



Preliminary communication

CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION OF JUDGES AND PUBLIC PROSECUTORS: THE CASE OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA AND ITS ALIGNMENT WITH THE EUROPEAN STANDARDS*

Aleksandra Gruevska Drakulevski, PhD, Full Professor

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Iustinianus Primus Law Faculty in Skopje
Bul. Goce Delčev 9 b, 1000 Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia
a.gruevskadrakulevski@pf.ukim.edu.mk

Aleksandra Deanoska Trendafilova, PhD, Full Professor

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Iustinianus Primus Law Faculty in Skopje
Bul. Goce Delčev 9 b, 1000 Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia
a.deanoskatrendafilova@pf.ukim.edu.mk

Boban Misoski, PhD, Full Professor

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Iustinianus Primus Law Faculty in Skopje
Bul. Goce Delčev 9 b, 1000 Skopje Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia
b.misoski@pf.ukim.edu.mk

ABSTRACT

Certain legal professions, by their very nature, require continuing legal education even after the completion of formal legal studies, particularly the professions of judge and public prosecutor. In the Republic of North Macedonia, the path toward these professions includes acquiring practical experience after graduation, passing the bar exam, admission to the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, completing theoretical and practical training, passing a final examination, and appointment to judicial or prosecutorial office. National legislation has so far recognized two training models: a unified training model for both professions and a model of early specializa-

* This paper has been produced within the framework of the project “Continuing Legal Education and Qualifications for a Modern Legal Profession”, implemented by the “Iustinianus Primus” Faculty of Law, Ss. Cyril and Methodius” University in Skopje and funded by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia.

tion, in which candidates choose one of the two career paths at the application stage. The latter approach is also reflected in the new draft Law on the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors.

Continuous professional development for appointed judges and public prosecutors constitutes a legal obligation, further regulated through by-laws, while failure to attend mandatory training sessions may result in disciplinary liability. The paper analyses the system of continuing legal education in North Macedonia in terms of its structure, objectives, and qualification frameworks, while also presenting the results of empirical research on the attitudes, experiences, and needs of judges and public prosecutors regarding lifelong learning and professional development.

Furthermore, the paper provides a comparative analysis of successful European models of continuing judicial training and offers a critical evaluation of the national system considering contemporary international standards and principles for judicial education, particularly those developed by the Council of Europe and the European Justice Training Network (EJTN). Special attention is also devoted to assessing the alignment of national higher education with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), through a critical re-examination of the role of higher education institutions in supporting continuing legal education. In this context, the authors propose specific recommendations aimed at improving the concept of continuing legal education and strengthening the role of higher education institutions in this field.

Keywords: *Continuing legal education, European standards, judges, judicial training, public prosecutors, Republic of North Macedonia*

1. INTRODUCTION

Continuing legal education (CLE) represents a fundamental element of judicial and public prosecutorial professionalism, independence, and efficiency in modern democratic systems. In the Republic of North Macedonia, continuing training of judges is regulated through a structured legal and institutional framework designed to ensure lifelong professional development and harmonization with European standards.

Judicial and public prosecutorial office requires not only independence but also continuing professional competence. In contemporary legal systems, characterized by legislative dynamism, European integration processes, and the expansion of human rights jurisprudence, judges and public prosecutors must engage in lifelong learning.

Continuing professional development is carried out with the aim of maintaining and expanding knowledge and expertise for quality and efficient performance of work tasks and improving the professional capabilities of professional services in courts and prosecutors' offices. In a broader sense it would contribute to strengthening and increasing the efficiency and independence of the judiciary.¹

¹ Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors "Pavel Shatev", Skopje, 2022, *Specialized program for voluntary continuing training*, Available at: [https://jpacademy.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Specijalizirana_programa_zasluzbenici_2023.pdf], Accessed 10 March 2026.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, continuing legal education of judges and public prosecutors (often referred to as continuing training or continuing professional development) is a structured and legally framed system aimed at keeping judges and public prosecutors up to date with legal developments, improving their skills, professional competence and ethical conduct throughout their careers.²

Continuing legal education for judges and public prosecutors in North Macedonia is regulated by laws and bylaws related to the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors “Pavel Shatev”³ and judicial service legislation. The rules define the obligation for lifelong learning to maintain and improve knowledge, skills and personal qualities needed for proper judicial duties.⁴

This paper analyses the normative foundations, institutional organization, structure, and implementation of continuing legal education for judges and public prosecutors, together with the critical observations on the possibility and the extend of involvement of the Higher Education Academic institutions into delivering of such continuing legal education. In this sense University Law Schools are considered as Higher Education Academic institutions.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research applies normative legal analysis of the Law on the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors and related legislation; institutional analysis of the Academy and other relevant judicial bodies; comparative-descriptive approach based on European standards for judicial training; analytical method for evaluating strengths and weaknesses of the system. Beside the theoretical analysis, this paper also evaluates the positions of the judges and the public prosecutors regarding their opinions of the received continuing legal education through the Academy for Training of Judges and Prosecutors. Judges’ and prosecutors’ opinions were gathered through online voluntary survey. The questionnaire consisted of demographic questions and questions related to their previous experience of continuing legal education. The survey was distributed to judges, prosecutors, attorneys at law, enforcement agents, corporate lawyers, law clerks, notaries and legal apprentices in Republic of North Macedonia, and was open to answers in the period of 1 December 2025 till 28 February 2026.

² Continuing Training, Available at: [<https://jpacademy.gov.mk/en/continous-training>], Accessed 10 March 2026.

³ Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors “Pavel Shatev”, Available at: [<https://jpacademy.gov.mk/en/>], Accessed 10 March 2026.

⁴ *Ibid.*, supra note 3.

The team gathered 143 responses. The questionnaire was answered by 92 females, 50 males, and one respondent decided not to answer this question. This distribution is matching the population of the legal professionals, where women are predominantly members of the legal professions. The predominant average age of the respondents was in the range of 36 to 45 years with 66 respondents, and second most represented group was the age 46 to 55 years of age with 41 respondents. This age distribution of the questionnaire matches the average age of the legal professionals in North Macedonia and mostly covers the middle-career professionals that should mostly invest into their personal development through personal continuing legal education. The number of judges that responded to the questionnaire is 22. Only 20 court clerks and 3 public prosecutors have responded to this questionnaire. All the respondents from the group of judges, public prosecutors and court clerks were involved in the continuing legal education activities that were undertaken during the 2025 organized by the Academy for training of Judges and Public Prosecutors.

Unfortunately, the number of the respondents is very low in order to consider their responses as a representative sample, and due to this, these answers will be used only as a comparative model in regard to the existing information in regard to the analysis of the quality and key challenges of the model of the continuing legal education. Hence, their answers are considered mainly as indicative evidence in regard to the analysed model.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND FOR CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION

The continuing legal education does not solely represent expanding of knowledge. It is a necessity for every lawyer, as well as added value to the profession. It is considered a supreme tool for professional development and positions the individual within the broader scope of the field relevance.

According to Le Thi,⁵ the continuing legal education is a crucial bridge between legal theory and practice, equipping students with practical skills while providing legal assistance to marginalized communities. Despite its significance, the long-term sustainability of CLE programs faces persistent challenges, including financial constraints, limited institutional support, and evolving societal needs.

As Kellerhals states,⁶ for centuries the continuing legal education was usually not what universities have offered, because they principally focused on primary edu-

⁵ Le Thi, T., *Sustainable Clinical Legal Education: Models of Cooperation with Legal Organizations and Community Engagement*, Journal of Legal and Political Education, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2025, pp. 37-59.

⁶ Kellerhals, A., *Continuing Legal Education in Switzerland – Situation today*, in: Kellerhals, A.; Mayer, M.; Elsener, J. (eds.), *Continuing Legal Education - Ambition and Reality*, (Conference Papers and Presentations), University of Zurich, 2023, p. 3.

cation: bachelor's programs, master's programs, and Ph.D. programs. Therefore, continuing legal education programs as such did not really exist for a long time. The continuing legal education in Switzerland, for example, started to develop in 1980s and the universities had a role in it, although one of the oldest universities in the country - the University of Basel was founded in 1460s.⁷ The organization of seminars and conferences are the main activities within the continuing legal education in this country.

In some countries there are special schools that must be attended in the complex path of continuing education before taking the bar exam. For example, *École d'avocature* (School for Lawyers) is part of University of Geneva and offers a one semester program finished with CAS (Certificate of Advanced Studies). The teaching staff comprises of law professors, attorneys, prosecutors, judges etc.⁸

In Germany, the continuing legal education is an obligation for every lawyer as the Section 43a para 8 of the Federal Code for Lawyers (Bundesrechtsanwaltsordnung – BRAO)⁹ states that “*A lawyer is obliged to engage in continuing professional development*“. However, according to Göcken,¹⁰ in Germany, 15-20% of the lawyers, depending on the age group and time, do not comply with this obligation.

The most common types of continuing legal education include seminars, workshop, trainings, as well as, professional development and skill trainings. Additional aspect that needs to be taken into consideration is also the mandatory training that is required for certain legal professions, such as judges and public prosecutors. Many countries have special institutions conducting the training for the Judiciary, as North Macedonia,¹¹ Croatia, Portugal, Bulgaria etc.¹²

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Mangeat, H., *A School for Lawyers - The Geneva Experience*, in: Kellerhals, A.; Mayer, M.; Elsener, J. (eds), *Continuing Legal Education - Ambition and Reality*, (Conference Papers and Presentations), University of Zurich, 2023, pp. 115-122.

⁹ Federal Code for Lawyers in the consolidated version published in the Federal Law Gazette III, Index No. 303-8, as last amended by Article 13 of the Act of 23 October 2024 (Federal Law Gazette 2024 I No. 323), Available at: [\[https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_brao/englisch_brao.html\]](https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_brao/englisch_brao.html), Accessed 21 March 2026.

¹⁰ Göcken, S., *Continuing Legal Education - Mandatory or Optional?*, in: Kellerhals, A.; Mayer, M.; Elsener, J. (Eds), *Continuing Legal Education - Ambition and Reality*, (Conference Papers and Presentations), University of Zurich, 2023, pp. 91-97.

¹¹ Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, North Macedonia, Available at: [\[https://jpacademy.gov.mk/en/\]](https://jpacademy.gov.mk/en/), Accessed 21 March 2026.

¹² Initial training of judges and prosecutors in the European Union, Available at: [\[https://e-justice.europa.eu/topics/trainings-judicial-networks-and-agencies/training-justice-professionals/national-training-systems/initial-training-judges-and-prosecutors-european-union_en\]](https://e-justice.europa.eu/topics/trainings-judicial-networks-and-agencies/training-justice-professionals/national-training-systems/initial-training-judges-and-prosecutors-european-union_en), Accessed 19 March 2026.

According to Burton Raffel,¹³ lawyers are the leading group of professional persons that remain active very long in their lifespan. He stresses the fact that the lawyers are not well prepared to start practice after finishing law school (at least less prepared than the medical professionals). Therefore, according to him, the continuing legal education is needed as „*comprehensive, protracted, and uniform as the needs and the deficiencies of the beginning lawyers...*“ all young lawyers, according to him need continuing legal education: judges, attorneys, practitioners, public prosecutors, even teachers.

According to some published studies and articles from last century, continuing legal education exists from a long time ago. It seems that the awareness for the necessity of the continuing legal education has been on a higher level in USA. There, the continuing legal education started to develop even before the Second World War, first - locally in New York in 1910s, wider in 1930s.¹⁴ A decade later, a revealing survey was conducted by the California Bar. According to this survey, in respect to ethics and honesty, the lawyers were ranked at the bottom of the list of all professions.¹⁵ This was a serious indicator for the emerging need of continuing legal education. Later, in late 1940s, the American Law Institute, together with the American Bar Association, sought to create national program of continuing legal education.¹⁶ As Friday pointed, the continuing legal education connotes a formal education experience. It can appear in the form of lecture, seminar, workshop etc. related to the practice of law and even back then, it was sponsored by a bar association or a law school.

Considering judges and public prosecutors, most of the European states have established training institutions for the Judiciary, where mandatory continuing legal education is envisaged. These institutions aim at advancement of the professional competences, integrity, ethical standards and the responsibility in the judiciary officials.¹⁷

¹³ Raffel, B. *Continuing Legal Education: The Need and the Reason*, Journal of Legal Education 1960, Vol. 13, p. 76.

¹⁴ Friday, H.H., *Continuing Legal Education: Historical Background, Recent Developments, and the Future*, St. John's Law Review Volume 50, Number 3, Spring 1976, p. 502.

¹⁵ Raffel, *op. cit.*, note 13, p. 77.

¹⁶ Friday, *op. cit.*, note 13, p. 504.

¹⁷ Deanoska Trendafilova, A., *Integrity, Independence, Impartiality and Transparency in Judiciary as Basic Values for Rule of Law*, Third Book of Recommendations, National Convention on the EU, Skopje, 2024, pp. 11-38. Available at: [https://nkeu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Kniga-EN-EL_compressed.pdf], Accessed 19 March 2026.

As Diaz Abad notes the training of judges when performed through self-governing institutions and operated autonomously aims to “*guarantee judicial independence, the maintenance of the Rule of Law, the promotion of civil liberties and individual freedoms, basic human rights and the effective and transparent administration of justice*”.¹⁸

Hence, continuing legal education for judges and prosecutors is considered as a cornerstone of the rule of law in the European Union. As a result, the European Commission’s Judicial Training Strategy 2025–2030 emphasizes digitalization, cross-border cooperation, and the need for a unified European judicial space.¹⁹ At the same time, the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) has become the central platform for coordinating national training institutions, facilitating exchanges, and harmonizing training methodologies.²⁰

4. CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION OF JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA: NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK, INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE AND REFORM CHALLENGES

The transformation of contemporary legal systems accelerated legislative reforms, digitalization, and the increasing influence of international and European law require judges and prosecutors to engage in lifelong learning. Judicial competence is no longer static but dynamic, requiring continuing adaptation to evolving legal standards and societal expectations.

In North Macedonia, continuing legal education constitutes an essential component of broader judicial reform processes aimed at strengthening independence, professionalism, accountability, and public trust of the judiciary. The establish-

¹⁸ Diaz Abad, N., *Judges’ Presidents of Courts’ and Members of Judicial Councils’ Perspective*, in: Rule of Law in Europe Perspectives from Practitioners and Academics, European Judicial Training Network (EJTN), Available at: [https://ejtn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2019-056-RoL-Manual-170x240-WEB_FINAL.pdf], Accessed 21 March 2026.

¹⁹ Communication From the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, European Judicial Training Strategy 2025 – 2030, COM(2025) 801 final.

²⁰ There are several other judicial networks in the EU, such as the networks of the Presidents of Supreme Courts of the EU, the Association of the Councils of State and Supreme Administrative Jurisdictions of the EU or the Judicial Councils, that offers some sort of training or coordination between its members, but the European Judicial Training Network is positioned as the most comprehensive one in regard to the continuing legal education to judges and prosecutors in EU. See: [<https://ejtn.eu/>].

ment and development of a centralized judicial training institution marked a turning point in the professionalization of the judiciary.²¹

The central institution competent for judicial and prosecutorial continuing education is the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors “Pavel Shatev”.²² The Academy performs dual functions: initial training of future judges and prosecutors; as well as continuing training of already appointed judicial office holders.²³ The initial training at the Academy consists of two phases. The first phase, which according to the 2023 Law on Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors is regulated in Article 51, represents theoretical instruction and lasts nine months. During this theoretical instruction, several modules/subjects are studied. The final examination is taken after the completion of both phases - theoretical and practical training.

Within the final examination, the acquired legal knowledge of future judges and public prosecutors is assessed through a written exam, a mock trial simulation, and an oral examination. Among other tasks, candidates draft judgments and decisions in civil or criminal cases, as well as indictments and similar documents.

According to Article 59 of the Law on the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors of 2023, candidates for judges and public prosecutors at the end of the training, after successfully passing the final examination, receive a single certificate of completed initial training with a final grade. This means that future public prosecutors undergo a unique training program in terms of structure and duration after completing the Faculty of Law, before being elected as public prosecutors. The same applies to judges. Their training at the Academy is therefore not specialized depending on whether the person would later be elected as a judge or a public prosecutor.

The new draft Law on amendments of the Law on Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors,²⁴ which is being prepared during 2026, foresees a different solution. According to the draft, candidates when applying on the public call will indicate whether they intend to become judges or public prosecutors, and at the end of the training they will receive a separate certificate. This means that they will decide

²¹ Continuing Training, Available at: [https://jpacademy.gov.mk/en/continous-training], Accessed 21 March 2026.

²² Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, Available at: [https://jpacademy.gov.mk/en], Accessed 21 March 2026.

²³ As regulated in the Law on Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, No. 129/23 and 53/24.

²⁴ Available at: [www.ener.gov.mk], Accessed 22 March 2026.

in advance in which professional field they intend to work. It is assumed that after the potential adoption of this law, the training of future judges and public prosecutors might also become partially directed or specialized according to the profession for which the candidates opted.

However, after being elected to a Basic Public Prosecutor's Office, and subsequently to higher public prosecutor's offices, the public prosecutor has obligations related to the continuous development and improvement of legal knowledge and skills. The Law provides for continuing training, which represents ongoing professional development of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills for the professional and efficient performance of judicial and prosecutorial functions.²⁵

The Academy operates as an autonomous professional institution with its own governing bodies and annual training programs.²⁶

Further in the paper we examine: the normative framework regulating continuing legal education; the institutional architecture of judicial and prosecutorial training; the structure and content of training programs and the alignment with European standards; the key challenges and reform perspectives.

4.1. Normative Framework of Continuing Judicial Education

Continuing legal education in North Macedonia is primarily regulated by The Law on the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors²⁷; The Law on Courts²⁸; The Law on Public Prosecution²⁹, bylaws governing continuing training programs.³⁰

The legal framework establishes that continuing training is a professional obligation of judges and prosecutors; a mechanism for ensuring competence and ethical conduct; and a factor in professional evaluation and career advancement.³¹

²⁵ Art. 61 para 1, Law on Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors.

²⁶ Organization of the Academy, Available at: [<https://jpacademy.gov.mk/about/organization/>], Accessed 21 March 2026.

²⁷ Law on Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" No. 129/23 and 53/24.

²⁸ Law on Courts, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 58/06, 62/06, 35/08, 150/10, 83/18, 198/18 and Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 96/19.

²⁹ Law on Public Prosecution Office, Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia No. 42/2020.

³⁰ Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, *Rulebook on the continuing training*, 2023, Available at: [<https://jpacademy.gov.mk/en/about/normative-framework/>], Accessed 11 March 2026; Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, Specialized program for voluntary continuing training, 2022, Available at: [https://jpacademy.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Specijalizirana_programa_zasluzbenici_2023.pdf], Accessed 11 March 2026.

³¹ Art. 61 para. 1, Law on the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors.

Participation in mandatory training activities is considered by the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia during performance evaluations and as a criterion for the appointment of a judge to a higher court. The same procedure is applied for the prosecutors, while the consideration is undertaken by the Council of Public Prosecutors. This connection between education and evaluation strengthens the functional importance of continuing legal education.³²

The normative framework reflects an understanding that judicial independence must be accompanied by professional accountability and continuing competence enhancement.

The aim of continuing training includes strengthening judicial independence, integrity, professionalism and diligence; enhancing protection of human rights and freedoms through updated legal expertise; promoting a transparent, fair, efficient and high-quality judiciary in line with international standards of fair trial; building organizational and managerial capacities of court leaders (e.g., presidents of courts).³³

The Rulebook on the Continuing Training, adopted by the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors in North Macedonia, outlines the framework for mandatory and voluntary continuing training programs aimed at enhancing the professional development of judges, public prosecutors, court presidents, lay judges, and other legal professionals.³⁴

The training aims to help participants gain practical legal knowledge and skills for implementation of the law. It seeks to strengthen their professional competence, deepen their understanding of the social role of their profession, and develop their ability to incorporate an international legal perspective.³⁵

The Rulebook emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning for legal professionals to ensure their independence, integrity, and efficiency in upholding the rule of law and protecting human rights.³⁶ It also aims to strengthen public trust in the

³² Art. 52 para. 2, line 1, Law on the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia, Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia No. 269/25.

³³ Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, *Rulebook on the continuing training*, 2023, Available at: [<https://jpacademy.gov.mk/en/about/normative-framework/>], (hereinafter: Rulebook on continuing training), Accessed 21 March 2026.

³⁴ Art. 2, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

³⁵ Art. 12 para. 2, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

³⁶ Art. 3 para. 2, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

judiciary by improving legal knowledge, ethical standards, and professional skills, including soft skills like communication, leadership, and empathy.³⁷

The Rulebook defines in more detail the training types, mandatory and voluntary training set in the Law on Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors. Mandatory Training is required for judges, public prosecutors, court presidents, and lay judges.³⁸ It includes general and specialized programs, with specific number of training days depending of the years of service.³⁹ Voluntary Training is available for clerks in courts, in public prosecution offices, and in other entities involved in justice implementation.⁴⁰

Training is organized independently or in collaboration with domestic and international partners.⁴¹ It includes various formats such as seminars, workshops, simulations, and study visits, delivered both in-person and online.⁴² A decentralized approach ensures regional accessibility, and participants are compensated for travel expenses.⁴³

Lecturers are selected based on expertise and experience, including judges, prosecutors, academics, and legal professionals.⁴⁴ They are required to undergo training before delivering lectures and must prepare detailed training materials and reports.⁴⁵ Lecturers are entitled to remuneration, which is regulated by a separate Rulebook on Remunerations.⁴⁶

Training programs are evaluated through participant feedback and assessments to ensure effectiveness and relevance.⁴⁷ The Academy uses a Quality Management System (ISO 9001:2015) to standardize and improve training processes.⁴⁸

For participation in individual specialized training or training cycles, the Academy prepares a participation certificate for the participants.⁴⁹ The Academy issues

³⁷ Art. 3 para. 3, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

³⁸ Art. 6 para. 1, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

³⁹ Art. 6 para. 2, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

⁴⁰ Art. 9 para. 1, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

⁴¹ Art. 21 para. 1, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

⁴² Art. 17 para. 1, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

⁴³ Art. 19 para. 1, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

⁴⁴ Art. 22 para. 2, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

⁴⁵ Art. 25 para. 2, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

⁴⁶ Art. 28 para. 1, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

⁴⁷ Art. 31 para. 1, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

⁴⁸ Art. 11 para. 1, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

⁴⁹ Art. 42 para. 1, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

certificates for completed training and keeps records of participation, ensuring compliance with personal data protection regulations.⁵⁰

To sum up, the Rulebook establishes a comprehensive system for continuing training, focusing on professional development, ethical standards, and public trust in the judiciary.⁵¹ It ensures structured implementation, quality management, and collaboration with domestic and international partners, while addressing logistical and financial aspects to facilitate participation.⁵²

4.2. Structure and Content of Continuing Training and Alignment with the EU Standards

Continuing legal education is organized on an annual basis and includes both mandatory and specialized components.⁵³

4.2.1. Mandatory Training

Judges and prosecutors are required to complete a prescribed minimum number of training hours annually. Mandatory topics usually include novelties to criminal, civil, and administrative legislation; jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights; judicial ethics and integrity; anti-corruption standards; procedural guarantees and fair trial principles etc.⁵⁴

Judges must complete a specified minimum number of training hours per year. For example, judges with more than 8 years of experience must complete at least 30 hours of training annually, while those with over 15 years' experience must complete at least 15 hours.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Art. 41 para. 4, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

⁵¹ Art. 14 para. 1, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

⁵² Art. 21 para. 2, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

⁵³ Art. 8, *Rulebook on the continuing training*.

⁵⁴ For details, see: General Programme for Continuing Education of Judges and Prosecutors and Specialized Programme for Voluntary Continuing Training, Available at: [<https://jpacademy.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/%D0%9E%D0%BF%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BE%D0%B4-2025-2026-1.pdf>], Accessed 18 March 2026.

⁵⁵ Art. 43 paras. 3 and 4, *Law on the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors*.

Training topics cover substantive law, procedural law, ethics, human rights, international conventions, modern judicial management, and emerging areas such as cybercrime and cross-border legal issues.⁵⁶

There are specific modules for newly elected judges, including separate programs for criminal and civil law areas.⁵⁷

Mandatory training for public prosecutors varies in the number of hours depending on the length of their professional experience. As stipulated in the Rulebook for Continuing Training in article 8,⁵⁸ the public prosecutors with work experience of up to 3 years shall attend 10 days of training (additionally to the obligation for specialized training for the newly elected prosecutors), the public prosecutors with work experience of 3 to 8 years shall attend 6 days of training, the public prosecutors with work experience of 8 to 15 years shall attend 4 days of training and the public prosecutors with work experience of more than 15 years shall attend 2 days of training annually.

According to the Annual Report on the work of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors for 2024⁵⁹, in the period from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024, a total of 4,610 participants took part in the trainings organized by the Academy, including 320 judges, 796 public prosecutors, 1,554 clerks in courts and in public prosecution offices, 128 judicial officers, 461 participants in initial training, and 351 representatives of other relevant institutions, organizations, the NGO sector, etc., invited by the Academy, whose work is related to the topics of the trainings. Regarding the topics of the trainings, 37 were in the field of civil law, 52 in criminal law, 13 were of common interest to both branches, 2 trainings were on overlapping subject matter, 22 were specialized trainings, 5 were in the field of administrative law, 6 in the field of commercial law, and 73 trainings were devoted to general topics. Trainings were conducted through seminars, workshops, conferences, roundtables, and interactive methods, emphasizing practical aspects. These

⁵⁶ Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors “Pavel Shatev”, Skopje, Specialized Program for Voluntary Continuing Training, 2022, Available at: [<https://jpacademy.gov.mk/continous-training/>], Accessed 19 March 2026.

⁵⁷ CEPEJ(2024)1REV1 - European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ): HFIII - Towards a Better Evaluation of the Results of Judicial Reform Efforts in the Western Balkans – “Dashboard Western Balkans” - Part 2 (A) - Beneficiary Profile - North Macedonia.

⁵⁸ Art. 8, Rulebook on the continuing training.

⁵⁹ Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors “Pavel Shatev”, *Annual Report on the Work of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors*, Skopje, 2024, Available at: [<https://jpacademy.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/filr/7336/Annual%20Report%20on%20Academy%20for%20Judges%20and%20Public%20Prosecutor%202022.pdf>], Accessed 21 March 2026.

trainings were organized independently by the Academy or in cooperation with other domestic and foreign projects, associations, organizations, and institutions.

Considering the latter, the Academy has respectable outreach regarding the continuing legal education to the judges and prosecutors on a yearly level in correlation to the numbers of the judges⁶⁰ and prosecutors⁶¹.

The Academy's continuing training programs are integral to the professional development of legal practitioners, ensuring alignment with national and international standards.

4.2.2. Specialized and Elective Training

Specialized modules address specific judicial domains such as: Organized crime and corruption; Cybercrime and digital evidence; Commercial disputes; Human rights protection; Case management and court administration. Leadership programs are designed for court presidents and senior judges to enhance managerial competencies.

The modern training methodology includes Interactive workshops; Case-study analysis; Practical simulations; Roundtables and peer discussions; E-learning modules.

The increasing use of digital platforms reflects broader digital transformation processes within the judiciary.

4.3. Key Challenges and Reform Perspectives

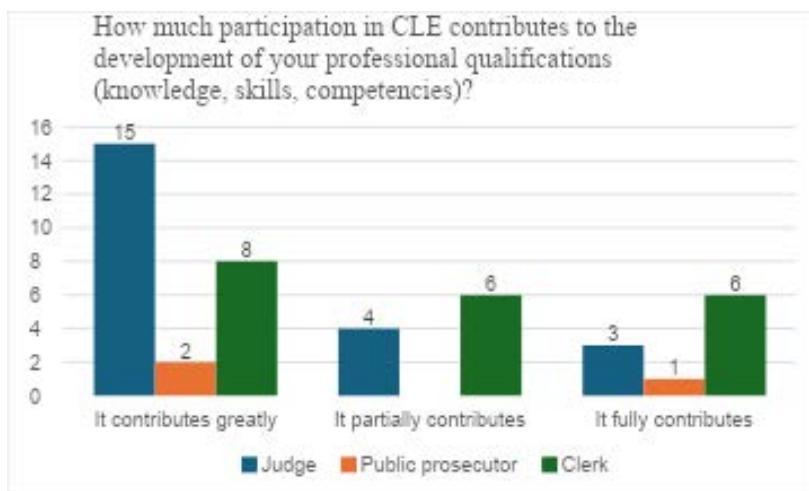
One can conclude that the legal education of judges and public prosecutors shows continuity after the completion of various legal requirements. These requirements comprise of passing the bar exam, enrolment at the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, attending theoretical training, passing the final exam, and obligation to attend continuing training after appointment.

⁶⁰ See Annual Report of the Judicial Council of Republic of North Macedonia, p. 6., Available at: [<http://www.vsrn.mk/wps/wcm/connect/ssrm/07c2cfb1-7280-49ca-91b2-c4279989f9fa/%D0%93%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%88%D0%B5%D0%BD+%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%98.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=pqQQYG9>], Accessed 21 March 2026.

⁶¹ See Annual Report of the Council of Public Prosecutors, p. 15. Available at: [<https://sjorm.gov.mk/godishen-izvestaj-za-rabotata-na-sovetor-za-2024-godina/>], Accessed 21 March 2026.

These activities primarily represent education, upgrading, and improvement of legal knowledge and skills. The significance of this continuing legal education is also greatly recognised by our respondents from the commenced survey. See Graph. No. 1.

Graph 1. How much participation in CLE contributes to the development of your professional qualifications (knowledge, skills, competencies)?



Source: Authors' interpretation

However, after completing studies at the Faculty of Law, all these activities of further legal education are usually carried out outside of the university, by other institutions. This raises the question of the extent to which law faculties can participate in the implementation of such forms of education and training.

Another question that arises is whether such training after completing the primary legal education, whether mandatory or voluntary, results in obtaining a certain certificate or acquiring a certain number of credits. In the current system this is usually not the case—the completion of continuing training of judges and public prosecutors does not lead to academic credits, an official certificate recognized as part of formal education or CAS. The reason for this is that these trainings are treated as professional development aimed at practical knowledge and skills necessary for the efficient performance of the function, rather than as formal academic education and discussion in this regard have not been initiated so far.

Nevertheless, this practice could be transformed into a system that would allow some form of qualification or official recognition of the acquired knowledge. For example, each completed training or module could be associated with a certain number of credits, similar to the ECTS system used at universities, or a certifi-

cate could be awarded formally confirming the acquisition of specific professional competencies. This would also enable the transformation of continuing training into a system that is visible and recognized for professional advancement, while at the same time connecting practice with the academic structure of education.

On EU level, most of the continuing legal education is regulated by some sort of specialised institution that is either independently organized or is part of the Ministry of Justice. Hence, in most of the cases in most of the EU member states, educators are judges, prosecutors or members of the academia.⁶²

In this regard we think that higher education institutions should be also involved in some sort of continuing legal education for the judges and prosecutors. In most cases universities can deliver more in-depth or even more detailed and more structured approach than the specialised state agencies that are organizing ex-officio continuing legal education. Furthermore, the members of the academia can be more prone to novelties in their method of instruction and have more theoretical approach regarding the judges and prosecutors as trainers who predominantly base their trainings upon their professional background and practice.

Due to this, we believe that besides the fact that the members from the academia are usually involved in the continuing legal education that is delivered through the specialised institutions for judicial and prosecutorial trainings,⁶³ higher education institutions should be more involved in regard to the continuing legal education, due to the fact that the higher education institutions *bring in specialised knowledge, interdisciplinary insights, and updated academic or practical perspectives (especially in areas where internal resources may be limited)*.⁶⁴

Considering these factors, we think that law schools should partner with the Academy for Judges and Prosecutors during the planning of the program for the continuing legal education for these professionals. Hence forward, we deem that higher education institutions in North Macedonia should provide a further detailed list of courses that they can deliver to the judges and prosecutors that should be recognized by the Academy as part of the continuing legal education for judges and prosecutors.

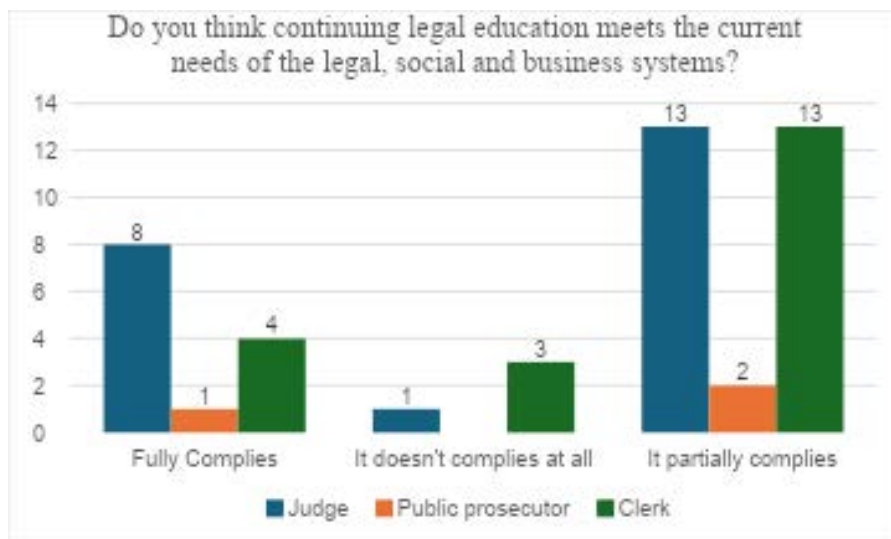
Additional argument for this thesis is the responses from our survey, where the respondents have predominantly stated that there is still place for improvement of the existing programmes for continuing legal education. See Graph No. 2.

⁶² European Judicial Training Network, *State of Judicial Training in Europe*, January 2026, Available at: [EJTN_State-of-Judicial-Training-in-Europe2026_EN-1.pdf], Accessed 23 March 2026.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19, regarding the statistical approach of the background of the educators, within the analysis performed by the European Judicial Training Network.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Graph 2. Do you think continuing legal education meets the current needs of the legal, social and business systems?

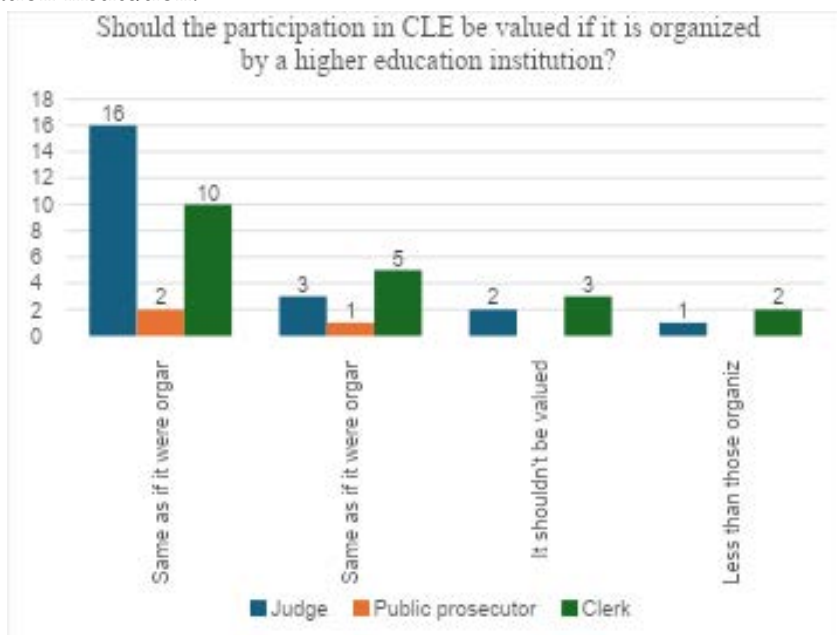


Source: Authors' interpretation

From Graph 2 we can conclude that more than half of the respondents think that the current model of continuing legal education meets the needs for legal, social and business systems. This means that for the further modernization of the Macedonian system of continuing legal education additional research should be performed in order to provide improved topics and improved curricula for continuing legal education for the judges and for the prosecutors. Indeed, in such endeavours the assistance from the law schools is crucial for support of the Academy for judges and prosecutors.

As per the opinions of the judges, prosecutors and law clerks, we can conclude that the respondents do not find any objections into the possibility of delivering such continuing legal education from the higher education institutions. Furthermore, in most of the cases the respondents (19 judges out of 22, all the prosecutors and 15 out of 20 law clerks) consider the possibility of delivering such training by the law schools should be considered on the same level as the authorised institutions for such continuing legal education. See graph No. 3.

Graph 3. Should the participation in CLE be valued if it is organized by a higher education institution?



Source: Authors' interpretation

These results only confirm that the judges, prosecutors and law clerks are more interested into the quality of the topics of the continuing legal education rather than considering who is entitled to commence such activities. Another conclusion from this survey is that the judges, prosecutors and law clerks have significant trust into their alma mater and into the higher education institutions as a knowledge provider and furthermore, they do not have any reservations regarding the quality and the significance of the education provided by the higher education institutions.

5. CONCLUSION

Continuing legal education of judges and prosecutors in the Republic of North Macedonia constitutes a cornerstone of judicial reform and professionalization. The institutional role of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors "Pavel Shatev", as a single entry point, ensures structured and centralized implementation of lifelong learning.

However, the long-term effectiveness of the system depends on its ability to evolve from a primarily hour-based compliance model to a competency-driven, performance-oriented framework that directly enhances judicial quality, independence, and public trust.

From the performed theoretical and practical evaluation of the stance of the prosecutors and judges regarding the quality of the continuing legal education we have concluded that there is space for its improvement, particularly through partnership between the Academy and the accredited higher education institutions in the Republic of North Macedonia. These partnership relations should be primarily induced for improvement of the topics, quality of the instruction and broadening the content of the offered existing continuing legal education.

Finally, Continuing legal education must remain a dynamic and strategically planned process aligned with both domestic reform priorities and European legal standards.

REFERENCES

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

1. Deanoska Trendafilova, A., *Integrity, Independence, Impartiality and Transparency in Judiciary as Basic Values for Rule of Law*, Third Book of Recommendations, National Convention on the EU, Skopje, 2024, pp. 11–38
2. Diaz Abad, N., *Judges', Presidents of Courts' and Members of Judicial Councils' Perspective in Rule of Law in Europe: Perspectives from Practitioners and Academics*, European Judicial Training Network, 2019
3. Friday, H. H., *Continuing Legal Education: Historical Background, Recent Developments, and the Future*, *St. John's Law Review*, Vol. 50, No. 3, 1976, pp. 502–504
4. Göcken, S., *Continuing Legal Education – Mandatory or Optional?*, in: Kellerhals, A., Mayer, M., Elsener, J. (eds.), *Continuing Legal Education – Ambition and Reality*, University of Zurich, 2023, pp. 91–97
5. Kellerhals, A., *Continuing Legal Education in Switzerland – Situation today*, in: Kellerhals, A.; Mayer, M.; Elsener, J. (Eds.), *Continuing Legal Education - Ambition and Reality*, (Conference Papers and Presentations), University of Zurich, 2023, pp. 3–9
6. Le Thi, T., *Sustainable Clinical Legal Education: Models of Cooperation with Legal Organizations and Community Engagement*, *Journal of Legal and Political Education*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2025, pp. 37–59
7. Mangeat, H., *A School for Lawyers – The Geneva Experience*, in: Kellerhals, A., Mayer, M., Elsener, J. (eds.), *Continuing Legal Education – Ambition and Reality*, University of Zurich, 2023, pp. 115–122
8. Raffel, B., *Continuing Legal Education: The Need and the Reason*, *Journal of Legal Education*, Vol. 13, 1960, pp. 76–77

REGULATIONS, ACTS AND REPORTS

1. Council of Public Prosecutors of Republic of North Macedonia, *Annual Report of the Council of Public Prosecutors of Republic of North Macedonia*, Skopje, 2024

2. Federal Code for Lawyers, Consolidated version published in the Federal Law Gazette III, Index No. 303-8, as last amended by Article 13 of the Act of 23 October 2024, Berlin, 2024
3. General Programme for Continuing Education of Judges and Prosecutors and Specialized Programme for Voluntary Continuing Training, Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors “Pavel Shatev” Skopje, 2025
4. Judicial Council of Republic of North Macedonia, Annual Report of the Judicial Council of Republic of North Macedonia, Skopje, 2024
5. Law on Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia” No. 129/23 and 53/24
6. Law on Courts, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 58/06, 62/06, 35/08, 150/10, 83/18, 198/18 and Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 96/19
7. Law on Public Prosecution Office, Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia No. 42/2020
8. Law on the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia, Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia No.269/25
9. Rulebook on the continuing training Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors (2023), [<https://jpacademy.gov.mk/en/about/normative-framework/>] Accessed 21 March 2026
10. European Judicial Training Network, State of Judicial Training in Europe, January 2026

EU AND OTHER EUROPEAN ACTS AND REPORTS

1. Specialized Program for Voluntary Continuing Training, Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors “Pavel Shatev”, Available at: [<https://jpacademy.gov.mk/continous-training/>] Accessed 21 March 2026
2. CEPEJ, Towards a Better Evaluation of the Results of Judicial Reform Efforts in the Western Balkans – Dashboard Western Balkans, Strasbourg, 2024. Available at: [https://www.coe.int/en/web/cepej/towards-a-better-evaluation-of-the-results-of-judicial-reforms-in-the-western-balkans-dashboard-western-balkans/-/asset_publisher/gEzlvNpkVTlx/content/presentation-of-some-cepej-data-in-the-context-of-ongoing-justice-reforms-in-kosovo*] Accessed 21 March 2026
3. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, European Judicial Training Strategy 2025–2030, COM(2025) 801 final. Available at: [<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2025%3A801%3AFIN&qid=1763637483073>] Accessed 23 March 2026
4. European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), HFIII - Towards a Better Evaluation of the Results of Judicial Reform Efforts in the Western Balkans – Dashboard Western Balkans, Strasbourg, 2024. Available at: [<https://www.coe.int/en/web/cepej/special-file>] Accessed 21 March 2026
5. European Judicial Training Network, State of Judicial Training in Europe, January 2026, Available at: [https://ejtn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/EJTN_State-of-Judicial-Training-in-Europe2026_EN.pdf] Accessed 23 March 2026