This section provides you with an overview of the court system in Estonia.

**Organisation of justice – judicial systems**

The Estonian Constitution requires that justice be administered solely by courts. Courts must administer justice in accordance with the Constitution and other laws. Pursuant to the Constitution, the Estonian court system has exclusive competence to administer justice. A court is separate from both the executive and legislative spheres in the performance of its duties.

**Administration of courts**

Courts of first and second instance are administered by the Ministry of Justice together with the Council for Administration of Courts. The Council for Administration of Courts is an advisory board set up to run the court system and its work is directed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The courts of first and second instance are financed from the State budget, through the budget of the Ministry of Justice. The Supreme Court is independently responsible for its own administration and has its own budget.

**The Council for Administration of Courts is composed of:**

the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (also the chair of the Council);
five judges appointed for three years by all judges sitting together (*en banc*);
two Members of the Estonian Parliament;
an attorney-at-law appointed by the board of the Bar Association;
the Chief Public Prosecutor or a public prosecutor appointed by him or her;
the Chancellor of Justice or a representative appointed by him or her;
the Minister of Justice, or their representative, who participates in Council sessions and has the right to speak.
You can find more information on the Council for Administration of Courts here.

**Hierarchy of courts**

Estonia's court system consists of **three levels**:
**County courts** and **administrative courts** are courts of first instance.
**District courts** (courts of appeal) are courts of second instance.
The **Supreme Court** is the court of final appeal (cassation).
As general courts, county courts hear civil, criminal and misdemeanour cases. As courts of first instance, administrative courts hear those administrative cases which are placed under their jurisdiction by law. District courts are courts of second instance which scrutinise rulings given by the country and administrative courts in the event of an appeal. The Supreme Court is the highest court and hears appeals in cassation lodged against district court rulings. The Supreme Court is also the court of constitutional review.

**Legal databases**

General information on the Estonian legal system can be found on the website of the Ministry of Justice.
An overview of the court system in Estonia can be found on the Courts website.

**Is access to this database free of charge?**

Access to information concerning the Estonian legal and court system is **free of charge**.

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