



## HUMAN RIGHTS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE



Artuss Kaimiņš, Chairperson of the Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee

- proposing new ideas for legislation and initiating legislative proposals;
- drafting of the Saeima decisions on appointment or dismissal of key public officials.

Parliamentary oversight of line ministries and public bodies enables the Committee to request from the responsible ministers, local governments and their agencies (bodies subordinated to or supervised by ministers and municipal administrations) any relevant information and data. To this end, public officials may also be requested to participate in Committee meetings. Ministerial staff, officials of different government and local bodies/agencies and NGOs are often invited to the Committee to ensure a more effective tackling of public issues within the scope of the Committee's area of competence.

The Committee is also responsible for review and assessment of proposals/applications submitted by private and legal entities on issues which fall within the scope of its competence.

The Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee of the Saeima (hereinafter Committee) is one of the standing committees established on the basis of Article 149 of the Rules of Procedure of the Saeima.

Legislative functions of the Committee include:

- preparation of assigned legislative proposals for the parliamentary readings;
- commenting legislative proposals under joint assignment procedures;

### STRUCTURE

The structure of the Committee is decided by the Saeima. All political groups elected to the Saeima have proportional representation in the Committee. Currently the Committee consists of nine MPs. It is chaired by Artuss Kaimiņš, with Boriss Cilevičs serving as Deputy Chair and Dagmāra Beitnere-Le Galla as Secretary.

### FUNCTIONS

Based on a decision of the Saeima, the Committee considers draft laws prepared by the Cabinet of Ministers, the Committee itself or at least five MPs, as well as draft laws that have been initiated by the President of Latvia or a tenth of the electorate according to the procedure and in cases prescribed in the Constitution.

### CHAIRPERSONS OF THE COMMITTEE

Convocation	Name	Tenure
5 <sup>th</sup> Saeima	<b>Inese Bīrzniece</b>	21.07.1993 – 06.11.1995
6 <sup>th</sup> Saeima	<b>Antons Seiksts</b>	16.11.1995 – 02.11.1998
7 <sup>th</sup> Saeima	<b>Antons Seiksts</b>	12.11.1998 – 04.11.2002
8 <sup>th</sup> Saeima	<b>Ina Druviete</b>	15.11.2002 – 06.02.2004
	<b>Ingrīda Cīrcene</b>	21.12.2004 – 06.11.2006
9 <sup>th</sup> Saeima	<b>Jānis Šmits</b>	20.11.2006 – 15.01.2009
	<b>Oskars Kastēns</b>	21.01.2009 – 26.03.2009
	<b>Ingrīda Cīrcene</b>	26.03.2009 – 02.11.2010
10 <sup>th</sup> Saeima	<b>Ingrīda Cīrcene</b>	08.11.2010 – 17.10.2011
11 <sup>th</sup> Saeima	<b>Ināra Mūrniece</b>	21.10.2011 – 04.11.2014
12 <sup>th</sup> Saeima	<b>Inese Laizāne</b>	07.11.2014 – 13.10.2016
	<b>Ritvars Jansons</b>	18.10.2016 – 12.01.2017
	<b>Inese Laizāne</b>	17.01.2017 – 05.11.2018
13 <sup>th</sup> Saeima	<b>Artuss Kaimiņš</b>	Since 20.11.2018

## AREAS AND ISSUES UNDER THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee covers all issues linked with **human rights**, including children's rights, rights of the persons with disabilities, minorities and asylum seekers. The Committee deals with an even broader range of other **public affairs**. The Committee handles issues related to children, youth, religious organisations, public holidays and commemorative days, veterans of World War II and members of the resistance. Another highlight of its work is **media**: freedom of speech and expression, strengthening of broadcasting and publishing practices, policies for improving the local media landscape.

### FORMAT

Committee meetings are open to the public, although the Committee may also decide to hold closed meetings. However, that happens only when a party invited to a meeting requests so. The Committee also has field meetings and hosts various conferences and events. According to the Rules of Procedure of the Saeima, the Committee is authorised to form subcommittees that perform preparatory work or specific tasks. In the 13<sup>th</sup> Saeima the Committee has established the Media Policy Subcommittee and the Latgale Region Subcommittee.

### COOPERATION PARTNERS

The main human rights partner is the State Human Rights Agency, founded



■ Meeting of the Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee

in 1995 and restructured into the Ombudsman's Office in 2007. Until 1998, when a post of Representative of the Government of Latvia before International Human Rights Organisations was created, the Minister for Human Rights was the direct link between the government and the Committee from 1993 to 1995.

The Committee works in close conjunction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Health.

One of the main elements of a sound judicial system is public and NGO involvement in the legislative process. Therefore, the Committee works closely with Non-governmental Organization of People with Disabilities and Their Friends *Apeiron*s, *Safe House* shelter, women's shelter *Marta*, shelter for people with mental disability *Zelda*, *Save the Children* Latvia, Lat-

vian Children's Fund, Latvian Human Rights Centre, Latvian Association of SOS Children's Villages, Women's NGOs Cooperation Network of Latvia, Crisis and Counselling Centre *Skalbes* and Latvian Association of National Cultural Societies. The Committee also cooperates with professional and sectoral associations, namely Latvian Broadcasters Association, Latvian Advertising Association, Latvian Association of Electronic Communications, association "For legal content!", Latgalian Culture Association as well as other organisations to address issues related to media policy.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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