

Litigation - Cyprus

Government announces court digitisation project

Contributed by **Andreas Neocleous & Co LLC**

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The government recently announced its decision to invite tenders for the digitisation of court procedures in all districts of Cyprus, with the dual objectives of streamlining the management of the court system and providing court users with new functionality and better information.

The new system is intended to provide a range of online services, including the ability to file a case, monitor its progress, submit documents and receive real-time information on cases in progress and any steps that have to be taken to execute court decisions.

According to the Ministry of Justice, all courts in Cyprus will participate in the project. The ability to file and track cases online will result in substantial savings of time, as lawyers will no longer need to travel to a court physically in order to file an action. They will also be notified in advance of postponements of hearings.

However, a number of interested parties have opined that although the proposed changes are welcome, they do not go far enough and that more radical reform is required in order to address the endemic delays in the court system. The procedural rules applied by courts in Cyprus mirror those of England and Wales in the mid-20th century and are open to delay and abuse, with the result that cases can often take five years or more to resolve. A proposal to update the system based on the reformed English civil procedure rules of the late 1990s was abandoned several years ago.

A range of interim measures are available to safeguard litigants' interests effectively, notwithstanding the slowness of the system, but there is no doubt that reform of legal procedures in Cyprus is long overdue.

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