

Annual Activity Report by Human Rights Commissioner



András Csúri

News

On 8 April 2019, the Commissioner for Human Rights, *Dunja Mijatović*, presented her first [annual activity report](#) before the Parliamentary Assembly.

Since taking up her work in 2018, the Commissioner visited several countries as an important means of dialogue, including Albania, Armenia, Estonia, and Greece. She paid particular attention to the following:

- Human rights in conjunction with immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers;
- Media freedom and the safety of journalists;
- Children's and women's rights;
- Human rights protection in conjunction with counter-terrorism legislation.

As regards migration, the Commissioner calls upon Member States to improve the treatment of immigrants, respect human rights, and share responsibility in this matter. A particular issue of concern is the situation of individuals and NGOs who provide assistance to migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, as increasing pressure and restrictions are being put on their work.

The report stresses the need for better protection of human rights advocates and journalists, as violent assaults, laws, and practices (e.g., against the right to confidential sources) significantly hinder their activities.

As regards women's rights, the report emphasises the need to tackle gender stereotypes and reduce the gender pay gap, which remain a major obstacle to achieving effective equality in both the public and private sectors. Additionally, violence against women must be efficiently investigated and prosecuted. The Commissioner also promoted the ratification and full implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

As regards children's rights, the Commissioner highlighted challenges connected to child poverty and equal access to quality-inclusive education for all children. The report identifies violence against children, including sexual abuse and exploitation of children, as another major issue. The Commissioner called on countries that have not yet done so to ratify both the Istanbul Convention, which protects children against domestic violence, and the Lanzarote Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. In this regard, the Commissioner also raised issues pertaining to juvenile justice, including the need to ensure that children have access to free legal aid and the importance of having a sufficiently high minimum age of criminal responsibility.

As regards the relationship between counter-terrorism measures and human rights protection, the Commissioner stressed that the misuse of anti-terrorism legislation has become one of the most common threats to freedom of expression, including media freedom. The report highlights that anti-terrorism legislation is

AUTHOR

András Csúri

Vienna University of Economics and Business

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typically adopted following accelerated procedures and/or in the direct aftermath of terrorist attacks, leaving little space for thorough and peaceful discussions on their human rights impact and thereby increasing the risk of misuse.

The report further summarized the Commissioner's activities against inequality faced by persons with disabilities, older persons, Roma, and LGBTI individuals.

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