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Initial training of judges and prosecutors in the European Union

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Latvia

Judges

General description

Since 2020 Latvia provides induction training for newly appointed judges (after approval to the judges post) based on the Law on Judicial Powers article 89, unit 5 that obliges every newly appointed judge to attend the special training program within the first year of the service. The main audience for the training program are judges from the general jurisdiction. Newly appointed judges from administrative courts join the training program where it is useful and applicable. It is foreseen though to develop a new program specifically targeted to newly appointed administrative court judges.

Training for judges and courts' staff is a responsibility of the Court Administration (CA) of Latvia however this task is delegated to the Latvian Judicial Training Centre (LJTC), a non-governmental organisation founded in 1995 by international donors and Latvian Judges Association. LJTC has the in-house experience and knowledge to ensure the quality training to newly appointed judges, judges with experience and court staff. LJTC is regulated by the Law of Associations and Foundations as well as a long term agreement between CA and LJTC on specifics regarding the training provision on national and international level.

On average it is up to 15 trainees per year in both general and administrative jurisdictions.

Access to the initial training

After the selection of candidates to become judges and as soon as the Parliament (Saeima) votes for the candidates, LJTC is allowed to start the training program. There is no additional or specific selection procedure as it is already done by the Selection Committee. There is only one route to enter the Judiciary - passing all the levels of the selection and being approved by the Parliament.

Initially judges are appointed for a period of 3 years.

Format and content of the initial training

The training program for newly appointed judges is built from the previously developed more extensive program for candidates to the judges' position.

However, the new program targets five main judicial responsibilities of a judge:

1. To prepare the case for the hearing (includes content on: court proceedings on civil cases and criminal cases, case management, qualitative court decisions, personal leadership, judicial ethics, the role of a judge, etc);
2. Leading a court hearing (includes content on: case management, court proceeding, personal leadership, presentation oratory skills, emotional and social intelligence, argumentation and critical thinking, moot

court on civil and criminal cases, moot court led by the Senators of the Supreme court, basis of a mediation process) etc.;

3. To write a court decision (includes content on: court proceedings on civil cases and criminal cases, case management, qualitative court decisions in civil and criminal cases, etc.);
4. To ensure effective collaboration and communication (includes content on: discussion on the role of a judge in 21st century, court proceedings on civil cases and criminal cases, case management, qualitative court decisions in civil and criminal cases, meeting judges for other instances and the Constitutional court, other legal professions, personal leadership, presentation skills, emotional intelligence, moot court, legal ethics, discussion with young judges on their experiences in the first year of service, team building, how to develop a plan of personal development, etc.)
5. Understand the role of a judge, specifics of the profession, limitations and responsibilities (moot court on civil and criminal cases, emotional and social intelligence, legal ethics (deontology) and specifics of judicial ethics, the role of a judge and expectations of society and the state.

The program is organised to also support development of competencies defined for the members of judiciary:

1. values and ethics;
2. analytical and conceptual mindset;
3. readiness to learn and being open for personal development;
4. ability to make decisions and take responsibilities;
5. communication and ability to collaborate;
6. ability to plan (organisation and elasticity).

Most of the training is ensured by judges-trainers who are trained on the training methodologies and techniques. LJTC ensures full support of the training while developing/updating programs and during the training, especially if the training is ensured on line. LJTC ensures that judges-mentors who are trained to do the mentorship are also supported, meeting on a regular basis and discussing challenges. A mentor is available from the first day of the service. While mentors are supporting young judges in addition, professional supervision is also offered that helps young judges to deal with the nontypical situations, issues with the colleagues and staff or deal with the impact of very difficult cases.

Some of the training (I.e, on the Court information system, data protection and privacy, internal HR systems, etc) is provided by specialists from the Court Administration.

EU law is an integral part of the training on specific matters, cross border topicalities, human rights and fundamental rights are provided as additional topics during the first year of service. Additionally, it is encouraged to follow the self- learning programs also offered in-house and other international training providers (for example, HELP).

The program is complimented by the internships organised by each court where the judge is appointed. The program will be further developed to ensure that the internship also takes place in the appellate courts and the Constitutional court and other offices of legal professions (for example, prosecution service for criminal case judges).

LJTC, as a member of the EJTN since 2004, ensures regular participation of Latvian judges in programs like AIAKOS and THEMIS, programs specifically targeted to the candidates for judges position and newly appointed judges.

To support teams for the THEMIS competition LJTC offers training on oratory skills, legal language, presentation skills, support of a tutor, etc.

Training of legal languages is not provided on a national level as a part of the training program. However, EJTN offered training on legal terminology is highly appreciated not only by young judges.

The majority of the training program (200 academic hours / AC, 1 AC is 45 minutes, summative length is 2,5 - 3 months) is provided as an intensive part at the beginning of the service. After the first part of the training program, evaluation of the specific training needs, taking into consideration the specialisation, is offered *asap*. The full profile of the trainee is developed along with the individual personal development plan. The program is organised in a way that encourages a trainee to take full responsibility of their professional development and regular training.

Termination of the initial training and qualification process

There is no termination policy as the judicial system does not require testing or examination after the program is completed.

When selecting and approving new judges, the judiciary does not foresee termination of training during training. Examination or testing and retesting is not performed. Assuming that the selection committee has approved the best candidates for the post of a judge, inclusive and interactive training is provided both in the form of seminars and in a learning at work (in the form of an internship), a new judge is guaranteed quality preparation for the job. A new judge is approved for a probationary period of 3 years.

Prosecutors

This content has not been provided.

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