

President of Latvia discusses the laws regulating exit from COVID-19 crisis with heads of constitutional bodies

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Egils Levits



On 11 June, President of Latvia Egils Levits chaired a Constitutional Council meeting in the Riga Castle to discuss current priorities of constitutional institutions with their heads.

Prime Minister presented the latest COVID-19 vaccination data, underlining that return to schools this autumn and uninterrupted operation of businesses in critical sectors requires much higher vaccination rate. Krišjānis Kariņš also informed others about future vaccine procurements.

Heads of constitutional bodies discussed additional freedoms that will be granted to those who have received vaccine against COVID-19, have recovered from the virus or have the certificate confirming that they have recently undertaken COVID-19 test and results have been negative. Participants of the meeting agreed that parliament should work on the legal basis for granting these freedoms. President envisages no conflicts between such regulatory requirements and Satversme if adopted measures are proportionate and balanced.

The need to find ways of offering more information and easy-to-understand facts about further steps and decisions taken by the government to the society was also emphasised. Widespread disinformation on the information platforms was another challenge highlighted during the meeting.

President of Latvia and President of the Constitutional Court updated everyone on the forthcoming conference for European Union (EU) constitutional courts and Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), which will take place in the beginning of this September in Riga, giving national constitutional courts an opportunity to deepen their dialogue with CJEU. This conference is crucial for uniform application of rule of law in the EU and Latvian constitutional court's participation in deepening of such dialogue is essential, said President.

Heads of constitutional bodies talked about problems in the enforcement of Constitutional Court decisions. Everyone agreed that an institutional solution ensuring timely enforcement of Constitutional Court rulings and legislative adjustments precisely following the court's orders must be sought.

Egils Levits reminded everyone that Satversme (Constitution) prohibits president from signing blatantly unconstitutional acts into force. 'According to the Preamble of Satversme, Latvia is a state that adheres to rule of law, and that means that everyone must follow the instructions of the Constitutional Court as closely and honestly as possible,' said the President.

Meeting then moved on to return of constitutional institution staff to their offices. As President Levits pointed out, constitutional bodies were allowed to work remotely during the lockdown and should return to normal working mode whenever possible as situation improves. Heads of constitutional bodies acknowledged the efficiency of hybrid working conditions, i.e., where participants or invited experts attend meetings from their remote locations.

Current legislative initiatives, which Parliament will review in autumn, were another topic discussed by participants.

Constitutional Council is comprised of President of Latvia Egils Levits, Speaker of the Saeima Ināra Mūrniece, Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Aigars Strupišs and President of the Constitutional Court Sanita Osipova.

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