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Judges from five foreign countries visited Estonian courts and law enforcement authorities from 16 to 20 September. Judges from the Netherlands, France, Italy, Bulgaria and Romania participated in the exchange programme of the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN).

They visited Harju County Court, Tallinn Circuit Court, the Ministry of Justice, the Estonian Bar Association, the Office of the Prosecutor General, the Office of the Chancellor of Justice and the Faculty of Law of the University of Tartu. They also visited the e-Estonia Briefing Centre, where the guests were given an overview of the digital state solutions of Estonia.

The foreign judges could participate in a job shadowing day where, for example, Heli Sepp, Judge of the Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court, welcomed Alessandro M. Andronio, Judge of Criminal Cases at the Italian Supreme Court of Cassation. Risto Uustal, Adviser of the Legal Information and Judicial Training Department, complemented the job shadowing day with a presentation.

On the last day of the visit, all the foreign guests had the opportunity to take a tour of the Supreme Court building and learn about its history. Kai Kullerkupp, Judge of the Civil Chamber, and Martin Kreutzberg, Adviser of the Constitutional Review Chamber, then talked about the organisation of work at the highest court in Estonia.

Estonia was the first choice as the destination country for all the guests in the EJTN exchange programme. They were mainly interested in the digital systems, especially the organisation of digital court proceedings. Estonia's image as a digital country was also the main reason why the foreign judges wanted to come within the scope of the exchange programme.

According to Kristin Kink, Adviser of the Legal Information and Judicial Training Department of the Supreme Court, who also participated in preparing the schedule of the exchange programme, the entire exchange programme was both informative and entertaining for the guests. Kink added that the foreign guests were positively surprised by the development of the Estonian digital state and the digital systems. The guests want to implement many of the solutions used in Estonian courts in their home countries. They were amazed at how the Estonian state has developed and become so successful so quickly after regaining independence.

“One of the reasons why the Bulgarian judge was interested in visiting Estonia was that a colleague had already visited Estonia as part of the exchange programme and was full of praise for the experience,” Kink added.

The foreign judges who visited Estonia highly appreciated the exchange programme. The guests enjoyed the discussions in various institutions as well as the openness and frankness of the Estonians.

