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## COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, ANNUAL REPORT 2024

By Helin Ayaz

### Abstract

*The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) presented its annual report for 2024. The report sheds light on the activities of the CJEU, which consists of the General Court and the Court of Justice, in 2024. In terms of judicial activities, the 2020 Mobility Package, organic products, public access, personal data, and restrictive measures, particularly in the context of the Russia-Ukraine War, were the main topics of focus for the CJEU.*

### Keywords

*Annual Report, Case-Law, European Union, Fundamental Rights, Rulings.*

The Report examined the judicial activities of 2024 separately based on the Court of Justice and the General Court.

**The Court of Justice** essentially deals with requests for preliminary rulings and is also responsible for resolving uncertainties regarding the interpretation and validity of European Union (EU) rules. Furthermore, the Court is vested with the authority to apply the urgent preliminary ruling procedure. Annulment of EU acts, actions concerning Member States' breaches of obligations, and acting as an appellate court in relation to decisions delivered by the General Court are also among the tasks of the Court.

When we look at **the activities and developments** of the Court of Justice in 2024, the adoption and implementation of the reform concerning the judicial structure of the EU through Regulation (EU) 2024/2019 of the European Parliament and the Council is particularly noteworthy.

- This regulation partially transferred the preliminary ruling jurisdiction of the Court of Justice to the General Court. It represents a significant reform aimed at balancing the workload and shortening the length of proceedings.
- The reform also expanded the mechanism for determining whether appeals should be allowed to proceed, thereby ensuring that only cases involving significant legal questions are brought before the Court of Justice.
- Another key aspect of the reform is the enhancement of transparency, as written observations submitted in preliminary ruling proceedings will now be published on the Institution's website within a reasonable time after the case has closed, provided that no objection is raised by the party concerned.

The second court included in the CJEU is the **General Court**. The General Court examines direct actions brought by natural and legal persons, actions brought by Member States, and actions for compensation for damage caused by the institutions or their staff. These cases are generally of an economic nature.

The reforms introduced by Regulation (EU) 2024/2019 of the European Parliament and the Council led the General Court to undergo structural changes and to take steps in terms of staffing. Also in 2024, the Grand Chamber, which is the highest-ranking formation of the General Court, composed of fifteen judges and responsible for hearing and determining important cases or those of a special nature — came to the forefront. Indeed, in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the



implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility under the NextGenerationEU recovery plan, the Grand Chamber delivered six judgments, each addressing multiple joined cases. (see: Table 1)

Table 1: Key Judgments by the Grand Chamber of the General Court, in 2024

Date	Case Number	Case	Summary of the decision of General Court
11.09.2024	T-635/22 and T-644/22	Fridman and Others v Council and Timchenko and Timchenko v Council	Confirmation of the Council's obligation for persons subject to restrictive measures to report funds and cooperate with competent national authorities, as well as the consequences of non-compliance with this obligation.
02.11.2024	T-797/22, T-798/22 and T-828/22	Ordre néerlandais des avocats du barreau de Bruxelles and Others v Council, Ordre des avocats à la cour de Paris and Couturier v Council and ACE v Council	The Council Regulation No 833/2014 concerning the prohibition on providing legal advisory services, directly or indirectly, to the Russian government, legal persons, entities, and bodies was found to be lawful, along with other legal assessments.
04.06.2024	T-530/22 to T-533/22	Medel and Others v Council	The Council's approval of Poland's recovery plan and the implementing decision setting the milestones for receiving financial contributions were upheld, and the applicants were found to lack standing to bring the annulment action.

Efforts are ongoing to ensure that the functionality gained by the Grand Chamber through the joinder of these cases continues in 2025.

The Report continues with the **key themes and priority issues** emphasized by the CJEU in 2024 as follows:

*Lithuania and Others v Parliament and Council* (C-541/20 to C-555/20)



The judgment concerns an action for annulment brought before the Court of Justice by Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus, Hungary, Malta, and Poland against the Mobility Package adopted by the EU's legislative bodies. These Member States requested the annulment of certain provisions of the Mobility Package, which introduced a series of reforms aimed at improving drivers' working conditions and ensuring fair competition in the road transport sector; particularly rules regarding drivers' rest periods, the obligation to install tachographs, and the requirement for vehicles to return to the operational centre in the Member State of establishment every eight weeks. While the Court of Justice upheld the overall validity of the 2020 Mobility Package, it annulled the provision requiring vehicles to return every eight weeks on the grounds that the Parliament and the Council lacked sufficient information to assess the proportionality of the measure and its social, economic, and environmental impacts.

[Judgment in Herbaria Kräuterparadies II \(C-240/23\)](#)

The case brought before the Court of Justice concerns the use of the EU organic production logo and the phrase "controlled organic farming" on the packaging of Blutquick, a food supplement produced by the German company Herbaria. The German authorities prohibited Herbaria from using these terms, and the national court that referred the case to the Court of Justice rejected Herbaria's appeal. The Court of Justice ruled that only products that fully comply with EU organic production regulations are permitted to use the EU organic logo. Along with this ruling, the Court of Justice stated that third-country organic logos may be used on products produced in third countries in accordance with the legislation of those countries.

[Auken and Others v Commission and Courtois and Others v Commission \(T-689/21 and T-761/21\)](#)

The case before the General Court concerns the Commission's failure to make purchase contracts for Covid-19 vaccines sufficiently accessible to the public. Following a request for review by certain members of the European Parliament and private individuals to examine details such as whether the public interest was protected, the purchase contracts signed between the Commission and certain pharmaceutical companies in 2020 and 2021 were made "partially" accessible. Two annulment actions were brought before the General Court against the Commission's decisions by EU Parliament members and private individuals regarding the online publication of the contracts, which were partially censored on grounds such as commercial confidentiality and the protection of personal data. The General Court ruled that the justifications for the censorship were insufficient, that a balance between transparency and confidentiality could not be established, and that there was a legitimate public interest in disclosing the provisions related to compensation to the public, thereby partially annulling the Commission's decisions.

[Mazepin v Council of \(T-743/22\); Fridman and Others v Council and Timchenko and Timchenko v Council \(T-635/22 and T-644/22\); and NSD v Council of \(T-494/22\)](#)

The EU uses restrictive measures or sanctions as an important tool in its foreign policy and security policy activities. Indeed, since 2014 and especially after Russia's war against Ukraine started in 2022, the EU has begun to use these tools more intensively, and natural and legal persons supporting Russia have become subjects of these sanctions. Numerous challenges to the legitimacy and scope of the sanctions decisions against Russia, issued by the Council, have been brought before the General Court. To generally address these decisions;



- [NSD v Council \(T-494/22\)](#)  
The Russia-based company National Settlement Depository (NSD) has provided financial support to the Russian government and the Central Bank of Russia. This support is being used by the Russian government in its efforts to destabilize Ukraine. For this reason, the General Court has approved the sanctions imposed on NSD and stated that NSD customers who claim that their property rights have been violated can seek redress in national courts.
- [Mazepin v Council \(T-743/22\)](#)  
Former Formula 1 driver Nikita Mazepin's name has been added to the sanctions list in accordance with the Council's decision. This decision is based on allegations that Nikita Mazepin's father, Dmitry Mazepin, is an effective businessman who generates income for the Russian government and is the main sponsor of his son's career at the Haas Team. However, the General Court annulled the Council's decision, stating that Nikita Mazepin is no longer a member of the team and that family ties alone are not sufficient grounds for this sanction.
- [Fridman and Others v Council and Timchenko and Timchenko v Council \(T-635/22 and T-644/22\)](#)  
Elena Timchenko, Gennady Timchenko, Mikhail Fridman, Petr Aven, and German Khan have been added to the list of persons subject to restrictive measures by the Council. These individuals filed a lawsuit before the General Court seeking annulment of their obligations to declare their assets and cooperate with the competent authorities, claiming that such obligations exceeded the Council's authority, in line with the amendments made to Regulation No. 269/2014. The General Court, however, rejected the lawsuits, stating that the Council has the authority to adopt regulations, can impose sanctions that impose active obligations, and that the authorities of member states have not been violated.

In addition to the main themes focused on in the report, it is also possible to see **major judgments** made throughout the year in various areas. Among these major judgments, especially two cases stand out for their focus on fundamental rights;

- [Ordre néerlandais des avocats du barreau de Bruxelles and Others v Council, Ordre des avocats à la Cour de Paris and Couturier v Council and ACE v Council \(T-797/22, T-798/22 and T-828/22\)](#)  
Belgian and French lawyers applied to the General Court for annulment of the sanction prohibiting the provision of legal advice to the Russian Government or legal persons, entities or bodies established in Russia. The General Court rejected the application, noting that the sanction at issue did not cover natural persons, while emphasizing the right to effective judicial protection.
- [Real Madrid Club de Fútbol \(C-633/22\)](#)  
A lawsuit was filed in Spain against Le Monde newspaper for publishing a article linking Real Madrid football team to doping allegations. The newspaper was ordered to pay damages. Le



Monde appealed against the enforcement of the decision in France. After the French Court of Cassation referred the matter to the Court of Justice, the Court stated that recognition decisions could be limited if they led to a violation of fundamental rights, and that disproportionate sanctions against the media were incompatible with the democratic values of the EU.

Furthermore when we look at decisions related to **personal data**, we see that the decisions of;

- Landeshauptstadt Wiesbaden (C-61/22)  
A German citizen filed a lawsuit in a German court after his request for an ID card without fingerprints was rejected; the German court referred the case to the Court of Justice for a review of the regulation requiring fingerprints on ID cards. The Court of Justice stated that the fingerprint requirement was essentially compatible with the right to respect for private life and the right to the protection of personal data, but ruled that the regulation was invalid because it had been established on the basis of an incorrect legal justification.
- Direktor na Glavna direksia 'Natsionalna politsia' pri MVR – Sofia (C-118/22)  
A request by a person who had been given a one-year suspended prison sentence to have their record expunged was rejected on the grounds that, under Bulgarian law, such data must be kept on file indefinitely until the person's death. The Court of Justice, which reviewed this regulation at the request of the Bulgarian Supreme Administrative Court, ruled that the indefinite storage of the biometric and genetic data of convicted persons, without distinction, is contrary to EU law.
- La Quadrature du Net II of (C-470/21)  
In a case concerning a French decree aimed at protecting works protected by copyright and related rights against criminal acts committed on the internet, the Court of Justice assessed the data storage practices of internet service providers. According to these assessments, internet service providers may be required to store IP addresses in a general and non-discriminatory manner in order to identify suspects; however, it was stated that this data should not be suitable for making definitive conclusions about the private lives of the individuals concerned.
- Bezirkshauptmannschaft Landeck (C-548/21)  
In a case in Austria, the police attempted to examine the mobile phone of a person who had purchased drugs. In response to questions regarding the validity of such investigations, the Court of Justice stated that access to stored data covers minor offences as long as prior approval has been obtained from a court or independent authority.

standt out. We also see decisions made on issues related to **equal treatment and labor law**;

- Comune di Copertino (C-218/22)  
A public employee working for the municipality of Copertino, Italy, resigned from his position due to early retirement. He requested financial compensation for his unused vacation days.



The Court of Justice assessed that Italian law did not grant civil servants such a right to compensation and stated that civil servants were entitled to financial compensation even if they resigned voluntarily.

- FIFA (C-650/22)  
A former French professional footballer objected to rules that required footballers and their new clubs to pay compensation for contracts terminated prematurely without just cause, and even resulted in the new club being banned from transferring players. The Court of Justice ruled that these rules were contrary to the right of free movement of workers and EU competition law.

**European Citizenship** is one of the topics to be addressed in 2024;

- Commission v Czech Republic (C-808/21) and Commission v Poland (C-814/21)  
Anyone who is a national of an EU Member State automatically acquires the status of a citizen of the EU. The European Commission brought an action before the Court of Justice on the grounds that the Czech Republic and Poland disregarded this principle by placing, in the context of elections, citizens of other EU Member States residing in their territory – but who are not their own nationals – at a disadvantage. The Court of Justice held that citizens of another EU Member State residing in those countries must be granted equal access to the right to vote and stand for election, and that the denial of such access cannot be justified by invoking the principle of national sovereignty.
- Mirin (C-4/23)  
In this ruling, the Court of Justice decided that all member states must recognize name and gender changes carried out in another member state.

**Consumer-related cases** were also dealt with;

- Aldi Süd (C-330/23)  
Advertisements by the supermarket chain Adli Süd regarding price reductions were brought before a German court by a German consumer association. As a result of the questions posed by the German court, the Court of Justice supported the association's view and stated that the price reductions announced in the advertisements should be calculated based on the lowest price in the last 30 days in accordance with EU law.

The EU aims to protect and improve the quality of the **environment and protect human health**. Indeed, important decisions regarding the environment were made in 2024.

- Symphony Environmental Technologies and Symphony Environmental v Parliament and Others (T-745/20)  
The marketing of goods made from oxo-biodegradable plastic, which breaks down as a result of oxidation, is prohibited by the European Directive. British companies claimed that the



plastics they marketed, which contained pro-oxidant additives, were easier to recycle than plastics covered by this ban, but that they had nevertheless suffered damage because the plastics they produced were also covered by the ban, and sought compensation. However, the General Court noted that the biodegradation rate of plastics containing pro-oxidants is negligible and dismissed the case.

- WWF Österreich and Others (C-601/22) and ASCEL (C-436/22)  
In two separate rulings, the Court of Justice addressed wolves protected under the Bern Convention in the context of the Habitats Directive. In these rulings, it stated that species that do not have appropriate protection status at the national level cannot be designated as huntable species at the regional level.
- Ilva and Others (C-626/22)  
The Ilva steelworks operating in Taranto was found by the European Court of Human Rights in 2019 to have negative effects on the environment and public health. Measures taken to eliminate these adverse effects have been implemented since 2012, and the deadlines for the implementation of these measures have been repeatedly extended. As a result of a lawsuit filed by the local population regarding this issue, the matter was examined by the Milan Court and subsequently referred to the Court of Justice. The Court of Justice found that the steelworks in question did not comply with the requirements of the Industrial Emissions Directive and ruled that if this deficiency is not remedied, the operation must be suspended.

One of the important issues in the EU in recent years is the fairness and openness of **digital markets**. The following are notable decisions related to this issue in 2024;

- Airbnb Ireland and Amazon Services Europe (Joined Cases C-662/22 and C-667/22), Expedia (C-663/22), Google Ireland and Eg Vacation Rentals Ireland (Joined Cases C-664/22 and C-666/22) and Amazon Services Europe (C-665/22)  
Following the enactment of a law in Italy imposing administrative obligations on certain online service providers, the Italian Court referred the matter to the Court of Justice for a preliminary ruling. The Court of Justice stated that member states must comply with the principle of mutual recognition and that additional obligations restricting these services are not compatible with EU law.
- Bytedance v Commission (T-1077/23)  
Bytedance, the company operating the social media platform TikTok, was designated as a “gatekeeper” by the Commission under the EU Digital Markets Regulation. The purpose of this designation is to prevent unfair practices and to ensure fair competition. Following a lawsuit brought by Bytedance, the General Court ruled that the criteria set out in the regulation, enacted by the EU legislature to improve the functioning of the internal market, were met in Bytedance’s case, thereby upholding the Commission’s designation as valid and dismissing the action.



Another issue to which the EU attaches importance is the implementation of rules aimed at **protecting free competition**. Important decisions were made in this regard in 2024.

- [Scandlines Danmark and Scandlines Deutschland v Commission; Denmark v Commission; and Scandlines Danmark and Scandlines Deutschland v Commission \(T-7/19, T-364/20 and T-390/20\)](#)  
Denmark provided financial support to the public entity carrying out the Fehmarn Belt Fixed Link Project, and the Commission stated that this aid constituted state aid but was compatible with the internal market. Denmark and two ferry companies affected by the project brought an action before the General Court seeking annulment of the Commission's decision. However, the General Court dismissed the action, accepting that the advantage granted to the public entity gave it an advantage over other market operators, but emphasizing that the project served EU transport policy.
- [Qualcomm v Commission \(T-671/19\)](#)  
The chipset manufacturer Qualcomm was accused by a competitor of engaging in predatory pricing. In 2019, the Commission imposed a fine on Qualcomm. Qualcomm raised its objections before the General Court, but only those related to the amount of the fine were accepted.

The judgments in [Google and Alphabet v Commission \(Google Shopping\)](#) (C-48/22 P), [Google and Alphabet v Commission \(Google AdSense for Search\)](#) (T-334/19) are also noteworthy in relation to the abuse of a dominant position.

- [Crédit agricole and Crédit agricole Corporate and Investment Bank v Commission and UBS Group and Credit Suisse Securities \(Europe\) v Commission \(T-386/21 and T-406/21\)](#)  
The Commission imposed fines on Deutsche Bank, Bank of America, Crédit Agricole, and Credit Suisse for participating in a cartel that coordinated their trading practices by sharing sensitive information. Deutsche Bank cooperated and was exempted from the fine. Crédit Agricole and Credit Suisse appealed the Commission's decision to the General Court. The General Court upheld the finding of infringement.
- [NetCologne v Commission, Deutsche Telekom v Commission and Tele Columbus v Commission \(T-58/20, T-64/20 and T-69/20\)](#)  
The Commission approved the request of the telecommunications company Vodafone to expand its field of activity. As a result of this approval, three German companies concerned that Vodafone would become the dominant company in the market appealed to the General Court to overturn the decision. The General Court dismissed the appeals on the grounds that the parties were not competitors in the same market.
- [Commission v Ireland and Others \(C-465/20 P\)](#)  
The European Commission decided that Ireland had granted tax advantages to the company named Apple during a certain period, and that these advantages constituted State aid. Although



the General Court annulled the Commission's decision on the grounds that it had not sufficiently justified that the company had benefited from the advantages, the Court of Justice, upon appeal, upheld the Commission's decision.

Cases involving **intellectual property and industrial property law** in 2024 are also noteworthy;

- [Escobar v EUIPO \(Pablo Escobar\) \(T-255/23\)](#)  
Escobar Inc. (Puerto Rico, United States) applied to the EU Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) to register the word sign "Pablo Escobar." However, this application was rejected on the grounds that Pablo Escobar, from whom the company took its name, was a drug baron and narco-terrorist, and that this would be contrary to public policy and principles of public morality. The General Court upheld EUIPO's decision, stating that the trademark conflicts with the fundamental principles of the EU.
- [Supermac's v EUIPO – McDonald's International Property \(T-58/23\)](#)  
The US-based McDonald's chain registered the 'Big Mac' trademark in 1996. The Irish fast-food chain Supermac's applied to the EUIPO for the cancellation of the trademark, arguing that it had not been put to genuine use. Dissatisfied with the EUIPO's partial decision, Supermac's brought an action before the General Court. The General Court held that McDonald's had failed to prove genuine use of the 'Big Mac' trademark for a continuous period of five years and significantly restricted the scope of its protection.
- [Administration of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine v EUIPO \(RUSSIAN WARSHIP, GO F\\*\\*K YOURSELF\) \(T-82/24\)](#)  
A Ukrainian border guard made a call to arms against Russian warships, saying, "Russian warship, go f\*\*k yourself". The State Border Guard Service of Ukraine applied to the EUIPO to register this phrase as a trademark, but the application was rejected. The case filed by the Ukrainian Administration in the General Court was also rejected on the grounds that the statement had become a symbol of resistance against Russian aggression and was not suitable for trademark registration.
- [Puma v EUIPO – Handelsmaatschappij J. Van Hilst \(Shoe\) T-647/22\)](#)  
A Netherlands-based company applied to EUIPO for the cancellation of a design registered by Puma in 2016. The application was made on the grounds that Rihanna, who was the artistic director at Puma 12 months before the registration application was filed, shared a similar shoe on her Instagram account. EUIPO accepted the application. Puma filed a lawsuit against the decision, but the General Court dismissed the case, stating that all the essential elements of the design had been disclosed.

The year 2024 has also been an important year in which cases related to **commercial policy** were heard.



- Commission and Council v Front Polisario (Joined Cases C-778/21 P and C-798/21 P; Joined Cases C-779/21 P and C-799/21 P)  
The scope of the agreements between the EU and Morocco on fishery and agricultural products has been extended to include Western Sahara without the express consent of the people of Western Sahara. The Polisario Front, the representative of the people of Western Sahara recognized by the UN, has filed a lawsuit before the General Court to annul the Council's decisions. The General Court annulled these decisions, and the Court of Justice, which examined the case on appeal, also ruled that these agreements were contrary to international law.
- Confédération paysanne (Melons and tomatoes from Western Sahara) (C-399/22)  
The case came before the Court of Justice as a continuation of proceedings brought before the French authorities by a French farmers' union claiming that it was misleading to market tomatoes and melons grown in Western Sahara as originating in Morocco. The Court of Justice stated that Western Sahara is a separate region from Morocco and that the indication of origin "Western Sahara" would be more appropriate. However, Court of Justice emphasized that only the EU has the authority to ban imports.

One of the EU's goals is to have an effective, human rights-compliant, and safe **migration policy**. Many regulations have been made on this issue. The decisions made in 2024 are important in terms of clarifying these regulations and acting in accordance with the specified goal;

- Zamestnik-predsedatel na Darzhavna agentsia za bezhantsite (Refugee status – Stateless persons of Palestinian origin) (C-563/22)  
According to the Qualifications Directive, persons registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) do not have refugee status. In a case before the Bulgarian courts concerning stateless persons of Palestinian origin, a question was referred to the Court of Justice regarding the conditions under which UNRWA assistance would cease. The Court interpreted UNRWA's failure to provide decent living conditions and minimum security in the region as meaning that the aid had ended. Therefore, these individuals have refugee status.
- Commission v Hungary (Reception of applicants for international protection II) (C-123/22)  
Hungary failed to comply with a 2020 ruling by the Court of Justice on asylum. The Court therefore ordered Hungary to pay a lump sum and penalty payment for violating EU legal unity and solidarity.

The establishment of a common area of freedom, security, and justice is one of the fundamental objectives of EU law. In 2024, important decisions were made in the area of **judicial cooperation**.

- Burdene (C-126/23)  
The perpetrator who killed his ex-partner was ordered to pay compensation to the victim's relatives. However, since the perpetrator was bankrupt, the Italian state paid less



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compensation than determined to the victim's spouse and children. In a lawsuit filed by the victim's relatives in Venice, a question was referred to the Court of Justice for interpretation of the Directive Relating to Compensation to Crime Victims. The Court of Justice stated that it was not fair and appropriate to exclude some family members from the compensation system because of the presence of other family members, and that the financial situation and dependency of these family members should also be taken into account.

- M.N. (EncroChat) (C-670/22)  
EncroChat was infiltrated during an investigation into illegal drug trafficking in France. A question was referred to the Court of Justice regarding the use of evidence obtained in this investigation, in Germany. The Court of Justice stated that a European Investigation Order (EIO) could be issued by the competent prosecutor, subject to subsequent judicial review of the evidence previously gathered.

The EU **common foreign and security policy** (CFSP) is an important part of a policy that uses restrictive measures or sanctions as tools. The decisions made on this matter in 2024 are noteworthy;

- KS and KD v Council and Others (Joined Cases C-29/22 P and C-44/22 P)  
Eulex Kosovo was established to investigate human rights violations that occurred in Kosovo in 1999. However, it was alleged that Eulex committed human rights violations while carrying out its duties, and a panel was established to investigate these allegations. Based on the complaints of individuals named KS and KD, the panel acknowledged the human rights violations. These individuals applied to the General Court for compensation for damages, but the General Court stated that it did not have jurisdiction. Upon appeal, the Court of Justice, which reviewed the case, ruled that the General Court had jurisdiction in matters not directly related to political or strategic choices and partially overturned the General Court's decision.

The judgment in *Ordre néerlandais des avocats du barreau de Bruxelles and Others v Council* (T-797/22, T-798/22 and T-828/22), referred to in the previous sections of the summary, is also relevant in this regard.

**For the full report, see:** [CJEU Annual Report 2024](#)

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