

Positive result of work of the Ethics' Committee is appreciated at the Judges' Conference

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Establishing of the Judicial Ethics' Committee eight years ago was a source of positive changes in understanding of judges about professional ethics. Those, who started the work of the Committee, put a high lath of an institution of judicial self-government, and the next composition of the Committee will have to deal with even new challenges in the same creative way – this was the fundamental conclusion at the Latvian Judges' Conference of 13 May, as the subject of this year was ethics.

"Judges expected advisory support from the new Committee, and the public – assessment of judges' actions, which affect reputation of the court system," Ivars Bickovics, the Chair of the Council for the Judiciary, said. He pointed out that the Code of Judicial Ethics had existed in Latvia since 1995, but there was no "proceedings on ethics" – assessment of situation to be discussed in context of provisions on ethics and application of norms written in the code to real situations. The Judicial Ethics' Committee, using new methods and applying international standards in its work, began to develop case-law on ethics of Latvian judges.

The Chair of the Council for the Judiciary pointed out that ethical norms and canons are not burden or restriction of independence in judge's work, but, on the opposite – recommendations and warnings help to adopt the correct decision and to choose more secure directions of activity. The Judicial Ethics' Committee has helped judges to solve problematic situations related to ethics.

Speech of Ivars Bickovics, the Chair of the Council for the Judiciary, at the Judges' Conference

Dzintars Rasnacs, the Minister for Justice, in his turn, stressed that recently the public opinion about courts has also changed positively. The Minister believes that change of attitude was caused by establishment of several institutions, including the Judicial Ethics' Committee, but mainly – of the Council for the Judiciary.

At the Conference, Signe Mezinska, the Associate Professor of the University of Latvia, presented a study, which comprised assessment of activity of the Judicial Ethics' Committee, analysis of achievement of goals of foundation and subjects of activity thereof. The study approves the positive assessment of work of the Judicial Ethics' Committee, in opinion of judges, and, as a researcher has pointed out – study of activity of the Judicial Ethics' Committee shows that active process of development of professional ethics has begun in Latvia.

Doctor in Law, Mrs Jane Kirtley, the guest lecturer at the Faculty of Law of the University of Latvia from the United States of America, the Professor at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Minnesota, presented a report at the Conference on use of social and traditional media by judges.

Communication was one of the main questions of work of the previous Judicial Ethics' Committee, and result thereof was elaboration of joint communication guidelines for judges, prosecutors and advocates. Visvaldis Sprudzans, the Chair of the Judicial Ethics' Committee urged so that the Judicial Ethics' Committee should further cooperate with the Prosecutors' Certification Committee and the Ethics' Committee of the Latvian Council of Sworn Advocates, and to use experts' opinions more extensively. As the main task for the new Judicial Ethics' Committee, he, along with majority of candidates to the new Judicial Ethics' Committee, considers the update of the Code of Judicial Ethics.

The new Judicial Ethics' Committee will be elected extramurally – in electronic conference on 20 May. At the Conference held on 13 May, judges heard the nominated candidates, who presented their vision on further work of the Ethics' Committee.

In May, the term of office of nine from among ten members of the Judicial Ethics' Committee expires. Moreover, six of them may not be re-elected, because the law "On Judicial Power" stipulates that term of office of a member of the Judicial Ethics' Committee is four years, and the member of the committee may not be elected for more than two consecutive terms.

Read more about Judges' Conference:

[Study: active process of development of professional judicial ethics has begun](#)

[Conclusions of the Judicial Ethics' Committee are summarised in a book](#)

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