

Courts no longer required to use registered mail (1/5/17)

The latest amendments to the Civil Procedure Act, the Criminal Procedure Act and the Administrative Procedure Act provide that the courts are no longer required to use registered mail for sending a summons to litigants. A summons will now generally be delivered by standard mail or electronic mail, or by messenger, but a summons to barristers and central or local government agencies, by electronic mail.

What is registered mail?

Unlike standard mail, a registered letter is entered on the postal register, the sender gets a receipt from the postal worker, and the letter will be issued to the addressee against their signature only.

If the addressee isn't at home at the time of delivery, then a note will be dropped in their letter box asking them to pick up the letter at the specified post office.

Difficulty may arise if the addressee doesn't have a letter box to drop a note in. Also, only the addressee or their authorised representative acting under a power of attorney has the right to receive the letter, a condition that makes it difficult to receive the letter if the addressee is abroad, for example.

Faster, easier, cheaper

The amendments aim to ensure more efficient communication between the court and litigants, and to encourage the development of electronic means of communication, the use of email and the online system, in order to make the process of communication faster, easier, and considerably cheaper.

According to the parliamentary website, about 455,000 registered letters are sent in criminal proceedings each year, costing around €650,000. Once the amendments come into force, the number of registered letters is expected to drop to 120,000 on average. This way the amendments help to save the public funds budgeted for ensuring the operation of the court system. The savings can now be used to increase court staff salaries.

To prevent the amendments from having adverse implications for litigants, the lawmaker has provided for retaining the obligation to notify a person by registered mail in certain clauses of the procedural Acts, including sections of the Civil Procedure Act which provide that applications and copies of their annexes, judgments by default, decisions to enforce temporary protections, and decisions governed by international civil procedures (e.g. to enforce a foreign judgment in Latvia) must be delivered by registered mail.