

Modernisation of the Latvian Judicial System

As part of its contribution to EU enlargement, Switzerland has pledged CHF 8 million to co-fund a project aimed at improving the quality and efficiency of Latvia's judicial system. The joint project agreement was signed by the two countries on 25 June 2009.

Faced with the rising number and growing complexity of lawsuits that come before its courts, and in view of the outdated communication technology used by them, the Latvian government decided that action was needed to modernise its judicial system. Consequently, it launched a project to improve the standards and efficiency of adjudication by its courts, and to afford citizens easier access to the system.

On 25 June 2009, Switzerland (represented by the Swiss ambassador in Riga, Gabriela Nützi Sulpizio) and Latvia (represented by the Deputy State Secretary at the Ministry of Finance, Andžs Ūbelis) signed the joint project agreement. Latvia has earmarked CHF 1.4 million, while Swiss funding for the project will total CHF 8 million. By the end of the project, which is expected to run for three years, not only will the courts be equipped with improved communication technology (audio, video-conferencing and internet), but Latvia will have an overall more effective and efficient court management system.



All of Latvia's courts will be given modern recording equipment, replacing the current labour-intensive and costly court reporting and transcription system. In addition, the introduction of videoconferencing facilities in courts and prisons will also help cut costs by doing away with the need to transport prisoners to and from court. The Latvian public will also have access to more information about the courts via the internet and will increasingly be able to communicate with them electronically. As a result of these and other measures, Latvia should end up with a more effective and speedier justice system. The measures set out in this modernisation project are in line with Council of Europe recommendations.