In this brochure you will find information about the Court Administration of Latvia, its goals, objectives, functions and role in the justice system, as well as get acquainted with the Latvian court system and its structure
Content

(I) The Court Administration 7
(II) Activity areas of the Court Administration 8
(III) Project management and international cooperation of the Court Administration 10
(IV) The Court Administration in terms of the judicial system and cooperation with other institutions 15
(V) The judicial system in Latvia – from the district (city) court to the Supreme Court 16
(VI) The European Court of Justice and European Court of Human Rights 19
(VII) Other courts and institutions 21
(VIII) Operational dynamics of courts and Land Registry Offices 24
TIESU ADMINISTRĀCIJAS KANCELEJA

DARBA LAIKS
"One does not buy books to acquire new knowledge, but rather to find in them a confirmation of what he already knows"

I selected this quote by Gabriel Garcia Marquez because it reflects the idea behind this brochure—to confirm what we already know and to inform the reader about the areas of our activities, the overall court and judicial system, as well as to highlight contemporary matters in the system.

Edvins Balsevics, Director of the Court Administration
The Court Administration is a modern growth-oriented state administration institution whose principal objective is securing administrative support for the effective operation and development of the courts and Land Registry Offices.

The Court Administration is responsible for administering 34 district (city) courts, 6 regional courts, the District Court of Administrative Cases (with 4 courthouses) and 27 district (city) court Land Registry offices, providing employment for 529 judges and 1,690 court and Land Registry employees.

At present, the key challenge facing the Court Administration is modernising and developing the work environment in the courts and Land Registry Offices, in line with the opportunities opened up by recent technological developments, and achieving proximity of the court system to the general public through securing a faster, more convenient, and effective process of court proceedings.
(I) Activity areas of the Court Administration

The Court Administration was established in 2004 and is subordinate to the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Latvia.

The Court Administration is involved in handling human resource matters in the courts and Land Registry Offices, preparing the budgets for courts and Land Registry Offices and managing the funds allocated for this purpose, providing material technical support, information and communication technology infrastructure to the courts and Land Registry Offices, securing the maintenance and development of the information system (the State Unified Computerised Land Register, the Court Information system and the Register of Enforcement Cases).

The Court Administration is headed by a director who is approved by the Minister of Justice. Three departments work under the direct leadership of the Court Administration’s director – Human Resource Department, Court and Land Registry Office Department, and the Finance and Administrative Department.

The functioning of the Court Administration is secured by 83 employees.

The structure of the Court Administration is illustrated below:
(II) Activity areas of the Court Administration

**Budget and finances**
- implementing the planning of income and expenditures of the budget of the courts, Land Registry Offices and the Court Administration
- administering the finances of the courts and Land Registry Offices’ budget
- analysing the economic performance indicators of the courts and Land Registry Offices

**Information systems and technologies**
- implementing the duties of the owner of the State Unified Computerised Land Register, and securing the dissemination of Land Register information
- securing the maintenance and development of the Court Information System and Data Dissemination System
- maintaining and developing the Register of Enforcement Cases
- compiling statistics about the court and Land Registry Offices performance
- securing the information and communication technology infrastructure to the courts and the Land Registry Offices

**Human Resources**
- keeping personnel files of judges, the staff of the courts and Land Registry Offices
- selecting judge candidates
- fulfilment of the performance appraisal of judges
- executing documents and carrying out activities with regard to appointments to the office and the approval thereof, as well as suspension, dismissal or removal from office
- preparing documents for the disciplinary cases of judges
- securing the process related to the hiring and dismissal of the staff of courts and the Land Registry Offices
- administering the staff of courts and the Land Registry Offices
- imposing a disciplinary punishment for breaches by the staff of the courts and Land Registry Offices
Material and technical support

- supplying goods and services to courts and the Land Registry Offices
- securing work premises in 48 courthouses and 27 Land Registry Offices
- securing the services of translators and interpreters
- assuming responsibility for compliance with work and fire safety procedures

Project management and international cooperation

- securing the development and implementation of development projects related to the Court Administration and the judicial system
- securing cooperation with international justice institutions

Other functions

- securing the operation of the Commission on Judicial Ethics and the Judicial Qualifications Committee
- compiling and maintaining the Forensic Experts Register and securing the operation of the Forensic Experts Council
Project management and international cooperation of the Court Administration

Implementation of projects
In recent years a topical trend has been to modernise the methodology of judicial work with a view to make court proceedings more convenient, modern, faster, and more accessible to the public. The Court Administration’s goal has always been a modern and accessible court. In order to achieve this goal, the Court Administration has been involved in the process of preparing court development project applications and project implementation by attracting financing from European Union Structural Funds and other financial instruments. The Court Administration has been involved in the project of the Nordic-Baltic mobility programme “Public Administration”, projects of the specific programmes “Criminal Law” and “Civil Justice” of the European Commission, the Latvian - Swiss cooperation programme project, and projects implemented by the European Union Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund.

• The individual project “Modernization of courts in Latvia” of the Latvian – Swiss cooperation programme

Within the scope of this project, Latvian courts and places of imprisonment have been equipped with video conferencing appliances and sound recording systems. Video conferencing is used with a view to providing the option to effect distance court proceedings to improve public safety and to promote the accessibility of courts in Latvian and cross-border court proceedings.
The judicial system in Latvia

• The European Union Regional Development Fund Project “Archival preparation of the Ministry of Justice and its subordinated institutions for electronic services – the 1st round”

The objective of this project is to create a single and effective electronic process of land registries through improvements of the State Unified Computerised Land Register, and securing a shift from hard copy to the electronic filing, processing and storing of documents. It would result in significant saving of resources of the institutions involved in the registration process, and the reduction of the administrative burden on the general public and businesses.

International cooperation

The Court Administration cooperates with international organisations such as the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), the European Land Registry Association (ERLA), and the International Association for Court Administration (IACA).

Since 2005 the Court Administration has been actively participating in the work of the CEPEJ, by providing statistical data for the report on the performance assessment of the judicial systems of the Member States of the European Union.

The Court Administration provides information to the ERLA on matters relating to the registration of immovable property, and shares experience through participating in conferences and meetings organised by the ERLA.

In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of global developments, trends and problems in court administration, the Court Administration participates in events organised by the IACA.
The Ministry of Justice is the principal state administration institution in the judicial system, supervising the judicial branch in Latvia. There are 13 state institutions working under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice, as graphically presented below.

The Court Administration provides data and cooperates with a number of bodies and other institutions of the judicial branch.

Based on the agreement among ministries, the Court Administration secures data exchange with the Maintenance Guarantee Fund Administration, the State Land Service, the Register of Enterprises, the Prison Administration, and cooperates with the Courthouse Agency.
Latvia has a three-tier court system:

- **district (city) courts**
- **regional courts**
- **the Supreme Court**

The current three-tier judicial system secures the option to appeal court decisions adopted by the court of the first instance, and the repeated hearing of a case in appeal and cassation instances.

**District (city) courts** are courts of the first instance in which civil cases, criminal cases, and administrative cases are heard.

**Regional courts** are courts of the first instance for civil cases and criminal cases which fall under the jurisdiction of a regional court in accordance with the law. Regional courts are also *De Novo* appeals in criminal cases, civil cases, and administrative cases which have been heard by the district (city) court.

The Supreme Court is composed of two separate instances – the Senate and two Court Chambers – the Chamber of Civil Cases and the Chamber of Criminal Cases representing *De Novo* appeals in cases which have been tried by regional courts as courts of the first instance. Conversely, the Senate is the cassation appeal for all cases and the court of the first instance for cases on the decisions of the State Control Council adopted under the procedure set forth in Section 55 of the State Control Law. The Senate is the highest and final instance in the country.

**Land Registry Offices** form a part of the district (city) court system. They secure the registration of immovable property and related title in the land registers, as well as reviewing applications regarding the undisputable coercive enforcement of obligations and coercive enforcement of obligations under a warning procedure. All data in the computerised land registries of the Land Registry Offices are aggregated in the State Unified Computerised Land Register.
Judicial activity areas

THE SUPREME COURT

THE SENATE

THE CHAMBERS

Regional Court

Regional Court of Administrative Cases

District (City) Courts

Land Registry Offices

District Court of Administrative Cases

Criminal Cases

Civil Cases

De Novo Appeals

The first instance

Petition for Cassation Appeal

Petition for De Novo Appeals
Latvia is proud of the performance of Latvian judges at the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights. Ingrida Labucka and Egils Levits have been working in the Court of Justice of the European Union since 2004.

Latvia is one of the countries represented in the Court of Justice of the European Union. The Court of Justice of the European Union employs one judge from each of the Member States of the European Union that have ratified the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Latvian judge, Ineta Ziemele, has been working at the European Court of Human Rights since 2005. She is an elected president of the Courts Section of the European Court of Human Rights.

The European Court of Human Rights also comprises Ad hoc judges from Latvia – Jautrite Briede (the senator of the Department of Administrative Cases of the Senate of the Supreme Court), Kristine Kruma (the judge of the Constitutional Court), Dace Mita (the senator of the Department of Administrative Cases of the Senate of the Supreme Court), and Martins Mīts (the pro-rector of the Riga Graduate School of Law).
Tiesu sistēmas neatkarība
(VII) Other courts and institutions

**Constitutional Court**
The Constitutional Court is an independent judicial body which hears cases regarding the conformity of laws and other regulatory enactments to the Constitution falling under its jurisdiction, in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia and the Constitutional Court Law, as well as other cases delegated to it by the law.
The Constitutional Court judges cases in line with the Constitution and the Constitutional Court Law.

**Judicial Council**
The Judicial Council is a collegial body involved in the policymaking and strategy development of the judicial system, as well as improving the operation of the judicial system. The Judicial Council was established with a view to balancing executive, judiciary and legislative power through being empowered with a significant role in matters concerning the judicial system.
The Judicial Council is composed of the following permanent members:
1) Chief Justice of the Supreme Court
2) President of the Constitutional Court
3) Minister of Justice
4) Chairman of the Parliamentary Legal Affairs Committee
5) Public Prosecutor General
6) Chairman of Latvian Council of Sworn Advocates
7) Chairman of Latvian Council of Sworn Notaries
8) Chairman of the Council of Latvian Sworn Bailiffs

The Judicial Council consists of elected members: a judge elected by the plenary of the Supreme Court and 6 judges of the Judicial Conference. The members of the Judicial Council are elected for a term of four years.

**Judicial Disciplinary Commitee**
The Judicial Disciplinary Commitee is a judicial self-governance body, the members of which are elected by the Judicial Conference by secret ballot.
The Judicial Disciplinary Commitee reviews disciplinary and administrative offences committed by judges of district (city) courts, Land Registry Offices, regional courts, and the Supreme Court. The Judicial Disciplinary Commitee can decide on the removal of a judge from an office until a final decision is adopted in a disciplinary case, and remove an imposed disciplinary punishment ahead of term.

**Commission on Judicial Ethics**
The Commission on Judicial Ethics is a collegial judicial self-governance body the key objective of which is to issue opinions in instances of breaches of ethical norms, and interpreting and updating judicial ethical norms.
The Commission on Judicial Ethics is composed of 10 members who are elected by the Judicial Conference by secret ballot. The members are elected for a term of 4 years.
Sworn bailiffs
Sworn bailiffs are a part of the judicial system and are present at regional courts where they carry out their duties imposed by law. In performing their duties, sworn bailiffs make use of the Register of the Enforcement Cases. Under the Law on Bailiffs, the Court Administration is the holder of the Register of the Enforcement cases.

Court-martial
The Court-martial is a court which is an arm of the judicial power of the Republic of Latvia, and which becomes operational in a state of emergency or time of war. The Court-martial hears cases about offences committed by soldiers, civilians, and prisoners of war during a state of emergency or time of war.

Latvian Judicial Training Centre
The Latvian Judicial Training Centre is a foundation which aims to improve the professional qualification of judges and court staff. The centre’s key task is to secure quality training for judges of district (city) courts, regional courts, investigative judges, judges of the Land Registry Offices, and court staff.

Disciplinary court
Under the Judicial Disciplinary Liability Law, in order to assess the lawfulness of decisions adopted by the Judicial Disciplinary Committee, the Disciplinary Court is convened. Members of the Disciplinary Court are elected by the plenary of the Supreme Court for a term of five years. The Disciplinary Court is composed of six judges of the Senate of the Supreme Court – two judges from the Department of Civil Cases, the Department of Criminal Cases and the Department of Administrative Cases.

Sworn notaries
Sworn notaries are civil servants who assist in handling legal transactions through certifying the authenticity of documents or transactions and attaching public reliance to them. The duties of sworn notaries include drafting public deeds and certifications, holding custody of funds, and handling inheritance cases.

Judicial Qualification Committee
Judicial Qualification Committee is a judicial self-governance body key objective of which is to strengthen the professional independence of judges. Judicial Qualification Committee assesses candidates for judicial appointment of professional backgrounds, assuming a qualifying exam. Judicial Qualification Committee attests the judges and decides on the qualification category of award, as well as decides the issue of judge’s qualification downgrading.
(VIII) Operational dynamics of courts and Land Registry Offices

To illustrate the performance of the courts and the Land Registry offices, the summary is provided of the statistical data on the operational dynamics of the courts and the Land Registry Offices during 2004 – 2011. The statistics summarise the data related to the derived from cases filed and completed in the courts of the first instance, De Novo appeals in the regional courts, administrative courts, as well as the number of registration applications filed and decisions adopted.

Operational dynamics of courts of the first instance during 2004 - 2011

Operational dynamics of regional courts as the courts of appeal instance during 2004 - 2011

AVC – Administrative Violations Cases. Data about the number of Administrative Violations Cases filed accumulated from 2007.

AVC – Administrative Violations Cases in the De Novo appeals. Administrative Violations Cases have been heard in regional courts as courts of De Novo appeals since 1 January 2009.
Operational dynamics of administrative courts during 2004 – 2011

Administrative courts commenced operation on 2 February 2004

Operational dynamics of Land Registry Offices during 2004-2011
Contact information

The Court Administration
Office address:
Ūnijas iela 8, k-9, Riga, LV-1084
Registered office:
Mūkusalas iela 41b, Riga, LV – 1004

e-mail: kanceleja@ta.gov.lv
Phone: 67063800
Fax: 67063840
www.ta.gov.lv

The Court Administration Twitter account: @tiesuadm

The Latvian court website:
www.tiesas.lv

The Unified Computerised Land Register:
www.zemesgramata.lv
European Commision special programme “Criminal Justice” project
“On the Way for optimization of Court Proceedings”