

**Submission to the Judicial Planning Working Group
Deputy Patrick Costello, Green Party Spokesperson for Justice**

To whom it may concern,

I welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Judicial Planning Working Group to consider the number of and type of judges required to ensure the efficient administration of justice over the next five years.

I believe there is an urgent need for the creation of twenty new High Court Judges and two corresponding Registrars per Judge, plus the creation of five to ten new Judges for both District and Circuit Courts. These extra Judges should be unassigned to District or Circuit Courts, instead available to travel to hold special sitting to cut through the backlog.

Ireland is bottom of the table when it comes to our spending on the Judicial System. A 2020 report published by the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) found that Ireland had the lowest number of Judges per capita in the EU among the 45 countries measured, with just 3.3 Judges per 100,000 people compared to 21 Judges per 100,000 elsewhere.¹ The High Court has been decimated of Judges in recent years and the lengthy delays are causing an administrative nightmare.

It is clear the backlog in cases in the Irish Courts Service urgently needs to be addressed, as highlighted by the news that cases in the Central Criminal Court are being adjourned for trial to March 2023 due to backlog caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The backlog of cases in the Irish Court Service was a problem before Covid-19 hit our shores, but to leave people waiting for two years for their case to go to trial is inexcusable.

The appointment of twenty more Judges, as well as two more registrars for every Judge, would help to tackle the concerning lengthy delays in cases that we are seeing. As it stands, lives are being kept on hold. In October 2020, a “Sea Change” in how the State would respond to victims of sexual violence was announced, yet now we are hearing that victims may have to wait another two years before their cases go to trial. This is inhumane and goes against everything we have said we would do to alleviate some of the pain and suffering victims go through. We need to significantly increase our investment in our Judicial System if it is to be in anyway fit for purpose.

Costings²

- Salary for Judge of the High Court at Year One: €177,125 x 20 = €3,542,500
- Salary for High Court Registrar at Year One: €70,000 X 40 = €2,800,000
- Salary for Judge of the Circuit Court at Year One: €134,456 X 5 = €672,280
- Salary for Judge of the District Court at Year One: €117,311 x 5 = €586,555
- Total: €7,601,335

¹ *European judicial systems CEPEJ Evaluation Report* (2020): <https://rm.coe.int/rapport-evaluation-partie-1-francais/16809fc058>

² Judicial Remuneration: <https://aji.ie/the-judiciary/judicial-remuneration/>

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Timely access to justice is a fundamental human right in a democratic society, but the current overburdened, under-resourced, and limited service is failing in its obligation to protect this right. There is an urgent need for change if we are to make equal access to justice for all a reality.

Thank you for your time in relation to this matter which is appreciated.

Kind regards,

Deputy Patrick Costello

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to be 'P. Costello', written in a cursive style.