

ZAGREB DECLARATION

RECLAIMING HUMAN RIGHTS IN EUROPE: HOW TO ENHANCE THE DEMOCRATIC SPACE?

The Ombuds, National Human Rights Institutions and Equality Bodies, present at the High level international conference « RECLAIMING HUMAN RIGHTS IN EUROPE: HOW TO ENHANCE THE DEMOCRATIC SPACE? », held in Zagreb on 11th and 12th May 2017;

Having in mind the current context in wider Europe, where human rights and equality are being increasingly challenged;

Recalling the standards of human rights and equality enshrined in many international instruments of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe;

Recalling the standards of human rights and equality enshrined in the charters of fundamental rights of national constitutions and legislation of European countries;

Considering the values of democracy, freedom, respect for human rights, equality, solidarity, human dignity and the rule of law;

Considering the role of Ombuds, National Human Rights Institutions and Equality Bodies in protecting and promoting human rights and equality and fighting discrimination;

REPORT

The current context in wider Europe is increasingly marked by growing inequalities, discrimination, racism, xenophobia and religious intolerance. Respect for human rights more generally, as well as particular human rights guarantees are increasingly being challenged.

A serious threat to human rights and democracy is posed by terrorism, as well as violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism. Action by states is necessary to prevent and condemn terrorist acts, however some security policies undermine respect for human rights, and could even lead to greater insecurity, when the fight against terrorism is not pursued without discrimination and in conformity with international human rights law.

Retaining freedom of expression and combating its abuse by hate speech remains an issue. Freedom of expression is under threat in several parts of Europe, and media freedom is in decline. At the same time, even though efforts are made to prevent and condemn expression which spreads, incites, promotes or justifies hatred based on intolerance, an increase in hate speech, particularly online, is evident.

In such a challenging context, successful integration is still not a reality for many migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and their descendants, as well as for many other socially excluded minorities, like Roma, which face discrimination all over Europe.

EMPHASIZE

Protection and promotion of human rights and the fight against discrimination, racism and intolerance and promotion of equality are indispensable in contemporary European societies, including as important safeguards for peace and security.

Ombuds, National Human Rights Institutions and Equality Bodies have an essential role in protecting and promoting human rights, fighting against discrimination, racism and intolerance and promoting equality, and also playing an important role in preserving democracy and the rule of law. They work closely with a variety of actors, including civil society, and support the democratic space.

There are difficulties and pressures encountered by Ombudsmen, National Human Rights Institutions and Equality Bodies in pursuing the fulfilment of their roles and it is therefore vital that they are recognised as key actors, guaranteed full independence, as well as granted sufficient powers and resources to fulfil their mandates.

AND HENCE REAFFIRM

Our strong commitment of our institutions to the protection and promotion of human rights and equality, the fight against all forms of discrimination, and the support of democratic space.

Our commitment to cooperation with key stakeholders, including state actors and civil society, in the promotion and protection of human rights and equality.

Our commitment to cooperation between our institutions, both at the national level, as well as through and between our networks, most notably IOI, ENNHRI and Equinet.

Our commitment to cooperation with the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as other organisations and bodies in the promotion and protection of human rights and equality in Europe.

Zagreb, 12 May 2017



REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Ombudsman

High Level International Conference
On The Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Ombudsman in Croatia
“Reclaiming Human Rights in Europe: How To Enhance The Democratic Space?”

Zagreb – 12 May 2017

LIST OF SIGNATORIES

1. Austria, Austrian Ombudsman Board
2. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman
3. Croatia, Ombudswoman
4. Croatia, Ombudswoman for Children
5. Croatia, Ombudswoman for Gender Equality
6. Croatia, Ombudswoman for Persons with Disability
7. Czech Republic, Public Defender of Rights
8. Finland, Human Rights Centre
9. France, Defender of Rights
10. Georgia, Public Defender
11. Germany, German Institute of Human Right
12. Great Britain, Equality and Human Rights Commission
13. Ireland, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
14. Ireland, Office of the Ombudsman
15. Kosovo*, Ombudsperson
16. Latvia, Ombudsman
17. Lithuania, Seimas Ombudsman office
18. Luxembourg, Centre for Equal Treatment
19. Macedonia, Ombudsman
20. Monte Negro, Ombudsman
21. Netherlands, Netherlands Institute for Human Rights
22. Northern Ireland, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
23. Poland, Commissioner for Human Rights
24. Serbia, Commissioner for Protection of Equality
25. Serbia, Protector of Citizens
26. Slovenia, Advocate of the Principle of Equality
27. Slovenia, Ombudsman
28. Spain, Catalan Ombudsman
29. Turkey, Ombudsman

SUPPORTED BY

30. International Ombudsman Institute - IOI
31. European Network of Equality Bodies - EQUINET
32. European Network of National Human Rights – ENNHRI

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and ICJ Advisory opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence