Explanation of Importance Level & Key cases

Importance Level

This field can be used to make searches of judgments, decisions and/or advisory opinions classified by level of importance.

Cases are divided into four categories, the highest level of importance being “Key cases”, followed by levels 1, 2 and 3. The classification by levels 1, 2 and 3 remains provisional until the Bureau has decided whether a case should appear in the Court’s official (Key cases) selection. The list of key cases selected by the bureau is published on the Court’s website under "Case-Law".

For example, a case that was tentatively classified as level 1 but ultimately selected will change to category Key cases.

Key cases: judgments, decisions and advisory opinions delivered since the inception of the new Court in 1998 which have been published or selected for publication in the Court’s official Reports of Judgments and Decisions or, since 2016, selected as Key cases. The selection from 2007 onwards has been made by the Bureau of the Court following a proposal by the Jurisconsult.

Judgments of the former Court (published in Series A and Reports) and cases published in the former Commission’s series Decisions and Reports have not been included in the Key cases category and are therefore classified by levels 1, 2 and 3 only.

1 = High importance: all judgments, decisions and advisory opinions not included in the Key cases selection which make a significant contribution to the development, clarification or modification of its case-law, either generally or in relation to a particular State.

2 = Medium importance: other judgments, decisions and advisory opinions which, while not making a significant contribution to the case-law, nevertheless go beyond merely applying existing case-law.

3 = Low importance: judgments, decisions and advisory opinions of little legal interest, namely judgments and decisions that simply apply existing case-law, friendly settlements and strike outs (unless raising a particular point of interest).