



Reform of the Court: Filtering of cases successful in reducing backlog

The European Court of Human Rights has confirmed that the methods employed since the entry into force of Protocol No. 14 to the European Convention on Human Rights, on 1 June 2010, have been successful in reducing the backlog of cases which are clearly inadmissible.

Since the entry into force of Protocol No. 14, judges have been sitting in Single Judge formations, assisted by rapporteurs from the Court's Registry, to decide cases that are clearly inadmissible or that can be struck out without further examination. To optimise this mechanism, initially, some two-thirds of incoming cases were placed under the organisation of a new Filtering Section tasked with streamlining the new procedure and ensuring that best practices were adopted for the treatment of incoming applications as well as the older cases still waiting for examination. These methods, which have in the meantime been extended to all incoming cases, have proved successful in diminishing the backlog of cases allocated for examination by a single judge. At its highest, on 1 September 2011, the backlog of these cases had reached over 100,000 (the total number of cases pending having reached 160,200 at that time). On 1 October 2013 the backlog of cases allocated for examination by a single judge had dropped to 38,200, the total number of pending cases being 111,350.

This practice of treating incoming applications has now been confirmed and a Filtering Section Registrar has been appointed. The Filtering Section is made up of the judges appointed as Single Judge (currently 36) and the Registry rapporteurs who have been appointed by the President of the Court to assist the Single Judges. It has responsibility for supervising the Court's case-load of incoming applications and assuring the speedy allocation of cases to the correct judicial body for decision.

The Court will continue to pursue other available means of improving its organisation and working methods with a view to fulfilling as effectively as possible the role entrusted to it by the European Convention on Human Rights.

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The European Court of Human Rights was set up in Strasbourg by the Council of Europe Member States in 1959 to deal with alleged violations of the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights.