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Initial training of lawyers in the European Union

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Estonia

General description

Is initial training offered, if yes is it compulsory?

Indirectly. According to the Bar Association Act, all attorneys (attorneys-at-law and assistant attorneys-at-law) are obliged to undergo continuing legal training.

As the Bar organises trainings and assistants attorney-at-law are obliged to undergo trainings, then these trainings can be considered as initial trainings for preparing the assistant attorneys-at-law practising as an attorney-at-law.

(A member of the Bar who has practiced as an assistant attorney-at-law for at least three years and passed the attorney-at-law examination can become an attorney-at-law on the basis of a written application. Where a person has, immediately before admission to the Bar, held for no less than two years an office or position which requires a publicly recognised master's degree in law or equivalent qualifications for the purposes of subsection 2² of § 28 of the Republic of Estonia Education Act or equivalent foreign qualifications, the Board of the Bar may allow the person to take the attorney-at-law examination, provided that the person has practiced as an assistant attorney-at-law for no less than one year in a row).

Does initial training differentiate between categories of trainees, e.g. for in-house lawyers and advocates?

There is no such categorisation in Estonia.

Which entities are responsible for organising initial training?

According to Bar Association Act § 3 p 4, the competency of the Bar includes also organisation of the continuing training of attorneys. According to § 12 p 13, the Board of the Bar organises the continuing training of lawyers.

[Bar Association Act](#) (in English)

What is the statutory basis for initial training?

- Compulsory training obligations as decided by state law (Bar Association Act)
- Compulsory training obligations as stated in the Rules of Procedure of the Bar Association

Legal basis:

[Bar Association Act](#) (in English) § 34¹, § 35 (4¹), § 36 (1) p 2¹.

[Rules of Procedure of the Bar Association](#)

Attorneys-at-law and assistants to attorneys-at-law are obliged to undergo periodical continuing legal training. In every 5 years the Admissions and Aptitude Assessment Committee controls whether this obligation has been fulfilled.

Access to the initial training

Are there conditions for accessing the training?

In order to undergo training, a person has to be admitted to the Bar. This procedure includes:

- Check / verification of diploma
- Written application / evaluation
- Entrance examination.

What is the main recruitment procedure? If it is competitive - who runs it?

According to the Bar Association Act, it is the competency of the Bar to admit and exclude persons. Specifically, the Board of the Bar decides the admission to the Bar and awarding of the professional title of assistant attorney-at-law and attorney-at-law.

Are there alternative access routes to the training?

A person who has practiced as an attorney-at-law, judge, judge of the Court of Justice, the European Court of Human Rights or the General Court of the European Union, the Chancellor of Justice or a prosecutor for no less than three years, except as an assistant prosecutor, and applies for admission to the Bar within five years after being excluded from the Bar based on clause 1 or 4 of subsection 1 of § 36 of Bar Association Act or after ending their practice as a judge, Chancellor of Justice or prosecutor, may be admitted to the Bar as an attorney-at-law. Likewise, a person who has for no less than three years held within the last five years an office or position not specified in the first sentence of this subsection, where the complexity of tasks and responsibility correspond to the complexity and responsibility of the work of an attorney-at-law may be admitted to the Bar as an attorney-at-law.

To admit a person to the Bar on the grounds specified above, the Admissions and Aptitude Assessment Committee holds an interview with the person for the purpose of assessing the person's compliance (a person must be honest and ethical and have the abilities and personal characteristics required for the attorney practice) and their knowledge of the legal practice and rules of professional ethics of an attorney. The Board decides the admission of the person based on the results of the interview.

Format and content of the initial training

What is the duration and time frames of the training?

The duration of one training is usually 4 academic hours, whereas 1 academic hour is 45 minutes. The duration of trainings is usually fixed and it does not change annually.

How is the training organised?

If a training is organised only by the Bar, it is run in-house, if the training is organised together with a cooperation partner, then both in-house and externally.

Who are the trainers?

Attorneys-at-law, university lecturers, judges, public sector professionals.

What is the content and objectives of the initial training?

The objective is to provide training for members of the Bar in various areas of legal practice. The purpose of the trainings is to maintain and develop attorneys' professional skills.

Who designs the initial training programmes?

The training programmes are mainly designed by responsible employees in the Bar. During the preparation of the programme, among other things, the feedback and proposals of the Bar members and committees are taken into account. The programmes are approved by the Board of the Bar.

What methodology is used for the training?

Lectures, seminars, roundtables, both face-to face or online (hybrid) or only face-to-face or online.

What practical elements of the training are applicable to the trainees?

Attorneys have to fulfill training obligations according to the law and comply with the Bases and Procedure of Continuous Training of the Estonian Bar Association (available only in [Estonian](#)); please see „Eesti Advokatuuri täiendusõppe alused ja kord“ and „Lisa 1“.

There are no additional specific practical elements.

How are trainees evaluated/assessed? How often and by whom?

According to the Bases and Procedure of Continuous Training of the Estonian Bar Association a credit system is used to assess the successful completion of the continuous training period. An attorney has to earn a minimum 10 training credits each year during the assessment period. 80 training points must be earned during the five year assessment period.

The assessment is carried out by Admissions and Aptitude Assessment Committee.

1 training credit corresponds to 1 hour of continuous training.

A 1 year assessment period corresponds to 10 continuous training credits.

A 5 year assessment period corresponds to 80 continuous training credits.

Are there any training activities carried out in conjunction with other legal professionals? If yes: How does it work?

Yes, for example trainings focused on the attorneys' obligations regarding money laundering and terrorist financing prevention, regular trainings in cooperation with the Financial Intelligence Unit are carried out. Roundtables on various legal issues are held in cooperation with courts or ministries.

What are the specificities regarding EU law training, linguistic training and European components of initial training, for example participation in CCBE or ELF activities?

N/A

How many trainees are accepted for training? Are the numbers of trainees adjusted annually and by who?

N/A

All the members of the Bar can take part of the trainings. The number of attendees are limited on physical trainings, where seats are limited or the maximum number of attendees is designated by the trainer (for example on seminars, which are impossible to carry out effectively when number of trainees is very high).

Termination of the initial training and qualification process

Does the initial training conclude with a final exam? How is it organised? Who is responsible for

the exam?

Initial training itself does not conclude/demand an exam. An assistant attorney-at-law can become an attorney-at-law when passing the attorney-at-law exam.

Is there a further recruitment procedure to become a lawyer upon completion of the initial training?

Assistants to the attorneys-at-law are also members of the Bar. After this 3-year period a person does not have to pass the attorney-at-law exam, they may continue practicing as an assistant of the attorney-at-law without time limitation under the supervision of an attorney-at-law.

Fully-fledged attorneys are attorneys-at-law. A member of the Bar Association may become an attorney-at-law on the basis of a written application if they have passed the attorney-at-law examination and they have practiced as an assistant of the attorney-at-law for at least three years. Where a person has, immediately before admission to the Bar, held for no less than two years an office or holding a position which requires a publicly recognised master's degree in law or equivalent qualifications for the purposes of subsection 2² of § 28 of the Republic of Estonia Education Act or equivalent foreign qualifications, the Board of the Bar may allow the person to take the attorney-at-law examination, provided that the person has practiced as an assistant attorney-at-law for no less than one year in a row.

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