

# Commissioner for Human Rights: Annual Activity Report



**András Csúri**

## News

On 19 January 2018, *Nils Muižnieks*, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, [presented](#) his last annual report on the activities carried out during 2017. It includes an assessment of the state of human rights in Europe. The [activity report](#) states that, in 2017, the human rights situation continued to deteriorate in many European countries.

Old crises intensified, including:

- The ongoing conflict in Ukraine, where neither the Commissioner nor other international human rights organisations gained access to assess the situation first-hand.
- The human rights crisis in Turkey, with growing numbers of journalists and human rights defenders in detention.
- The rule-of-law crisis in Poland, with the adoption of new legislation further undermining the independence of the judiciary and the separation of powers.
- The neglected needs of many victims of war crimes in the Western Balkans, after the ICTY ceased its operations.
- The crisis in Catalonia.
- The persecution of people on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity in the Russian Federation and Azerbaijan.

New crises emerged:

- Due to an outpouring of revelations about sexual harassment and sexual assault, the Commissioner devoted considerable effort to promoting ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention.
- The space for human rights defenders and NGOs shrank in many places in Europe, which made the Commissioner address this issue, amongst others, with the Ukrainian, Romanian, and Hungarian authorities.
- The situation of journalists and media freedom was a focus of country visits in Bosnia and Herzegovina and missions to Kosovo and Ukraine.

Ultimately, migration, the reunification of refugee families, and questionable European efforts to halt the flow of migrants from Libya, including returning persons to countries where they could face torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, continued to dominate the agenda.

The report concludes that commitment to human rights values and standards seemed to be weakening and that it is crucial to improve the quality of the debate and the level of awareness about human rights.

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