

UNDP Project Quarterly Progress Report

Country Office for Barbados and the OECS

<u>Project Details</u>	
Project Title	Partnership of the Caribbean and European Union on Justice (PACE Justice)
Project ID	01000412
Country	Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago
Reporting Period	01/01/2025 – /03/2025
<u>Results Reporting</u>	
Introduction to the Progress Report	The PACE Justice Project continues to make significant progress towards strengthening criminal justice systems across beneficiary countries. This report outlines ongoing initiatives, and upcoming activities that focus on judicial efficiency, technological modernization, and legislative reform. PACE Justice has also been actively engaged in regional and international dialogues, including participation in the EL PACCTO AI Symposium in Costa Rica, which emphasized AI's role in judicial modernization, and the Regional Security and Justice Summit in Barbados, where the project joined the launch of the Alliance for Security, Justice, and Development. Efforts to modernize judicial infrastructure are ongoing, with the procurement of digital case management systems, transcription tools, and IT hardware aimed at improving efficiency and reducing backlogs. Capacity-building initiatives such as restorative justice workshops in St. Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago, along with legislative reforms in Dominica, are further strengthening justice systems across the region. The Barbados Backlog Symposium and the Attorney General's Roundtable provided platforms for discussions on backlog reduction, witness protection programs, and long-term strategic partnerships. Looking ahead, PACE Justice is exploring a potential partnership with UNODC, and CIVIPOL or EUROPOL to introduce investigative training programs, further enhancing law enforcement capabilities in the Caribbean. With these advancements, PACE Justice remains committed to supporting regional justice sector transformation through innovation, collaboration, and evidence-based reforms.
Details of Milestones and Achievements	<u>SECTION I: Country-Level Activities:</u>

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ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Work plan approval and Implementation

Procurement and Delivery of Equipment (December 2024 and February 2025)

⇒

⇒ Hardware:

- Judiciary: 4 laptops and 27 desktops, 4 printers and 1 TV for the Magistrate's and High Court.
- Prison: 5 desktops, 13 laptops, 10 printers, 1 TV and 3 headsets w/mic.

⇒ Software:

- 3 Liberty systems.

Presentation to the Cabinet

BARBADOS

Barbados Backlog Symposium (January 27-29, 2025)

The Barbados Backlog Symposium provided a crucial opportunity for the Barbados Police Service (TBPS) and its criminal justice partners to collaboratively address delays in court cases. The event served as a platform for TBPS to assess its file production and management systems, identify root causes of delays, and develop effective solutions to enhance efficiency and accuracy in case file handling.

To enrich discussions, an expert from the European Union was invited to deliver a presentation on best practices in backlog reduction. Additionally, the Project Specialist from PACE shared key European best practices, offering valuable insights into strategies for improving judicial efficiency. The collaborative nature of the symposium ensured meaningful exchanges, fostering cross-agency improvements, and reinforcing best practices across all participating institutions.

Attorney General's Roundtable (February 13-14, 2025)

The Attorney General's Roundtable provided a platform for regional collaboration, legal reforms, and improving justice sector efficiency. Discussions focused on backlog reduction, criminal justice reform, and

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legislative modernization while establishing a structured approach for ongoing cooperation.

To strengthen the Roundtable's impact, participants emphasized refining its purpose, format, and frequency. The need for a Terms of Reference (TOR) was highlighted to ensure sustained engagement and clear deliverables.

A major topic was the enhancement of regional witness protection programs, particularly in response to gang violence. Hon. Garth Wilkin stressed the importance of regional cooperation, with Jamaica offering expertise in confidentiality and extraterritorial measures. Future discussions will explore partnerships with the EU, Canada, and Jamaica to establish a regional framework.

Procedural inefficiencies in criminal trials were also examined, particularly regarding witness anonymity, evidence disclosure, and handling uncontested evidence. A session with Directors of Public Prosecutions (DPPs) focused on streamlining trial procedures while maintaining legal integrity.

The declining participation in criminal law practice was raised, particularly in smaller jurisdictions where experienced attorneys are not being replaced. AGs and bar associations will explore incentives and capacity-building measures to attract new lawyers to the field. Public defender systems, such as Trinidad and Tobago's model, were suggested as a way to improve access to legal representation.

Concerns over the effectiveness of anti-gang legislation were discussed, with jurisdictions facing challenges in enforcement. Future sessions will focus on best practices, legislative amendments, and crime prevention strategies.

Structural recommendations included holding in-person meetings twice a year, as virtual meetings were seen as less effective. AGs agreed to share agenda topics in advance to allow for better preparation. A WhatsApp group will be created to enhance coordination, with Hon. Garth Wilkin responsible for setting it up. Barbados was selected as the preferred meeting location, with Guyana as an alternative.

To ensure sustainability beyond the PACE Justice Project's completion in 2027, new partnerships will be pursued with organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ). These collaborations will provide technical expertise, funding, and regional support to maintain the Roundtable's impact.

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BELIZE

Digital Diagnosis (January 2025 and still going on)

A comprehensive needs assessment has been conducted across all Magistrates' Courts and High Courts in Belize to gain a clear understanding of the current digital infrastructure and to identify priority areas for improvement. This assessment forms the cornerstone of Belize's broader judiciary digital transformation agenda, offering critical insights into operational challenges and opportunities for innovation.

As part of this initiative, a digitalization expert is currently leading the next phase of the project, focusing on the following key objectives:

- ⇒ Institutional Diagnosis: A detailed institutional analysis is underway to identify efficiency gaps within the justice system and to highlight opportunities to enhance performance through digital solutions.
- ⇒ Digital Transformation Roadmap
A strategic roadmap is being developed to guide the digital transformation of the judiciary. This roadmap will be grounded in the identified needs and aligned with international best practices.
- ⇒ System Transition Planning
A comprehensive project plan is being prepared to manage the transition from the current Case Information Management System (CIMS) to the Police Records Management Information System (PRMIS) within the Police Department.
- ⇒ Technical Specifications and Procurement Terms
Detailed technical specifications and procurement terms are being drafted for the acquisition of critical ICT systems to support the digital transformation.

In parallel with these strategic components, the expert is mapping internal workflows, court processes, and public-facing services. This process is essential to ensure that the digital solutions designed are not only technically robust, but also responsive, efficient, and user centered.

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Upon completion of this mapping exercise, a comprehensive digital diagnosis will be presented to the Honorable Chief Justice and the Chief Magistrate. This report will summarize the main findings and provide actionable recommendations to inform the next stages of implementation.

This process is currently ongoing and is expected to be finalized by the end of April.

DOMINICA

Work plan approval and Implementation

Procurement and Delivery of Equipment (December 2024 and February 2025)

⇒ Hardware:

- Judiciary: 14 Laptops for the Magistrate's Court and 1 multifunction printer
- Police: 40 desktops
- Prison: 3 desktops and 8 multifunction printers.

⇒ Software:

- 2 Liberty systems.

Support for Legislative Reforms

The PACE Justice legislative amendment initiative in Dominica aims to reform key legal frameworks to reduce criminal case backlogs and enhance judicial efficiency. The process began in December 2024 with an initial review of the Police Act, subsidiary legislation, and the Evidence Ordinance, led by PACE Project Specialist Vanessa Untiedt. These findings informed stakeholder discussions during the January 6–8 meeting, where legal inconsistencies and procedural inefficiencies were addressed.

Key achievements from the January meeting included refining legal language to improve clarity, introducing section titles in the Evidence Ordinance for easier navigation, and establishing clear legal definitions to ensure consistency among magistrates, lawyers, and law enforcement.

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A follow-up meeting on March 14–15 will finalize amendments before submission to the Attorney General’s Office, including revisions to Section 8 of the Evidence Ordinance to align with international best practices. The final amendment proposal for the Magistrate Procedure Act is set for submission by April 10, 2025, with input from the Director of Public Prosecutions, State Attorney, and Parliamentary Counsel. Similar reviews will be conducted for the Firearms Legislation and the Vehicles and Road Traffic Act, ensuring amendments effectively support law enforcement and public safety.

To maintain legislative drafting standards, all amendments will be carefully structured and formatted. A follow-up timeline will be established to track progress and stakeholder engagement.

Through these efforts, the PACE Justice initiative aims to create a more transparent, efficient, and accessible legal system in Dominica, ensuring long-term improvements for all stakeholders.

GUYANA

SAINT LUCIA

Work plan approval and Implementation

Procurement and Delivery of Equipment (December 2024 and February 2025)

⇒ Hardware:

- Judiciary: 3 Laptops, 25 desktops, 2 portable driver, 8 multifunction printer for the Magistrate’s and High Court and 1 multifunction printer.

⇒ Software:

- 7 Liberty systems.

SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

Work plan approval and Implementation

Procurement and Delivery of Equipment (December 2024 and February 2025)

⇒ Hardware:

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- Judiciary: 5 Laptops, 5 desktops, 6 TV, 2 portable driver, 5 HDMI extender, 4 videoconferencing systems.
- Prison: 1 desktop.
- DPP: 5 Laptops, 5 network printer, 1 videoconferencing.
- ⇒ Software:
- 4 Liberty systems.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

EASTERN CARIBBEAN SUPREME COURT

Work plan approval and Implementation

Procurement and Delivery of Equipment (December 2024)

- ⇒ Hardware:
- 2 videoconferencing system.
- ⇒ Software:
- Signature of Low Value Grant for purchasing 7 Liberty systems.

regional legal harmonization and strengthening access to justice.

SECTION II: REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

⇒ EL PACCTO Panama Mission (March 10–13, 2024):

From March 10 to 13, 2024, the EL PACCTO launch event in Panama brought together key stakeholders to strengthen regional cooperation in combating transnational organized crime. The event focused on building networks, enhancing justice and law enforcement collaboration, and addressing key criminal challenges such as cybercrime, firearms trafficking, and human trafficking.

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The Project Specialist from PACE, Vanessa Untiedt, played a crucial role in reinforcing synergies between PACE and EL PACCTO, ensuring that efforts were aligned and avoiding duplication.

As part of these efforts, Vanessa participated as a panelist in a discussion on justice and security institutions and civil society coordination to tackle organized crime. She shared insights on the PACE Justice Project, international cooperation strategies, and ways to strengthen engagement between justice institutions and civil society.

A key outcome was the agreement to hold follow-up meetings with Maite Verhoeven, EL PACCTO's Strategic Key Expert for the Caribbean, to map areas of collaboration and ensure effective resource allocation.

Through this engagement, PACE strengthened its role in regional justice reform, ensuring greater alignment between EU-supported initiatives and the priorities of Caribbean justice institutions.

⇒ **EL PACCTO Dominica Mission (April 18–19, 2024):**

Following the Project Steering Committee meeting, an EL PACCTO mission was conducted in Dominica from April 18th to 19th, 2024, further strengthening the collaboration between EL PACCTO and the PACE Justice Project.

During this two-day mission, Vanessa Untiedt, Project Specialist, along with Maite Verhoeven, Strategic Key Expert for the Caribbean, and Project Officers Luuk Bruijn, Chloe Torre, and Emilie Breyne, engaged with key stakeholders to align activities under both projects.

Meetings were held with the police, prison service, the Financial Intelligence Unit, and the Attorney General's Chambers to discuss ongoing and upcoming initiatives. Judicial stakeholders, including magistrates and high court judges, welcomed the projects' oversight and the proposed legislative amendments aimed at enhancing judicial efficiency.

This mission reinforced the strategic alignment between PACE and EL PACCTO, ensuring a coordinated approach to strengthening criminal justice systems and legislative reforms in the region.

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1. Trinidad and Tobago

While AI tools had not been fully explored, the country had begun laying foundational work.

- There was increasing recognition of the value of AI in improving data collection and investigation methods.
- Proposals were under development to use machine learning in emergency services, enabling AI to assist call takers by generating automated incident reports.
- Experts from EL PACCTO and the Digital Alliance were drafting a proposal for AI integration in cybercrime efforts, to be presented in 2025.
- The absence of a legislative framework and limited institutional capacity highlighted the need for legal reforms and targeted training for law enforcement on AI tools.

2. Belize

Belize had not yet integrated AI into its justice system but acknowledged its potential to enhance operational efficiency.

- The Crime Information Management System (CIMS) offered nationwide data capabilities using the Memex Intelligence Engine for data linking and retrieval.
- AI could support faster case tracking and improve victim communication by automating report generation.
- Stakeholders expected AI to reduce procedural delays and enable law enforcement to shift focus from administrative tasks to substantive investigations.

3. Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ)

The CCJ was actively exploring AI to manage increasing caseloads and improve process efficiency.

- While the COURA system registered cases electronically, rescheduling remained a major challenge.
- Plans were underway to develop an AI-powered research tool to accelerate case reviews using keyword-based searches.
- A primary barrier was the high cost of AI platforms such as Microsoft AI; more cost-effective solutions were being sought.
- The CCJ remained committed to aligning with the EU Digital Agenda while maintaining budgetary discipline.

4. Saint Lucia

Saint Lucia faced a significant case backlog, particularly at the Magistrates' Courts, and saw AI as part of the solution.

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- The country had begun digitizing case files but lacked AI tools to fully leverage this data.
- The E-Litigation Portal and V-LEX system, launched in January, included early-stage AI for document search and retrieval.
- Stakeholders expressed concern over the reliability and privacy risks of AI, underscoring the need for awareness-building and training to foster trust.

5. Barbados

Barbados had taken meaningful steps toward digitalization and was exploring AI to boost efficiency.

- The CARDS system, donated by the USA, provided a foundation for digital case management.
- AI was identified as a critical tool for enhancing categorization, pattern recognition, and report generation.
- Gaps in AI awareness and regulatory oversight persisted. Leadership was encouraged to establish appropriate legal frameworks and stakeholder sensitization efforts.

6. Saint Kitts and Nevis

Saint Kitts and Nevis made early progress in AI adoption, mainly through communication tools and cybercrime support.

- An AI-powered WhatsApp integration enabled automated responses to voice notes, improving public service delivery.
- Interest in AI-supported mobile phone data analysis for cybercrime investigations was noted, though no structured strategy was in place.
- The lack of regulatory and institutional frameworks remained a challenge to broader AI integration in justice.

7. Guyana

Guyana was advancing AI adoption across sectors, including law enforcement, money laundering prevention, and education.

- AI tools were being used to detect suspicious financial activities, and educational initiatives introduced AI to students.
- The Guyana Police Force showed interest in AI to streamline reporting but faced internal resistance and lacked a formal AI policy.
- Concerns over data privacy and AI reliability slowed momentum, highlighting the need for legal and institutional readiness.

8. Antigua and Barbuda

Antigua and Barbuda had introduced AI tools for vehicle tracking and facial recognition, mainly for law enforcement.

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	• Despite the use of these technologies, the legal framework remained outdated. • The 2014 Cybercrime Act and Electronic Act did not sufficiently address emerging AI issues. • The need for AI-specific legislation was evident to ensure responsible use and protection of rights.
Achievements and Challenges	Achievements and Challenges Achievements 1. Facilitating Policy Dialogues on Judicial Efficiency The Barbados Backlog symposium and the Attorney General’s roundtable provided platforms to discuss backlog reduction, witness protection, and judicial reforms, leading to long-term strategic partnerships. 2. Approval and Implementation of Work Plans. Nine national work plans were finalized and approved guiding the strategic direction of PACE across beneficiary countries and supporting judicial modernization efforts. 3. Capacity Building through Training initiatives. 4. Recognition for Leadership in Criminal Mediation As direct result of PACE’s training initiatives, the Project Specialist was invited to assist in the creation of Barbados’ first Criminal Mediation Unit, reinforcing PACE’s leadership in justice sector reform. 5. Advancements in Legislation Reform. PACE contributed to proposed legislative amendments in Dominica, reviewing laws such as the police Act, Police subsidiary legislation and the Evidence Ordinance, ensuring alignment with international best practices and improved judicial efficiency. 6. Staff Recruitment and Expansion To strengthen its capacity, PACE has successfully recruited a National Officer based in Saint Lucia, who began supporting project activities across Antigua

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and Barbuda, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Barbados as of February 1, 2025.

Additionally, a Digitalization Expert has been hired and will begin work on March 14, 2025. This expert will focus on improving digital workflows, data interoperability, and IT infrastructure within criminal justice agencies, while also developing long-term digital transformation strategies to modernize case management systems and enhance operational efficiency.

Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

1. Baseline Data and Research Access.

The absence of comprehensive baseline data complicated project planning. However, PACE initiated stakeholder surveys and future missions to ensure data-driven decision-making.

2. Recruitment and Budget Constraints

Delays in hiring key personnel and budget execution, particularly in Guyana, have slowed program implementation and resource allocation. To address this, the team is actively working to accelerate recruitment processes and explore cost-sharing mechanisms to ensure that financial and human resources align with project needs.

3. Limited digital infrastructure and interagency coordination

Many jurisdictions still rely on manual record-keeping slowing down case processing. The Digitalization expert beginning in March 2025, will focus on IT modernization and interagency data-sharing solutions.

4. Slow adoption of AI and Digitalization tools in Justice System

Despite progress in digitalization, some stakeholders remain hesitant about AI-driven justice solutions. The upcoming PACE-led AI and digitalization training in collaboration with EL PACCTO and ITU aims to bridge this gap.

5. Sustainability Beyond the PACE Project

Ensuring long-term impact beyond PACE's 2027 timeline is a challenge. New partnerships with organizations such as IDB, CCJ, and regional academic institutions are being explored to sustain reforms.

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	Despite these challenges, PACE continues to make steady progress by leveraging stakeholder engagement, legislative reforms, digital transformation initiatives, and capacity-building programs to drive meaningful justice sector improvements across the Eastern Caribbean.
Good Practices and Lessons Learned	1. Proactive Stakeholder Engagement Enhances Project Success • Lesson Learned: Engaging stakeholders early and consistently ensures smoother implementation of initiatives, reduces resistance, and fosters shared ownership of reforms. • Good Practice: Regular consultations, working group meetings, and collaborative decision-making processes help align national priorities with project objectives, ensuring reforms are contextually relevant and widely accepted. 2. Clear Justification for Resource Allocation Improves Efficiency • Lesson Learned: Delays in procurement and spending were partly due to challenges in obtaining clear justifications for equipment requests. Ensuring that all resource allocations are tied to specific project outcomes (e.g., backlog reduction) is crucial. • Good Practice: Establishing a structured request and justification process, supported by data and stakeholder input, enhances transparency and ensures resources are directed where they are most needed. 3. Strong Coordination Between Projects Maximizes Impact • Lesson Learned: Partnerships with UNDP, EL PACCTO, and UNODC demonstrate that leveraging complementary initiatives increases effectiveness and reduces duplication of efforts. • Good Practice: Actively seeking synergies with other justice sector projects fosters knowledge exchange, enhances capacity-building efforts, and enables resource-sharing to achieve broader regional reforms. 4. Adaptive Planning and Flexibility Ensure Sustainability • Lesson Learned: The lack of baseline data initially posed challenges, but the project successfully adjusted by leveraging regional insights and expertise to develop relevant workplans.

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	• Good Practice: Incorporating adaptive strategies, such as ongoing monitoring, feedback mechanisms, and flexibility in project planning, allows teams to overcome unforeseen challenges while maintaining project momentum.
Monitoring and Evaluation	The PACE Justice Team is committed to implementing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of its initiatives. A key component of this effort has been the distribution of baseline surveys to key stakeholders to systematically gather essential data on existing judicial conditions. This data collection exercise is critical in establishing a reference point for measuring progress, particularly in assessing the impact of interventions on backlog reduction. Despite initial challenges in accessing baseline data, PACE has proactively engaged stakeholders to bridge this gap. In addition to the surveys already conducted, future missions across PACE project countries will further support comprehensive data collection. Additionally, after each of the six training sessions led by PACE, monitoring and evaluation assessments were conducted, gathering feedback from participants. This input has been carefully analyzed and integrated into planning for future PACE initiatives, ensuring continuous improvement and alignment with the specific needs of justice sector professionals. By capturing and analyzing this information, the PACE team ensures that its strategies remain evidence-based, adaptive, and aligned with its overarching goal of enhancing efficiency and strengthening justice system operations.
Looking Forward/Next Steps	• Workplan Finalization: Approved and refined nine national workplans to stay aligned with evolving priorities, ensuring strategic relevance through the Project Steering Committee. • Institutionalized Training: Embedded 2024 training initiatives into regional academic institutions, partnering with UWI to sustain long-term justice sector capacity building. • Impact Measurement: Implemented a robust M&E framework with clear baselines and refined indicators to track progress and maximize project impact.

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	• Civil Society Engagement: Strengthened community involvement by establishing an NGOs Roundtable on Access to Justice, integrating diverse perspectives into justice reforms. • Relationship Building: Expanded regional partnerships, deepened collaboration with CARICOM, and explored new alliances to enhance stakeholder cohesion and drive reforms. • AI and digitalization Workshop: a two-day AI and digital transformation Workshop is planned under PACE in collaboration with EL PACCTO, focusing on AI-driven modernization, regional cooperation, regulation, and ethical considerations. • AI and Digitalization Training: A bespoke training on AI and digital transformation will be conducted at the end of June/early July, in coordination with CDO/ITU's digital training project. The training will be tailored to stakeholder needs, targeting 30-32 participants with a specific focus on the Caribbean. • Judicial Workflow Assessment: A consultant has been engaged to conduct a mapping of judicial workflows, including process gaps, digital readiness, evidence management, interagency communication, and compliance with data protection regulations. This assessment, originally set for completion in May, will now provide preliminary findings by April to inform the co-creation and implementation of training by end-June. • Police training: Discussions are ongoing regarding the police investigative training planned by UNODC, which is set to begin across its member states, including the PACE Justice countries, from April 2025. This presents an opportunity for synergies and collaboration, and UNODC has expressed its readiness to conduct the training on behalf of UNDP. The initial plan is for a regional training session, with the possibility of expanding to country-specific sessions based on the individual needs of each nation.
Risk Log	Please see link below for Project Risk Log. PJ Risk log.docx
Supporting Documents (links to press releases, articles, or	Please see link below for Media Monitoring Report PACE Justice Media Monitoring - Google Docs

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other documentation)	
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Document Submitted by:

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Date: