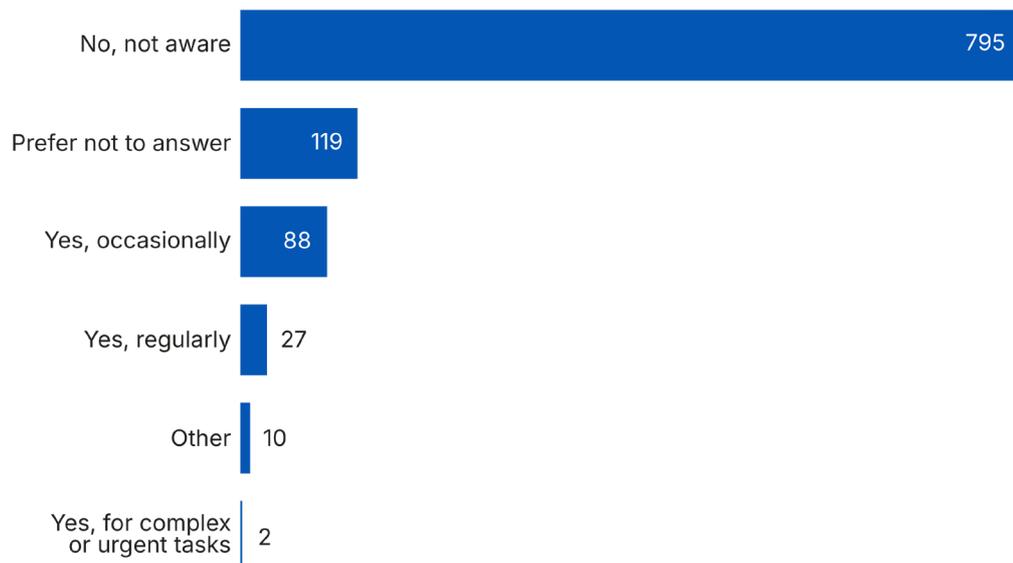


Diagram 27

Impact of martial law on working conditions

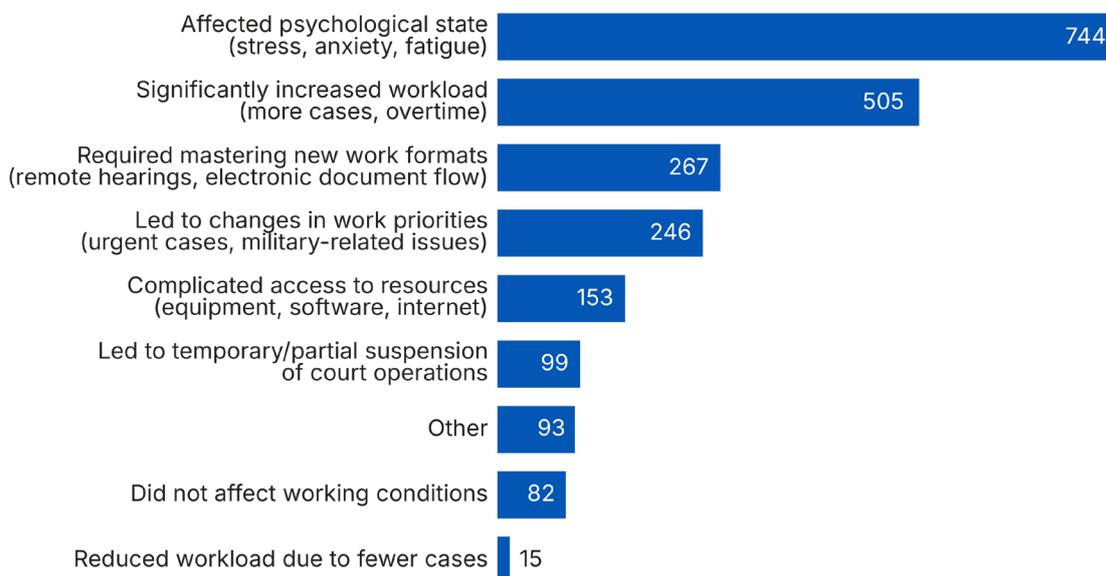


Diagram 28

Change in the number of court staff after 24.02.2022

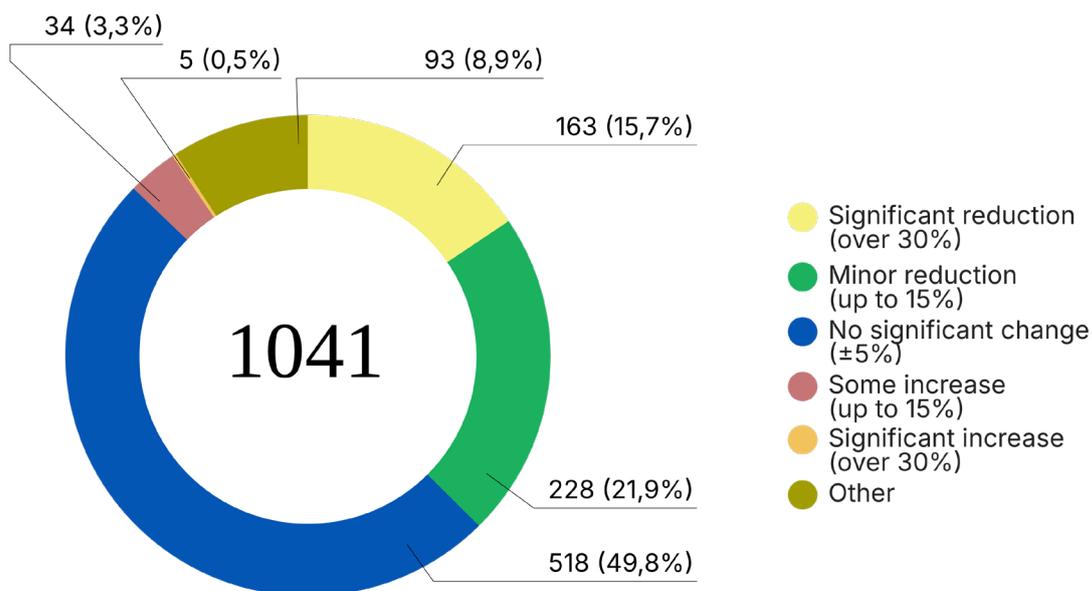


Diagram 29

Receipt by the court of additional resources from the state for work under martial law

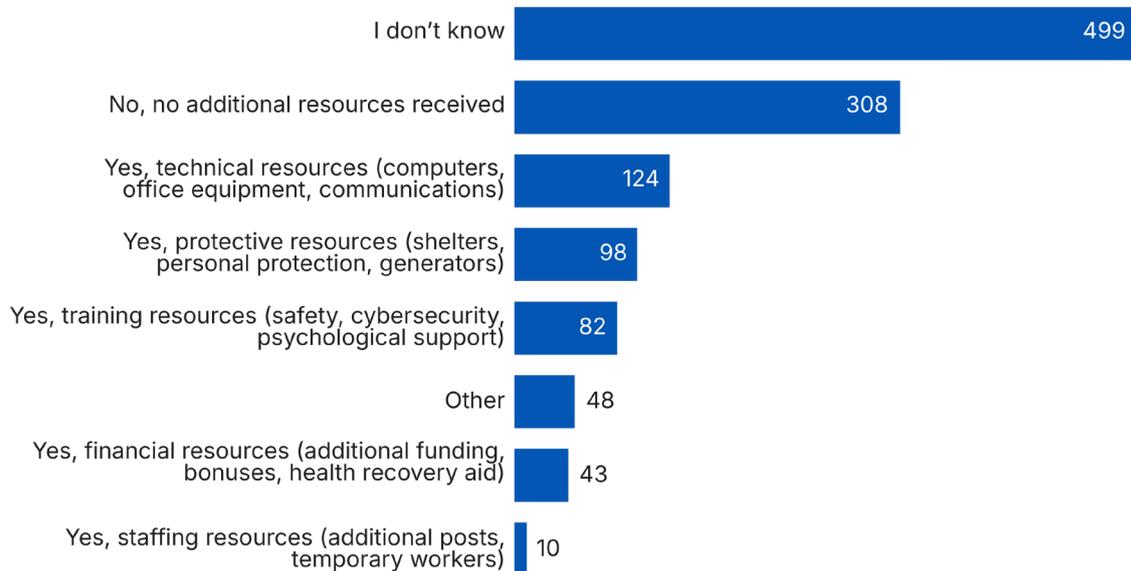


Diagram 30

Innovative tools introduced to adapt to the conditions of martial law

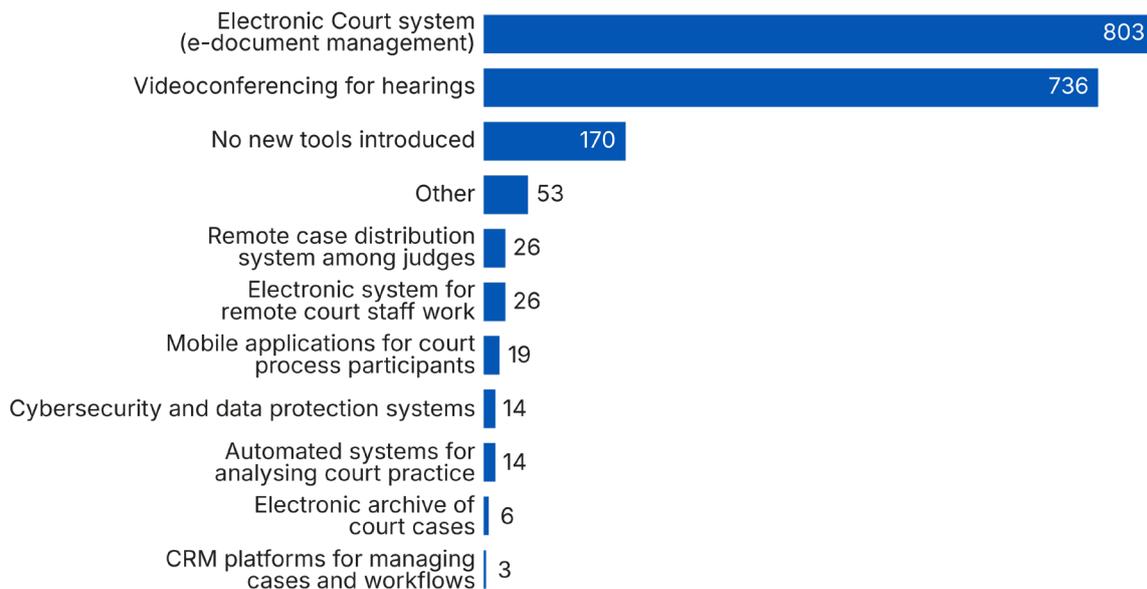


Diagram 31

Number of times respondents underwent professional development training from 2020 to 2024

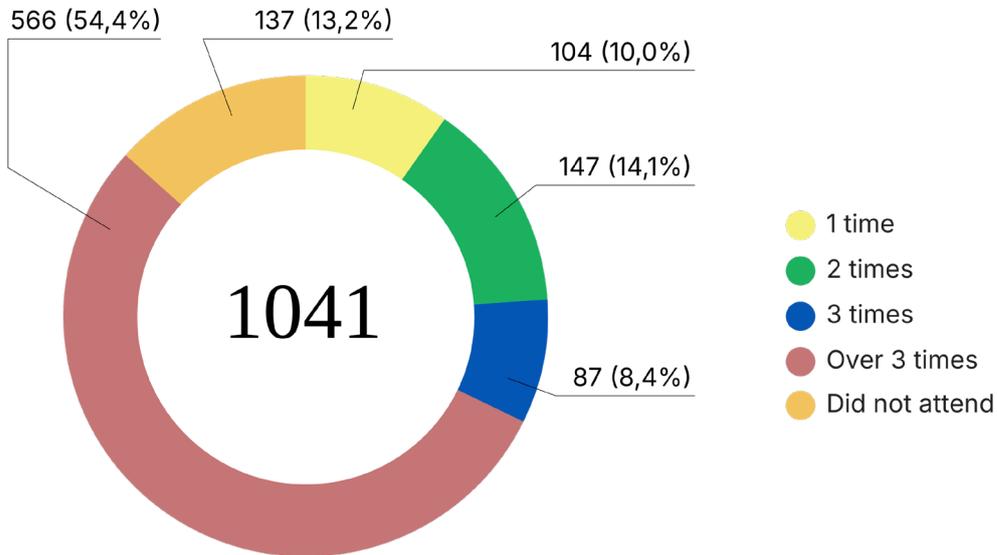


Diagram 32

Respondents' assessment of the usefulness of training attended between 2020 and 2024

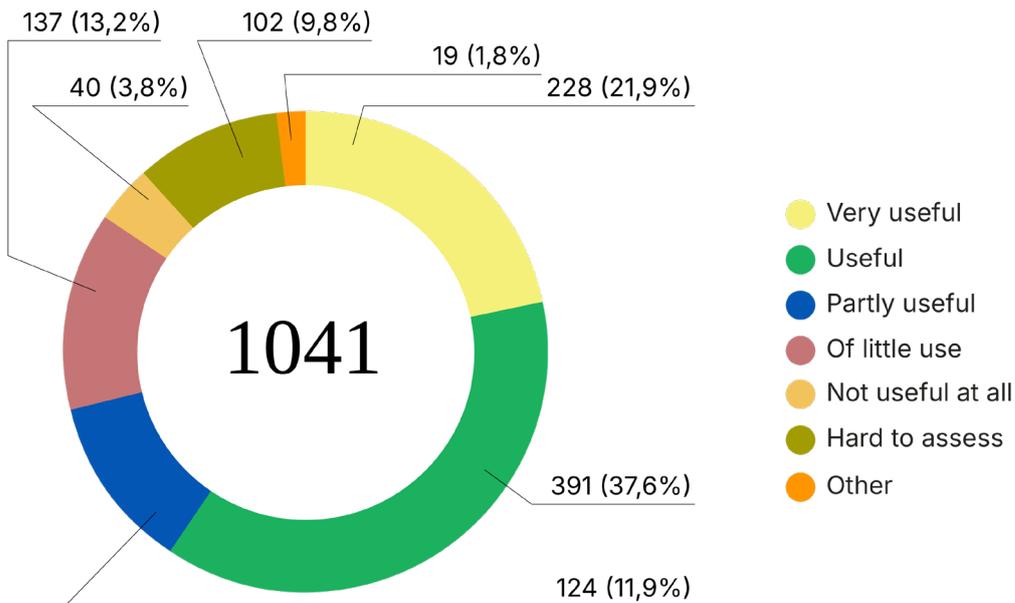


Diagram 33

Main shortcomings of training in 2020–2024



Diagram 34

Entities that conducted training during 2020–2024

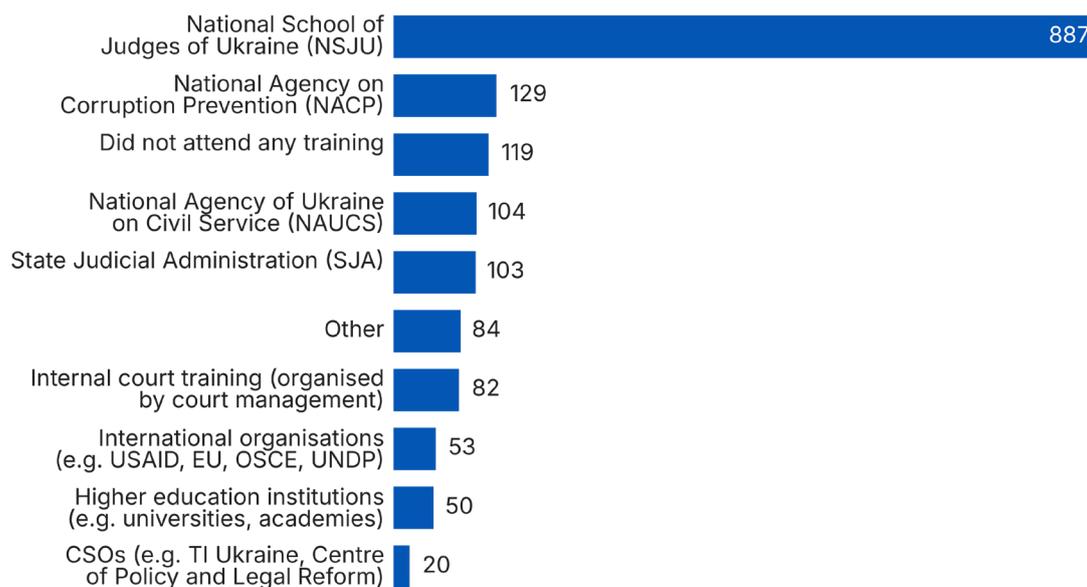


Diagram 35

Entity that provided the most useful training for employees of civil and patronage service

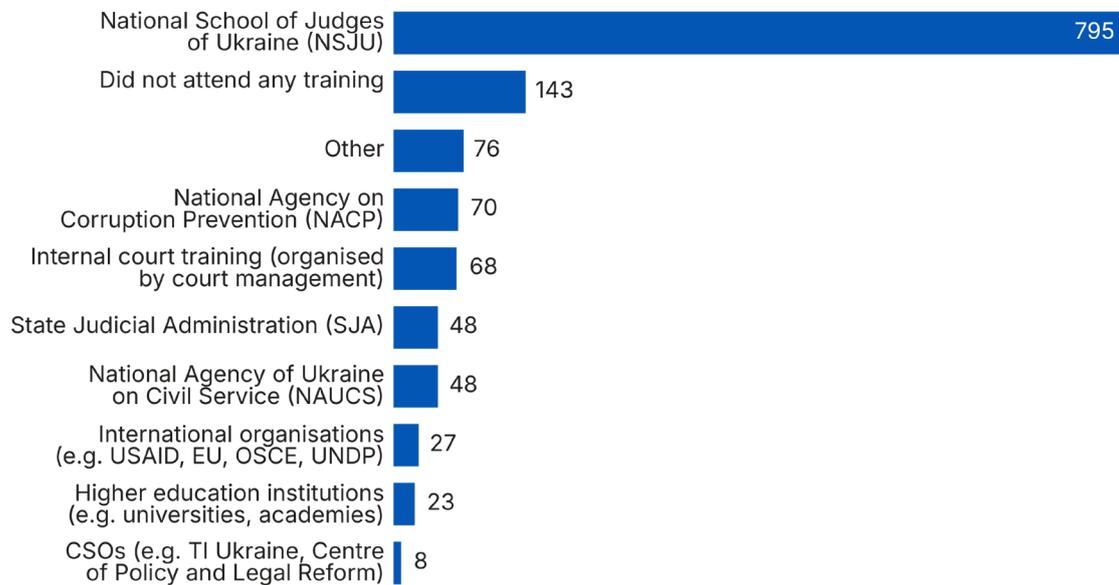


Diagram 36

Need for internships in higher-level courts (appeal/cassation) for the professional development of court staff

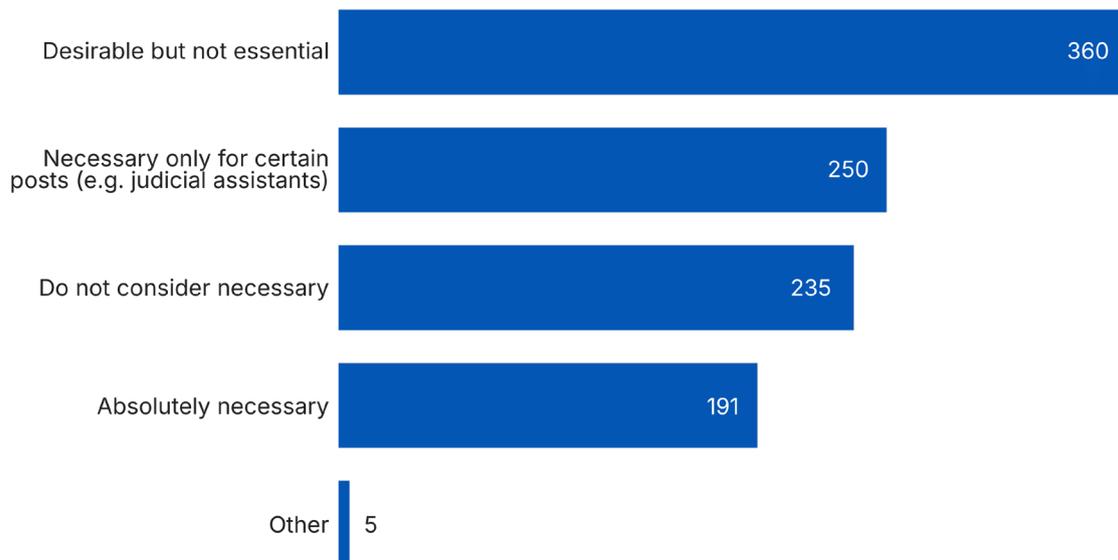


Diagram 37

Availability of opportunities for respondents to undertake internships in higher-level courts in their specialisation

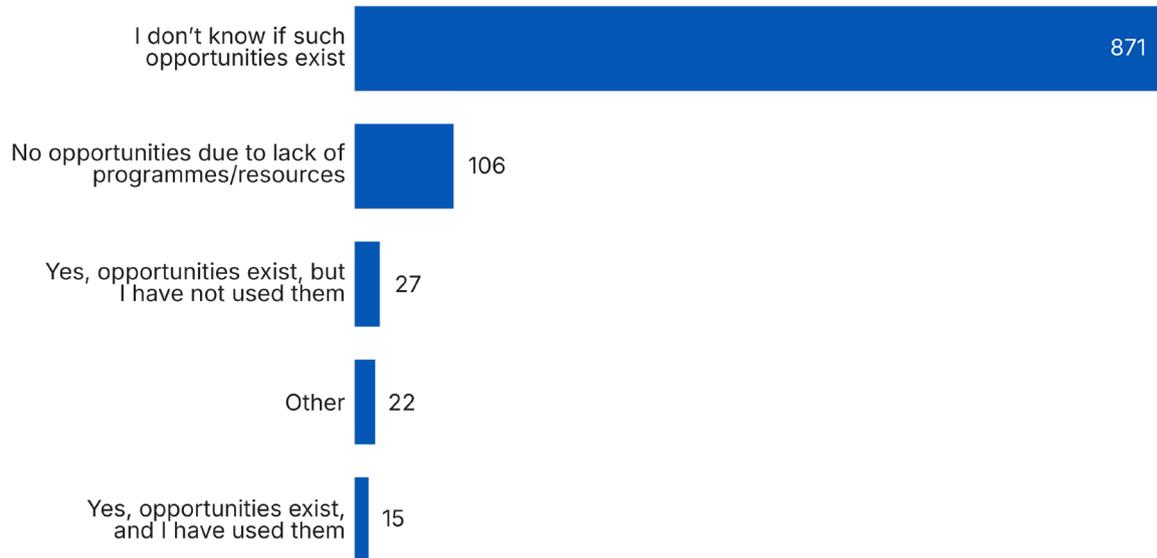


Diagram 38

Respondents' willingness to undertake internships in higher-level courts

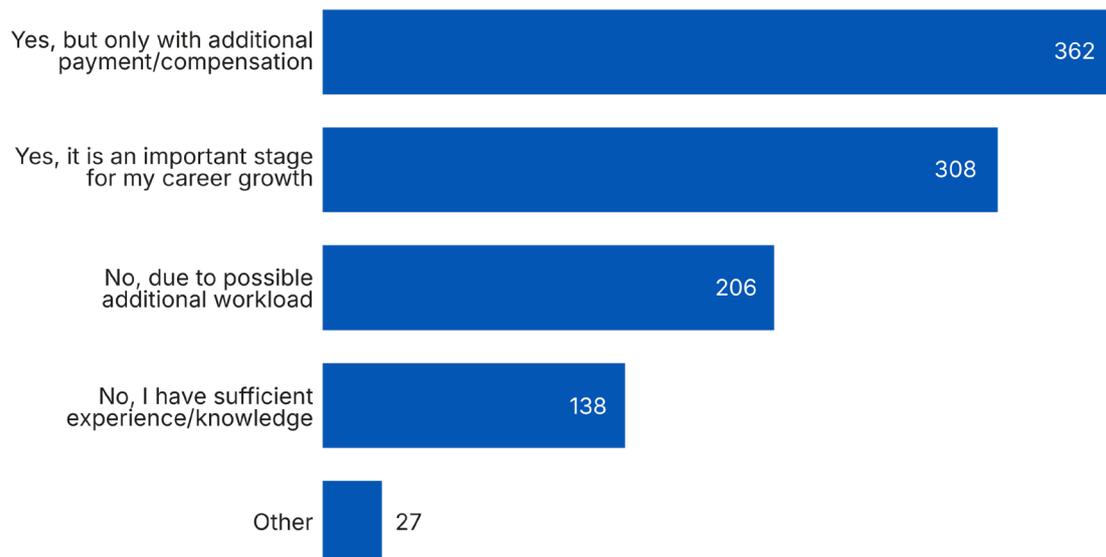


Diagram 39

Effectiveness of the functioning of civil and patronage service in the judiciary of Ukraine

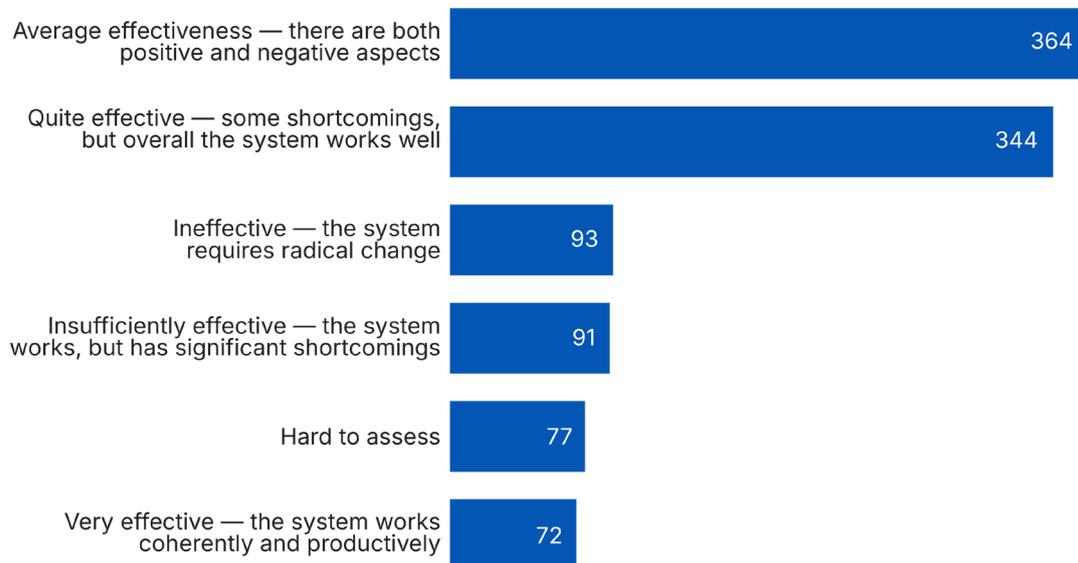


Diagram 40

Factors that most reduce the effectiveness of civil and patronage service in the judiciary of Ukraine

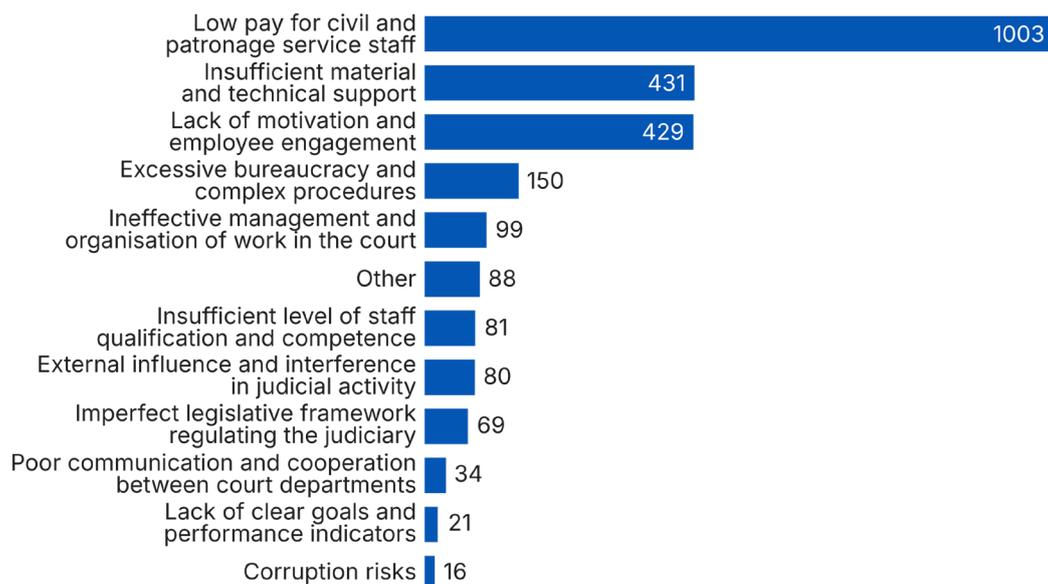


Diagram 41

Assessment of the effectiveness of the recruitment system for civil and patronage service staff in courts

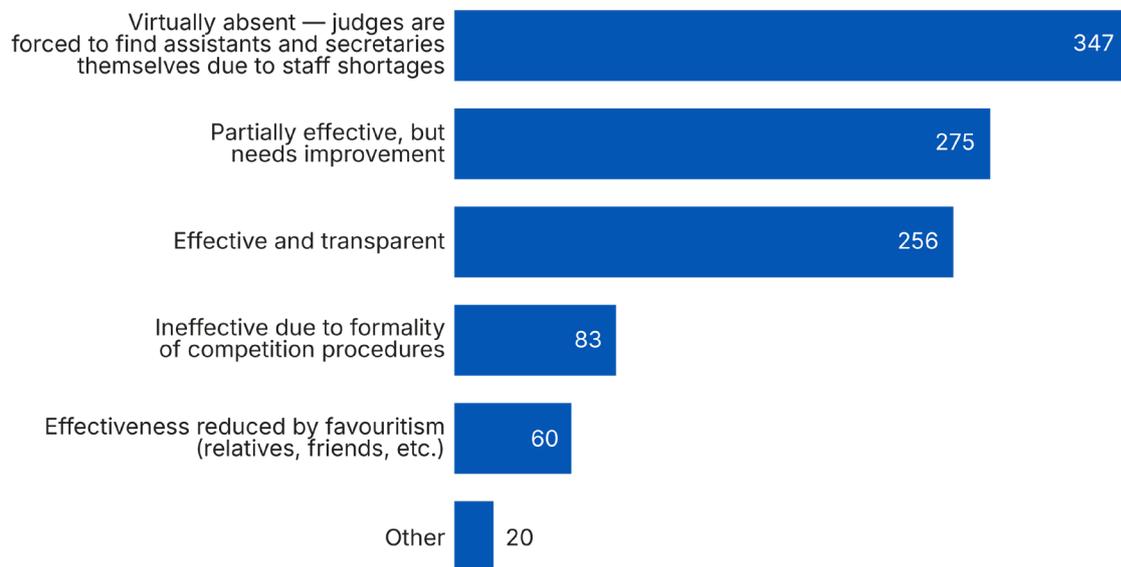


Diagram 42

Problems arising from the discrepancy between pay levels and the scope of duties of civil and patronage service staff in courts

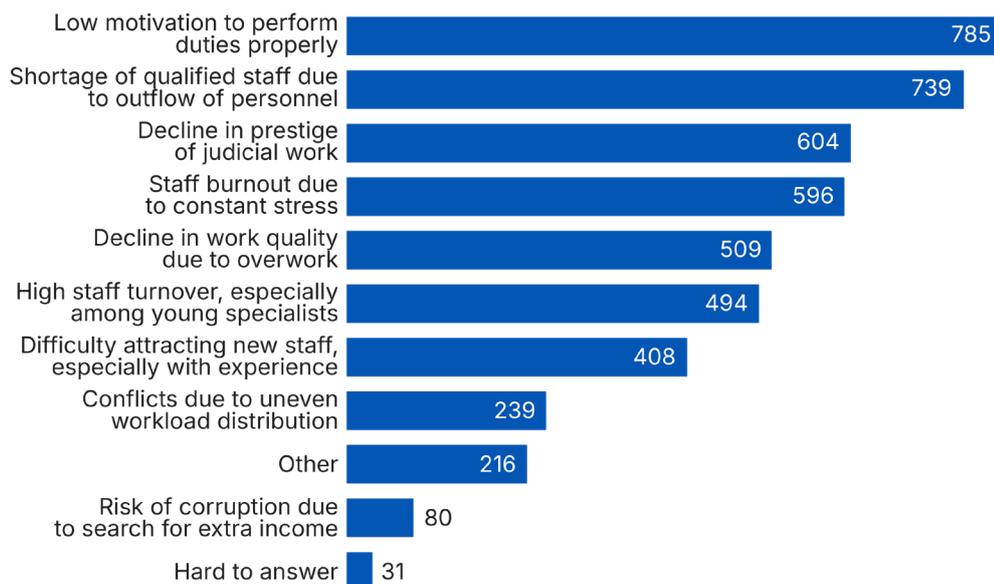


Diagram 43

Respondents' participation in anti-corruption training

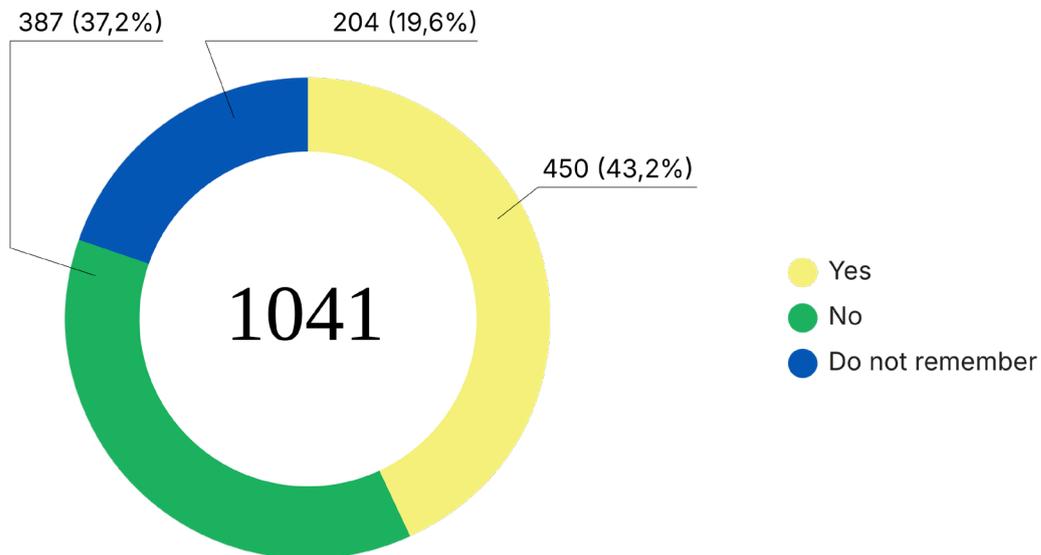


Diagram 44

Anti-corruption mechanisms in operation in courts

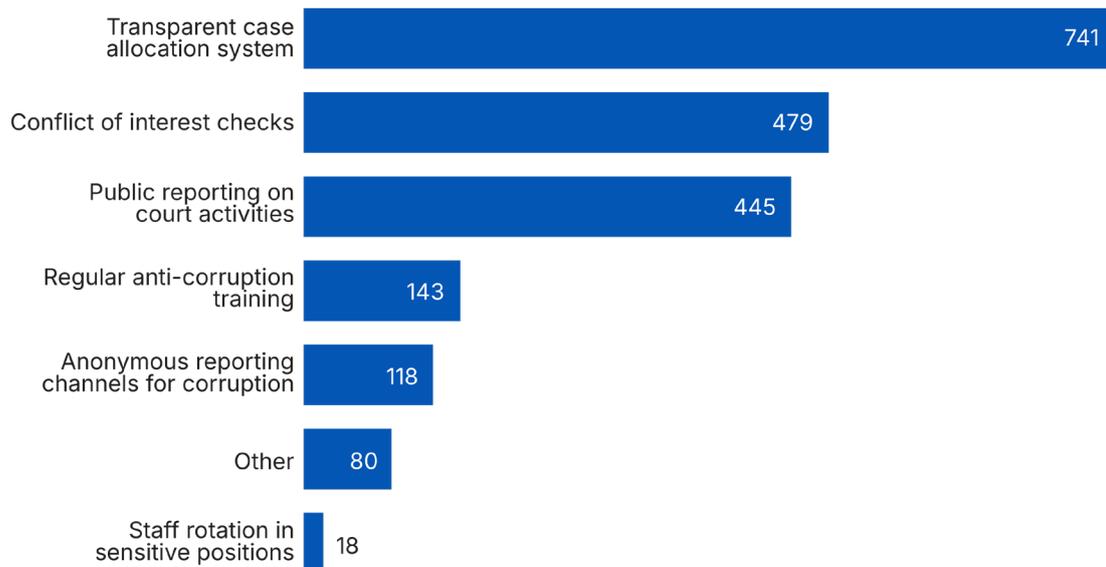


Diagram 45

Respondents' views on the need for patronage service staff to submit annual declarations

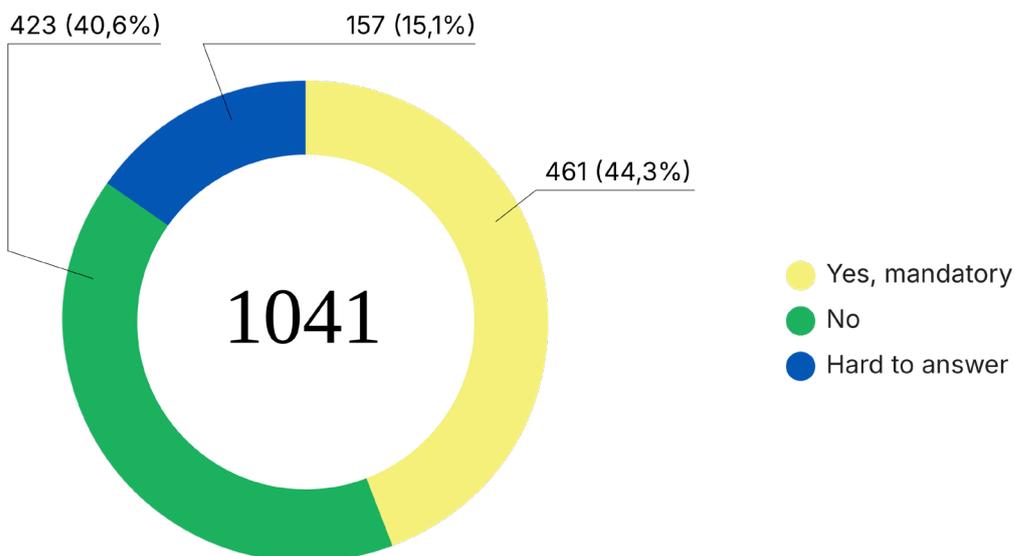


Diagram 46

Main reasons why patronage service staff in courts should submit annual electronic declarations

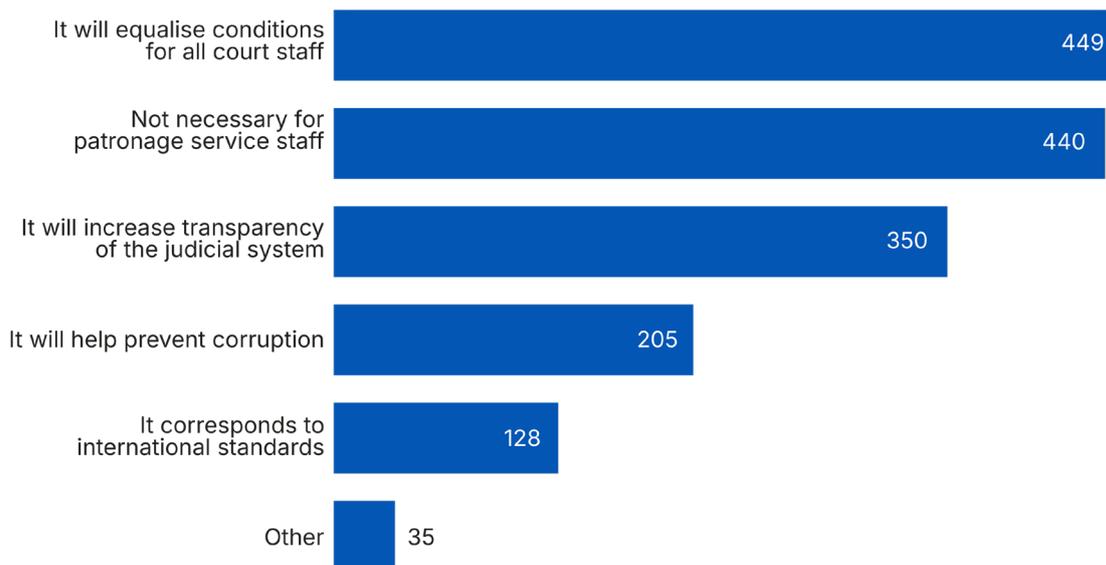


Diagram 47

Respondents' level of access to official information in the context of fulfilling job duties and potential corruption risks

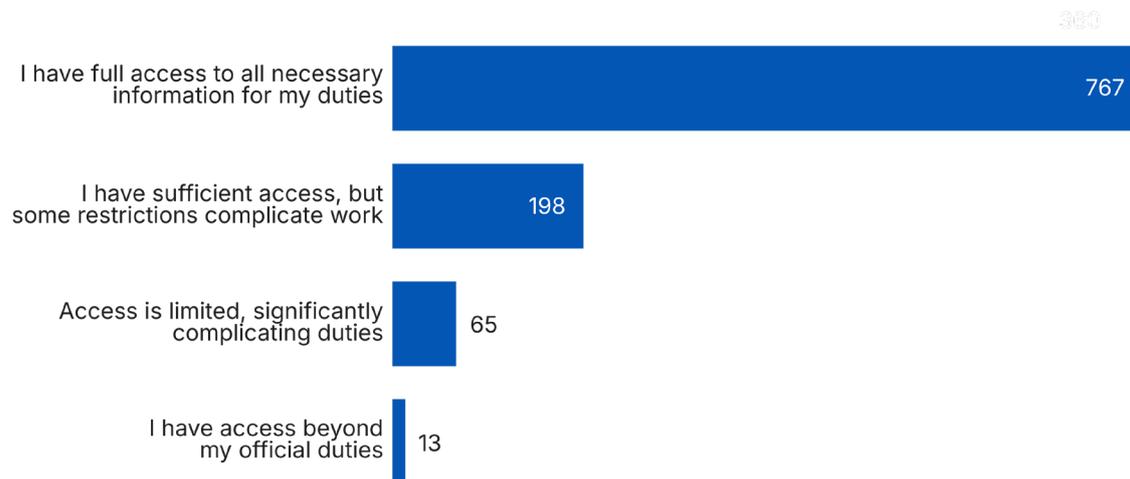


Diagram 48

Whether restrictions on access to official information for civil/patronage service staff in courts help prevent corruption risks

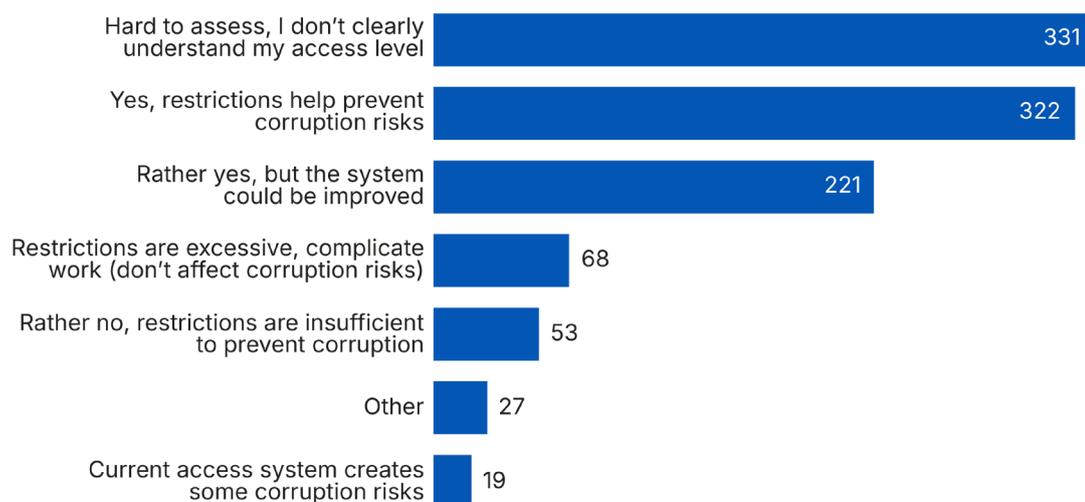


Diagram 49

Frequency with which respondents experienced influence/pressure from judges or court management in their court

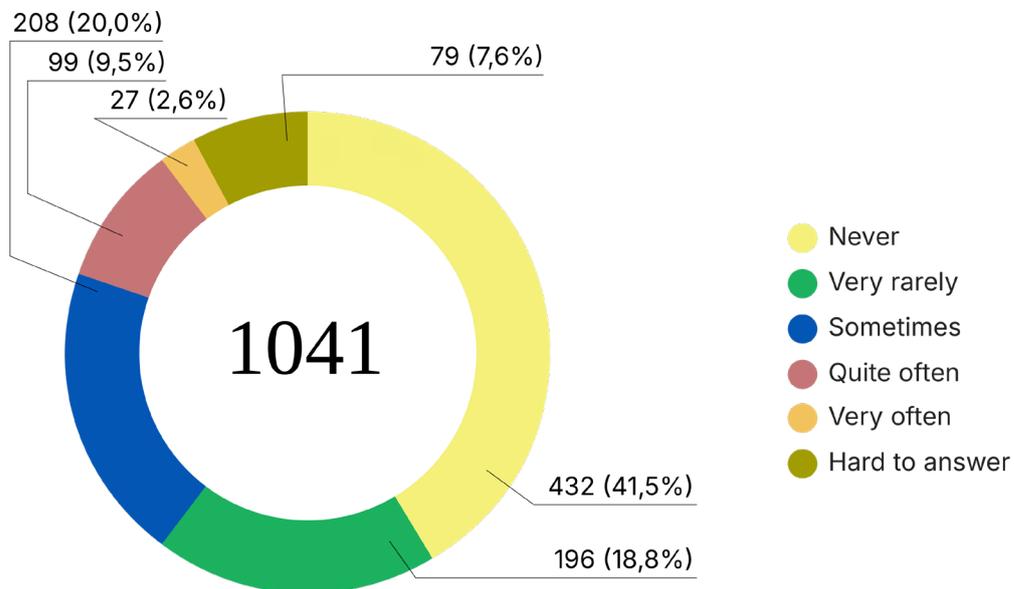


Diagram 50

Respondents' awareness of the Rules of Conduct for Court Staff

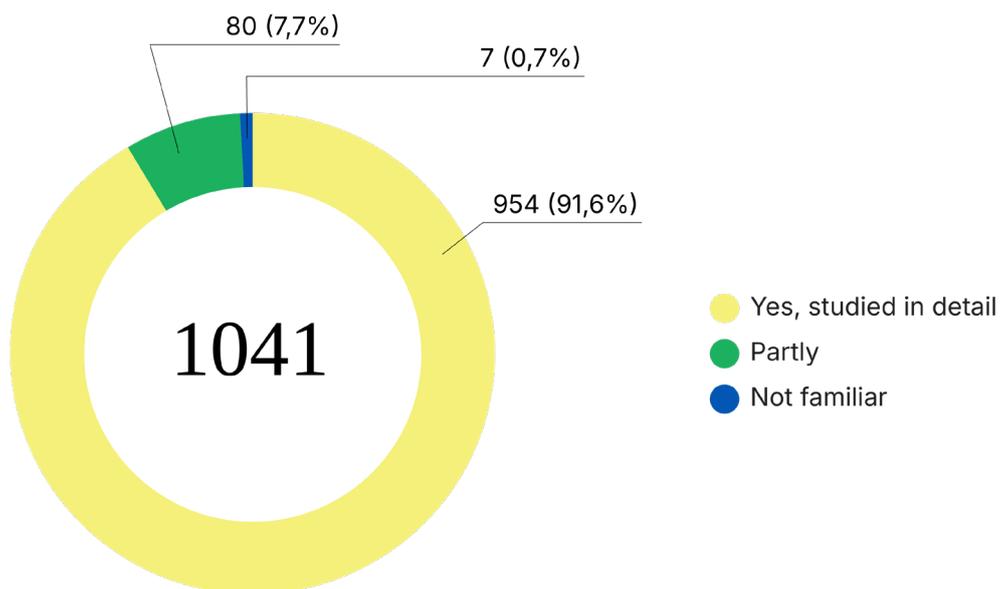


Diagram 51

Level of independence of civil and patronage service staff

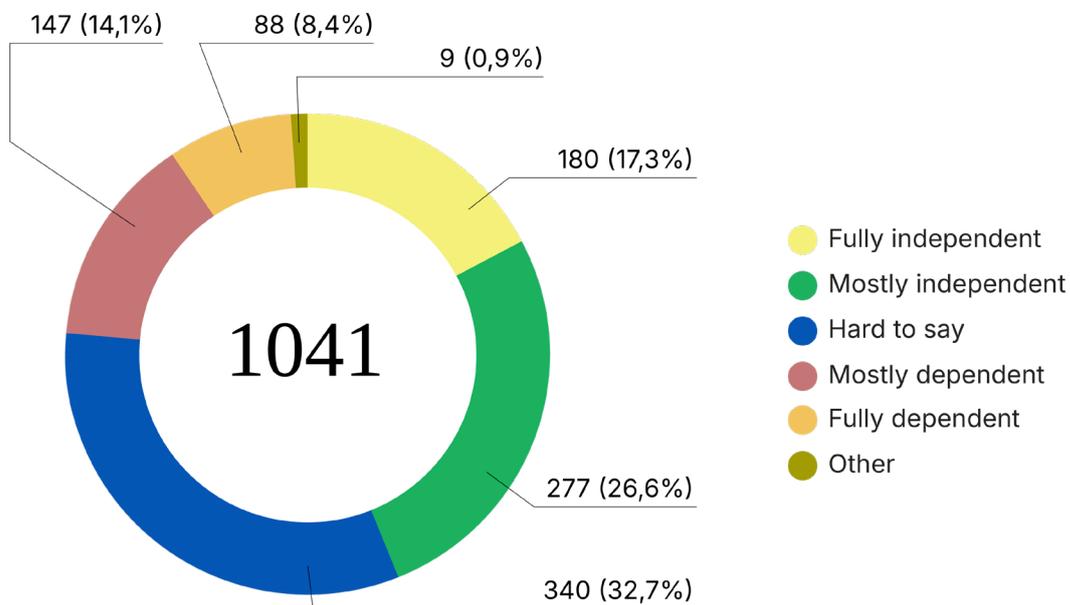


Diagram 52

Factors that most affect staff independence

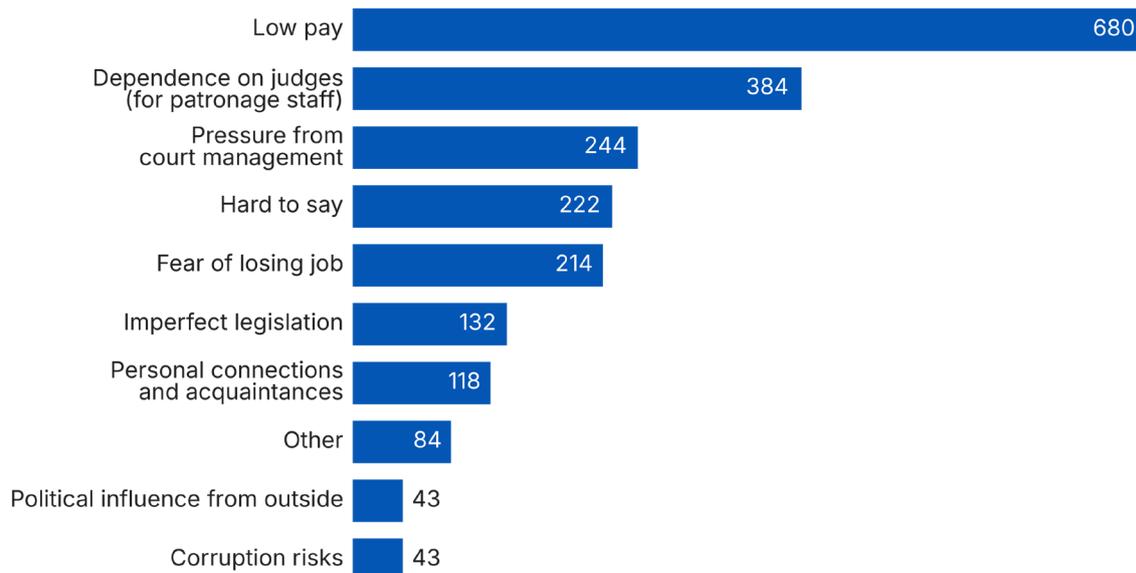


Diagram 53

Compliance with ethical norms and standards of professional conduct by civil and patronage service staff

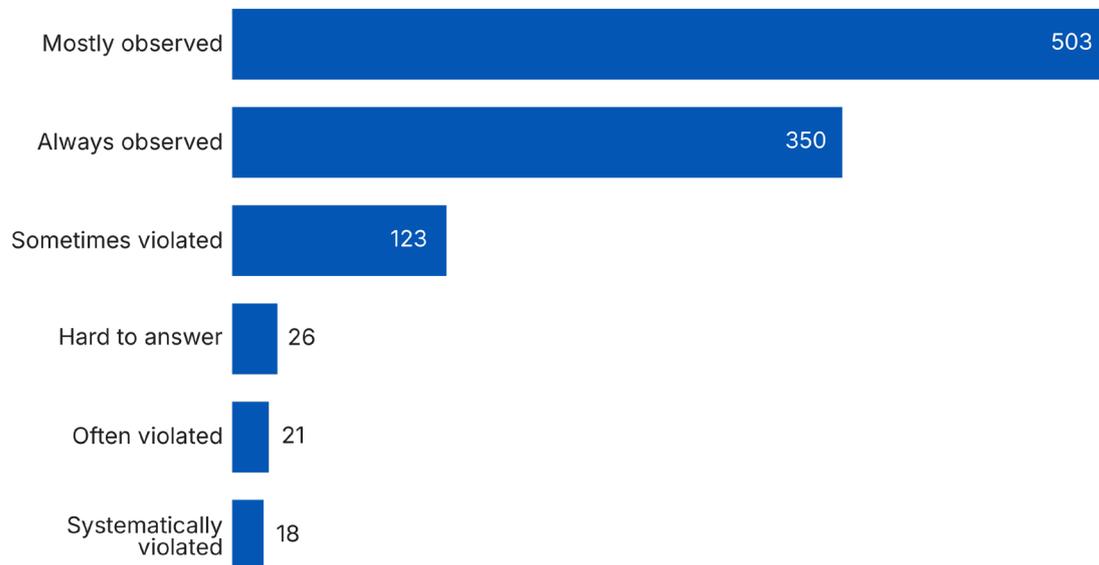


Diagram 54

Manifestations of discrimination or biased treatment in the workplace

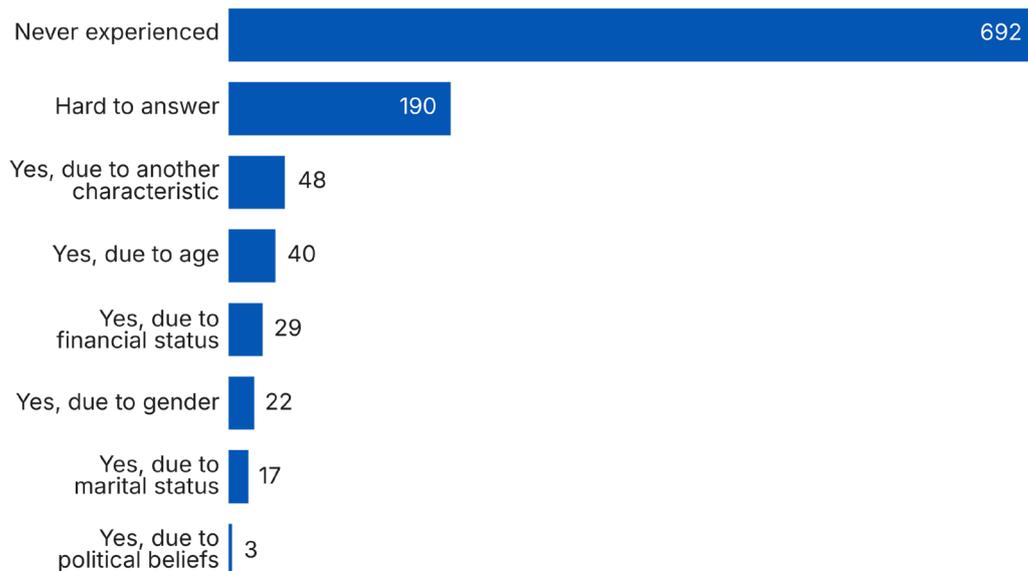


Diagram 55

Whether respondents have encountered sexual harassment or inappropriate sexual behaviour from judges or other court staff



Diagram 56

Manifestations of workplace bullying (mobbing)

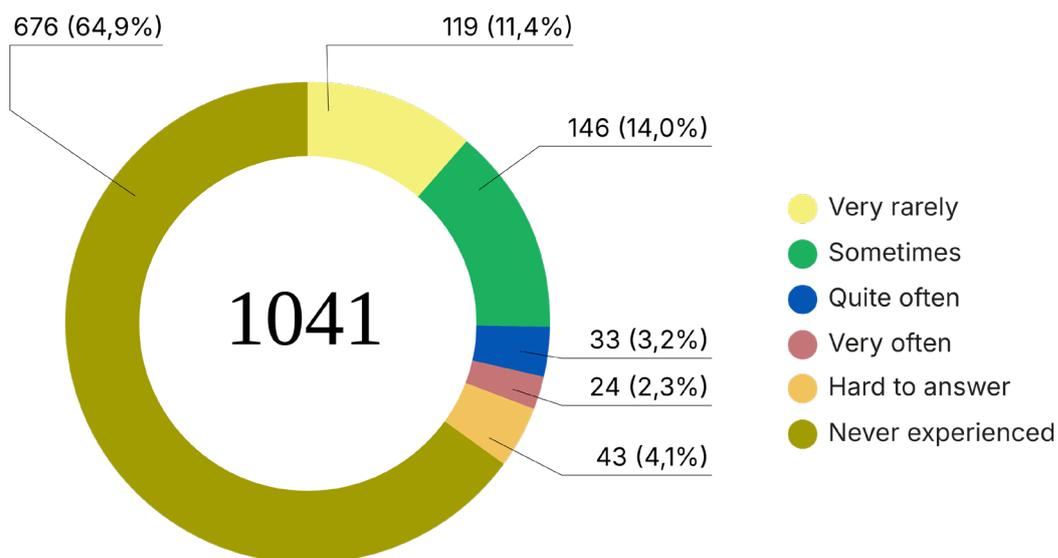


Diagram 57

Types of workplace bullying (mobbing)

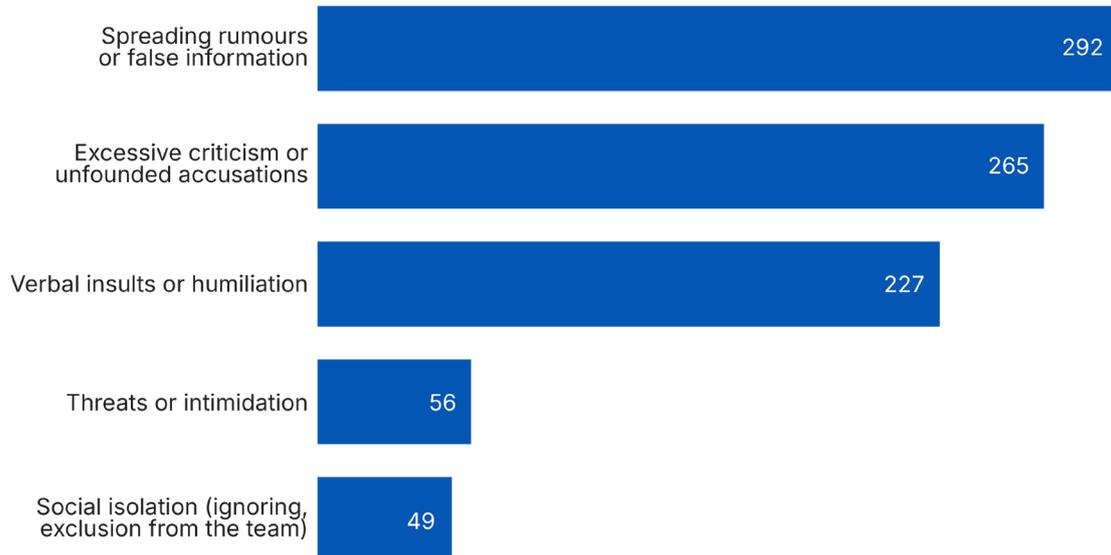


Diagram 58

Respondents' awareness of where to turn in cases of discrimination, sexual harassment, or workplace bullying

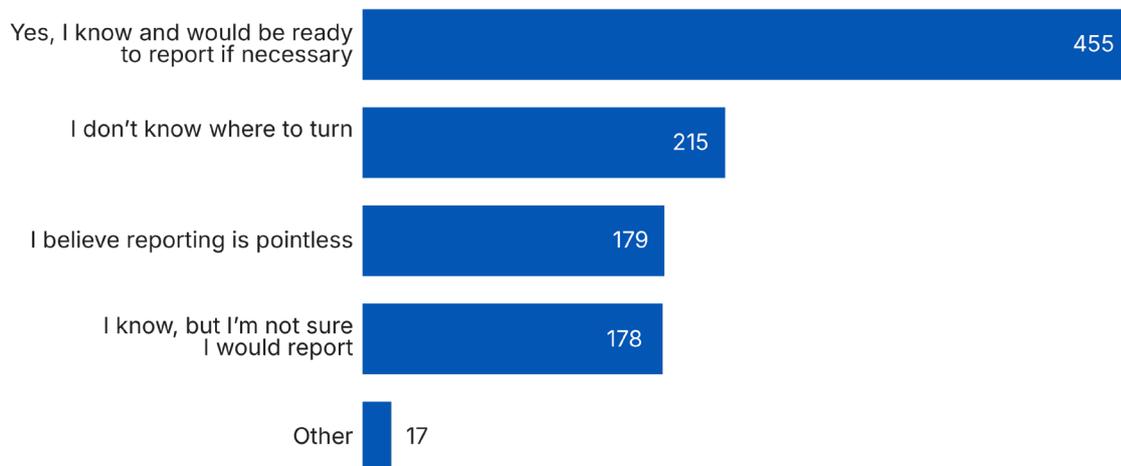


Diagram 59