

## **International and National NGOs call upon the Austrian Ministry for Women, Family and Youth to guarantee the continuance of the Litigation Association of NGOs against discrimination**

Austrian Federal Ministry for Women, Family and Youth  
Untere Donaustraße 13-15  
1020 Vienna

June 14th, 2018

### **Subject: Equal Treatment and Antidiscrimination require adequate funding**

We, representatives of the undersigned international and national civil society organizations, issue this appeal to the Austrian Federal Ministry for Women, Family and Youth to request the rethinking of the decision to reduce the budget for the Litigation Association (Klagsverband) of NGOs against Discrimination by 50%.

One of the Austrian Civic Solidarity Platform (CSP) member organizations, ZARA – Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit (Civil courage and Anti-Racism-Work), was an initiator of the Litigation Association and has been a member since its founding. Today the umbrella organization includes 50 NGOs dealing with different aspects of discrimination.

The Klagsverband has been consulting member organizations and their clients as well as sending advisory experts to the Commission of Equal Treatment. The Equal Treatment Act and the Disability Equality Act explicitly provide the Klagsverband with legal rights in the interest of those who consider themselves discriminated against on the grounds of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion and belief and sexual orientation. Since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018, the Klagsverband has the right to class actions, which cannot be exercised without the corresponding financial support of the Klagsverband. Generally, its services and activities have proven to be pivotal for the protection of human rights in Austria.

Subsequently, we underline our concern that this decision might indicate a tendency towards restricting human rights and civic space in Austria and therefore call upon you to demonstrate the importance of Antidiscrimination measures and the protection of human rights by providing the entire requested subsidy amount and thus guaranteeing the continuance of the Litigation Association.

### NGOs associated with the statement:

1. Association UMDPL (Ukraine)
2. Austrian Helsinki Association – For Human Rights and International Dialogue (Austria)
3. Belarusian Helsinki Committee (Belarus)
4. Bir Duino (Kyrgyzstan)
5. Center for Civil Liberties (Ukraine)
6. Center for Participation and Development (Georgia)
7. Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights (Russia)
8. Citizens' Watch (Russia)
9. DRA – German-Russian Exchange (Germany)
10. Helsinki Association (Armenia)
11. Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Vanadzor (Armenia)
12. Human Rights Center of Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan)
13. Human Rights Center "Viasna" (Belarus)
14. humanrights.ch (Switzerland)
15. Human Rights House Zagreb (Croatia)
16. Human Rights Matter (Germany)
17. International Partnership for Human Rights (Belgium)
18. Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (Kazakhstan)
19. Kosovo Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims (Kosovo)
20. Legal Policy Research Center (Kazakhstan)
21. Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights (Austria)
22. Macedonian Helsinki Committee (Macedonia)
23. Netherlands Helsinki Committee (The Netherlands)
24. Norwegian Helsinki Committee (Norway)
25. Protection of Rights without Borders (Armenia)
26. Public Association „Dignity“ (Kazakhstan)
27. Swiss Helsinki Committee (Switzerland)
28. The Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House (Belarus)
29. The Public Verdict Foundation (Russia)
30. The Swedish OSSE-network (Sweden)
31. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Germany)
32. ZARA – Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit (Austria)