



EESTI ADVOKATUUR  
ESTONIAN BAR ASSOCIATION

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## **46th European Presidents' Conference 2018**

### **Country report – Estonia**

#### **General information**

As of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017, the Estonian Bar Association (EBA) had 1027 members, including 659 attorneys-at-law, 82 senior assistants to attorneys-at-law, 281 assistants to attorneys-at-law and 5 associated members, of which 810 are active members.

There are altogether 210 law firms in Estonia of which the number of solo practitioners (law firm with one practitioner) is 98.

#### **EBA membership fees**

No changes were made in 2017 fees: €728/year or €61/month for attorneys-at-law and for senior assistants to attorneys-at-law and €575/year or €48/month for assistant attorneys at law.

#### **Strategy Plan**

On-going preparation of the new EBA strategy plan to address issues like the rise of law firms at the big four audit companies, possible foreign ownership of law firms and law firms partnering with service providers from other sectors as well as many other issues. We expect the first version of this strategy plan to be presented to the annual meeting of our members in May, 2018.

#### **Commenting on amendments to Estonian legislation**

EBA participated actively in legislative process. The EBA has 11 committees (established according to areas of expertise) that respond to requests by the Estonian Ministry of Justice or other government agencies to review and comment on proposed legislation. The committees may also comment on legislation when we believe it is in our self- interest or the public interest to do so.

#### **Legal Software/Artificial Intelligence Competition**

EBA and the University of Tartu jointly carried out a competition to create a working prototype or application to solve legal issues. Five projects were submitted in January, 2017 and the three finalists were introduced in May, 2017. The winning bidder was composed of three Estonian students (one from Lund University in Sweden, one from University of Tartu and one from Tallinn Technical University) and an artificial intelligence Estonian entrepreneur. Their winning entry was an algorithm that carries out a semantically accurate legal issue search from legislation, court cases and other legal material.

#### **Legal Aid system**

The EBA continued to pursue additional funding of legal aid from the state budget. The resources allocated from the state budget must enable to increase the fees for the provision of state legal aid to ensure fair remuneration for the work of an advocate; the gap between the fees/prices of regular legal aid and state-funded legal aid is still unacceptably big. Considerable efforts have been made to find more efficient alternatives to the current system. The work in this field will also continue in 2018.

In 2017, 14219 applicants received legal aid (66% percent of legal aid applications are for criminal cases).

### **Quality Management Certificates**

The EBA has issued Quality Management Certificate for law firms that are members of the Estonian Bar Association since the end of 2015. As of December, 2017, 12 quality management certificates have been issued. These certificates have been issued to both small and large firms, and to firms in all regions of Estonia.

The Quality Management Certificate is recognition by the EBA that the law firm operates to a high standard of service. The certification procedure reviews the internal procedures of a law firm. It does not assess the content and quality of the legal advice provided by the attorneys at law.

Applying for a Quality Management Certificate is optional. A fee is charged for applying for the certification and the annual follow-up audits.

### **New Secretary General**

Hillar Lauri began his five-year term as Secretary General of the EBA on 1 August, 2017.