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National justice systems

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Latvia

Latvia

This section provides you with an overview of the court system in Latvia.

Organisation of justice – judicial systems

Alongside the legislative and the executive branches of government, Latvia has an independent judiciary, with a three-tiered court system. The Constitution states that judicial power is vested in district and city courts, regional courts, the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court and, in the event of war or a state of emergency, also in military courts.

Administration of courts

Pursuant to [the Law on Judicial Power](#), the main public authority for the administration of courts is the Ministry of Justice.

The Ministry of Justice:

1. may issue internal regulations on how the administrative work of district and city courts, regional courts and land registry offices is organised;
2. may request district and city courts, regional courts and land registry offices to provide it with the information necessary for it to perform the functions assigned to it under laws and regulations;
3. is responsible for the institutional governance of district and city courts, regional courts and land registry offices;
4. carries out inspections in district and city courts, regional courts and land registry offices.

The Courts Office (*Tiesu administrācija*) arranges and ensures performance of the administrative work of district and city courts, regional courts and land registry offices. It is under the authority of the Minister for Justice, who acts via the Ministry of Justice.

The Supreme Court (*Augstākā tiesa*) has no administrative links to district or city courts or regional courts. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court organises the work of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has a separate department for performing administrative tasks, the Supreme Court Administration (*Augstākās tiesas Administrācija*).

The Judicial Council (*Tieslietu padome*) is a collegiate body involved in formulating court system policy and strategy and improving the way the work of the court system is organised.

Types of courts: brief description and hierarchy

Ordinary courts: courts of first instance and appellate courts

District and city courts (*rajonu (pilsētu) tiesas*) are the courts of first instance in civil, criminal and administrative cases. A district or city court may have structural units, i.e. courthouses located at various places within the territorial jurisdiction of the relevant district or city. District or city courts may have a land registry office. A land registry office manages land registers (where items of immovable property and associated rights are recorded)

and considers claims for undisputed enforcement, debt recovery orders, and approval of statements of auction.

Regional courts (*apgabaltiesas*), as appellate courts, hear civil, criminal and administrative cases in a panel of three regional court judges. A regional court may have structural units, i.e. courthouses located at various places within the territorial jurisdiction of the relevant regional court.

According to the [Law on judicial power](#), military courts may operate in a state of war or emergency. Pursuant to the [Law on military courts](#), the order that military courts are to begin operating is given by the Minister for Justice. Should that occur, one or several military courts of first instance and a military court of appeal begin operations.

Supreme Court

The Supreme Court (*Augstākā tiesa*) comprises a Senate, consisting of three divisions (*departamenti*) (Civil Cases, Criminal Cases and Administrative Cases) and two chambers (*palātas*) (Civil Cases and Criminal Cases). The Supreme Court is the court of appeal on points of law (*kasācijas instance*), unless the law provides otherwise. The Supreme Court had two chambers (Civil Cases and Criminal Cases) until 31 December 2014, but from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2016 it has only a chamber of civil cases.

The full bench (*plēnums*) is the general assembly of the judges of the Supreme Court. It deliberates on immediate questions of interpretation of legal provisions. The full bench also elects members of the Disciplinary Tribunal (*Disciplinārtiesa*). The Disciplinary Tribunal is made up of six judges from the divisions of the Supreme Court. The Disciplinary Tribunal is convened to review the legality of the decisions of the Judicial Disciplinary Committee (*Tiesnešu disciplinārkolēģija*). Immediate questions of interpretation of legal provisions may be considered, in order to ensure the uniform application of the law, not only by the full bench of the Supreme Court but also by the full bench of the relevant chamber or division.

The Constitutional Court (*Satversmes tiesa*) is an independent judicial body that considers cases of the constitutionality of laws and other legal acts within the remit laid down for it in the Constitution and the Law on the Constitutional Court. It also considers other cases referred to it under the Law on the Constitutional Court.

Legal databases

Latvia has the following legal databases:

1. The website of the [Ministry of Justice](#), which contains information on the court system, persons operating within that system (certified notaries and certified bailiffs) and links to other court-system-related websites.
2. Latvia's National Portal [Latvija.lv](#)

The 'Latvija.lv' portal gives access to the internet resources of central and local government bodies. Information is classified by topic.

The section of the portal entitled 'e-services' (*E-pakalpojumi*) gives access to e-services generally provided using dedicated centralised infrastructure. This section contains a virtual working space where users can request and receive central and local government e-services, follow progress in the provision of those services, and receive information on the outcomes.

The section for finding services ('Service catalogue', *Pakalpojumu katalogs*) is a centralised point of access to central and local government services. The 'Service catalogue' can be used to obtain essential information on central and local government services, conditions for requesting and receiving those services, the cost of those services and a description thereof. The descriptions of online services contain a link to the relevant resource (information, website, direct link or e-service). Users can access the information either via the catalogue, which is divided into sections corresponding to various life situations, or by using the portal's search functions. The content of the centralised catalogue is maintained by the government bodies providing the services.

Latvia's national portal, [Latvija.lv](#), has as its objective to enable Latvian and foreign residents to access the internet resources of Latvian government bodies and act as a centralised point of access for e-services provided by a range of institutions.

The portal can be accessed free of charge.

Links

[National Courts portal](#), [Supreme Court](#), [Constitutional Court](#), [Courts Office](#), [Ministry of Justice](#)

■ Last update: 27/05/2024

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