



Latvijas Republikas tiesībsargs
Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia

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Written Statement for the UPR Pre-session on The Republic of Latvia

Mr. President,

Distinguished members of the Human Rights Council, ladies and gentlemen, this statement is made on behalf of Ombudsman of Latvia, a national “A status” human rights institution.

It should be noted that the Ombudsman was invited to participate in the national consultation process, however the Ombudsman has chosen to provide an alternative report instead.

In this statement the Ombudsman wishes to focus on the issues concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, trafficking in human beings and ratification of OPCAT.

Rights of persons with disabilities

First of all, the Ombudsman considers the issues relating to the rights of persons with disabilities to have the most urgency and compared to the other aspects of our statement – to have the least improvement over the reporting period. The Ombudsman wants to point out areas concerning the provision of technical aids to children and accessibility of inclusive education and calls upon the state to improve the provision of these services with the utmost urgency.

Ombudsman has repeatedly called upon the state to implement community-based services for persons with disabilities and accelerate the deinstitutionalization process. The high Covid-19 infection and mortality rates in social care homes in Latvia once again prove the urgent need for significant improvements in the provision of support available to persons with disabilities.

Trafficking in human beings

During the review period the trafficking in human beings has been an important field of research and the Ombudsman has repeatedly noted concerns about the shortcomings regarding the co-operation between various stakeholders, undermining the identification and referral of victims to social service providers. In 2019 the Ombudsman has called upon the Government to develop one comprehensive “umbrella” law to provide a clear referral mechanism for victims of trafficking, as well as an effective mechanism for transferring and exchanging information between public authorities and social service providers.

*Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel,
Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT)*

Regarding the ratification of OPCAT, The Ombudsman notes that although the government of Latvia has shown readiness for the ratification of the optional protocol and Ombudsman's capacity has been financially strengthened, as of February 2021 the ratification process has not been completed.

Non-citizen status

To conclude the statement the Ombudsman wishes to remark the positive development on the part of the government of Latvia regarding the amendments in the Citizenship law. From 2020 onwards no children born in Latvia can receive "non-citizen" status. The Ombudsman welcomes the decision of the parliament.

The Ombudsman would like to declare its readiness for constructive cooperation with the Latvian government in the implementation of the recommendations.

Thank you for the attention.