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# Defendants (criminal proceedings)

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These factsheets explain what happens if you are suspected or accused of a crime which is tried in a court of law. For information on minor traffic offences, which are usually dealt with by a fine, see Factsheet 5. If you are the victim of a crime, you can find full information about your rights here.

## Summary of criminal proceedings

The following is a summary of the standard stages in criminal proceedings:

- Launching of criminal proceedings
- Pre-trial proceedings or investigation
- Access to the criminal file and hearing of applications
- Charging
- Pre-trial proceedings in court
- Court hearing
- Judgment
- Appeals proceedings (in courts of second and third instance)
- Execution of the judgment

The factsheets give details about these stages of the process and about your rights. This information is not a substitute for legal advice and is intended to be for guidance only.

## The role of the European Commission

Please note that the European Commission has no role in criminal proceedings carried out in Member States and cannot assist you if you have a complaint. These factsheets provide information on how and to whom complaints should be submitted.

Click on the links below to find the information that you need

[1 - Getting legal advice](#)

[2 - My rights during the investigation of the crime](#)

- Launching of criminal proceedings
- Detention and arrest
- Interrogation and the gathering of evidence
- Access to the criminal file, hearing of applications and charging
- Additional information for non-residents

[3 - My rights during the trial](#)

[4 - My rights after the trial](#)

[5 - Traffic offences](#)

## Related link

[Overview of the Estonian criminal procedure in English](#)

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