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On Thursday and Friday, Tallinn will host a meeting of the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the European Union Member States. The central focus will be on ensuring the separation of powers.

The Presidents of the European Supreme Judicial Courts will convene in Estonia for the first time. The meeting will be chaired by Priit Pikamäe, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who was elected in October last year to serve as Chairman of the Network of the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the European Union.

According to Priit Pikamäe, the independence of the administration of justice and the substantive achievement of the separation of powers have become increasingly topical issues in Europe: “I am referring to the developments in Poland but also before that in Turkey, where the coup d’état was followed by the wholesale arrest of judges. Also in Hungary, the politically motivated judicial reform resulted in many judges losing their offices. This shows that the independence of the judiciary is not an undisputed fact, even in 21st century Europe.”

“Ensuring the independence of the judiciary is a decision to be made by the legislators, and is thus an important part of the political culture. The influence on the activities of the courts through public political reforms is only one aspect of this, as a much more insidious tendency is the influence on the activities of the Supreme Courts through financing decisions,” Pikamäe said.

During the meeting in Tallinn, the presidents will discuss the conditions which must be fulfilled in order to ensure the independence and autonomy of the judiciary as a separate branch of power. Similarly, the exchanges of mutual knowledge and experience will involve questions on whether, and to what extent, the other national institutions should control the actions of the Supreme Court, and what role the presidents of the courts should play in relation to the judicial reforms. One of the goals of the meeting is to develop uniform standards for the definition and understanding of the independence of the judiciary.

The meeting will be attended by the Presidents of the Supreme Courts of Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Croatia, Finland, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, Germany, France, Latvia, Montenegro, Italy, Spain, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Slovakia, Albania and Estonia.

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