



**LATVIAN CENTRE FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS**

30

YEARS

ACTIVITY REPORT

LATVIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS - 30 YEARS ACTIVITY REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Latvian Centre for Human Rights is one of the first human rights organisations in Latvia after the country regained independence in 1991. The Centre has and continues to focus on a wide range of fundamental rights issues. During its 30 years of activity the Centre has worked on raising the human rights awareness in general, in implementing and improving human rights standards in specific areas and in relation to specific target groups. Centre's work with places of detention, especially prisons and prisoner rights, the rights of persons with mental disabilities, access to asylum and refugee rights, integration of minorities and third country nationals, in promoting diversity, preventing discrimination, hate crimes and hate speech must be especially mentioned.

From its inception, the Centre has employed a multi-disciplinary staff, including political scientists, sociologists, lawyers, media specialists. The Centre has always co-operated with other NGO and academic experts. This has guaranteed a comprehensive approach to different human rights issues by the Centre – conducting research, drafting analytical reports, conducting monitoring on human rights in Latvia, providing legal aid and analysing the legal framework in different human rights areas, participating in work groups and advisory councils at the parliament, ministries and municipalities, conducting training for different target groups, raising awareness and informing the public. LCHR has always co-operated with experts, institutions and NGOs from other countries, international organisations, especially in transferring good practises to promote the development of human rights in Latvia. The Centre's current and former staff have become well know experts at the UN, Council of Europe and OSCE level.

The aim of the report is to give an historic insight into the foundation of the Latvian Centre for Human Rights and the most significant activities of the organisation during its 30 years, thus to recognise the contribution of more than 50 individuals who worked in the Centre at different times, were its directors, members and Board members, co-operation partners and

several tens of volunteers in the human rights development in Latvia. Although it is not possible to mention everyone in the report whose name is linked with the centres – every one of them has participated and contributed to the creation of modern human rights history in Latvia.

The Latvian Centre for Human Rights hopes that the report will be useful to those who are interested in the Centre's work, want to research human rights development in Latvia and those who are looking for the inspiration to start or continue initiatives to improve human rights in Latvia.

FOUNDATION HISTORY, FIRST DECADE

1993 - 2003

1993

Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies (hereinafter LCHRES) is founded on October 8, 1993.

The founders of the LCHRES are the University of Latvia lecturer Žaneta Ozoliņa, US lecturer Ron Kim and Anhelita Kamenska. Žaneta Ozoliņa is the first director of the LCHRES.

Although LCHRES is founded on October 8, 1993, the idea of establishing a human rights NGO occurred earlier in 1992. It was the year when the first political science students began their studies at Latvia University. American lecturers arrived in Latvia with the support of the US Information Agency to strengthen the academic contacts with universities in Latvia and assist them with the development of new courses. One of them was Ron Kim, an American Korean – the first lecturer in the University of Latvia (hereinafter UL) who taught international relations to the first political science students. Žaneta Ozoliņa was one of the UL lecturers who was in contact with the US lecturers while Anhelita Kamenska worked as a volunteer with the NGO “Save the Children” and taught English to students of various faculties at UL.

Centre's first funder is the Higher Education Programme of the Open Society Institute.

One of the reasons of the foundation of the LCHRES was lack of objective information about many human rights issues in Latvia, including in English, lack of information and awareness about human rights issues in the Latvian society in general, including Latvia's international obligations. The tasks of the Centre were to train students on human rights, conduct research, collect and disseminate information about human rights and ethnic issues, facilitate discussions, submit proposals to state institutions, and establish

international contacts to exchange information and research. From the very beginning the LCHR involved university students in its work, predominantly students of political science and social sciences.

1994

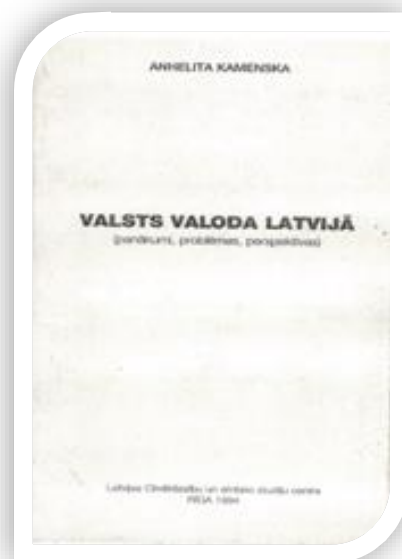
In April **Nils Muižnieks, a US born Latvian political scientist, becomes the director of the LCHRES**. He is LCHRES's director until December 2002.

LCHRES begins to publish [newsletters on human rights issues in Latvian and English](#), with contributions by the LCHRES staff and students of political and social sciences. During the next three years LCHRES publishes 12 newsletters.

The Centre begins organising a range of events to educate teachers, lawyers and the general public about human rights issues. In 1995 Latvia is to join the Council of Europe which meant that by joining the regional human rights organization, Latvia would have to accede and ratify the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. LCHRES, in cooperation with UL organises a [10-lecture series on the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms](#), which were delivered by Jeremy McBride, the Council of Europe expert from the UK.

Due to the sensitivity and topicality of the language policy issues and the absence of a comprehensive, independent research, the LCHRES publishes A. Kamenska's monograph **"State Language Policy in Latvia: achievements, problems and prospects"** in Latvian and English. The English language version is re-printed several times and serves as a valuable background material when preparing the National Latvian Language Training Programme coordinated by the UN Development Agency.

To raise the awareness about Holocaust among the public, LCHRES organises a special screening of the film "Schindler's List" for teachers and mass media representatives and a round-table discussion about the film, Holocaust and Latvia.



A. Kamenska's monograph "State Language Policy in Latvia: achievements, problems and prospects"

On 18 May, in co-operation with the UN Refugee Commission LCHRES organises a seminar about refugee issues for the representatives of state institutions and academia.

In summer and autumn Ieva Zaķe conducts practical training in human rights education in 15 schools and several youth camps.

1995

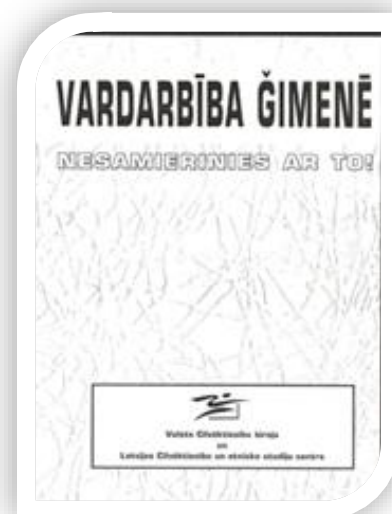
From its inception, the LCHRES co-operates with the UN Development Programme. From 1995-1997 LCHRES director Nils Muižnieks is the national coordinator of the UNDP Latvia National Development Report. Three Human Development Reports in Latvian and English are published under his guidance.

LCHRES staff Ieva Zaķe and Ieva Leimane lead weekly radio programmes for youth about human rights from April until June 1995 (funded by the Soros Foundation-Latvia); from October 1995 until April 1996 Ieva Leimane and Sanita Vanaga lead radio programmes on similar issues on Radio 2 (funded by the US Information Service).

1996

In its human rights education work LCHRES has also tried to include women's rights issues. In the end of 1995, LCHRES publishes a special edition of the newsletter on women's rights issues. In 1996, in co-operation with the National Human Rights Office the LCHRES publishes a **brochure "Domestic Violence - Don't Put Up with It!"**.

The brochure was prepared by Anhelita Kamenska, Ieva Zaķe and Kristīne Dzelme, an intern at the National Human Rights Office. This is the first known edition on domestic violence in Latvia published after the country regained independence in 1991. During the next years LCHRES publishes several other educational brochures on women's rights "**Sexual harassment – a phenomenon without a name?**" (1997) and "**Women's Rights Movements – Yesterday and Today**" (1998). In 1997 and 1998 in co-



LCHRES published a brochure "Domestic Violence - Don't Put Up with It!".

operation with US Peace Corps, the LCHRES organises an essay competition for high school students on gender equality issues.

Due to the relevance of minority rights and society integration issues in Latvia, LCHRES in co-operation with different partners organises various seminars about ethnopoltics. On 16 May 1996, in co-operation with National Human Rights Office, National Affairs Department of the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights Institute of the Faculty of Law of Latvia University, Raul Wallenberg Institute (Sweden) and Inter-Ethnic Foundation (Netherlands) the LCHRES organises a seminar "The Rights of National Minorities: Mechanisms for the Promotion of Government-Minority Dialogue."

1997

Together with the University of Jyväskylä, Finland and other partners, the LCHRES helps to organise a series **of conferences on refugee-related issues for policy-makers.**

Since its inception, one of the main areas of work of the LCHRES has been **human rights education.**

LCHRES has published several educational materials, including "Human Rights and Tolerance Handbook" (*Cilvēktiesību un tolerances rokasgrāmata*) for teachers (1996), Council of Europe "Human Rights album" in Latvian (1996) and video "Stand Up for Human Rights! (Iestājoties par cilvēktiesībām!)" (1997). LCHRES has organised a series of seminars for teachers on human rights, e.g. "Human Rights Education in Latvia" in April 1997, "Human Rights Education, Civics and Social Integration" in Liepāja in October 1997 and "Human Rights in Rūjiena and the World" in November 1997.

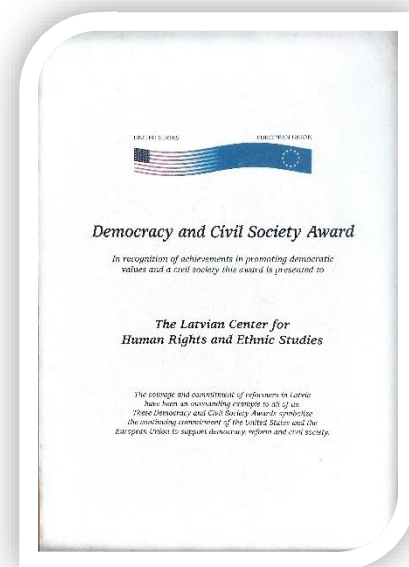


Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies staff in 1997. LCHRES director Nils Muižnieks, Anhelita Kamenska, Ieva Zaķe, Ieva Leimane, Sanita Vanaga. Photo: Boriss Kolesnikovs, A.F.I.

1998

From 1 March LCHRES begins to provide **free legal consultations and legal aid on human rights issues**, paying special attention to human rights violations of police officers, hazing of recruits in the army, treatment of persons with mental disabilities, and prisons, thus expanding the scope of work of the Centre.

In May LCHRES receives the **EU-US Democracy and Civil Society Award**¹ for its contribution in promoting democratic values and a civil society, and communal tolerance in Latvia. The EU-US Democracy and Civil Society awards were announced in 1997 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Marshall Plan, which helped the Europeans rebuild their economies after the



EU-US Democracy and Civil Society Award

¹ U.S. And EU Announce Awards For Cementing Democracy. Accessible at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/1088666.html>

devastation of the Second World War, and the 40th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, which laid the groundwork for the European Union. The award is presented to the LCHRES director Nils Muižnieks by the US President Bill Clinton, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and European Commission President Jacques Santer.

LCHRES prepares its **first report on human rights situation in Latvia** for the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, which is published in its yearly human rights report (in English) for 1997.

LCHR actively campaigns for granting Latvian citizenship to non-citizen children born after the restoration of independence in 1991.

1998 referendum on Amendments to the Citizenship Law – Latvian citizenship to non-citizen children

On 22 June the Saeima (parliament) voted to amend the 1994 Law on Citizenship in line with the recommendations of OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Max van der Stoel. The amendments grant citizenship through registration to about 18,400 stateless children born in Latvia since 21 August 1991 upon the request of their parents. This change is in line with the requirements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which affirms that the child has the right to a nationality from birth and obligates states to prevent statelessness. The amendments did not enter into force immediately after adoption, as rightwing deputies employed a little-used constitutional provision to suspend enactment pending an attempt to gather signatures to hold a referendum on the issue. The signature gathering campaign took place from 20 July through 18 August and succeeded in gathering the necessary number of signatures to hold a referendum. **In the referendum of October 3, 52.54% of voters approved liberalisation of the law, thereby confirming the June parliamentary vote and resolving a serious human rights concern.**



Mēs esam atbildīgi par visiem Latvijas bērniem.
Mēs esam atbildīgi par to, lai visi Latvijas bērni būtu veseli, izglītoti un Latvijas patrioti. Nesen tika pieņemti grozījumi Pilsonības likumā, kuru mērķis ir dot visiem bērniem vienādas iespējas. Šie grozījumi dos iespēju iegūt pilsonību bērniem-bezvalstniekiem, kuri dzimuši Latvijā kopš neatkarības atjaunošanas.

Kas ir šie bērni-bezvalstnieki?
Šādu bērnu nav daudz - to kopskaits nesasniedz pat 20 000. Tā ir tikai maza daļa no visiem pēc neatkarības dzimušajiem bērniem. Vecākajam no viņiem ir 7 gadi. Daļa šo bērnu jau apmeklē skolu un apgūst latviešu valodu, citi drīz uzsāks mācības skolā. Ja turpināsīm reformas izglītības sistēmā, mērtiecīgi veicināsīm latviešu valodas apguvi un dosim visiem bērniem vienādas iespējas, viņi izaugs par Latvijas patriotiem.

Ar ko Tevi mēģina iebaidīt?
Daži politiskie spēki cenšas Tev iestāstīt, ka iegūstot pilsonību, šie bērni apdraudēs Latviju, ka mēs esam par vāju, lai dotu visiem Latvijas bērniem vienādas iespējas. Vai Tu tam tic?

Politiska akcija pret bērniem.
Šie politiskie spēki Latvijā rīko priekšvēlēšanu akciju, kas ir vērsta pret šiem bērniem. Viņi ir apturējuši likumu un aģitē parakstīties un balsot referendumā pret neseniem Pilsonības likuma grozījumiem. Parakstoties par referendumu, Tu piedalīsies priekšvēlēšanu akcijā pret bērniem, Tu liegsi iespēju šiem bērniem kļūt par Latvijas patriotiem.

Politiska akcija pret Latviju.
Šie politiskie spēki ir gatavi upurēt Latvijas drošības intereses, lai īstenotu savu priekšvēlēšanu akciju. Visa demokrātiskā pasaule apšveic šos Pilsonības likuma grozījumus. Pret tiem iebilst tikai Krievija. Lūk, ko saka Latvijas draugi par likuma grozījumiem. ASV prezidents Bils Klintons: "Man ir īpašs prieks uzzināt, ka Latvijas parlaments ir pieņēmis svarīgas un tālredzīgas izmaiņas jūsu valsts pilsonības likumā". Eiropas Savienība (ES) apšveic Latvijas parlamenta drosmīgo un tālredzīgo lēmumu... ES cer, ka likums stāsies spēkā bez kavēšanās." Parakstoties, Tu atbalsti Latvijas palikšanu vienatnē pret Krieviju, Tu atbalsti ekonomisko lejupslīdi, nabadzībai nolemtu Latviju, sašķeltu sabiedrību.

Padomā, pirms Tu paraksties vai balso

LCHRES information leaflet on granting Latvian citizenship to non-citizen children

In late 1998, the LCHRES co-operates with the UNHCR in creating a handbook for teachers on refugee rights.

LCHR together with human rights organisations in Estonia and Russia becomes involved in a large project within PHARE Democracy programme. The aim of the project is to facilitate minority integration. Several international conferences are organised within the project which are attended not only by experts on human rights and national relations, but also teachers, and representatives of municipalities.

During 1994-1998 LCHRES receives core funding from the Soros Foundation's Higher Education Support Program and Open Society Institute, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the US-Baltic Foundation. The LCHRES also receives project grants from the Council of Europe, the Embassy of the Netherlands, the United Nations Development Programme, the EU PHARE programme and others.

1999

LCHRES becomes a full-fledged member of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, an international, non-governmental organisation constituted by national Helsinki Committees and Cooperating Organizations in the participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

On 1 June 1998, the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment comes into force in Latvia. In early January 1999, the LCHRES cooperates with the Council of Europe Committee Secretariat in organising an information seminar on the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and the Committee's mandate. **This was the first time in the Committee's history when an information seminar was organised by an NGO, as ministries which oversee places of detention could not take an initiative to do that.** [The Committee's first visit took place from 24 January - 3 February 1999.](#)

LCHRES publishes the **first report on human rights in Latvia in 1998** in Latvian, English and Russian. The report reflects specific areas of LCHRES's expertise and what in their view are the most topical issues in Latvia. The report mostly focuses on civil and political rights. Social, economic and cultural rights are

partially covered in the sections on women's rights, the rights of mentally ill persons, the rights of the child and patient's rights.

Since March 1999, Sandra Garsvāne provides free legal assistance to victims of human rights violations, especially to prisoners and victims of police abuse which is supported by a grant from the Embassy of Finland.

In 1999 LCHRES staff participates in an ambitious project organised by the Institute of Human Rights of the University of Latvia – writing a university-level human rights textbook. The book is published in 2000. Ieva Leimane wrote a chapter on “The Historical Evolution of the Concept of Human Rights” and sub-chapters on “Women’s Rights” and “Refugee Rights.” Nils Muiznieks wrote a chapter on “The Historical Development of Human Rights in Latvia, 1918-2000” and a subchapter on “Minority Rights.” Sandra Garsvāne wrote a sub-chapter on “Children's Rights.” Anhelita Kamenska, Ieva Leimane and Sandra Garsvāne together wrote a sub-chapter on “Human Rights in Closed Institutions.”

2000

Together with the US organisation Mental Disabilities Rights International LCHRES organises the seminar "Mechanisms for protecting the interests and rights of mentally ill individuals and individuals with mental disabilities".

LCHRES publishes “Kur griezties pēc palīdzības” (Where to Turn for Help), brochure on institutions providing information on human rights and legal assistance, in Latvian and Russian.

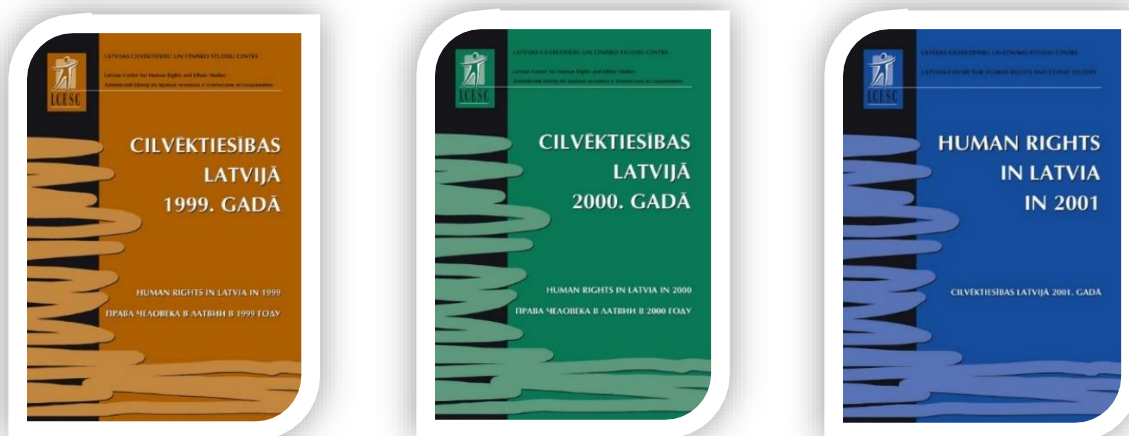
In order to improve and strengthen their knowledge on a range of human rights issues, the LCHRES staff participate in several study visits and summer schools. 9-14 May, Sandra Garsvāne is on a study visit to Denmark devoted to children's rights. 16-21 May, Nils Muiznieks has a Foreign Office visit to the UK which included a programme of meetings and participation in a Ditchley Foundation Conference entitled “Making Multicultural Societies Work,” at which he gives a presentation on legal and educational strategies for promoting multiculturalism. 10-21 July, Ieva Leimane attends the Central European University summer course “Health Care Law from a Comparative and European Perspective” in Budapest. 9-16 September, Sandra Garsvāne participates in the International Summer School on

Human Rights organised in Warsaw, Poland by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights.

Nils Muižnieks participates as a lecturer and expert in a range of European regional conferences against racism and gave lectures on struggle against racism and xenophobia, and rise of extremism in Central and Eastern Europe. European regional events are organised in preparation of the 2001 World conference against Racism.

On 20 December Anhelita Kamenska is **appointed to the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and becomes its first member in respect of Latvia.**

LCHRES continues publishing annual Human Rights Reports in Latvia.



LCHRES annual Human Rights Reports

2001

LCHRES takes over the daily press summary of the OSCE mission in Latvia on integration issues (**Integration monitor**). All press summaries from 1994 to 2016 are available on the centre's website.

Cooperation with the Soros Foundation Latvia (hereinafter – SFL) expanded in other realms: the SFL delegates to LCHRES deputy director Ieva Leimane the management of a multi-year programme for the Promotion of the Rights of the Mentally Ill and to LCHRES director Nils Muižnieks the management of its Human Rights and Tolerance Programme.

Nils Muižnieks is one of four experts in a UNDP/OSCE sponsored “Expert Review Mission on the Latvian National Human Rights Office and Ombudsman Functions in Latvia.” Expert mission includes John Hucker, Secretary General of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, Lauri Lehtimaja, Finnish Parliamentary Ombudsman, and Jānis Mažeiks, Head of the Humanitarian Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia.

31 August – 8 September, **Nils Muižnieks participates as a United Nations expert at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban**, South Africa and gives a presentation on minority rights in Europe at a conference on minority rights organised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In 2001, the LCHRES expands its staff with the addition of office manager Sanita Šūmane, SFL funded policy fellows Artis Pabriks and Ilze Brands Kehris. Staff lawyer Sandra Garsvāne leaves the LCHRES in September to pursue a master's degree in human rights at the University of Padua. In September the LCHRES welcomes into its ranks new staff lawyer Ilvija Baķe.

In 2001, the LCHRES receives core funding from the Soros Foundation's Open Society Institute, project grants from the Soros Foundation – Latvia, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, the OSCE Mission to Latvia and the United States Embassy's Democracy Commission.

2002

On 20 March, the LCHRES organises a high-level international conference entitled “**The OSCE and Latvia: Past, Present and Future**” presided over by Ilze Brands Kehris. Nils Muiznieks gives a presentation entitled “The OSCE and Latvia: Arm-twisting, Hand-holding or Partnership?”. The conference is organised in connection with the closure of the OSCE mission in Latvia.

On 7–8 June, the LCHRES organises an international seminar on “Monitoring and Combating Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe” attended by teams from all the EU candidate countries.

In September 2002, the LCHRES starts the project “Monitoring Closed Institution in Latvia”. During the 6 months the LCHRES staff visit 10 closed facilities under the authority of the Ministries of Justice, Interior, Education and Science, Welfare, and Defence and published a report. It is the first LCHRES **report on monitoring places of detention**. The project is supported with the European Community European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Micro projects programme in Latvia.

LCHRES staff participate in several study visits and attend human rights courses. From 25 February — 8 March, Ilvija Baķe participates in the course on the International Protection of Human Rights organised by Turku University and Abo Academy. From 25–29 August, Ieva Leimane attends European Observatory Summer School Programme “Globalisation, EU Enlargement and Health: Making Health Care Policy in the Changing World”, Dubrovnik, Croatia. From 9 September — 4 October, Ieva Leimane participates in an OSI-funded study visit to New York and Washington D. C., USA, on advocacy systems for mentally disabled and community based services. From 25–29 November Ilvija Baķe (Pūce) attends a course on Non-Discrimination and Minority Rights at the Institute for Human Rights, Abo Akademi University, Turku, Finland.

On 31 October Nils Muiznieks receives **the Society Unity Award** by the Society Integration Foundation.

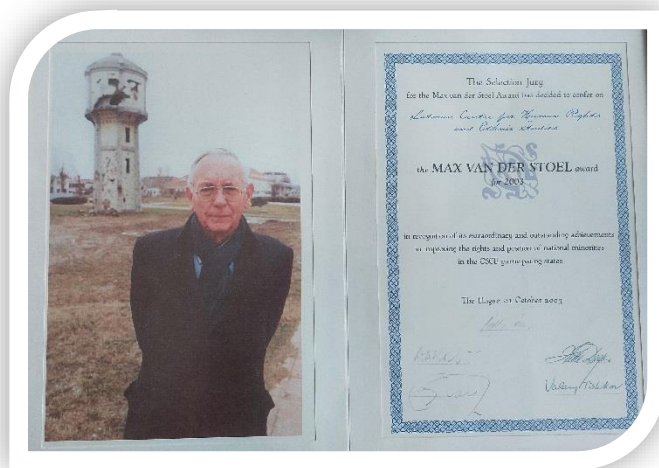
Former LCHRES director Nils Muiznieks leaves the Centre in November to assume the post of the Minister for Social Integration of the Republic of Latvia.

The **new director, Ilze Brands Kehris**, was appointed on 4 December 2002 by the LCHRES Board and Members' Assembly. Ilze Brands Kehris was born in a Latvian refugee family in Sweden. She leads the Centre until 2011.

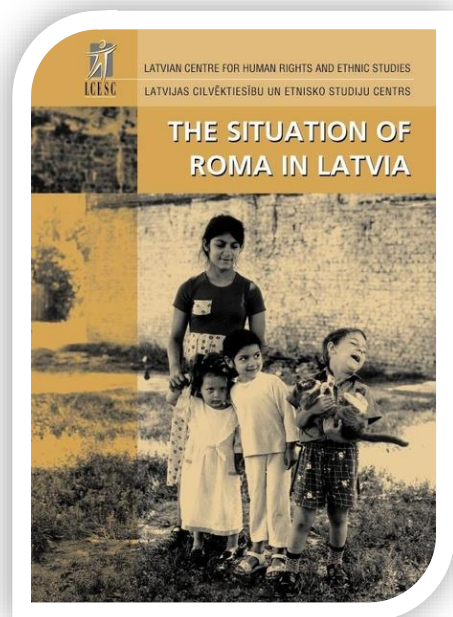
LCHR team is joined by policy analyst Svetlana Djačkova and media analyst Dace Lukumiete.

2003

In October LCHRES receives the Max van der Stoel² Prize for **"outstanding achievements in improving the rights and position of national minorities in the OSCE participating states"** by an international jury, led by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Rolf Ekéus. LCHRES is the first recipient of the prize in the OSCE region.



Max van der Stoel award to the LCHRES



LCHRES publishes country's first comprehensive study on **"The situation of Roma in Latvia"**.

The study covers 1) discrimination and public attitudes, 2) history and demography of the Roma community, 3) education, 4) employment, 5) living conditions, 6) relations with the law, 7) Roma participation in political and civic activities. The goals of the study are the following: 1) to obtain objective and all-encompassing information about the real situation of the Roma; 2) to learn the views of the Roma; 3) to learn the attitudes of Latvia's residents

² The prize of €50,000 is presented to a person, group or institution for extraordinary and outstanding achievements in improving the position of national minorities in the OSCE participating States. It is presented by the Government of the Netherlands every two years.

towards the Roma; 4) to make a first evaluation of whether discrimination against the Roma in Latvia is a significant problem. The study is conducted by Dace Lukumiete and Signe Martišūne, while Maija Mauriņa serves as the project assistant. The leader of "Ame Roma" NGO Vanda Zamicka secures meetings and interviews with Roma individuals and Roma NGO leaders throughout Latvia. The study serves as a basis for conducting similar government studies in later years.

LCHRES becomes the **national contact point of the European Information Network on Racism and Xenophobia (RAXEN)³ (later the contact point of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency)**. At the request of the EUMC, the LCHRES drafts numerous reports in the areas of racism and xenophobia, employment, education, racist violence, housing, legislation, e.g. [Roma in Public Education](#) (2004), [Roma and Travellers Housing Conditions](#) (2009), annual reports on data collection, etc.

In 2003, LCHRES receives funding for a three-year project (2003-2006) **“Monitoring Human Rights and Prevention of Torture in Closed institutions: prisons, police cells and mental health care institutions in Baltic countries” under EU program “European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights.”** The LCHR begins regular monitoring of places of detention.

24-28 November, Ilze Brands Kehris, Ilvija Pūce, Marina Krupņikova made a study visit to the Netherlands, organised by the Netherlands Helsinki Committee within the framework of the project “Strengthening the Anti-Discrimination Work of the Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies” financed by the Netherlands Foreign Ministry. Upon the invitation of the LCHRES, representatives of the Secretariat of the Special Task Minister for Society Integration Affairs, the Latvian Gender Equality Association and the Latvian Youth Council also participates in the visit.

³ RAXEN network is a core activity of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), which had been established by the EU 1997 and is based in Vienna, Austria. The primary objective of the EUMC is to provide the European Community and its Member States with objective, reliable and comparable data on the phenomena of racism and xenophobia at the European level, in order to help them take measures or formulate courses of action.

ACTIVITIES FROM 2004 – 2023

2004 -2023

2004

Latvia joins the European Union and NATO.

LCHRES creates a home page www.humanrights.org.lv (also www.cilvektiesibas.org.lv).

LCHRES together with "Providus" runs an anonymous [phone-in campaign "Do not fear and report police violence!"](#) to encourage inhabitants in Latvia to report about police violence. In three days from 12-15 February 2004 nearly 300 persons report police misconduct, including 130 directly related to violence by police officers, including during the interrogation at the police station. Most callers are men who had suffered from police violence. Callers include witnesses, victims' relatives, friends, sworn advocates. The majority of callers are aged 20-40, 45% of complaints are about police stations in Riga, 51% - in other towns and rural areas, in 4% of cases the place is not indicated. Although ¼ of the callers complains about police violence, only few mention that it had resulted in disciplinary or criminal proceedings.

With the accession to the EU in 2004, Latvia had to transpose many directives, including in non-discrimination. LCHRES launches the first [3 year anti-discrimination project](#) (2003-2006) supported by the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands (MATRA programme). On 5 May, the LCHRES in cooperation with Netherlands Helsinki Committee organises a [conference "Anti-discrimination in Europe and Latvia"](#) with the participation of anti-

discrimination experts from the Netherlands and the UK. In the following years, LCHRES implements several projects, publishes studies and reports, conducts conferences, seminars and trainings on anti-discrimination issues for different target groups.

LCHRES continues to publish annual human rights report.



LCHRES annual Human Rights reports

In February Ieva Leimane-Veldmeijere together with international partners conducts monitoring visits to mental hospitals and social care homes in the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation.

2005

LCHRES changes the name of the organisation to the Latvian Centre for Human Rights (hereinafter – LCHR).

For the first time, LCHR wins a discrimination court case, with LCHR lawyer Ilvija Baķe (Pūce) representing the victim. The case concerns discrimination on grounds of gender and property status in employment, whereby the Straupe municipal council refused to employ a woman as a stoker. The

court establishes discrimination and awards the victim compensation amounting to 1000 Lats.⁴

In 2005 LCHR **begins working on issues related to combatting hate crimes and hate speech.**

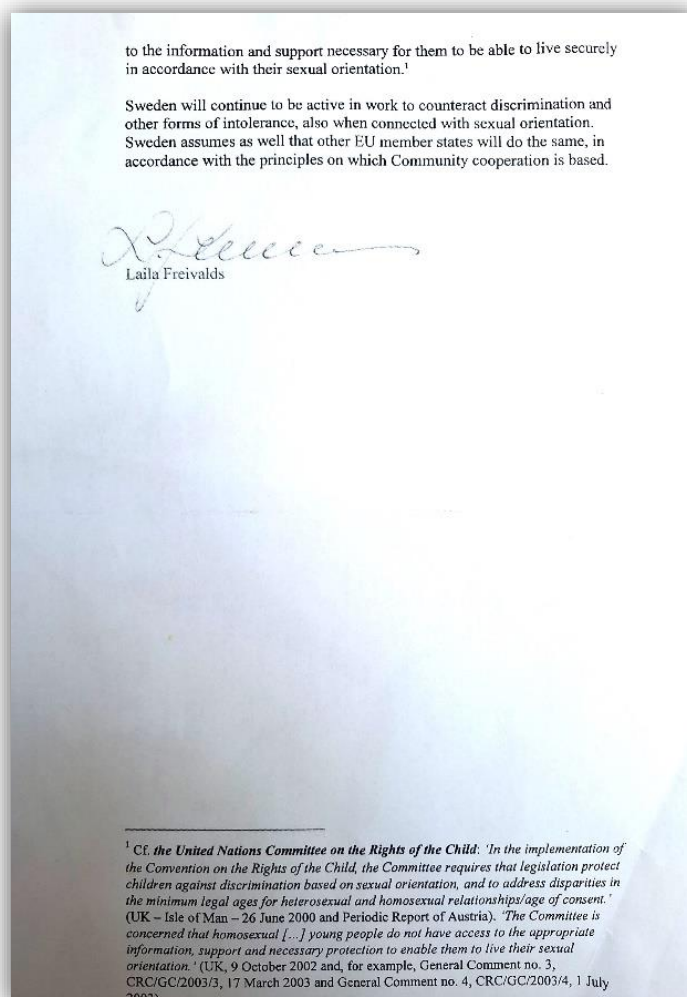
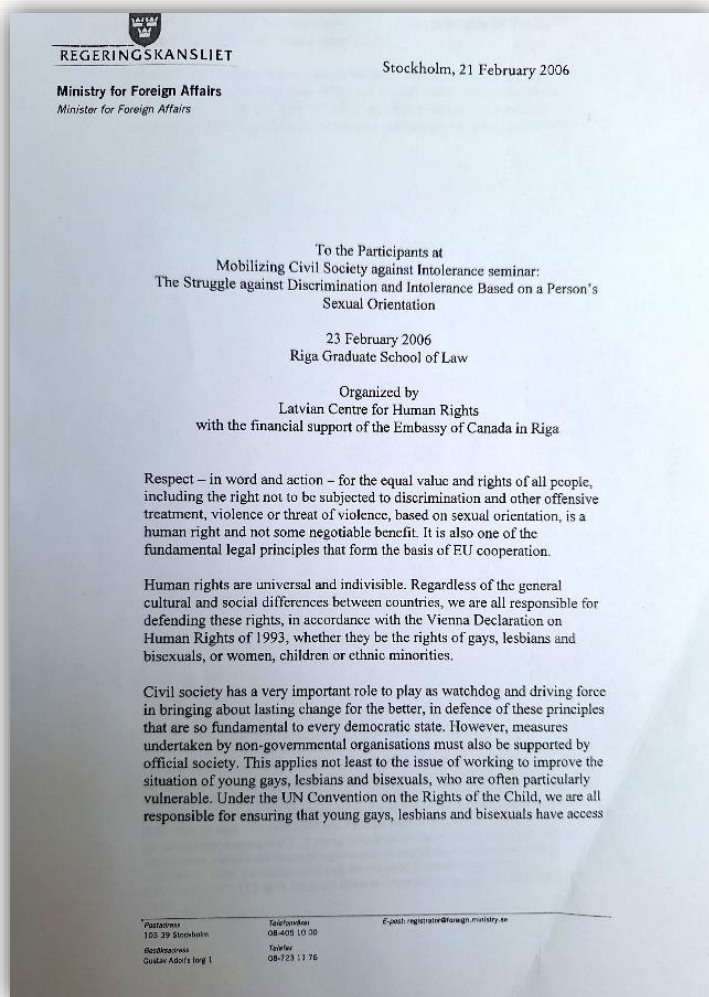
In view of the events of 2005, when various manifestations of intolerance become increasingly visible in the public sphere, while the voice for tolerance is insufficiently mobilized in either government or civil society, the LCHR organises a series of four seminars entitled “Mobilizing Civil Society against Intolerance”.

The seminars focus on issues that relate to each of the most vulnerable groups to prejudice and intolerance presently in Latvia: 1) LGBT, 2) visible minorities (race/ethnicity), 3) religious minorities and 4) migrants (newcomers), asylum seekers and refugees. Experts from other EU countries attend the seminars to share their country's good practices. A seminar [“Peaceful protests, hate and social cohesion: politics, role of the police and legal framework. The experience of Riga and Amsterdam”](#) is organised and aims at presenting the different experience of two cities Riga and Amsterdam in issues related to preventing hate crimes.



LCHR director Ilze Brands-Kehre, NGO “Mozaika” representative Linda Freimane, Swedish Homo Ombud Hans Ytterberg in the seminar “Discrimination and intolerance on the grounds of sexual orientation”

⁴ Cēsu District Court, Case No. C11019405, *Anga Stūriņa v. Straupe municipal council*, 5 July 2005



Letter of Support for the participants of the seminar "Discrimination and intolerance on the grounds of sexual orientation" by Laila Freivalds, Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs

In organising educational and awareness raising activities on non-discrimination, LCHR has always paid a special attention to the regions. In 2004-2005 LCHR organises several seminars on non-discrimination for NGOs in Liepāja, Ventspils, Jelgava, Daugavpils, Valmiera, Ventspils and Alūksne. The seminars address the legal framework in the EU and Latvia, developments concerning non-discrimination in Latvia, including court cases and the role of NGOs in preventing discrimination.

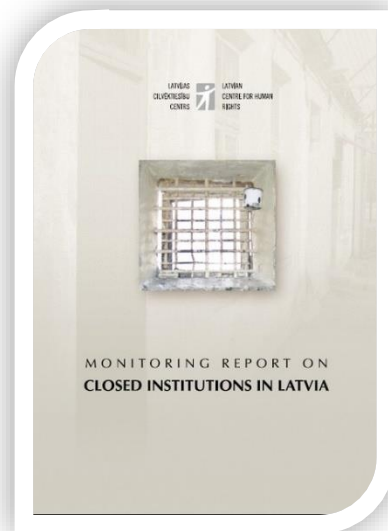
Anhelita Kamenska receives the Certificate of Recognition by the Society Integration Foundation for promoting ethnic integration.

LCHR team is joined by the policy analyst Sigita Zankovska-Odiņa and media analyst Jekaterina Kirjuhina (Tumule).

2006

In 2006, the LCHR completes the **3 year-project “Monitoring Human Rights and Prevention of Torture in Closed institutions: prisons, police cells and mental health care institutions in Baltic countries”** under EU program “European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights.”

LCHR publishes a comprehensive Monitorings Report on Places of Detention ([Ziņojums par cilvēktiesību monitoringu slēgtajās iestādēs.](#)) in Latvian and [English](#) (**Independent Detention Monitoring**). The report compiles information from 102 monitoring visits conducted from April 2003 to June 2006 to mental health hospitals, social care centres for persons with mental and intellectual disabilities, police detention facilities, prisons, immigration detention facilities accommodating irregular migrants and asylum seekers. Visits are conducted to 65 detention facilities in Latvia. In 2012, the European Court of Human Rights in the case [Savičs v Latvia](#) cites LCHR’s monitoring visit which described in detail the conditions of detention of prisoners sentenced to life imprisonment in the Daugavpils Prison. LCHR staff Ieva Leimane and Eva Ikauniece, and several external experts conduct monitoring visits to mental hospitals and



social care homes in Latvia. Ilvija Pūce, Laila Grāvere and Anhelita Kamenska conduct monitoring visits to state and municipal police detention facilities, immigration detention facilities and prisons. Visits to mental health institutions are conducted not only in Latvia, but also in Lithuania, Estonia and Kaliningrad Region in the Russian Federation. In total, [158 monitoring visits](#) are conducted, 23 monitors trained. [24 seminars](#) (16 in Latvia, 4 in Lithuanian, 2 in Estonia and 2 in Kaliningrad region) are organised for prison staff and police officers working in police detention facilities, personnel of psychiatric hospitals and social care homes, lawyers, NGOs and mass media). 12 reports, brochures, overviews are published, and 8 policy documents prepared within the project.

LCHR translates the standards of the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment into Latvian ([Eiropas Padomes Spīdzināšanas novēršanas komitejas standarti](#)).

LCHR publishes a monograph on National Minority Convention (["Nacionālo minoritāšu konvencija – Eiropas pieredze Latvijai. Eiropas Padomes Vispārējā konvencija par nacionālo minoritāšu aizsardzību – Konsultatīvās komitejas viedokļi par atsevišķu Konvencijas pantu īstenošanu dalībvalstīs"](#)), the result of a co-operation project between the LCHR and the Human Rights Institute of the University of Latvia with the support of Council of Europe Information Office and Friedrich Ebert Foundation. The authors of the book are Ilze Brands Kehris, Sigita Zankovska-Odiņa and Artūrs Kučs. It is the first publication in Latvian where the experience of European countries in implementing the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities has been compiled.

Ilze Brands Kehris is elected the First Vice-President of the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe.

LCHR becomes **a member of the [International Network Against Cyber Hate \(INACH\)](#)**.

On 23 May, LCHR staff meets with H.M. Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands and participates in the discussion on topical human rights issues, including issues related to integration and minority rights.

On 28 August, the LCHR organises **the first conference on hate crimes and police role and experience in preventing the crimes in Riga and other European cities**. The conference is attended by the representatives of the State Police, Riga Municipal Police, Prosecutor's Office, as well as ministry and NGO representatives. A separate conference session is dedicated to practical police work with violent hate incidents, as well as organised manifestations of hate in public events. The conference is attended by UK (including Northern Ireland) and Swedish experts.



Dr. Robin Oakley, independent consultant and associate researcher at the Ethnic Minorities Centre



LCHR director Ilze Brands-Kehris, "Afro-Lat" representatives Peter Mensa and George Steele in the conference "Hate Crimes and Police Role and Experience in Preventing Them"

To increase the reporting about discrimination LCHR lawyers provides free legal consultations to the inhabitants of Valmiera and Rēzekne.

2007

LCHR continues its work on non-discrimination and publishes the first report "Preventing Discrimination in Latvia" ("[Diskriminācijas novēršana Latvijā](#)"). The report looks at country's legal framework, the work of the relevant institutions in examining discrimination complaints and court cases on discrimination from 2004-2007.

LCHR organises three seminars for NGOs “Preventing discrimination in Europe and Latvia: theory and practise” in Liepāja, Jelgava and Daugavpils. The seminars are aimed at the capacity building of NGOs and trade unions in non-discrimination. The seminars are organised together with the secretariat of the Minister for Social Integration and Liepāja NGO centre. The seminars are attended by 85 participants, including representatives of NGOs for persons with disabilities, women, national minorities, senior citizens, and trade unions. Anti-discrimination seminars continue in 2007 and 2008.

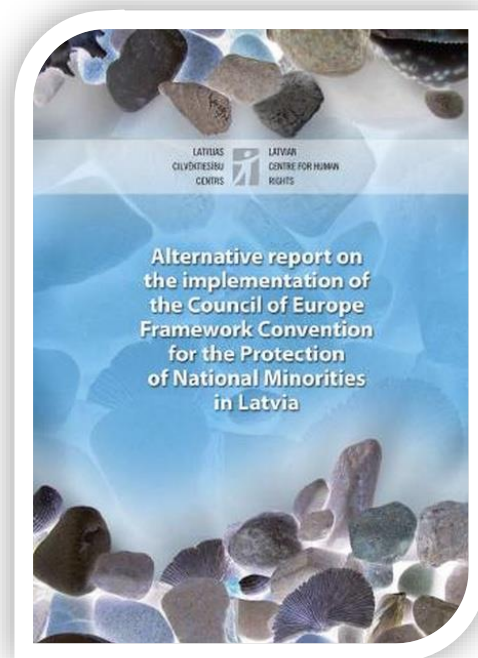
Raimonds Skuja begins working as the LCHR accountant. Renāte Līne, LCHR's previous accountant of several years leaves the organisation.

Ilze Brands Kehris is elected to the Management Board of EU's Fundamental Rights Agency. In 2010 she becomes the Chairperson of the Management Board.

LCHR lawyer Ilvija Pūce becomes a member of the Committee on the Prevention of Torture of the Council of Europe in respect of Latvia.

2008

LCHR submits first ["shadow report" to the Advisory Committee on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in Latvia](#). The report aims at providing information on the implementation of specific articles of the Convention in Latvia. The shadow report does not provide general analysis of legislation and other normative acts but focuses on practical aspects of the implementation of the rights enshrined in the Convention. To include in the report a wide range of opinions of minority organisations, LCHR organizes four regional seminars: in Daugavpils (24.08.2006), Jelgava (19.02.2007), Ventspils (13.03.2007) and Liepaja (15.03.2007). Representatives of thirty-six regional minority NGOs take part in these seminars. LCHR also conducts ten interviews with leaders of national minority NGOs based in Riga.

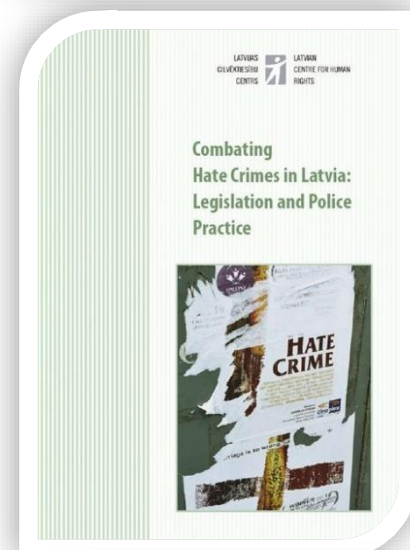
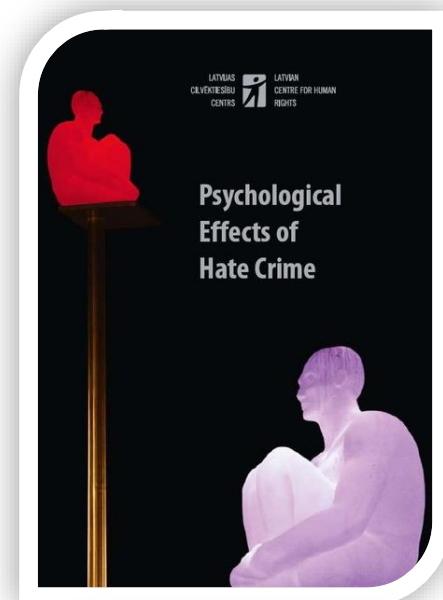


In 2006-2008 in co-operation with the Czech Helsinki Committee LCHR implements the project [“Combating Hate Crimes in Latvia and the Czech Republic: legal framework, police practise and the role of NGOs.”](#) LCHR issues several publications on hate crimes, including the first and so far the only study in Latvia on [“Psychological effects of hate crime – individual experience or community response”](#). The study raises the issues related to the psychological impact of hate crimes on the victims, their families and communities. LCHR commissions Dr. Inta Dzelme to conduct research who interviewed hate crime victims representing visual minorities, LGBT and Roma.

LCHR publishes a paper [“Combating Hate Crimes in Latvia: Legislation and Police Practice”](#) which maps and analyses the situation concerning hate crimes in Latvia, including legislation and police practises, in order to identify the gaps and to improve legislative and law enforcement responses to hate crimes. The research is conducted by Anhelita Kamenska and Ilze Brands Kehris.

Various materials for police officers for identifying, registering and investigating hate crimes are prepared within the project “Reducing Manifestations of Hate Crimes and Intolerance in Latvia”. LCHR also publishes **the first brochures for victims about hate crimes and where to report them**. The brochures are published in three languages – Latvian, English and Russian.

On 21 November 2008, LCHR organises an international conference [“Policing, Combating and Preventing Hate Crimes”](#). The conference analyses the experience of police and prosecutors in several EU Member States in investigating, combating and



preventing hate crimes. Police representatives from Stockholm, Amsterdam, Finland and the UK speak on their experiences and new initiatives in dealing with hate crimes. The conference highlights good examples of police and NGO, and community partnerships and also focuses on victims' experiences.

2009

LCHR implements the project "Legal Aid to Asylum Seekers – a Pre-Condition for Improving the Quality of Asylum Procedure in Latvia" which is funded by the European Refugee Fund. The project expands LCHR's work with asylum issues in Latvia, including establishing cooperation with responsible institutions. It is **one of the first projects in Latvia that provides free legal counselling and aid to asylum seekers.**

In October LCHR organises a discussion "**The Impact of economic crises on social and economic rights in Latvia and Europe.**" In 2008, after years of economic success, the Latvian economy suffers a sharp downturn as its GDP contracts by 10.5%. In early 2009 the Latvian government asks the IMF and the EU for an emergency bailout loan of 7.5 billion Euros, while at the same time the government nationalises Parex Bank, the second largest bank. In the end of 2008, the unemployment rate is 7%, while in December 2009, it rises to 22.8%

Towards the end of 2009, lawyers Džena Andersone and Kristīne Laganovska join the LCHR.

On 8 December Ilze Brands Kehris receives the French National Order of the Legion of Honour. The prestigious French decoration is presented to the LCHR's director for her contribution to Latvian and French relations and promotion of dialogue on issues regarding citizenship, minorities, discrimination, multiculturalism and migration.

2010

LCHR develops a 2-3 day anti-discrimination training course "**A different client in a diverse Latvia**" ("Atšķirīgs klients daudzveidīgā Latvijā"), including issues related to intercultural communication and diversity management. During two years, 158 persons participate in the training course, including representatives of state institutions, municipal and social workers, health

care workers, police officers, and trade union representatives. The training courses are conducted by Sigita Zankovska-Odiņa un Boriss Kolčanovs.

Ilze Brands Kehris is elected the Chairperson of the Management Board of the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency.

Ilze Brands Kehris participates in a comprehensive study "[How Integrated is Latvian Society? An Audit of Achievements, Failures and Challenges](#)" conducted by the University of Latvia Advanced Institute of Social and Policy Research (ed. Nils Muižnieks) by contributing a chapter "Citizenship, Participation and Representation."

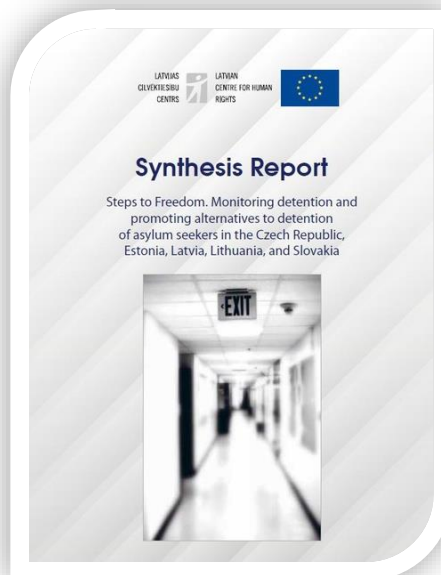
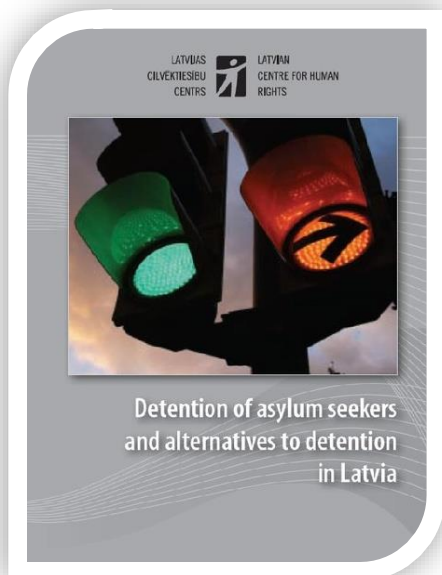
2011

In connection with the unlawful long-term detention of an asylum seeker, the ECHR finds the violation of human rights in the case [Longa Yonkeu vs Latvia](#), who is represented by the LCHR lawyer Džena Andersone. **The court awards the victim a compensation in the amount of EUR 9000 in respect of non-pecuniary damage.**

In 2011, the LCHR begins implementing projects financed by the European Refugee Fund and UNHCR, by [providing legal aid to asylum seekers, and facilitating the improvement of the quality of asylum procedure](#) in line with Latvia's asylum law, EU and international legal norms. [Monitoring of the border crossing points and detention facilities of the asylum seekers](#) starts in the UNHCR funded project, which is made possible due to the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the UNHCR and the State Border Guard. A brochure "Seeking asylum in Latvia. An aid to asylum seekers" is published in English, Russian, French, Arabic and Georgian languages.

In 2010-2011, the LCHR implements the project "**Steps to Freedom. Monitoring Detention and Promoting Alternatives to Detention of Asylum Seekers in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic**". The project is managed by Svetlana Djačkova, and it results in reports on [the situation in Latvia](#) and the partner countries, several study visits, national policy briefs and papers, [a comparative report, national seminars](#) and an international conference in Riga. Representatives of the State Border Guard, Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, Daugavpils district and

Latgale region judges, representatives of the Ombudsman's Office and NGOs take part in the seminar and the international conference.



In March the LCHR participates in **the first situation testing night** coordinated by the EGAM (European Grassroots Movement against Racism), which is aimed at drawing the public attention to the risks of racial and ethnic discrimination. **It is the first time when the situation testing is used as an experiment to identify cases of direct discrimination.**

In 2011 the LCHR publishes a second report **“Preventing Discrimination in Latvia: from legislation to court practise (2008-2011)”** (Diskriminācijas novēršana Latvijā: no likumdošanas līdz tiesu praksei (2008-2011).)” The report continues LCHR's previous work in monitoring legal developments, institutional framework and case law in non-discrimination.

In December Anhelita Kamenska becomes LCHR's director, as in February the former LCHR director I. Brands Kehris left LCHR and became the Director of the Office of the OSCE's High Commissioner for National Minorities in the Hague, Netherlands.

2012

For the first time the Centre conducts [monitoring of online hate](#) to see how internet news sites in Latvia respond to users' complaints. During the monitoring around 9,000 comments to 45 articles are analysed, including during the controversial historic dates (16 March, the Day of the Latvian Legion) and 9 May (so called Victory Day, when the end of WWII is marked by certain sections of the population in some former Soviet republics). Of those 22 are articles on the Latvian internet news portals, while 12 are on Russian internet news sites (in Latvia). Reports about more than 200 comments are sent to the news portals, of which most are removed. The project is supported by the Riga City Council.

In cooperation with the Lithuanian Human Rights Monitoring Institute, an international conference "[The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the role of civil society in the promotion of fundamental rights](#)" is organised. The aim of the conference is to raise awareness about the EU Fundamental Rights Charter, its applicability and developments after the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty. The conference is attended by the representative of EU's Fundamental Rights Agency and representatives from 13 EU MS – United Kingdom, Netherlands, Slovenia, Greece, France, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Ireland, Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia and Finland.

LCHR staff conducts regular monitoring visits to border crossing points with Russian Federation and Belarus, Riga international airport, commercial port, Centre for Detained Foreigners "Daugavpils", asylum seekers' camp "Mucenieki", State Border Guard departmental units. From 2012 – 2015 LCHR lawyers - Elīna Eihmane and Ilze Dubava - conduct 82 monitoring visits.

Supreme Court Senate Administrative Cases department in its judgements of 26 October 2012, when examining a prisoner's complaint about unlawful actions by the prison authorities in examining the letter addressed to the Latvian Centre for Human Rights, notes:

"[...] human rights institutions, including non-governmental, are an essential mechanism in the protection of person's rights. It is not always possible for an individual to hire a lawyer or to understand himself/herself whether a human rights violation has occurred in respect him/her and what the

possible human rights violations remedies are. [...] **Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies (currently the Latvian Centre for Human Rights) is a well-known independent NGO in Latvia, which deals with the protection of human rights, and focuses on prisons and consults in individual cases.**

[...] The Senate deems it justifiable the conclusion of the regional court, that there has been a violation of the claimant's right to correspondence in connection with the inspection of the letter addressed to the Latvian Centre for Human Rights."

2013

In January, February and March LCHR conducts 5 training seminars for secondary school pupils "Active European Citizenship." The pupils receive information about the rights and freedoms of European citizens, changes introduced with Lisbon Treaty and EU Fundamental Rights Charter. 148 pupils attend the seminars.

LCHR participates in a 7-country project (Italy, Poland, France, Portugal, Spain, Latvia, Greece) "European prison observatory. Conditions of imprisonment in the European Union." Several studies are published within the project, including ["From national practices to European guidelines: interesting initiatives in prisons management"](#), national reports on prison conditions, including [Prison Conditions in Latvia](#).



In September LCHR organises an international [conference about the Participation of Minority Consultative Bodies in Decision Making](#) and the launching of the [LCHR's 2nd alternative or shadow report about the implementation of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](#) in Latvia. The aim of the conference is to analyse the achievements, problems and challenges of national and municipal level consultative integration and minority mechanisms.

His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and exiled spiritual leader of Tibet, arrives in Latvia on Sept. 8, on a visit until Sept. 11.

Anhelita Kamenska participates in a closed round-table discussion with Latvian religious leaders and representatives of academia.

2014

LCHR organises the first 3-day training course for youth on limiting hate speech on the Internet within the project “NGO capacity building to limit hate speech on the internet” (“[NVO rīcībspējas stiprināšana naida kurināšanas ierobežošanai internetā](#)”). The aim of the course is to strengthen the capacity of youth NGOs and minorities in reducing hate speech, raise the capacity to identify hate speech and develop technical skills to effectively react to hate speech on the net.

Starting with 2014 a [confidential reporting form to report about discrimination](#) and [hate speech and hate crimes](#) is made available on the LCHR home page. The forms are available in Latvian, English and Russian.



LCHR continues **co-operation with EU's Fundamental Rights Agency as part of FRANET network**, which is the Agency's multidisciplinary research network. It is composed of contractors in each EU Member State who, upon request, provide relevant data to FRA on fundamental rights issues, to facilitate Agency's comparative analysis. LCHR wins a 4-year tender with FRA (2014-2017).



LCHR staff Anhelita Kamenska, Sigita Zankovska – Odiņa and Boriss Kolčanovs participate in the preparation of comprehensive study “[How Democratic is Latvia. Audit of Democracy. 2005-2014](#)” (ed. J.Rozenvalds). Anhelita Kamenska authors the chapters on Civil and Political Rights and Civilian Control of the Military and Police, and Sigita Zankovska-Odiņa, Boriss Kolčanovs author the chapter on Nationhood and Citizenship. The study is published by University of Latvia Advanced Social and Political Research Institute.

In November the LCHR organises an **international conference "Global, regional and national mechanisms for the prevention of torture and cruel or degrading treatment: sharing experience. 25 years of The Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) of the Council of Europe"**.

The aim of the conference is to evaluate the impact of different level human rights protection mechanisms on the situation of prisons and police detention facilities in Latvia; to raise awareness about the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture (OPCAT) and models of National Preventive Mechanisms in Europe; exchange experiences in how independent detention monitoring is conducted in the Baltic States at national level; how to improve the knowledge of prison and police officers about CPT standards.

This is the 2nd conference organised by the LCHR which focuses on OPCAT as Latvia was one of the few countries among the EU Member States which had not ratified it.

LCHR organises a study visit to Slovenia to learn about the experience of the Slovenian National Preventive Mechanism (Slovenian Ombudsman + NGOs) in monitoring places of detention. The delegation includes representatives from the Ministry of Justice, Government representative's office before international human rights institutions, Latvian Prison Administration and the LCHR.

2015

ECHR finds a violation about Article 5 § 4 of the Convention as regards speediness of review of detention in the case of an asylum seeker [Nassr Allah v Latvia](#),⁵ who is represented by the LCHR's lawyer Džena Andersone.



International conference "Global, regional and national mechanisms for the prevention of torture and cruel or degrading treatment: sharing experience. 25 years of the Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) of the Council of Europe".

⁵ ECHR judgement of 21 July 2015 in the case Nassr Allah v Latvia,

From 2013-2015 LCHR in cooperation with Lithuanian Red Cross Society and Human Rights League implements a project [„Developing good practices: promoting compliance with the Return Directive in Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia.”](#) The overall objective of the project is to promote the compliance of the legislation and practices of return in Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia with the Return Directive and international standards through the exchange of experience and best practices among the return practitioners from several member states. Study visits to Austria and Belgium, seminars, conferences take place within the framework of the project. Several research papers, including [a comparative report](#) are published.



In 2015, LCHR team is joined by the lawyer Jevgēnija Nerugale, Centre's first and only staff member in Daugavpils, who begins providing legal counselling to detained asylum seekers in the Daugavpils Detention Facility for Foreigners. The counselling is provided within the UNHCR funded project.

In 2015 LCHR conducts research [on Roma portrayal in the Latvian media](#) and publishes an overview to highlight media stereotypes of Roma which promote prejudice and stereotypes against Roma.

Together with researcher Didzis Bērziņš and Ilya Lensky, director of the museum “Jews in Latvia”, LCHR publishes a brochure **“Manifestations of antisemitism: history and today”** ([“Antisemītisma izpausmes: vēsture un mūsdienas.”](#)) The authors of the publication try to answer difficult questions: what is antisemitism, typical antisemitic myths and prejudice and how they have developed over the course of history. The publication addresses issues related to modern forms of antisemitism, Holocaust denial and manifestations of antisemitism in social media.

On 22 October, LCHR organises an international conference [“Effective ways of addressing hate crimes and hate speech”](#) . Paul Iganski, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Law of Lancaster University, one of Europe’s leading researchers on hate crime, makes a keynote speech on global trends in hate crimes, the impact of hate crimes on the lives of victims. The conference is widely attended by representatives of law enforcement institutions and civil society.



Paul Iganski, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Law of Lancaster University in international conference “Effective ways of addressing hate crimes and hate speech.”

Conference “Effective ways of addressing hate crimes and hate speech.”

LCHR submits its shadow report to the Universal Periodic Report (UPR) ⁶. The Latvian government report is examined in January 2016.

In November Jekaterina Tumule participates in the UN OHCHR Minorities Fellowship Programme. The programme provides minority rights defenders with the opportunity to learn about the work of UN institutions and mechanisms that deal with human rights, in general, and minority rights, in particular. The programme selects human rights defenders and activists from all over the world.

⁶ Latvian Centre for Human Rights Submission to the Universal Periodic Review. Pieejams: https://cilvektiesibas.org.lv/media/attachments/26/01/2016/lchr_upr24_lva_e_main.pdf

2016

In April **the first training seminar “Topical Theoretical and Practical Issues in Legal Counselling to Asylum Seekers”** is organised specifically for legal aid providers. The seminar is financed by the UNHCR.⁷ Annual seminars have taken place not only in Riga, but in 2023 in Daugavpils and in 2024 in Rēzekne.

Due to the increasing diversity in the Latvian society which is connected with the reception of a larger number of asylum seekers and refugees, the growing number of foreign students, the LCHR implements the project ‘Promoting public participation in preventing discrimination and intolerance.’ The project pays special focus to intolerance on religious grounds and the assessment of the experiences and needs of foreign students in preventing discrimination and intolerance. Interviews with the representatives of immigrant and minority groups, and [an anonymous student survey](#) highlights daily problems in their encounter with discrimination, hate crimes and hate speech.

During 2015-2017 the LCHR is involved in the implementation of an international project [AMIITE CODE \(Capitalizing On DEvelopment\)](#). The aim of the project is to promote greater public support and increase the awareness of EU citizens about the interrelation of migration, human rights and development. In co-operation with Education, Culture and Sports Department of the Riga City Council several training seminars ‘Migration, development and human rights’ are organised for social workers, teachers and youths.

Although LCHR is no longer engaged in conducting prison monitoring, LCHR continues to be involved in the research projects co-ordinated by the international project ‘European Prison Observatory’ which focuses on different aspects of prisons and alternatives to imprisonment. In co-operation with the National Probation Service the LCHR organises several



Seminar “Topical Theoretical and Practical Issues in Legal Counselling to Asylum Seekers”

⁷ Kopsavilkums pieejams: <https://cilvektiesibas.org.lv/lv/news/organizets-seminars-juridiskas-palidzibas-sniegsan-386/>

events. A conference “**On Different Aspects of Work with Sex-Offenders**” is organised in Riga. The conference aims at developing different approaches in the work with sex offenders by programme managers and case workers in the probation service. A conference and seminar are held in Rēzekne and Saldus “**Challenges and Prospects - 10 years of community service – as managed by the National Probation Service**”. The participants share good practices, look back at the historic development of community service as a criminal punishment, its application and effectiveness, analysis of organising community services, address future prospects and challenges.

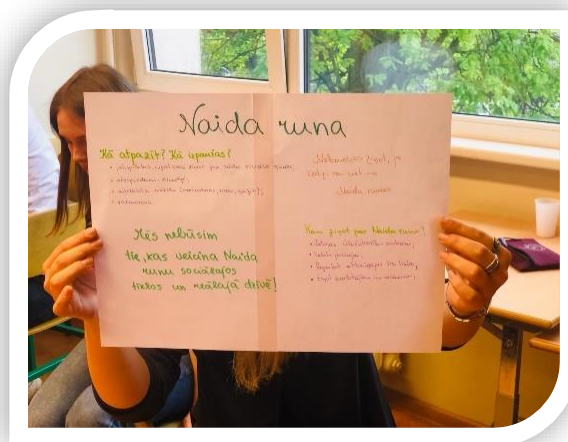
In co-operation with the European Network against Statelessness LCHR prepares a study “[Ending Childhood Statelessness: A study on Latvia](#)”. The study analyses main causes and consequences for the problem of non-citizen children in Latvia and possible solutions. The study is conducted by Svetlana Djačkova and Sigita Zankovska-Odiņa.

Anhelita Kamenska is elected to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in respect of Latvia.

LCHR team is joined by lawyer Edgars Oļševskis.

2017

In 2017 LCHR together with experts from NGO “Participation for All! (“Līdzdalības platforma”) and the financial support of the Riga City Council Education Culture and Sports Department begins training events for pupils on hate speech prevention. **During the next six years with the support of various funders around 1,000 youths and 250 teachers, school support staff, youth workers and NGOs are trained in different regions across Latvia.** The seminars focus on what is hate speech, its impact and consequences and what everyone can do in preventing or reducing hate speech. The seminars have been organised in schools with Latvian language of instruction and schools implementing minority education programmes. The projects are managed by Jekaterina Tumule.



Seminars for pupils "Say "no" to hate speech!"

LCHR publishes a study "[Lifecycle of a Hate Crime. Country Report for Latvia](#)". The study includes the findings of in-depth primary and secondary research conducted over two years tracing the *Lifecycle of a Hate Crime* in Latvia. The research is undertaken in five jurisdictions within the EU - Ireland, England and Wales, Latvia, the Czech Republic and Sweden in which contrasting approaches to the prosecution and punishment of hate crime are evident. The study highlights the developments concerning hate crimes and hate speech in Latvia since 2014. 30 police officers, prosecutors, judges and defence counsels from Riga, Liepāja, Jelgava, Ogre, Valmiera, Tukums, Cēsis and Gulbene, with experience in handling hate crime and incitement to hatred cases are interviewed for the purposes of the study. The study is written by Anhelita Kamenska and Ēriks Treļš, a lecturer at the State Police College.

In 2017, the LCHR for the first time participates in the [online hate monitoring exercise coordinated by the European Commission](#) to verify how global social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube) observe the European Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online. Since 2017 the LCHR has the status of a "trusted flagger."

LCHR continues co-operation with EU's Fundamental Rights Agency as part of FRANET network, which is the Agency's multidisciplinary research network. LCHR wins a 4-year tender (2017-2022) with FRA to collect data in

a range of fundamental rights areas: racism, xenophobia, equality and non-discrimination, children's rights, access to justice and victims' rights, children's rights, migration, border, asylum, refugee and migrant integration, Roma integration, information society, right to private life, data protection, UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.

2018

In cooperation with human rights organisations from Estonia and Lithuania LCHR implements the first pan-Baltic project "[Police and NGO cooperation in the fight against hate crimes in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania](#)" co-funded by the EU. The project strengthens the co-operation among NGOs and law enforcement bodies to encourage reporting hate crimes and improving victim trust in law enforcement. The project **for the first time focuses on disability hate speech/crimes in the Baltic States**. To encourage report hate speech and hate crimes several [informative materials](#), including animated videos, are prepared for wider public.

LCHR gathers extensive information on [the situation of non-citizens and stateless in Latvia](#) for "The Statelessness Index" prepared by the European Network against Statelessness (ENS). The Index assesses how countries in Europe protect stateless people and what they are doing to prevent and reduce statelessness. The Index is updated on an annual basis.

LCHR submits its [shadow report to the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#).

2019

LCHR becomes a member of the European Council for Refugees and Expatriates (ECRE).

LCHR publishes a brochure in English, French, Russian and Arabic languages [about family reunification for refugees and persons with alternative status](#). The brochure "Everyone has the right to seek asylum" published in 2017 and funded by the UNHCR is available in 10 languages.

A special 7 session programme "[Safe School for Everyone](#)" for pupils is designed and piloted. 24 youths acquire knowledge and skills in preventing hate speech through interactive and educational activities, e.g. simulation games, museum visits and excursions, living library, etc.

2020

Despite the restrictions caused by the covid-19 pandemic LCHR continues implementing different project activities, including providing legal aid to asylum seekers and representing them in court.

At the request of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency LCHR prepares [five reports about the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on fundamental rights](#), including the impact of restrictions on specific groups, e.g. persons residing in social care homes, senior citizens, persons with disability, Roma, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

During 2020-2022 LCHR together with the NGO “Participation for all” (“Līdzdalības platforma”) manages and together with partners from Lithuania, Estonia, Romania, Croatia and Bulgaria implements the project “Active European Citizens against Hate Speech”.

17 youth training seminars involving 350 youths about preventing hate speech take place in the participating countries, comparative research on [hate speech and euroscepticism in Europe](#) and national reports, including on [Latvia](#), are published. Jekaterina Tumule and Aleksandrs Milovs author the report on Latvia.

2021

The ECHR indicates interim measures in the case of H.M.M. and Others v. Latvia (41 Kurdish-ethnic Iraqi nationals) at the border of Latvia with Belarus. They are represented by the LCHR lawyer Edgars Olševskis. ECHR requests the Latvian authorities to provide claimants with food, water, clothes, adequate medical care and, if possible, temporary shelter.

After the declaration of the state of emergency in the areas bordering with Belarus, border monitoring, which was funded by the UNHCR, is no longer



Seminar “Active Young People against Hate Speech”



possible. From 2017 until 2022, LCHR lawyer Edgars Oļševskis conducted more than 100 monitoring visits to border crossing points, Riga international airport, State Border Guard regional headquarters, etc.

From 2021 until March 2024 LCHR together with “Participation for all” and “Make Room Europe” implements a project **“On the Way to a More Tolerant Society – Information, Education, Support and Co-operation”**. The project is funded by EEA finance instrument and aimed at strengthening civil society skills in identifying and effectively responding to the manifestations of intolerance and discrimination and providing adequate support to the victims.

13 information seminars are organised for different target groups (nearly 300 persons attended the seminars), including Roma, foreign students, migrants, asylum seekers, international protection beneficiaries, Ukrainian refugees). Free legal aid is also provided to victims of discrimination and hate speech/hate crime.





Seminar "Roma for Tolerance and against discrimination!" on 26 January 2023

2022

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, LCHR provides numerous consultations to Ukrainian refugees on issues related to their arrival in Latvia, legalisation of documents, receipt of residence permits and other issues. LCHR lawyers participate in different working groups in connection with the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Latvia.

LCC lawyer Jekaterina Tumule prepares and **submits an application to the European Court of Human Rights on behalf of Professor Deniss Hanovs who suffered from a homophobic attack.** [On 18 July 2024](#) the Court holds that there has been a violation of Articles 3 (prohibition of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment) and 8 (right to private life) of the Convention, taken in conjunction with Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination). **The court awards the victim D.Hanovs compensation – 10,000 euros in respect of non-pecuniary damages.**

LCHR continues implementing UNHCR funded project "Legal counselling to asylum seekers in Latvia." Legal consultations are provided to 129 asylum

speech; sexist hate speech, the impact of covid-19 pandemic restrictions on fundamental rights and separate social groups, annual reports in eight fundamental rights areas. LCHR co-operated with the Baltic Social Sciences Institute who conducted interviews and prepared a report “Procedural Safeguards in European Arrest Warrant Proceedings.” LCHR conducted interviews and prepared a report on General Data Protection Regulation – the experience of Data protection authorities.

Since the beginning of co-operation with the EU’s Racism Monitoring Centre in 2003, and later EU’s Fundamental Rights Agency, **the LCHR prepared over 220 reports of different size.**

2023

LCHR wins a discrimination case in court in the provision of services. In the given case a Ukrainian citizen was denied a car wash service only because she is a Ukrainian. **The court awards a compensation – 1000 euros – to the victim for non-pecuniary damages.** The victim is represented by the LCHR lawyer Jekaterina Tumule. This is only the second successful case where the court establishes discrimination on ethnic grounds.

To commemorate LCHR’s 30 years of activity, LCHR begins implementing the project **“Human Rights in Latvia – past, present, future”** (“[Cilvēktiesības Latvijā – pagātne, tagadne, nākotne](#)”). This is the largest LCHR project to date which has received state funding. During the project the LCHR drafts its future strategy, publishes overviews about the LCHR work during 30 years, a report on human rights during the last 5 years (2019-2023), organises training to pupils and teachers on human rights, training for NGOs on domestic and international human rights protection mechanisms and their use in practise, and a conference dedicated to the contribution by the LCHR and other Latvian NGOs to human rights protection in Latvia.



LCHR current and former staff in the conference “Latvian Centre for Human Rights. 30 years: NGO role in human rights development”: Evita Goša, Ilze Mikulāne, Jevgēnija Nerugale, Raimonds Skuja, Džena Andersone, Sigita Zankovska-Odiņa, Anhelita Kamenska, Ieva Leimane-Veldmejiere, Nils Muižnieks, Dace Meile, Renāte Līne, Indra Strautiņa, Laila Grāvere, Liliana Garkalne, Jekaterina Tumule, Edgars Oļševskis, Alise Hirša.

In December LCHR organises a conference [“On the Way to a More Tolerant Society – current challenges and solutions in reducing hate speech and hate crimes”](#). The conference addresses issues related to online hate speech, the rights of hate crime victims and support services to victims and reducing intolerance and preventing hate speech among children and youth. The conference is livestreamed on the Latvian public media, and internet news portal tvnet.lv.

During the conference the LCHR [presents](#) the findings of online monitoring of hateful content. From **January 2021 until November 2023, LCHR identified 2,414 instances of hate speech** in the user generated content on the Latvian internet sites (or in connection with the content generated by Latvian internet users) in Latvian and Russian. Most hate speech cases were identified on **global social networks** Facebook (Meta), TikTok, Twitter (X), Youtube and Instagram – **1 607**, while **807 cases** of hate speech were identified on **Latvian internet news sites** (the largest part on nra.lv,

neatkariga.nra.lv). Hate speech removal rates were monitored regarding global social networks as they are bound by the EU Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online. 50% of the identified hate speech was against LGBT+ (45% against gays and lesbians, 5% against trans people), 20% was hate speech due to ethnic or national origin; 18% - xenophobia, 6% - racism (skin colour), 2% against a religious group, 1% due to gender, while 3% against other social groups.