

The Judicial Council sets a strategic overarching goal – equal representation in the dialogue between branches of state power

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Commencing a discussion on the status and functions of the Judicial Council, in particular on the need to provide the Judicial Council with a legislative initiative and enshrine it in the Constitution as a constitutional body, is one of the tasks stated in the Judicial Council's strategy for the next five years approved on 12 March.

The strategy states that the overarching goal of the Judicial Council is to achieve equal representation of the judiciary in the dialogue between branches of state power in order to ensure the independence, quality, development and accountability of the judiciary.

The Judicial Council appreciates that in the first ten years of its operation it has demonstrated its potential in strengthening the independence of the Latvian judiciary. Progress has been made in ensuring the independence of the judiciary, in particular by taking over the matters of career development of judges, as well as by participating in judicial reforms. In the strategy of future activities, the Judicial Council sets goals that are relevant to the current situation of the Latvian judicial system, as well as taking into account the assessment given by the European Union and international institutions.

The Judicial Council has identified four main areas of action for the next five years, as well as goals and objectives in each of these areas.

Strengthening the independence of the judiciary. The aim is to promote the independence of the judiciary from the executive and to develop guarantees of independence.

Tasks for achieving the goal are as follows: to achieve the independence of the budget of the judiciary as a constitutional body; to take over the training of judges from the executive branch; to strengthen the institutions of self-government of judges and their cooperation with the Judicial Council; to raise the level of self-assessment of the independence of judges; to set professional standards for persons belonging to the judiciary; to participate in the development of a model of competitive remuneration of judges and court employees, as well as in the development of court policy and improvement of regulatory framework in matters that directly affect the functioning of the court system.

Strengthening the functionality and role of the Judicial Council. The aim is to ensure that the Judicial Council is a respected representative of the interests of the judiciary, including in the policy-making process.

The Judicial Council considers it necessary to initiate a discussion on its status and functions, especially on the need to envisage a legislative initiative for the Judicial Council and to enshrine it in the Constitution as a constitutional body. The Judicial Council will carry out an audit of the organizational management functions of the judiciary in order to take over a part of the functions of the executive branch, developing the administrative capacity of the Judicial Council accordingly. The Council has also set as its tasks to analyze and, if necessary, initiate changes in the composition of the Judicial Council, in the regulation of voting rights of Council members, so that decisions on career development of judges are the sole responsibility of judges, as well as to promote full involvement of judges in work of the Judicial Council and judicial self-government bodies. In developing the international cooperation of the Judicial Council, it will actively participate in the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary and will apply the experience of other countries in organizing the judicial system.

Efficient and high-quality judiciary. The aim is to make the Latvian court system more efficient, convenient, timely, understandable and accessible to the public.

The Judicial Council will focus on the quality of court judgments, deadlines of court proceedings, system efficiency and access to justice, the evaluation process of judges' performance, digitalisation processes of court system, judges' specialization standards, employee evaluation and remuneration system. The Judicial Council will facilitate the identification of problems in the judiciary and liaise with chairs of courts.

Public confidence in the judiciary. The aim is to raise public awareness of the judiciary in order to increase trust.

The Judicial Council will promote the fulfilment of the tasks of the communication strategy of the judicial system and the observance of common communication principles in the institutions of the judiciary, as well as will constantly inform the public about its dialogue with the constitutional bodies. In order to create a successful dialogue, both the skills of the judiciary to provide information on topical issues of the judiciary will be developed and the society will be educated. The Judicial Council will periodically assess public confidence and attitudes towards the judiciary and the work of the judiciary.

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