



April 24 2017

“MISSING” JUDGMENTS THREATEN GOOD LENDING

Fewer debt judgments were recorded in the Four Courts during the first three months of 2017 than in any other first quarter on record, according to figures released today by Registry Trust.

Registry Trust is the mission led organisation which operates as Irish Judgments in the Republic of Ireland, where it collects information on registered judgments against businesses and consumers. A judgment is incontrovertible proof of unmanaged debt.

There were 535 judgments registered against consumers in Q1 2017, three percent fewer than the same period last year. It marks the fourth consecutive year of decreases and is the lowest figure recorded for a first quarter since 2008. The average value of a consumer judgment dropped by 45 percent to €78,447, bringing the total down 47 percent to €42m.

The number of business judgments fell by almost half to 156 during the first quarter of 2017, the lowest first quarter since 2008. The total value also dropped sharply, falling 78 percent to €5.7m. The average business judgment accordingly fell 58 percent to €36,498, bucking the trend of increases during the preceding four years.

While the total number of judgments decreased for both incorporated and the generally smaller non-incorporated businesses, the total value of corporate judgments increased as it fell for non-corporates. The average corporate judgment was worth €48,568, whereas a non-corporate judgment was €5,776 on average.

The figures are based only on judgments registered at the request and cost of creditors at the Four Courts in Dublin and therefore provide only a partial picture of unmanaged debt judgments in the country. By comparison, in the much smaller economy of Northern Ireland, where judgments from all courts are registered, there were 1,970 judgments in Q1 2017.

“If we scaled up the Northern Ireland figures, we would expect over 5,000 judgments this quarter. As a rough estimate, therefore, there might well be some 4,500 unregistered judgments in courts around the country,” said Registry Trust chairman

Malcolm Hurlston. "This mass of missing judgments represents a serious risk to credit unions and other lenders – and most of all their customers."

In Q1 2017 Registry Trust received 8,080 requests to search the register for the Republic of Ireland online at www.trustonline.org.uk. Through TrustOnline anyone in Ireland may search for judgments and similar information registered against businesses and consumers anywhere in the British Isles and Ireland. "It is a unique benefit for consumers to be able to check the debt record of any person or business with which they may be transacting," said Mr Hurlston. "Negative information would certainly make me think twice."

ENDS

Statistics

Judgments against consumers Q1 2017 (compared with Q1 2016):

- Total: 535 (down three percent)
- Value: €42m (down 47 percent)
- Average: €78,447 (down 45 percent)

Judgments against businesses Q1 2017:

- Total: 156 (down 47 percent)
- Value: €5.7m (down 78 percent)
- Average: €36,498 (down 58 percent)

Notes for editors

Irish Judgments is a division of Registry Trust, a non-profit company established in 1985. It maintains public records of judgment and decree information for all jurisdictions in Britain and Ireland. These records are an important factor in avoiding debt and in supporting responsible lending decisions, which in turn underpin a modern and stable economy.

Irish Judgments holds a public register of judgments registered at the Four Courts in Dublin.

Judgments can be removed from the register if paid in full within one calendar month of the issue date and Irish Judgments is informed, but will otherwise remain registered for six years. If fully paid outside the one calendar month, the defendant can apply to have the judgment marked as 'satisfied' to improve their credit rating. Failure to pay within one month is proof of unmanaged debt.

Anyone may search for entries against a named person or business at a stated address or a corporate body in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland or England and Wales by visiting Registry Trust's website www.trustonline.org.uk or by writing to Irish Judgments at Irish Judgments, Ulysses House, Foley Street, Dublin 1.

To view the full set of annual statistics, please visit www.trustonline.org.uk/press.

For more information about Registry Trust's aims, structure and accountability as well as information about its range of products beyond the register of judgments please visit www.registry-trust.org.uk.

For more information, please contact Daniel Helen at dhelen@hurlstons.com or call +44 (0)20 7239 4971.