



LATVIJAS VALSTS PREZIDENTS

**Address by H.E. President of Latvia Raimonds Vējonis at the Conference Dedicated to the Centenary of the Judicial System of Latvia
7 September 2018**

Dear judges, Excellencies, Dear Participants of the Conference, Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

The state cannot be imagined without rights and a judicial system. Establishing our own judicial system was among the first decisions made after the foundation of the Republic of Latvia. That is why we also mark the centenary of the Latvian judicial system this year.

Looking back at what we have achieved, we can really be proud. Since the restoration of the independence of Latvia, an independent, European judicial system is developed and the laws that are in line with the standards of a legal state define the functioning of the courts.

I would like to thank everyone who works every day to make Latvia a legal state. The professionalism and good faith of many judges in Latvia make a significant contribution to strengthening the rule of law.

According to the indicators of the European Union, we are only in the middle of our way. Thus we may not stop at the achievements and offer a mediocre judicial system to the population in Latvia.

Every judge must strive for excellence and must make the best possible effort within his or her mandate in every case. Every judge must be convinced of the justice achieved and the rule of law when the ink has dried up on a court order. Then we will be able to say that justice is guaranteed in Latvia without compromises.

The fact that there is still a lot to do in the judicial system is a very vivid report on the challenges in the area of insolvency. Specific judges have been actively involved in the covering up various dubious schemes, thus casting a shadow over the judicial system as a whole.

Using this opportunity, I would like to thank every judge who has been actively involved in investigating and discussing these cases. Thank you! Perhaps the assessment of insolvency proceedings would not have reached the agenda of the Council of the Judiciary if journalists had not been so persistent in their commitment. So thanks to the journalists as well!

The ability to assess problems in the field of insolvency and discuss them with the public

demonstrates the readiness of the judiciary to change. The work begun may not be left halfway. Systemic improvements are required so that nothing similar would occur in this and other categories of cases.

Dear judges,

Judging and ensuring justice is among the most important functions of the state. However, each individual encounters with the judiciary on an individual basis. Hence, in the eyes of the public, all judges are equal: commitment of each judge, their attitude to the parties, and the ability to ensure justice shape the impression of the whole system.

Therefore, we must demand professionalism, responsibility, and courage to ensure a fair trial and solve complicated issues from all judges. No judge or any judicial body is an exception. The uncertainty of the law or the absence of the Supreme Court's practice may not be an excuse if justice is not ensured in the case.

I would like to pay particular attention to the judges of the first instance court, which form the basis of the entire judicial system. Judicial reforms were carried out with the aim of allowing the district or city court to examine and fairly resolve each case. With that in mind, we have moved to an explicit instance system, and opportunities for appeal are reduced in many cases.

Therefore, it is particularly important that a judge of the first instance court does everything professionally so that we can say that the process has been fair and the outcome is fair. If we will not be demanding today and we will accept that any judge of the first instance court cannot deal with some cases, then we should ask whether we are not facing new challenges.

Yesterday, the Saeima passed amendments to the law, which widened the possibilities for extraordinary assessment of professional activities of judges. Nevertheless, I invite the Legal Standing Committee of the Saeima and the Ministry of Justice to improve the regulation of the disciplinary liability and qualification assessment of judges further.

The limitation periods for disciplinary proceedings against judges should be longer because we often find out about the perpetrators of violations later than the two years stipulated by law. Provision should be made for an extraordinary assessment of the qualifications of judges outside the disciplinary proceedings as well if there are important reasons for that. We also need to assess how to make the assessment of qualifications of judges and mechanisms for disciplinary liability more efficient and effective.

I urge the judiciary to come forward with ideas and proposals for the improvement of laws shortly to improve the mechanisms of judicial accountability and thereby strengthen the independence of the judiciary.

I call on each judge to work in such a way that the three words would describe a judicial system of Latvia unambiguously: justice, integrity, and excellence.

I congratulate you on your celebration, the centenary of the judicial system!

May the centenary of Latvia inspired all of us for faithful actions that strengthen the state and the rule of law!