

# Riga Justice Agenda

*“Transforming justice for a vibrant social contract”*

Riga, Latvia, 6 December 2021



Ministry of Justice  
Republic of Latvia



On the occasion of the second “Global Dialogue of Justice Leaders” (6 December 2021), Ministers and high level representatives from OECD, Open Government Partnership and Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies Member and Partner countries convened virtually in Riga, Latvia to reflect on ways to help governments revitalise the social contract and strengthen democratic values and citizens’ trust in public institutions by putting people at the centre of justice systems.

During the meeting, participants recalled the 2018 Riga Statement: Investing in Access to Justice for all!, which recognised 1) the importance of equal access to justice and legal empowerment as intrinsic goods and foundational components of inclusive growth, transparent and accountable institutions 2) the unique opportunity offered by target 16.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals to accelerate the provision of justice and work toward ensuring equal access to justice for all by 2030.

Achieving this goal remains a priority. At the same time, participants acknowledged that even before the pandemic, two-thirds of the world’s population did not have meaningful access to justice.

There is a growing movement for people-centered justice, which has gained momentum with the adoption of the above-mentioned 2018 Riga Statement, followed by the Hague Declaration, the Buenos Aires Declaration, the Joint Action Plan of the G7+, the Joint Letter to the UN Secretary-General.

Several international organisations are working in this area. In particular, the participants welcomed the UN Secretary General’s report Our Common Agenda, which identifies building trust between people and institutions as “our defining challenge” and recognises justice as an essential dimension of the social contract, as well as the OECD Framework and Good Practice Principles on people-centered justice.

In order to move forward and transform justice in support of a vibrant social contract, the participants welcomed the following Riga Justice Agenda:

1) In order to strengthen the bonds that hold societies together, enable democracies to deliver on people's expectations and reestablish trust between people, their governments and other stakeholders, countries need to work towards transforming justice systems by putting people at the centre.

2) Transformation of justice systems needs to be grounded in empirical data on people's justice needs and structural injustices. Responsive strategies, management approaches and capacity building should be in place to ensure transformation. Justice actors need to increase their understanding of what the most common justice problems are, who faces them, what impact they have, how they are addressed, how people experience justice pathways and what works to resolve and prevent justice problems.

3) Open government principles of transparency, participation and accountability should be embedded into justice policy, design and delivery in bringing about the transformation of justice systems.

4) Working collaboratively at local, national and international levels, as well as with civil society and other stakeholders; learning from each other; measuring progress towards achieving justice for all and being accountable to the people are important.

Efforts are needed to:

- a. **Put people and their justice needs at the center of justice systems**, by developing better management approaches, strategies and building capacity and by using justice data to reach groups that are most likely to suffer injustice.
- b. **Resolve justice problems**, with fair, open, inclusive, relevant and timely justice solutions that respect human rights.
- c. **Improve justice journeys**, empowering people to tackle the root causes of injustice, access justice services and help them achieve fair outcomes.
- d. **Use justice for prevention and to promote reconciliation**, by focusing on the de-escalation of conflicts and disputes and building trustworthy justice systems
- e. **Empower people to access services and opportunities**, enabling them to participate fully in society and the economy.

Finally, participants thanked the OECD, the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies for their work to promote a global consensus on people-centred and open justice for inclusive societies, growth and stronger democracies.