



Austrian League for Human Rights

(Österreichische Liga für Menschenrechte, speaker: Mr. Florian Horn)

The Austrian League for Human Rights again this year was able to organise an alliance of more than 250 organisations of the Austrian civil society in one comprehensive joint statement.

We thank the state representatives for listening to the concerns voiced in this pre-session. For further reference we also refer to our written joint statement, which lists all organisations participating in their respective fields (available at <http://www.liga.or.at/projekte/universal-periodic-review-2020-upr/>).

In the short time of this statement, I can only briefly touch on some of the important issues. One of these issues is women's rights: Domestic violence against women has increased in recent years, reaching a peak during the lockdown period of the Covid19-crisis. Attempts to counter this increase by legal amendments focus too much on (harsher) punishment of perpetrators and too little on prevention. Therefore, we stress the importance to create a new National Action Plan "Protection against Violence for Women" and to improve data collection on gender-based violence and femicide.

Also, regarding persons with disabilities, still many open issues remain. The National Action Plan for Disability lacks clarity and was not efficiently implemented. In the last circle, state representatives have also emphasised the importance of the establishment of an inclusive education system. However, up to this day the segregation of children with disabilities in special educational institutions is still a fact. We demand the preparation of a comprehensive strategy to de-institutionalise children with disabilities.

Regarding refugees and asylum seekers too, the handling of unaccompanied children and young people in the asylum procedure is still not satisfactory. The care of minor foreigners must be guaranteed by child and youth welfare services from the first day of their arrival in Austria. Furthermore, Austria has introduced an Agency for Care and Support services for Refugees. While taking responsibility for welfare and housing of refugees, this organisation also takes over the legal counselling from the existing independent organisations of civil society. This infringes the fundamental right to an effective legal remedy. Therefore, we demand real independent legal advice for asylum-seekers.

Continuing on the rule of law, public consultations were not improved in the legislative process, but deteriorated within the review period. This is contrary to the statement in the current state report. These problems were elevated in the Covid19-crisis and the legal measures taken therein. Numerous government measures have already been repealed by the Austrian Constitutional Court, while public statements by government officials seem to still willingly accept such breach of constitutional norms. The Austrian government has so far failed to make necessary considerations regarding proportionality of the measures taken.