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18-19 October, Tallinn will host a round table of the Supreme Administrative Courts of Europe, focusing on fair judicial proceedings. The meeting will be attended by judges from 25 European countries.

The participants will discuss the possibilities for simplifying administrative court proceedings. It is important to keep in mind that the protection of the participants' fundamental rights will not be undermined.

The goal of the simplified proceedings is to resolve disputes in court as quickly and as economically as possible. For instance, during the simplified proceedings, the court will hear both parties in the dispute but it does not have to hold a trial. The communication between the parties in the proceedings will be less formal and the decision may be made in a shorter format.

'Simplified forms of proceedings are already used in many European states, but the approach to the simplification of proceedings differs substantially country by country. In Estonia, we can use simplified proceedings to hear cases where the claim is under 1000 euros; whereas in Belgium, for example, simplified proceedings are used to hear cases in the field of financial supervision regardless of the size of the claim,' said Ivo Pilving, Chairman of the Administrative Law Chamber of the Supreme Court. 'Due to the sharp increase in the number of asylum applications, many countries have also created simplified proceedings for resolving such cases,' he added.

According to Pilving, the possibility to hold court sessions by video conference will also be discussed at the meeting. 'It is a fairly common practice in Estonia, but many states are more cautious about holding video conferences – they consider that the direct communication between the judge and the participants in the proceedings is an essential part of the proceedings. We will try to share our experience with the other states in this regard.'

Last year, the courts of the first instance solved approximately 3000 administrative cases, with 3 to 4 % of these concluded via simplified proceedings. In comparison, the corresponding ratio in the Netherlands and Luxembourg was 30%, and in Belgium and France a total of half of the cases were resolved using simplified proceedings.

'Although the Estonian Code of Administrative Court Procedure also provides for the possibility to hear cases using simplified proceedings, so far, this option has not been used much. During the meeting in Tallinn, we will get an overview of the experiences of the other states, and we hope that this will provide us with good ideas for the development of the Estonian justice and court practices,' said Priit Pikamäe, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who considers the meeting necessary.

This is the first time that the Presidents of the Supreme Administrative Courts of Europe will convene in Estonia. The meeting will be attended by representatives of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the Supreme Courts of Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and Estonia.

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