

President of Latvia awards the Certificate of Merit to Rita Aksenoka, the retired long-standing head of the Clemency Service

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On 22 April, President of Latvia Egils Levits awarded the Certificate of Merit to the former head of the Prosecutor General's Office Major (PGO) Crime Investigation Department and head of the Presidential Clemency Service, Mrs Rita Aksenoka, for her enormous role in creating Clemency Service and preparing the Clemency Law.

'We highly appreciate your role in creating the Presidential Clemency Service and drafting of the Clemency Law. This achievement was largely made possible thanks to your extensive experience of working as head of the PGO's Major Crime Investigation Department, exceptional working ability, wit and high ethical standards. Many of your peers and colleagues still praise and admire you for being the soul of the Clemency Service – so inspiring, supportive, kind and wise. Thank you for everything you have done and happy 85th birthday!' says the Certificate of Merit signed by President Levits.

Pardoning of convicts is one of the rights of the President of Latvia provided in the Section 45 of the Satversme (Latvian Constitution). Although Satversme, and Section 45 therein, were fully restored by the Saeima (Parliament of the Republic of Latvia) on 6 July 1993, particular provision contained no reference to clemency procedures. On 17 December 1993, President of Latvia Guntis Ulmanis enacted the Regulations regarding the clemency review procedures prepared by the Chancery of the President of Latvia, which also provided for the establishment of new body – the Clemency Service. Clemency law, which regulates the scope of President's pardoning rights and stipulates the clemency procedures, was finally adopted by the Saeima only on 16 June 1998. Adoption of Clemency Law gave the President of Latvia the right to apply the procedures provided in the Clemency Law in full scope. Rita Aksenoka has been one of the major players in these processes since 1993 and worked as the head of the Clemency Service from 1995 to 2007.

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