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“transparent and efficient justice”
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SPEECH

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Dear colleagues,

First of all, I would like to thank the Minister of Justice and the Government of Turkey as well as the Council of Europe for organising this conference that gives us an opportunity to exchange opinions about important aspects of today's justice and share our experience in pursuit of more effective administration of justice.

Information technology and new means of communication definitely play a very important role in today's world. These technologies facilitate much faster dissemination of information, accumulation of huge amounts of data and mutual communication and they must therefore be inevitably applied in the context of administration of justice. Lithuania attaches great importance to the modernisation of public sector services and their transfer to the electronic space, including judicial activities. We seek to use electronic communication technologies that would facilitate work, save resources and help to shorten procedures.

Today, we are considering how the modern means of communication could accelerate court proceedings without prejudice to the rights of the parties to the proceedings. One of such examples is the delivery of procedural documents to the parties to a dispute and the submission of procedural documents to the court by electronic means of communication. We are discussing possibilities for courts to deliver procedural documents to some parties to the proceedings named in the law exclusively by electronic means of communication.

Another example is the possibility to transfer to the electronic space the procedure of issuance of court orders whereby debt recovery issues are dealt with by simplified procedure. We are planning to make it possible to submit procedural documents to the court, process them and deliver them to the parties to the proceedings using information and electronic communication technologies.

My third example is the use of information and electronic communication technologies (video conferences, teleconferences, etc.) when questioning witnesses in their locations.

Virtually the same provisions are planned in administrative proceedings as well.

Seeing great progress in the area of information technology and obvious benefits and opportunities it creates as well as other countries' experience, we have decided to move criminal proceedings to the electronic space as well. In two years' time, all institutions involved in criminal proceedings will start using an integrated criminal procedure information system, also known as e-case. This will enable us to ensure a much faster and more transparent process as well as more effective cooperation and coordination of actions of all institutions involved in criminal proceedings.

In addition, seeking to facilitate and improve access to justice, we intend to place templates of some of the most important procedural documents to be submitted by persons applying to court on a public website, thus enabling the parties concerned to prepare these documents themselves.

I would like to point out that the first steps in applying electronic communication technologies have already been taken: audio recordings of all court hearings have been made since 1 July 2010. Eventually, they should replace the minutes of meetings. This technological innovation not only simplifies the organisation of court hearings but also enhances the transparency and publicity of judicial work as well as increases public confidence in courts.

We believe that the application of information and electronic communication technologies in the judicial and enforcement process will enable us to not only facilitate and modernise the existing procedures and reduce the workload of courts but also avoid expenses on the delivery of documents and the costs of the minutes of hearings, etc. Reduced expenses on post, printing and paper would also contribute to a reduction in litigation costs. There would be no need to compensate for the expenses of travel to court hearings incurred by parties to the proceedings, etc. All this will help to save both the money of the parties to the proceedings and the state budget.

Thank you for your attention.