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## Factsheets on defendants' rights now available on the e-Justice portal

The European Commission has made available to the public this week, on the European e-Justice portal, national factsheets on the rights of defendants in all 27 Member States of the EU. These factsheets were prepared by the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) working together with experienced criminal defence lawyers, the CCBE's member Bars, Ministries of Justice and qualified legal translators. They list in a simple but comprehensive way the rights available to defendants in criminal proceedings in all the EU Member States. They are available in all of the EU's official languages.

The factsheets cover the following areas: obtaining legal advice; rights during the investigation of a crime (arrest, questioning and police investigation, searches, first court hearing, preparation for trial); rights during the trial; rights after the trial; and road traffic offences.

"The factsheets are drafted in plain language so that it will be easy for EU citizens to understand them. They are nevertheless the result of a complex and challenging process of co-ordinating lawyers, translators and Ministries of Justice across 29 jurisdictions in 27 Member States", said the CCBE President Marcella Prunbauer-Glaser. "We are proud to have worked on this important project and are delighted with the outcome. We would like to congratulate the Commission on taking this important initiative", she added.

The CCBE believes that the factsheets provide a very useful source of information for suspects and defendants in cross-border situations. For example, a Portuguese national who is charged with a crime in Germany can now access information in Portuguese on his rights throughout the German court process. The factsheets are also a useful starting point for others involved in the judicial process, such as lawyers.

### Background

In November 2009, the CCBE was awarded a European Commission funded project on Factsheets on Rights of Defendants project (FRD), which required the preparation of national factsheets on the rights of defendants in all 27 Member States of the EU, described in plain, unambiguous language which can be easily understood by the layperson.

The factsheets have been made available today to the public on the e-Justice portal at the following address: [https://e-justice.europa.eu/content\\_rights\\_of\\_defendants\\_in\\_criminal\\_proceedings\\_-169-en.do](https://e-justice.europa.eu/content_rights_of_defendants_in_criminal_proceedings_-169-en.do) They will be updated on an annual basis for three years to ensure that they are accurate and reflect any changes in the law.

The European Commission's e-Justice portal aims at facilitating access to justice by citizens and businesses across Europe. It is also aimed at reinforcing judicial co-operation, on the basis of existing legal instruments, and at bringing e-Justice closer to the legal profession and all interested parties.

The CCBE is the representative organisation of around 1 million European lawyers through its member bars and law societies from 31 full member countries, and 11 further associate and observer countries. The CCBE is also contributing to the section "Find a lawyer" of the e-Justice portal, by developing a European-wide lawyer's directory.

For further information,  
please contact Antoine Fobe  
Tel: +32.(0)2.234.65.10  
Fax: +32.(0)2.234.65.11/12  
E-mail: [fobe@ccbe.eu](mailto:fobe@ccbe.eu)