According to the 2012 data of the CEPEJ of Council of Europe, mediation is practiced in 42 European countries through different type of means such as private mediations (35 countries), court-annexed (27 countries), judge referred mediation (17 countries) and mediation by other public authorities (30 countries). Total numbers of accredited mediators per country is as follows: Romania (4136), the Netherlands (2949), Austria (2400), Hungary (1606), Belgium (1134).

**Developing Mediation Practices in Civil Disputes in Turkey**

The Project on “The Development of Mediation Practices in Civil Disputes in Turkey” funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Republic of Turkey will be implemented in 2 years’ time (December 2014 - November 2016) by the Council of Europe (COE). The Ministry of Justice of Turkey is the main beneficiary of the Project. The purpose of the Project is to improve the efficiency of justice by reducing the cost and the time needed to resolve civil disputes through an effective implementation of mediation practices. This could favourably lead to the decrease in the number of litigations over the course of the years, to develop mediation training programs comparable to the ones in Europe, to enable registered mediators and judges to acquire experience through practices, to avoid considerable delays and high costs in the judicial process, to encourage negotiation and a dispute resolution culture among the public as well as to provide better accessibility to the justice.

**Project will be focusing on four areas of concern**

**Legislation:** The 1st component is the improvement of legislation to facilitate an effective implementation of mediation in civil disputes in Turkey through workshops and meetings, which will be utilised in discussions with relevant stakeholders and the judiciary about practical shortcomings arising from the existing legislation; to analyse best practices and finally to draft legal amendments in line with Council of Europe - CEPEJ Guidelines and European standards.

**Mediation Pilots:** The 2nd component will be dedicated to the design of mediation models in 32 selected pilot courts (trade courts, family courts, consumer courts, civil of courts of first instance, courts of Intellectual and industrial rights and labour courts) in 6 provinces (Ankara, İstanbul /Çağlayan, İzmir, Kayseri, Bursa and Mersin) - for which separate action plans will be set to define the scope of mediation scheme. A Baseline Study will be conducted to identify the current situation of mediation in practice. Judges and court staff in pilot courts will be trained for their new functions and new clerks will be employed and trained to answer questions from the general public. UYAP (National Judicial Network Information System) will also provide support for monitoring the civil cases resulted in mediation.

**Training:** The 3rd component will focus on the mediation training programmes with a standardised training curriculum and tools in line with CEPEJ Guidelines and Tools. Performance assessment criteria will be developed for the mediation training Centres in Turkey.

**Awareness Raising:** The 4th component will include awareness raising activities to promote mediation in civil disputes, its use, cost, advantages and legal implications among the general public, the judiciary, the legal professionals and the users of the justice system.

**Organisational Support:** The Board of Mediation was created within the DG Civil Law Affairs of the Ministry of Justice in order to steer mediation practices in Turkey. The Board is composed of 15 members, i.e. representatives from the Union of Turkish Bar Associations, the Union of
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Turkish Public Notaries, the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey, the Confederation of Turkish Tradesmen and Craftsmen, the Turkish Justice Academy, the Board of Higher Education, as well as mediators and civil judges.

CEPEJ (The European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice)

The Project is supported by the CEPEJ Cooperation unit of the Council of Europe. CEPEJ (the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice) is the Council of Europe body aiming at improving the quality and efficiency of the European judicial systems in the member States, and at developing the implementation of the instruments adopted by the Council of Europe. The CEPEJ has elaborated guidelines and specific Recommendations on mediation, *inter alia*: Recommendation (98) 1 on family mediation, Recommendation (2001) 9 on alternatives to litigation between administrative authorities and private parties, Recommendation (2002) 10 on mediation in civil disputes.