



NEWS REPORT

Date:	5 April 2011
Expert:	Gediminas Andriukaitis
Title:	The Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson publishes its 2010 Annual report
Country:	Lithuania
Context	
Issue at stake:	Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson – national equality body – emphasises in its 2010 annual report the negative effects of governmental budget cuts on anti-discrimination activities, causing the closure of governmental bodies and diminishing the total number of complaints.
Ground of discrimination:	All grounds
Source:	Annual report of Lithuanian national Equality body
Field:	All fields

Content

Political development: On 15 March the national equality body of Lithuania – the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson – published its annual report covering all activities implemented in 2010. In this yearly obligatory report, submitted to the Parliament, the Ombudsperson placed emphasis on the continuous negative effects of the financial downturn.

The report highlighted the diminution of the total amount of complaints lodged in 2010 (218 in 2008, 165 in 2009 and only 148 in 2010), which, according to the Ombudsperson, was the result of fear of victimisation – during economic downturn persons were inclined to renounce to their right to complain, in favour of a secured employment. However, despite this general tendency, employment was one of the areas, which experienced a slight growth of complaints as the Ombudsperson noticed a growing in the amount of complaints on grounds of age and disability (25 complaints on the ground of age, 22 complaints on the ground of disability, mostly in the field of employment), which was also related to the situation in the labour market. Due to enlarged labour supply, employers tend to increase efficiency by hiring younger and healthy employees for lower wages. The diminution of



governmental support for the integration of the disabled also contributed to lower amounts of disabled being employed.

The report also emphasised drastic budget cuts, which significantly affected national anti-discrimination policy in 2010. This is well illustrated by the following examples: the National Anti-discrimination Programme 2009-2011 received no financing in 2010, the Department of National Minorities under the Government of Lithuania was shut down, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour was restructured (the Department of Equal Opportunities was reorganised in 2010 and now it is the Equal Opportunities division of the Social Inclusion and Communities Department, which is responsible for equal opportunities in the ministry), the Special Investigation department of the General Prosecution Service, which was mainly responsible for instigation of hatred or criminal discrimination cases, was also closed down. In addition, the Ombudsperson also emphasised the need to amend the Law on Equal Treatment, to expand the scope of personal liability. Under the current legislation employees cannot be held liable for discrimination (neither are service providers, or employers for actions of their employees or third parties), thus, according the Ombudsperson, the Law on Equal Treatment should set out explicit rules on this matter.

Internet link source and additional information:

Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson annual report for 2010, available in Lithuanian at: <http://www.lygybe.lt/?pageid=7>