

The Commissioner

- [Welcome](#)
- [Biography](#)
- [Speeches and statements](#)

Activities

- [Mandate](#)
- [Country visits](#)
- [Major themes](#)

Library

- [Latest documents](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Viewpoints](#)
- [Links](#)

Media section

- [News archive](#)
- [RSS](#)
- [Multimedia](#)
- [Newsletter](#)
- [Media contact](#)

The Office

- [Who is who](#)
- [Contact](#)

The Commissioner discussed minorities' rights and discrimination issues during his visit to Lithuania

[22/10/2009] Commissioner Hammarberg visited Lithuania from 19 to 20 October for high level discussions with the Lithuanian authorities where a number of human rights issues were raised, including minority rights, the need to investigate the alleged existence in Lithuania of a secret detention centre for terrorist suspects, and the deficiencies of the Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effects of Public Information.

He met the President of Lithuania, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as representatives of the Parliament (Seimas) and the Head of Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad. Further meetings were held with the Head of the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office, the Ombudsman for Equal Opportunities, and with civil society representatives.

Commissioner Hammarberg took part in a seminar on discrimination issues organised by the Swedish Embassy, which is holding the EU presidency, and by the Human Rights Monitoring Institute of Vilnius. In his speech, he underlined that states should do everything in their power to avoid and counter tendencies of a xenophobic and homophobic nature, which have been feeding on the social insecurities resulting from the economic crisis. He appealed to politicians and to the press in Europe to resist such tendencies and to inform people about the importance of respecting human rights.

The Commissioner noted that the presidential working group created to analyse the controversial Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effects of Public Information had proposed a list of amendments to this law. This decision shows that the Lithuanian authorities are fully aware of the negative effects of legislation containing vague or unduly broad restrictions on freedom of speech, or with provisions discriminating against people on the basis of their sexual orientation. He is convinced of the willingness of the Lithuanian authorities to find a solution to these concerns.

The Commissioner discussed possible solutions to various questions concerning minorities' rights, an example being the introduction of the possibility to spell names in the minority language. He hopes that a constructive approach will be followed in devising approaches which will preserve minority identity, make integration possible, and protect the cultural diversity and pluralism which are inherent to Lithuanian society.

Answering journalists' questions about the alleged existence of a secret detention center on the territory of Lithuania, the Commissioner said these allegations should be seriously and impartially investigated. The Commissioner welcomes the determination of the Lithuanian authorities to fully clarify this matter.

Press contacts in the Commissioner's Office:

Stefano Montanari, +33 6 61 14 70 37; stefano.montanari@coe.int