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Estonian Court System

The **Constitution of the Republic of Estonia** [1] establishes that justice shall be administered solely by the courts. The courts shall be independent in their activities and shall administer justice in accordance with the Constitution and the laws. According to the spirit of the Constitution the court system of Estonia forms a uniform whole, having the exclusive competence to perform the function of administration of justice and being separated from both the executive and the legislative powers in the performance of this duty.

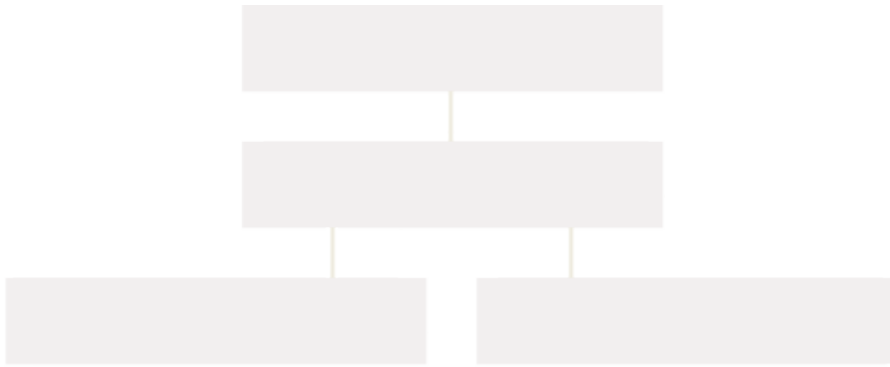
Estonia's court system [2] consists of three instances: **district [3] and administrative [4] courts** are the first instance courts; **circuit [5] courts** are the courts of the second instance, and the **Supreme Court** [6] is the third instance. The formation of emergency courts is prohibited by the Constitution.

The structure of Estonia's court system is one of the simplest in Europe. The peculiarity of the system lies in the fact that the Supreme Court simultaneously performs the functions of the highest court of general jurisdiction, of the supreme administrative court as well as of the constitutional court.

There are **249 judges** employed in Estonia's court system as of 1 January 2025.

Yet, the administration of the courts in Estonia is not independent and separate from the executive power. The first and second instance courts are financed from the state budget through the budget of the Ministry of Justice and Digital Affairs [7]. Courts of the first instance and courts of appeal are administered in cooperation between the **Ministry of Justice and Digital Affairs** and the **Council for Administration of Courts** [8]. The Supreme Court, being an independent constitutional institution, administers itself and is financed directly from the state budget.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is appointed to office by the parliament Riigikogu, on the proposal of the President of the Republic. Justices of the Supreme Court are appointed to office by the Riigikogu, on the proposal of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Other judges are appointed to office by the President of the Republic, on the proposal of the Supreme Court.



Supreme Court

District courts

Source URL: <https://www.riigikohus.ee/en/estonian-court-system>

Administrative courts

Links

- [1] <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/530122020003/consolide>
- [2] <https://www.kohus.ee/en/estonian-courts/estonian-court-system>
- [3] <https://www.riigikohus.ee/en/estonian-court-system/district-courts>
- [4] <https://www.riigikohus.ee/en/estonian-court-system/administrative-courts>
- [5] <https://www.riigikohus.ee/en/estonian-court-system/circuit-courts>
- [6] <https://www.riigikohus.ee/en/supreme-court-estonia>
- [7] <https://www.justdigi.ee/en>
- [8] <https://www.riigikohus.ee/en/administration-courts/council-administration-courts>