

# **Keeping administrations accountable**

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# Until present...

...activities of Ombudsmen in

Civil and political



National level

International level

Social, economical and cultural rights



National level

# The reality in recent years...

...activities of Ombudsmen in

Civil and political



National level

International level

Social, economical and cultural rights



National level

International level

# Common values

- Freedom
- Democracy
- Rule of law
- Human rights and fundamental freedoms

# Description of Situation in Latvia (1)

- Population of Latvia **2 070 371**
- Threshold of poverty risk
  - 223 EUR per person / month
  - 468 EUR per family with 2 children / month

# Description of Situation in Latvia (2)

- 40% of people exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion
  - 43% of children
  - 33% of pensioners
  - 38.8% of incomplete families with 1 dependent child
  - 37.4% of complete families parenting 3+ children
  - 33.5% of households of a single person under the age of 64 years

# Description of Situation in Latvia (3)

- 833.8 thousand employees while the number
  - 28.9% earn  $\leq 285$  EUR net / month
  - 28.6% earn 285 – 427 EUR net / month
- Therefore, **57.5%** of employees earn wage under 427 EUR net
- 114.7 thousand employment seekers

# Description of Situation in Latvia (4)

- 859.8 thousand households in Latvia
- Unable to afford certain expenditures:
  - 23.0% of all households – costs of utility payments
  - 22.4% - costs of heating
  - 75.3% - unforeseen costs
  - 28.0% - meat, fish or chicken products every second day



# Description of Situation in Latvia (5)

- 478.8 thousand pensioners
  - 1.2% receive old age pension  $\leq 71$  EUR /month
  - 4.4% receive old age pension 71 – 142 EUR /month
  - 69.5% receive old age pension of 142 -284 EUR /month

# Constitutional rank of social rights and international obligations (1)

- Constitution of Latvia (Article 109 ) guarantees the right to social security:
  - in old age
  - for work disability
  - for unemployment and
  - in other cases as provided by law
- Contains no provisions to the amount of such security and to the procedure of its granting

# Constitutional rank of social rights and international obligations (2)

- Treaty on European Union
  - Article 2 - defines human rights as the EU fundamental values
  - Article 3 - determines the duty to promote well-being of its people as well as to combat social exclusion and to promote social justice

# Constitutional rank of social rights and international obligations (3)

- Public authorities of the Member States **may not ignore** the objectives and approach to eradicate poverty and to reduce social exclusion on the EU scale

# Governmental efforts to minimize poverty (1)

- Minimization of poverty - priority task of the Government of Latvia since 1998
- Ministry of Welfare (2004):
  - «**lack or clearly defined policy and mechanism of cooperation** between institutions in the field of social development and minimization of poverty has adversely affected the existing situation»
- The Government of Latvia has been **unable to solve** this task

# Governmental efforts to minimize poverty (2)

- Government's tax policies have contributed to the increase of social equality since only the richer or middle-class of society have benefitted from it
- The **success** of Latvia in reaching the economic targets is **achieved** in complete **ignorance** of other priorities such as human rights and social security

# Initiatives of the Ombudsman

- Situation where the national government follows a single objective of fulfilling the requirements of an article in an international treaty, ignoring at the same time other equally important obligations under the same treaty is **impermissible**

- «The higher is inequality, the higher is the number of murders and prisoners, people with mental conditions including alcohol and drug addiction, and mortality, low social mobility and lack of trust in Government»

Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett



# In conclusion...

- To work active with the officials of European institutions and national governments to implement real actions for providing equality, development and welfare