



September 2022 Newsletter

September - Civic Engagement Month

The Ombudsman declared September as the month of civic engagement. The Ombudsman's Office delivered a social media campaign on the following topics: elections, public debate, freedom of association, volunteering, pickets, rallies and strikes, referendums and signature collection, involvement in local administration, law enforcement mechanisms, protection of vulnerable groups, freedom of speech and expression, privacy and data protection.

In particular, the Ombudsman stressed the importance of elections, inviting everyone to participate in the parliamentary elections on 1 October and to vote for the option that would provide – in their opinion - the best possible future, not just for the lesser evil.

“Annual Award for Supporting People with Disabilities”: Submissions are Open

The Ombudsman has called on people to notice and appreciate the important contribution of the people around them and their work in support of people with disabilities, by submitting them for the 8th “Annual Award for Supporting People with Disabilities”. The award is aimed towards activities launched or implemented between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2022. The award is organised by the Ombudsman, in cooperation with the Association of Disabled Persons and their Friends “Apeirons” and the National Library of Latvia.

Ombudsman Withdraws from the European Ombudsman Institute

On September 16, Ombudsman Juris Jansons sent a letter to the European Ombudsman Institute (EOI), announcing his withdrawal from the organisation. The main reason for this step is the organisation's dubious attitude towards the Russian Federation and its long-lasting military activities in Ukraine, as well as its continued cooperation with the National High Commissioner for Human Rights of the Russian Federation's Tatyana Moskalkova.

“It is not acceptable for me to be a member and board member of an organization that does not have a clear and firm position in relation to Russia's war in Ukraine. As a human rights defender, it is important for me to take a stance at the European level, so I call on other ombudsmen to evaluate their participation in the organisation,” says J. Jansons.

Ombudsman: Politicians Must Comply with Constitutional Court Judgments and Urgently Revise the Minimum Income Levels

The Ombudsman called on the government to review minimum income levels for guaranteed minimum income and state social security benefits as early as October. He also stressed that the government should ensure that

the planned increase in the minimum pension and state social security benefit reaches the population already in January, rather than in May as planned at the moment. It is important to note that people with disabilities make up the majority of recipients of state social security benefits.

The Ombudsperson has already spoken out about this issue on several occasions. “Such a delay is, in essence, a blatant ignorance of judgments of the Constitutional Court, even mockery of the Court,” he points out.

Ombudsman Calls for Support for All Households Regardless of the Type of Heating Used

The Ombudsman addressed Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš with a request to assess the need to compensate for energy costs for all households in the upcoming heating season, regardless of the type of heating technology used (provided that the specific technology can be used according to the current regulatory framework).

Currently, aid is provided to households using electricity, natural gas, wood pellets, briquettes and firewood for heating purposes. In the case of liquefied gas and diesel fuel, no support is foreseen, although these types of heating technologies are allowed in the country.

Ombudsman: Children are Hostage to the Inaction of Politicians and Blackmail of Teachers

Teachers had planned to go on an open-ended strike on 19 September. The Ombudsman stressed that it is the duty of the State and local governments to provide education to children. He expressed concern that children’s right to education had been forgotten amidst the struggle of teachers for the right to fair remuneration and the failure of politicians to ensure this constitutional principle. Teachers have the right to go on strike, but children should not suffer from it.

Ombudsman: Screentime for Children Must be Limited - Including in the Education Process

The Ministry of Health has come out with new recommendations, aiming to limit screentime for children. In the opinion of the Ombudsman, a new regulatory framework that would be binding on educational institutions would be a more effective means of protecting children’s rights. However, he is convinced that the recommendations are a step in the right direction in the aim to create a learning environment that is safe for children’s health and development.

Ombudsman Invites Schools to Apply for “Ready for Life” Lectures

In the “Ready for Life” lectures and excursions, experts from different fields highlight the ways that knowledge gained in school can be used in different life situations and professions. Experts from the Ombudsman’s Office are taking part in the programme by offering lectures on electoral literacy, data protection and trafficking in human beings. In the near future, schools will also be able to apply for lectures on tolerance in society, freedom of expression and hate speech.