

## 2013 RANKING OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

To celebrate the **International Human Rights Day (10th December)** and the **25th anniversary of the existence of the Human Rights Defender institution in Poland** the Human Rights Defender for the first time prepared a special ranking of problems which pose the greatest threat to the observance of human and citizen rights in our country. What is more, the Defender, for the first time as well, presented a list of issues, in case of which a noticeable progress has been made.

The following issues are at present perceived by the HRD as the most serious sources of threat:

1. Lack of effective state strategy (modern legislation) to combat such phenomena as **extreme poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, homelessness**;
2. Unstable **pension scheme and welfare system** coupled with lack of clear change prospects in this area;
3. Legislative chaos and difficulties in accessing **health care services financed from public resources** (surprising regulation changes, difficulties in accessing medical specialists, discrimination against the elderly and their needs);
4. Incapable **justice administration system** (sluggish courts, overcrowded prisons, lack of use of mediation);
5. Dysfunctional **legislation system** (excessive "juridisation", low quality acts, effects of the regulations are not assessed on an ongoing basis, insufficiently regulated lobbying) and crisis **of the public consultation system** (the ACTA case, suspended work of the Trilateral Commission);
6. Lack of quick response to new threats to **privacy and personal data protection**, also in the electronic communication area (more intense monitoring of individual activity and data transmission on the Internet, lack of legal regulations relating to vision monitoring, expanding citizen databases);
7. Lack of effective procedural means to **counteract discrimination**;
8. Lack of a uniform solution, applicable to all injured groups, to the **issue of reprivatisation** of properties seized during the after-war period in connection with the implementation of system reforms (lack of reprivatisation act);
9. Dysfunctional legal regulations relating to **safety at mass events and gatherings**;
10. Lack of a universal **free legal assistance system** for individuals experiencing financial difficulties;

Of course the above problems do not exhaust the **threat list**. Similarly, it is impossible to select the most pressing ones. This is our selection - made on the basis of analyses of complaints received by the Office of the HRD and assessment of changes taking place in our country from the perspective of the Defender's mission. There is no doubt however that these problems need to be effectively resolved as quickly as possible. They have been building up for years and if no effective actions are taken now the situation in these areas will be significantly deteriorating. Because of that many social groups are experiencing a feeling of deepening social injustice, it leads to numerous tragedies suffered by people, each month the HRD and other complaint handling institutions receive thousands of applications sent by citizens.

Of course we also notice **progress in the process of resolving problems** that are important from the perspective of human and citizen rights observance and wish to indicate the following events and areas:

1. Ratification by Poland of the Convention **on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** as well as taking intensive and multi-theme legislative works aimed at adapting Polish legislation to protection standards envisaged in the Convention;
2. Actions taken on the initiative of the President of the Republic of Poland and the government relating to **pro-family policy**, conducive to improving demographic situation in the country;

3. Wider and wider **access to public information** and raising awareness among citizens of their rights and possibilities to act within the framework of civil society;
4. Improved **legal situation and perception of foreigners** in our country (abolition, changes in guarded centres, a new draft act on foreigners, actions promoting the immigrants "acceptance culture");
5. Reformed **electoral law** (taking into account the needs of the elderly and the disabled, introducing alternative voting methods).