1952-2022: a brief overview of the history of the Court of Justice of the European Union

The most significant milestones in the history of the institution and its development, from 1952 to the present day. Then, as now, it is an institution that guarantees compliance with EU law and is always at the service of citizens.

1952 Establishment of the Court of Justice of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) by the Treaty of Paris. The 7 Judges and 2 Advocates General of the Court take up their duties (4 December). The Court has 4 procedural languages (German, French, Italian, Dutch).

1953 First case brought before the Court: Verband Deutscher Reeder v High Authority (Commission) (1/53).

1954 First judgment of the Court: France v High Authority (Commission) (1/54) (21 December).

1958 The Court of Justice becomes the Court for the three European Communities: ECSC, EEC, Euratom, following the entry into force of the Treaties of Rome.

1961 First request for a preliminary ruling brought before the Court of Justice from the Court of appeal of The Hague: Bosch (13/61).

1963 Van Gend en Loos judgment (26/62): the EEC Treaty creates rights for individuals that national judges must guarantee (principle of direct effect of Union law).

Commission v Luxembourg and Belgium judgment (90 and 91/63): a Member State cannot avoid its obligations under Community Law by arguing that other Member States do not respect it.

1964 Costa v Enel judgment (6/64): where a conflict arises between an aspect of national law and an aspect of EU law, the latter prevails (principle of primacy).

1968 The Court organises for the first time the Meeting of Judges of the Member States, which brings together the Members of the Court and national Judges.

1973 First enlargement (Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom). The Court of Justice has 9 Judges, 4 Advocates General and 7 procedural languages.

The Court moves into its first purpose-built building, known as the Palais (Kirchberg plateau) (9 January).

1976 Defrenne v Sabena judgment (43/75): an employee can invoke the principle of equal pay for men and women in case brought directly against their employer.

1981 Second enlargement (Greece). The Court of Justice has 10 Judges, 5 Advocates General and 8 procedural languages.
1986 Third enlargement (Spain and Portugal). The Court of Justice has 13 Judges, 6 Advocates General and 10 procedural languages.

1987 The Single European Act enshrines the Community's "small steps" method and makes it possible to establish an additional Community Court, the Court of First Instance, now called the General Court.

1988 Council decision creating the Court of First Instance.

1989 Establishment of the Court of First Instance, competent for direct actions in competition and European civil service matters.

1991 Francovich and Bonifaci v Italy judgment (C-6/90 and C-9/90): establishment of the principle of Member States' liability for damage caused to individuals from failure to transpose a directive.

1994 Bosman judgment (C-415/93): sports practised at a professional level constitute an economic activity that cannot be hindered by rules limiting the transfer of players or the number of players who are nationals of other Member States.

1995 Fourth enlargement (Austria, Finland and Sweden). The Court of Justice has 15 Judges, 9 Advocates General and 12 procedural languages.

1998 Decker and Kohll judgment (C-120/95 and C-158/96): any national of a Member State may seek to receive healthcare in another Member State and be reimbursed by their sickness insurance fund in accordance with the tariffs of the Member State of affiliation.

2001 Treaty of Nice is signed: the General Court now must have “at least” one Judge per Member State, paving the way for additional judges.

2004 The Great Enlargement (fifth): Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland Slovakia and Slovenia. The Court of Justice has 25 Judges, 8 Advocates General and 21 procedural languages.

2006 Germany v Parliament and Council judgment (C-380/03): the Court upholds the directive banning tobacco advertising in the media.

2007 Sixth enlargement (Bulgaria and Romania). The Court of Justice has 27 Judges, 8 Advocates General and 23 procedural languages.

Entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty: Court's members are now appointed after consultation with a committee responsible for giving an opinion on the candidates' suitability.

Microsoft judgment (T-201/04): The General Court upholds the fine of €497 million imposed by the Commission on Microsoft for abuse of dominant position.

2009 Sturgeon and others (C-402/07 and others): passengers on flights delayed by 3 hours or more are entitled to compensation.

2011 Creation of e-Curia, an electronic application that enables the lodging and service of procedural documents by electronic means.

2013 Seventh enlargement (Croatia). The Court of Justice has 28 Judges, 9 Advocates General and 24 procedural languages.

UEFA and FIFA v Commission judgment (C-201/11 P, C-204/11 P and C-205/11 P): Member States may require free-to-air broadcasting of the World Cup and Euro finals because of their major importance for their society.

The Union legislator adopts the reform of the judicial architecture of the Union, increasing the number of judges at the General Court to two judges per Member State.

2015 Schrems judgment (C-362/14): the Court declares invalid the Commission's Safe Harbor decision, which allowed EU-based companies (in this case, Facebook Ireland) to transfer personal data to the US.
The Court receives the **EMAS** (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) **certification** in recognition of the institution’s environmental commitment.

**2016** Establishment of the **European Union Judicial Network** (EUJN), a secure exchange platform between the Courts of the Member States.

**2018** *Planet 49* judgment (C-673/17): **cookies** require internet users’ active consent, a pre-ticked checkbox is insufficient.

**2019** UK withdrawal (Brexit): the Court of Justice has 27 Judges and 11 Advocates General, the General Court has 54 judges.

**2020** The Court of Justice and the General Court hold some of their **hearings with simultaneous interpretation by video conference during the pandemic**. This novelty receives the **Ombudsman’s Award for Good Administration** in the category of innovation.

*Centraal Israëlitisch Consistorie van België* and others judgment (C-336/19): Member States may impose an **obligation to stun animals prior to the killing**, even in the case of slaughter prescribed by rites.

**2021** **First webstreamed hearing** of the Grand Chamber of the Court of Justice. Any citizen, wherever they live, may watch a hearing of the Court of Justice with simultaneous interpretation.

**2022** *Hungary and Poland v Parliament and Council* judgment (C-156/21 and C-157/21): Member States may receive **funding from the Union’s budget upon decision of the Council, provided they respect the rule of law**.

The Court celebrates its **70th anniversary**.

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