FROM THE IUSTORIA BLOG

How Long Does a Court Case Take: A Realistic Timeline from Claim to Enforcement

> *In 2024 a civil case at a district court took a median of 157 days, an electronic payment order 11. What an appeal, a further appeal and enforcement add, and what to do when the court stalls.*

IUSTORIA TEAM

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"How long will it take?" We hear this question at the start of every new dispute, right after the one about cost. People usually expect an answer in weeks. The official figures talk about months. A dispute that goes through an appeal tends, in practice, to stretch to a year or two.

The length of a dispute decides whether the debtor will still have anything to pay with at the end, how much you will spend on legal representation and whether it is worth accepting a worse settlement now. So it helps to know what the statistics say, how long each stage takes, what slows proceedings down and what can be done when the court does nothing.

What the Ministry's figures say

Every year the Czech Ministry of Justice publishes an annual statistical report, *České soudnictví* (The Czech Judiciary). The latest one, with data for 2024, gives these figures for civil disputes before district courts, counted from the filing of the claim to the decision of the court of first instance:

- a median of 157 days, meaning half the cases ended sooner and half later,
- an average of 247 days,
- 393 days, exceeded by the longest tenth of cases.

At the district courts within the region of the Regional Court in Brno, where we practise, the figures were higher: a median of 188 days, an average of 292 days, and a tenth of cases took longer than 451 days. The fastest were the courts in the region of the Regional Court in Plzeň, with an average of 184 days.

The statistics include only cases that have been finally concluded, and they measure only the time at first instance, without any appeal. They also include simple disputes in which the defendant puts up no defence. A dispute with witnesses and an expert usually falls in the slower half.

Regional courts decide at first instance, among other things, disputes between members of business corporations and disputes over intellectual property and unfair competition (Section 9(2) of the Czech Code of Civil Procedure). There, in 2024, the median was 367 days and the average 662 days. The Ministry points out, however, that the average is pushed up by cases stayed for a long time because one of the parties became insolvent.

The timeline, stage by stage

Payment order. Where a claim is for payment of money, the court can issue a payment order (*platební rozkaz*) without a hearing and without hearing the defendant (Section 172(1) of the Code of Civil Procedure). In 2024 district courts dealt with electronic payment orders (Section 174a) in a median of 11 days. The defendant then has 15 days to pay or to file a statement of opposition (*odpor*). If the defendant does nothing, the payment order has the effects of a final judgment (Section 174(1)), and you have an enforcement title within a matter of weeks. If the defendant files an opposition, the payment order is cancelled and the court schedules a hearing (Section 174(2)). When a payment order is worth using is explained in our guide to payment orders (in Czech).

First instance. The court serves the claim on the defendant and often invites the defendant to respond in writing within at least 30 days and to attach evidence (Section 114b(1) and (2)). It then schedules a hearing. The judgment is served in writing, and only from service does the fifteen-day time limit for an appeal start to run (Section 204(1)). In disputes over money up to CZK 10,000, excluding ancillary amounts, an appeal is, with few exceptions, not admissible and the first-instance judgment is final (Section 202(2)).

Appeal. An appeal is lodged with the court of first instance, which forwards the file to the appellate court once the time limit for an appeal has expired for all parties (Section 210(3)). In 2024 regional courts then decided appeals in civil cases in a median of 64 days and an average of 114 days. At the Regional Court in Brno the median was 204 days; the Ministry attributes this to a different administrative practice. An appeal is far from the rule: in 2024 an appeal on the merits was lodged in roughly 7.7% of civil cases before district courts. Where one was lodged, however, the appellate court varied or set aside the judgment in 42.7% of cases. If it sets the judgment aside (Section 219a), the case goes back to the court of first instance for further proceedings (Section 221(1)(a)), and the new judgment can be followed by another appeal. What can still be added on appeal and what can no longer be added is covered in our article The Appeal Is Written at First Instance.

Appeal on a point of law. An appeal on a point of law (*dovolání*) against a final decision of the appellate court can be lodged within two months of service (Section 240(1)), and with few exceptions the appellant must be represented by a lawyer (Section 241). The Supreme Court does not review the facts, only an incorrect legal assessment (Section 241a(1)), and only on questions it has not yet resolved, resolves inconsistently, should assess differently, or whose settled resolution the appellate court departed from (Section 237). In disputes over money up to CZK 50,000, an appeal on a point of law is inadmissible except in consumer and employment matters (Section 238(1)(c)). At the end of 2025 the Supreme Court had 1,366 civil appeals on points of law pending, and over the whole year it disposed of 3,350. At that pace, the court gets through such a backlog in about five months. Add to that the two-month time limit and the time it takes the court of first instance to forward the file.

A final judgment of the appellate court must be complied with within the time limit for performance, usually within three days of becoming final. An appeal on a point of law does not change that on its own: only the Supreme Court can suspend enforceability, and only if immediate enforcement would cause the appellant serious harm (Section 243 of the Code of Civil Procedure). Anyone who has lost at the regional court and is counting on the case “still going to the Supreme Court” may find enforcement hitting their bank account before the Supreme Court has even started on the file.

Enforcement. The obligation under a judgment must be performed within three days of the judgment becoming final, unless the court has set a longer time limit or instalments (Section 160(1)). On an enforcement application, the court bailiff (*soudní exekutor*) must then ask the court for authorisation within 15 days, and the court grants it within 15 days (Section 43a(1) and (3) of the Czech Enforcement Code). How long enforcement then takes depends on what the debtor owns. If for six years there has not been even partial payment and no real estate has been seized, the bailiff asks the creditor whether they agree to the enforcement being discontinued. If the creditor does not reply within 30 days, the bailiff discontinues it (Section 55(7)). The details are in our guide to enforcement (in Czech).

Put together, it works out like this. An undisputed claim dealt with by a payment order is usually enforceable within a matter of weeks. A contested case before a district court with one appeal will, in practice, more likely reach a final judgment in one to two years. If the appellate court sends the case back or an appeal on a point of law follows, count on several years. How to factor that time into the decision whether to sue at all is the subject of our article Litigation as an Investment.

What drags a dispute out and what shortens it

Service. A payment order must be served on the defendant personally; leaving it at the post office with deemed service is not enough, but delivery to a data box (*datová schránka*, the Czech state electronic mailbox) is (Section 173(1)). If it cannot be served, the court cancels it (Section 173(2)). It cannot be issued at all if the defendant's whereabouts are unknown or if it would have to be served abroad (Section 172(2)). An accurate, up-to-date address for the other side in the claim saves months. When even an uncollected letter counts as served is covered in our article "I Never Collected the Letter, So It Never Reached Me." When It Still Counts.

Expert. As soon as a dispute turns on a technical question, such as defects in a building, a valuation or someone's state of health, everyone waits for an expert report. In practice that means many months, and more are added when the report needs to be supplemented or the expert has to be examined.

Adjournment and stay. A hearing can be adjourned only for important reasons, which the court must state (Section 119(1)), typically illness of a party or a witness. Evidence brought in late will, as a rule, no longer help: allegations and evidence can in principle be put forward only until the end of the preparatory hearing or, if there was none, the first hearing, and the court takes later ones into account only exceptionally (Section 118b(1)). Proceedings are also stayed, for example while another set of proceedings that matters for the decision is pending (Section 109(2)(c)); during that time nothing happens and time limits do not run (Section 111(1)).

What shortens a dispute. The most time is saved by a claim that sets out all the decisive allegations and evidence right at the start; every round of requests and supplements means weeks, and after the first hearing gaps usually cannot be filled. Why it is not enough for the court that "everybody knows" is explained in our article "Surely the Court Will Find Out What Happened." Why It Won't, and What to Do About It. By law, the court must above all seek an amicable resolution of the dispute (Section 100(1)). A court-approved settlement has the effects of a final judgment (Section 99(3)), and if it is reached before the court decides on the merits, the court refunds the fee paid, less 20% and at least CZK 1,000 (Section 10(7) of the Czech Court Fees Act).

When the court does nothing: a complaint and an application to set a time limit

A long case is not necessarily a delayed one. Delay means the court fails to take a step it is supposed to take: for months it does not schedule a hearing, does not draw up the judgment or does not forward the appeal. For that you have two tools.

A complaint about delays (*stížnost na průtahy*) is filed with the president of the court where the case is stuck (Section 164(1) of the Czech Act on Courts and Judges, Act No. 6/2002 Coll.; for a district court, Section 171). It must be dealt with within one month (Section 173(1)). A complaint cannot, however, interfere with the judge's decision-making (Section 164(2)).

An application to set a time limit for a procedural step (*návrh na určení lhůty k provedení procesního úkonu*) is the stronger tool. It is filed with the court where the delays are occurring, and it does not have to be preceded by a complaint (Section 174a(1) and (2)). It must make clear which case and which step it concerns, what you consider the delays to be and what you are asking for. Within five working days the court forwards it, with its own statement, to the higher court. That does not apply if, within 30 days, it takes all the steps the application concerns. The application is then no longer considered, unless within three days of learning that the steps have been taken you declare that you maintain it (Section 174a(3)).

The higher court decides without a hearing within 20 working days (Section 174a(6)). It weighs the complexity of the case, its importance for you, the conduct of the parties and the court's handling of the case so far. If it finds delays, it sets a time limit that is binding on the court, and the state bears the costs of the proceedings on the application (Section 174a(8)). There is no remedy against its decision (Section 174a(9)). From practice: the application makes sense when it targets one specific step. General dissatisfaction with the pace, or with how the judge is taking evidence, does not belong in it.

Put every allegation, all the evidence and the other side's current address into the claim. Service and supplementing filings are the most common brakes, and they are the ones in your hands.
If the proceedings have been stuck on one step for months, file an application to set a time limit under Section 174a of the Act on Courts and Judges, and state precisely which step is missing and since when.
Before suing, work out what a wait of one to two years means for you and whether the debtor will still have anything to pay with by then. Use that to set the point at which you will accept a settlement.

Compensation for unreasonably long proceedings

The state is liable for delays. Incorrect official conduct (*nesprávný úřední postup*) includes a failure to take a step or issue a decision within a reasonable time (Section 13(1) of Act No. 82/1998 Coll., the Czech State Liability Act), and besides damage, appropriate satisfaction for non-pecuniary harm is also awarded (Section 31a(1)). When setting the amount, the court considers, among other things, the length and complexity of the proceedings and whether the injured party used the means available to remove the delays (Section 31a(3)). If you kept quiet for years and filed neither a complaint nor an application to set a time limit, expect that this may be reflected in the amount of satisfaction.

The claim must first be lodged with the Ministry of Justice, and without that you cannot go to court (Sections 6(2)(a) and 14(3)). You can sue only if the ministry does not grant your claim in full within six months (Section 15(2)). The claim to satisfaction becomes time-barred six months from the day you learned of the harm, but for delays not earlier than six months after the proceedings ended (Section 32(3)). How much is usually awarded for each year of proceedings, and how to put the claim together, is covered in our guide to state liability (in Czech).

At a glance

Question	Answer	Provision
How long does a case before a district court take?	In 2024, a median of 157 days and an average of 247 days to the first-instance decision	Ministry of Justice annual statistical report České soudnictví 2024
When does a payment order have the effects of a final judgment?	When the defendant does not file a statement of opposition within 15 days of service	Sections 172(1) and 174(1) of the Code of Civil Procedure
What is the time limit for an appeal?	15 days from service of the written judgment	Section 204(1) of the Code of Civil Procedure
What is the time limit for an appeal on a point of law?	Two months from service of the appellate court's decision, as a rule with mandatory representation by a lawyer	Sections 240(1) and 241 of the Code of Civil Procedure
Does an appeal on a point of law halt enforcement?	Not on its own; only the Supreme Court can suspend enforceability	Section 243 of the Code of Civil Procedure
What can I do about delays?	A complaint to the president of the court, or an application to set a time limit; the higher court decides within 20 working days	Sections 164, 173 and 174a of Act No. 6/2002 Coll.
How do I get compensation for delays?	First lodge the claim with the Ministry of Justice; sue only after six months without full satisfaction	Sections 6(2)(a), 13, 14(3), 15(2) and 31a of Act No. 82/1998 Coll.

Is your case dragging on, with the court doing nothing for months? We will go through the file and tell you whether these are delays, which tool to use and what to expect from it. We handle disputes as part of our dispute resolution practice. Get in touch.

Conclusion

The statistics are a good starting point: a civil case before a district court takes a median of around five months, with an appeal more likely a year or two in practice, and enforcement then depends on the debtor. The timeline of a particular dispute, however, is shaped most by how well the claim is prepared, whether an expert is needed and whether the other side defends itself.

That is why, from the first meeting, we plan for time just as we plan for costs, and we compare any settlement offer with a realistic timeline, not an optimistic one.

Sources

- Act No. 99/1963 Coll., the Code of Civil Procedure, Sections 9, 99, 100, 109, 111, 114b, 118b, 119, 160, 172 to 174a, 202, 204, 210, 219a, 221, 237, 238, 240, 241, 241a and 243 (as in force on 1 November 2026).
- Act No. 6/2002 Coll., on Courts and Judges, Sections 164, 171, 173 and 174a (as in force on 1 November 2026).
- Act No. 82/1998 Coll., on Liability for Damage Caused in the Exercise of Public Authority by a Decision or Incorrect Official Conduct, Sections 6, 13, 14, 15, 31a and 32.
- Act No. 120/2001 Coll., the Enforcement Code, Sections 43a and 55.
- Act No. 549/1991 Coll., on Court Fees, Section 10(7).
- Ministry of Justice, České soudnictví 2024, annual statistical report.
- Supreme Court, Supreme Court statistics for 2025.

This article is for information only and does not constitute legal advice. It reflects the law as at the date of publication. The statistics describe average and median values across all courts; the length of any particular proceedings depends on the court, the complexity of the case and the conduct of the parties.

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