



Alternative Report of the Ombudsperson of the Republic of Latvia
to the Human Rights Council
for the 4th cycle of the Universal Periodic Review

2025

Introduction

The Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia has developed this alternative report for the 4th cycle of the Universal Periodic Review considering thematic recommendations issued by the states during the 38th UPR Session and supported by the Republic of Latvia. The Ombudsperson has compiled the information on the topics as deemed relevant. To observe the technical guidelines for the format and length of the report, the Ombudsperson has it rather concise.

National Human Rights Institution

The Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia is institutionally and functionally independent, wholesome, autonomous authority subject to law that ensures operation of the Ombudsman within the scope of competence stipulated in the Ombudsman Law and other regulatory acts. According to Section 15 Paragraph 1 of the Ombudsman Law the Ombudsman is independent, once a year providing the Parliament and the President with a written report and speech in the Parliamentary session regarding the activities of the Ombudsman's Office.

In May 2015, the Ombudsman urged the Parliament to include in the Constitution a new chapter on the "Ombudsman", to strengthen its compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).¹

In 2018, the Ombudsman sent a letter to the Parliamentary Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee and Legal Affairs Committee suggesting amendments to the Constitution to add a new chapter on the Ombudsman, stressing that consolidation of the Ombudsman's institution in the Constitution would demonstrate the serious intention of political decision-makers to strengthen the fundamental rights of Latvian people and the state's responsibility towards its people, also strengthening the democratic state system.²

In 2025, the Ombudsman was given additional mandate on artificial intelligence. This mandate is extensive, but no additional human resources or funding were allocated.

In 2025, the Ombudsman's Office is undergoing re-accreditation procedure, with 23 October 2025 set as the date for the dialogue with the Sub-Committee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

Discrimination prevention

According to Article 91 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, all human beings in Latvia shall be equal before the law and the courts, human rights shall be realised without discrimination of any kind. National regulatory framework provides for 29 discrimination criteria, which are horizontally included in 34 different areas of law. The top three most common criteria for discrimination are gender (27 laws), race and ethnicity (26 laws), and religious beliefs (26 laws).

¹ [Ombudsman Juris Jansons urges to strengthen the status of the Ombudsman's institution in the Constitution \(available in Latvian\)](#)

² [Ombudsman's opinion on the amendments to the Constitution \(available in Latvian\)](#)

The Ombudsman's Office has actively cooperated with various organizations representing persons with disabilities. For example, for the last 10 years, the Ombudsman together with the Association of Persons with Disabilities and Their Friends "Apeirons" has organized a conference, a networking event for organizations of persons with disabilities and the Annual Award for the Support of Persons with Disabilities.³ Organizations for persons with disabilities are involved in the Ombudsman's monitoring visits to various closed-type institutions and accessibility assessments. Persons with disabilities are also involved in studies conducted by the Ombudsman on various topics related to the rights of persons with disabilities and in situation tests.

In 2021-2022, the Ombudsman performed a study in seven municipalities in Latvia on cooperation with the Roma community, education of Roma children, housing support and support for the provision of social assistance. Following the publication of the report in 2023, the Ombudsman recommended further support and cooperation with the Roma community, the engagement of Roma mediators; the encouragement of Roma families to give their children a formal education, to engage children in vocational or interest education activities to motivate them to acquire basic education; and local governments to provide Roma teaching assistants in schools attended by several Roma children and to ensure the functioning of after-school day centres, where children could receive study support.⁴

In 2023, the Ombudsman launched an information campaign "Nationality is an opportunity. Roma – one of us"⁵ stressing that regardless of nationality a person has the same needs.

Persons with disabilities

In 2022, the Ombudsman submitted the Alternative Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as based on the Article 2 of the Law on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities the Ombudsman ensures monitoring of the implementation of obligations referred to in Article 33(2) of the CRPD. To show significant changes that have had a direct impact on the target group, the information on the implementation of certain articles of the CRPD included data from 2017 up to 2019, in some matters up to 2022. In September 2025, the Ombudsman participated in a meeting of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, providing information on areas where the rights of persons with disabilities have not improved since 2019.

In 2024, the Ombudsman's Office completed a study regarding respect for human rights in the process of determination of the compulsory measures of medical nature (applicable to persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, deemed unfit to stand trial/not criminally responsible). To study the situation, more than 70 % of court cases that were heard in 2019 and 2020 in all first instance courts of the Republic of Latvia were analysed. Based on the conclusions of the study, the Ombudsman recommended to amend the Criminal Procedure Law, excluding the norm that determines that a person's participation in the process depends on the opinion of a forensic psychiatric expert and to ensure that necessary adjustments should be made to the court process so that persons with various types of disabilities can fully participate in the process.

³ [Information on the Annual Award for the Support of persons with disabilities \(available in Latvian\)](#)

⁴ [Ombudsman's research on the situation of Roma in Latvia \(available in Latvian\)](#)

⁵ [Informative campaign on the rights and possibilities of Roma people \(available in Latvian\)](#)

Right to work / labour rights

In 2021, the Ombudsman objected to proposals to the Labor Law an obligation for persons with disabilities to inform their employer about their disability before starting work, pointing out that such a procedure could give rise to differential treatment, as no other group with special rights under the Labor Law has such an obligation.

In 2022, the Ombudsman called on the government to improve the legal framework for minimum income so that minimum income levels would change in line with socio-economic changes in the country.

In 2022, the Ombudsman concluded that child-care benefits have not been reviewed for a long time. Although both the prices of goods and services and the average wage have increased significantly, benefits and allowances have not been reviewed. Consequently, the Ombudsman called on the Cabinet of Ministers to improve the regulations for determining and reviewing the amount of state social benefits.⁶

Right to health

In 2023, the Ombudsman pointed to unfair legal regulations that prevent compensation from being awarded in atypical cases under the individual compensation mechanism when the state-approved reimbursable medicines are not suitable for treating the patient's diagnosis and the medical council has prescribed other medicines that are not included in the list of state-reimbursable medicines for the specific diagnosis.

Right to social security

In 2017 and 2021, the Ombudsman prepared and submitted to the Council of Europe Committee of Social Rights its alternative reports on the implementation of the European Social Charter in Latvia. Additionally, in 2023 the Ombudsman submitted a report on the unratified articles of the Charted, and in 2024 – alternative report on the cost-of-living crisis.

From 2021, because of the Constitutional Court's ruling, the government significantly increased minimum income levels, which led to an unprecedented improvement in social security. An additional €95.7 million was allocated to social security in 2021; the GMI, poverty and deprivation levels, minimum pensions and state social security benefits were significantly increased; and a uniform housing allowance was introduced throughout the country. As a result, for example, the number of people living in poverty alone changed from 37,500 in 2020 to 64,400 in 2021. This means that more residents who were previously denied this support were able to receive state and municipal social assistance and services.

Ratification of the OPCAT

In Latvia, the tasks of the national preventive mechanism as referred to in Article 3 and Articles 17-23 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment are performed by the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman implements the tasks of the national preventive mechanism and visits places where persons are or may be deprived of their liberty within the meaning of Article 4 of the OPCAT to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

⁶ [Ombudsman's letter to the Prime Minister on the review of social benefits \(available in Latvian\)](#)

Already in 2017, a government decision entrusted the Ombudsman with the function of the preventive mechanism. Consequently, a unique situation arose in Latvia, because although the Optional Protocol had not yet been ratified, the state already laid the foundations for the establishment of the national preventive mechanism. On 1 March 2018, the Prevention Division was established in the Ombudsman's Office to conduct regular visits to closed-type institutions where persons are or may be deprived of their liberty, with the aim to prevent the risks of ill-treatment. On 9 January 2022, Latvia became the 91st country where OPCAT entered into force.

Hate crimes and hate speech

In 2022, the Ombudsman emphasised the need for administrative responsibility for hate speech as Latvian regulatory framework criminalised hate speech. In his 16 January 2023 letter to the Parliament, amongst other, the Ombudsman drew the attention of the Members of the Parliament that Latvian legislation established criminal liability for hate speech.⁷ Article 78 of the Criminal Law provides for liability for inciting national, ethnic and racial hatred, while Article 150 of the Criminal Law provides for liability for inciting social hatred and discord. However, there are very limited sanctions for harmful speech that doesn't reach the threshold of criminally prosecutable hate speech. Thus far, this initiative has not been supported by parliament. Technical difficulties to investigate administrative offences and differentiate the criminal and potential administrative liability in practice have been cited as the reasons.

In 2025 there have also been developments in parliament to amend Section 11.1 "Aggressive Behaviour against Other Persons" of Law on Administrative Penalties for Offences in the Field of Administration, Public Order, and Use of the Official Language" which could improve the application of the legal norm to combat harmful behaviour in online setting. However, so far no legislative amendments have been confirmed.

Ombudsman notes that the topic of hate speech and aggression online continues to be an important issue that requires a multidisciplinary action to address the consequences of hate speech as well as tackle the origins of it.

Administration of justice & fair trial

In 2024, Ombudsman's office published research on human rights in the process of determining compulsory measures of medical nature upon having analysed 110 criminal court cases during 2019 to 2020 where compulsory measures of a medical nature were imposed in lieu of criminal punishment.⁸ The Ombudsman provided recommendations to improve the legal assistance in these cases. The Ombudsman also recommended to amend the Criminal Procedure Law, excluding the norm that determines that a person's participation in the process depends on the opinion of a forensic psychiatric expert and to ensure that necessary adjustments should be made to the court process so that persons with various types of disabilities can fully participate in the process.

⁷ [Ombudsman's letter to the Parliament on the necessary changes in the regulatory framework \(available in Latvian\)](#)

⁸ [Ombudsman's research on human rights in the process of determining compulsory measures of medical nature \(available in Latvian\)](#)

Prohibition of ill-treatment / rights of prisoners

Detailed information on the Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights has been included in the Ombudsman's Alternative report on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights regarding List of issues in relation to the fourth periodic report of Latvia, submitted in June 2025.⁹

In 2025 the building of new prison in Liepāja was concluded and it is expected that it will fully start operation in 2026 after conclusion of procurement procedures. Ombudsperson welcomes this development but also notes the importance of sufficient and adequately remunerated staff for the operation of the new prison.

Human trafficking & contemporary forms of slavery

Detailed information on the Article 8 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights has been included in the Ombudsman's Alternative report on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights regarding List of issues in relation to the fourth periodic report of Latvia, submitted in June 2025.¹⁰

The Ministry of Interior has developed guidelines for the identification of human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation intended for the law enforcement institutions – the State Police, the State Labour Inspectorate, the State Border Guard, the Municipal Police and non-governmental organisations, which have been granted the right to provide services for victims of human trafficking.¹¹

Gender Equality and gender-based violence

Representatives of the Ombudsman's Office are members of the National Council for Disability Matters and Gender Equality Committee (coordinated by the Ministry of Welfare) participating in the Council sittings and giving presentations on various topics, including Ombudsman's research on sexual harassment from 2024. In 2025, the Ombudsman published an extensive study on sexual harassment in Latvian universities, along with several guidelines, for example, providing practical information on how to understand the parties involved in a case of sexual harassment from a psychological perspective.¹² The Ombudsman's Office developed and distributed webinars on sexual harassment, including, when children are involved, provided to approximately 3,000 viewers, including cadets of the State Police College.

On 27 November 2024, Ombudsman's Office organised a discussion on aggression on the Internet against recognizable women in Latvia, with the help of practical examples, debating the impact of aggressive behaviour on the Internet on the observance of various human rights, as well as the availability and suitability of existing legal mechanisms for the protection of individual rights.

⁹ [Alternative Report of the Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights regarding List of issues in relation to the fourth periodic report of Latvia](#)

¹⁰ [Alternative Report of the Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights regarding List of issues in relation to the fourth periodic report of Latvia](#)

¹¹ [Guidelines for the identification of human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation](#)

¹² [Ombudsman's research on sexual harassment \(available in Latvian\)](#)

The discussion analysed manifestations of aggression on the Internet in Latvia, examined the role of gender in manifestations of aggression on the Internet, and discussed a strategy for action.¹³

In 2023, the Ombudsman pointed out to the Parliament that the current legal framework was insufficient in the fight against violence.¹⁴ As an international instrument, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) would help combat violence against women and domestic violence more effectively, as well as gradually eliminate various gender-rooted stereotypes. The Parliament ratified the Istanbul Convention on 30 November 2023. Although there appears to be an increase in the visibility and awareness of violence, in autumn of 2025 there have been developments in the parliament to initiate denunciation of the Istanbul Convention. The Ombudsman strongly opposes such initiative.¹⁵

In 2024, the Ombudsman's Office concluded thorough research on temporary protection against violence in courts.¹⁶ Altogether, 1630 court cases from 2021-2022 from all regions of Latvia were analysed and Ombudsman provided recommendations to stakeholders to improve the efficiency of the procedure.

Migrants / ethnic minorities

Detailed information on the Article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights has been included in the Ombudsman's Alternative report on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights regarding List of issues in relation to the fourth periodic report of Latvia, submitted in June 2025.¹⁷ On 8 October 2025 the Ombudsperson published an opinion on the immigration control with the context of human rights transformation.¹⁸

Human rights education, trainings & awareness raising

Since 2019 the Ombudsman's Office is an active member of school programme "Ready for Life" (Dzīvei gatavs) giving guest lectures to primary and secondary school students (children and youth) on election rights, data protection, freedom of expression and hate speech, legal texts.

In 2022, the Ombudsman's Office published a campaign on discrimination prevention, explaining with situations that could and could not be discriminatory attitude¹⁹ and a campaign on the concept of democracy and forms and good examples of civic participation²⁰, and a campaign on prevention of mobbing and bossing in the workplace.²¹

¹³ [Ombudsman's discussion on aggression on the Internet against recognizable women in Latvia \(available in Latvian\)](#)

¹⁴ [Ombudsman's letter to the Parliament on the necessary changes in the regulatory framework \(available in Latvian\)](#)

¹⁵ [Ombudsperson's Ms Karina Palkova statement on respecting human rights and reducing violence](#)

¹⁶ [Ombudsman's research on temporary protection against violence in courts \(available in Latvian\)](#)

¹⁷ [Alternative Report of the Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights regarding List of issues in relation to the fourth periodic report of Latvia](#)

¹⁸ [Opinion of the Ombudsperson on the immigration control \(available in Latvian\)](#)

¹⁹ [Ombudsman's awareness raising campaign "Is this discrimination?" \(available in Latvian\)](#)

²⁰ [Ombudsman's awareness raising campaign on forms and examples of democracy and civic participation "It is in your hands to make the world go round" \(available in Latvian\)](#)

²¹ [Ombudsman's awareness raising campaign on prevention of mobbing and bossing in the workplace \(available in Latvian\)](#)

In the beginning of 2024, the Ombudsman launched a campaign called “Spark your Empathy”, educational, acceptance-stimulating series of ten talks to raise awareness on such possible discrimination topics as mental disorders, nationality, age, language, hearing impairment, sexual orientation, visual impairment, gender, religion, and social status.²² There was also a campaign and info material on patient rights.²³

The Ombudsman's Office regularly educates different institutions, companies and employers about mobbing and bossing as unacceptable phenomena in the workplace, pointing to a safe working environment as an integral part of civil rights.

²² [Ombudsman's awareness raising campaign on discrimination prevention 'Spark your Empathy'](#)

²³ [Ombudsman's awareness raising campaign on patient rights \(available in Latvian\)](#)