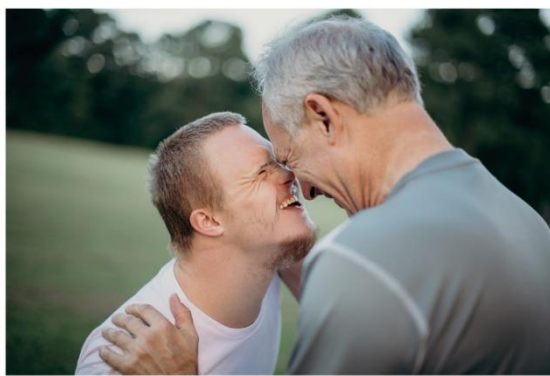
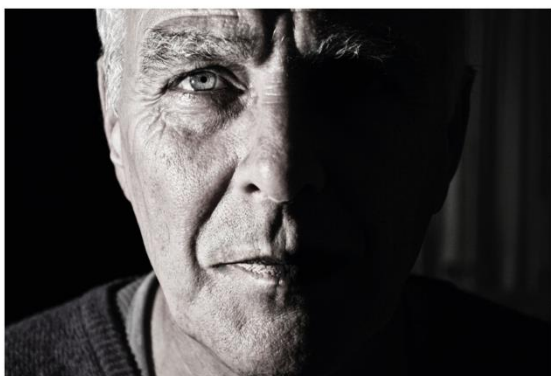


## Ten years of the Ombudsman as the national equality body

This annex to the regular quarterly report for the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic summarises the Defender's ten years of work in the area of equal treatment and protection against discrimination. The aim of this text is to remind the Deputies of the most important findings resulting from the Defender's activities concerning protection of equality and human dignity in 2009–2019.



## **Ombudsman's competence and individual powers in the area of equal treatment and protection against discrimination**

The Public Defender of Rights was entrusted with competence in matters of the right to equal treatment and protection against discrimination with effect from 1 December 2009.<sup>1</sup> This occurred in connection with adoption of the Anti-Discrimination Act<sup>2</sup> and as a result of the requirement of European Union law that the Member States establish an equality body. Apart from being present in every EU country, similar bodies also exist in some third countries.

For over ten years, the Defender has contributed to the enforcement of the right to equal treatment of all persons regardless of their race or ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, belief or world view. For that purpose, the Defender provides methodological assistance to victims of discrimination in lodging their applications to initiate proceedings concerning discrimination, carries out surveys, publishes reports and issues recommendations with respect to matters of discrimination, and ensures exchange of available information with the relevant European bodies.<sup>3</sup>

Since 1 January 2018, the Defender has performed competence in matters related to the freedom of movement of citizens of the European Union and the European Economic Area and their family members.<sup>4</sup> To this end, the Defender provides methodological assistance to citizens of the European Union in filing lawsuits concerning discrimination; carries out surveys and analyses concerning the exercise of the EU citizens' freedom of movement; publishes reports and issues recommendations on matters related to the exercise of the rights of the EU citizens; publishes up-to-date information on the rights of the EU citizens in Czech and at least one other official language of the European Union; and shares available information with the relevant national, foreign and international bodies.<sup>5</sup>

The Defender continuously provides information on his/her findings in the area of protection against discrimination through quarterly and annual reports, which the Defender submits to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic,<sup>6</sup> as well as through press releases and conferences, websites,<sup>7</sup> social networks, educational

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1 Section 1 (5) of Act No. 349/1999 Coll., on the Public Defender of Rights, as amended.

2 Act No. 198/2009 Coll., on equal treatment and legal remedies for protection against discrimination and on amendment to certain laws (the Anti-Discrimination Act), as amended.

3 Section 21b of the Public Defender of Rights Act.

4 Further to transposition of Directive 2014/54/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 on measures facilitating the exercise of rights conferred on workers in the context of freedom of movement for workers.

5 Section 21d (1) of the Public Defender of Rights Act.

6 The reports are available at: <https://www.ochrance.cz/zpravy-o-cinnosti/zpravy-pro-poslaneckou-snemovnu/>.

7 <https://www.ochrance.cz/>

and awareness-raising events and the Defender's Opinions Register<sup>8</sup>. Since 2015, the Defender has also issued separate annual reports on protection against discrimination.<sup>9</sup>

### International standards for national equality bodies

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), as a monitoring body of the Council of Europe, published its revised general policy recommendation concerning equality bodies in 2018.<sup>10</sup> ECRI will supervise compliance with the recommendation in all countries of the Council of Europe within its sixth monitoring cycle.<sup>11</sup>

In 2018, the European Commission issued a recommendation to the EU Member States on standards for equality bodies.<sup>12</sup> The Commission will monitor compliance with this recommendation in 2020 within its regular review of the implementation of two anti-discrimination directives.<sup>13</sup>

Both recommendations invite the individual countries to ensure that equality bodies have sufficient powers as well as financial and human resources in order to provide for effective equal treatment in society.

The effective powers of these bodies also include the possibility to represent victims of discrimination in court, to lodge public actions or expert statements with the court (*amicus curiae*), and the authorisation to act as a mediator in discrimination disputes. However, the Czech Public Defender of Rights has not been entrusted with any of the above-mentioned powers so far.

I will therefore recommend to the Government of the Czech Republic at the beginning of 2020 that the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, in co-operation with the

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8 The Defender's Opinions Register (ESO) is available at: <https://eso.ochrance.cz/Vyhledavani/Search>.

9 The reports are available at: <https://www.ochrance.cz/diskriminace/vyrocní-zpravy/>.

10 ECRI General Policy Recommendation N°2 revised on Equality Bodies to combat Racism and intolerance at national level (adopted on 13 October 1997, revised on 7 December 2017, published on 27 February 2018). Available in English at: <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-/16808b5a23> (retrieved on 2 January 2020). An unofficial Czech translation of the recommendation (without an explanatory memorandum) is available at: [https://www.ochrance.cz/fileadmin/user\\_upload/DISKRIMINACE/Knihovna/Standardy\\_ECRI.pdf](https://www.ochrance.cz/fileadmin/user_upload/DISKRIMINACE/Knihovna/Standardy_ECRI.pdf) (retrieved on 2 January 2020).

11 ECRI visited the Czech Republic at the end of November 2019. The report on the Czech Republic (including recommendations) can be expected in 2020. For more information, see ECRI press release of 5 December 2019. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/-/council-of-europe-anti-racism-commission-prepares-report-on-the-czech-republ-1> (retrieved on 2 January 2020).

12 COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION (EU) 2018/951 of 22 June 2018 on standards for equality bodies. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/CS/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0951&from=IT> (retrieved on 2 January 2020).

13 Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin; Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.



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Ministry of Justice, draw up a legal analysis of the effectiveness of the powers of the Public Defender of Rights as an equality body (with emphasis on the 2018 recommendations of international organisations), including a possible legislative solution to the unsatisfactory state of affairs. If the Government follows my recommendation, I would like the legal analysis to be drawn up by 31 August 2020.



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## **Assistance to victims of discrimination, surveys and recommendations in numbers**



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**3,616**



complaints against discrimination in the public and private sectors were received by the Defender in 2009-2019.

The Defender found that there were

**135**

cases of direct discrimination

**89**

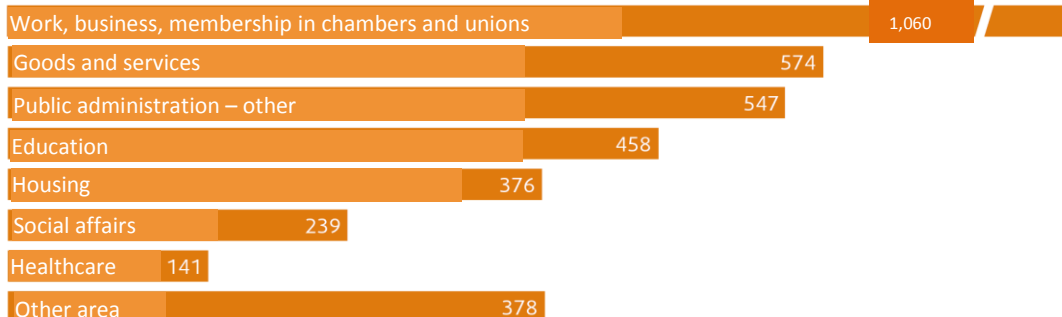
cases of indirect discrimination

**36**

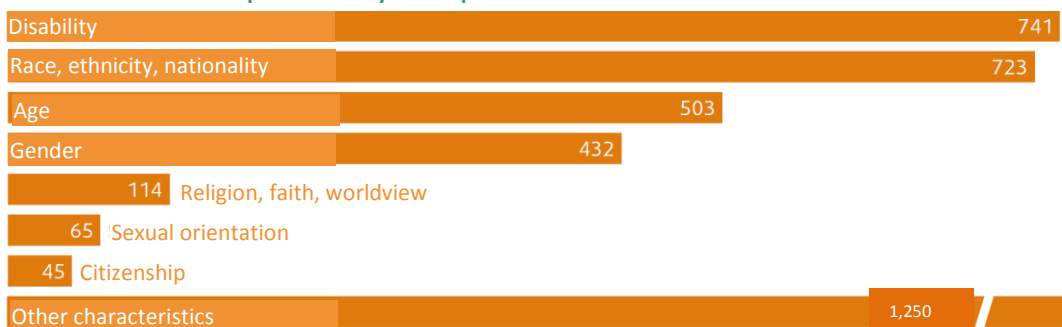
cases of other forms of discrimination (most often harassment)

In the remaining cases, discrimination did not occur or could not be proven or the Defender did not inquire into discrimination and, instead, advised the complainant who should be addressed with the matter.

### Number of complaints by areas where discrimination is prohibited



### Number of complaints by the protected characteristic claimed



**19**

Number of cases where the Defender helped to secure legal representation free of charge for victims of discrimination lacking the necessary means, thanks to co-operation with the Pro Bono Alliance.



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**In the area of equal treatment and protection against discrimination, the Defender issued**



\* Category monitored separately since 2017

\*\* Category monitored separately since 2014

## **Low number of complaints against discrimination does not imply non-existence of discrimination in society**

In 2015, the Defender brought fundamental findings as to why people did not report discrimination to governmental authorities and why they did not file anti-discrimination actions with the courts. Underreporting of discrimination led many to believe that discrimination did not occur in the Czech Republic.

But this was not the case, as revealed by a Defender's survey. Although up to 11% of Czech residents over 18 years of age questioned in the survey feel discriminated against, they consider it difficult to enforce their rights. The main obstacle lies in the lack of trust put in the relevant institutions as regards their ability to resolve the case. A lack of evidence and information constitutes another complication. People living in the Czech Republic agree that the most common case of discrimination is that on grounds of ethnic origin. However, the majority population most often experience discrimination in the area of work on grounds of old age and gender. People from vulnerable groups (older people or persons with disabilities) are also prevented from exercising their rights by feelings of shame, distrust in their own abilities and fears of retaliation.

In her report, the Defender summarised the results of court proceedings and inspection activities of selected governmental authorities during the first five years of effect of the Anti-Discrimination Act (2009–2014). The results were very upsetting. Only one person was awarded compensation in money for intangible damage by the court. The vast majority of claimants were not successful in court. Therefore, the Defender formulated fifteen key recommendations (of legislative and non-legislative nature) to improve the situation.

Survey report titled [Discrimination in the Czech Republic: Victims of Discrimination and Obstacles Hindering their Access to Justice](#)

[Summary](#) of the survey report

## **Representation of victims of discrimination requires high level of expertise and patience**

The Defender herself is not authorised to represent victims of discrimination in court. The role of attorneys-at-law is therefore irreplaceable and indispensable in this regard. Attorneys-at-law co-operating with the [Pro Bono Alliance](#) have taken over a total of [19 cases of discrimination](#) since 2012 on a *pro bono* basis, for which they deserve great deal of gratitude. All these cases concerned assistance to victims of discrimination who could not afford professional legal representation.





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In her 2019 recommendation, the Defender summarised her co-operation with attorneys to date and presented the results of a qualitative survey conducted with selected lawyers having experience of representing victims of discrimination. The recommendation also contains a list of useful sources in the area of anti-discrimination law.

Recommendation: [Representing Victims of Discrimination](#)

## Most important cases of the Defender before Czech courts

If the Defender comes to the conclusion that discrimination occurred in a specific case, the Defender's conclusion is in most cases confirmed by the court (albeit with a certain time delay). This rule can be inferred from several well-known cases:

**Refusal to enrol Roma children in the first grade** (Defender's [report](#) File No. 5202/2014/VOP of 16 April 2015, [judgment](#) of the District Court in Ostrava File No. 26 C 42/2016 of 1 March 2017)

**Bullying of an older employee at a university** (Defender's [report](#) File No. 134/2013/DIS of 14 December 2015, [judgment](#) of the District Court in Ostrava File No. 85 C 20/2016 of 8 March 2018)

**Lower severance pay for an employee of pensionable age** (Defender's [report](#) File No. 7077/2015/VOP of 9 May 2016, [judgment](#) of the Supreme Court File No. 21 Cdo 5763/2015 of 18 January 2017)

**Rejection of a blind applicant for a municipal flat** ([judgment](#) of the Regional Court in České Budějovice File No. 8 Co 960/2017-263 of 22 June 2017)

**Ban on wearing a Muslim headscarf during theory classes** (Defender's [report](#) File No. 173/2013/DIS of 2 July 2014, judgment of the Supreme Court File No. 25 Cdo 348/2019 of 27 November 2019)

**Discrimination against a Roma woman in seeking housing with a real estate broker** (Defender's [report](#) File No. 112/2012/DIS of 10 September 2014, [judgment](#) of the District Court in Litoměřice File No. 14 C 46/2013 of 14 August 2015)

**Invalidity of removal of an employee from her leadership position prior to commencing maternal leave** (Defender's [report](#) File No. 1594/2014/VOP of 25 August 2014, [judgment](#) of the District Court for Prague 1 File No. 23 C 146/2014 of 15 March 2019)

**Invalidity of termination of employment of a judicial officer in pensionable age** (Defender's [report](#) File No. 8024/2014/VOP of 26 January 2016, [resolution](#) of the Supreme Court File No. 21 Cdo 2662/2019 of 22 October 2019)

**Parents' locus standi to file an anti-discrimination action for their deceased daughter** (Defender's [report](#) File No. 61/2015/DIS of 6 November 2015, [judgment](#) of the Supreme Court File No. 30 Cdo 2260/2017 of 13 December 2017)

**Impossibility to adopt a child for a person living in a registered partnership** (Defender's [report](#) File No. 2977/2014/VOP of 1 July 2014, [judgment](#) of the Constitutional Court File No. Pl. ÚS 7/15 of 14 June 2016)

By providing methodological assistance to victims of discrimination in all the above-mentioned cases (the Defender analysed their situation from the viewpoint of the applicable law and European case law and subsequently recommended filing an action), the Defender substantially contributed not only to enforcement of the prohibition of discrimination in practice, but also to development of the so far limited Czech anti-discrimination case law.

## **Basic findings of the Defender in selected areas of life**

### **Discrimination in the area of work**

The Defender found that people faced unfair treatment already at the stage of job seeking. In his 2011 [survey](#), he demonstrated that the wording of certain job advertisements constituted discrimination on grounds of age or gender. As he was providing methodological assistance, the Defender found that people (most often women) were asked inadmissible questions concerning their marital status or number of their children during job interviews. In view of numerous public inquiries, the Defender gave [recommendations](#) to employers on how to correctly proceed when requesting an extract from the Criminal Records. As found by the Defender (and others), Czech employers did not offer sufficient measures to ensure that people were able to harmonise work with care. Also the State, as an employer, has room for improvement in respect of flexible forms of work, as shown by a [survey](#) conducted at Czech ministries in 2017. The Defender therefore [recommended](#) several measures to civil service offices to improve the situation.

In labour-law relationships, people face unequal pay, not only on grounds of gender, but also on grounds of age or disability. The Defender also assessed discriminatory provisions of various [collective bargaining agreements](#) – these often excluded older employees from all sorts of benefits. Employers are also not prepared to reasonably accommodate to people with disabilities. The Defender considers various forms of aggression at the workplace – bullying, mobbing, harassment and sexual harassment – to be a serious problem we can best deal with by way of prevention. For this reason, he/she also focused on [awareness-raising](#) in this specific area.

The Defender dealt with a number of cases concerning termination of the labour-law relationship (especially during the economic crisis) where people complained about discriminatory conduct (most often on grounds of age). Some of the cases were settled out of court, while some had to be resolved by courts.

The Defender believes that a major task lies especially with the Labour Inspectorate and its bodies. Not only can they detect discrimination through more efficient procedures than the Defender (employers are obliged to co-operate with the Labour Inspectorate's bodies), but they also can impose fines for infractions. The Defender thus recommended [standardised procedures](#) to the Labour Inspectorate's bodies for monitoring of equal treatment at the workplace.

## **Discrimination in the provision of goods and services**

Over the past ten years, the Defender has dealt with a wide range of public services (postal, transport, financial, social). Most common were complaints about unavailability of railway or bus transport for people using wheelchairs, inaccessibility of premises to people accompanied by a [specially trained dog](#), or not assigning [reserved parking spaces](#). All the above-mentioned complaints were used by the Defender to create general recommendations as well as for the purpose of [surveys](#) (monitoring of the rights of people with disabilities). The Defender also repeatedly dealt with complaints lodged by parents concerning school catering. These complaints were based on the fact that kindergartens and primary schools did not take into account specific needs of children and pupils (e.g. celiac disease), although this was required by the law. Cases of discrimination against older people in the financial sector and price differentiation (e.g. on grounds of age or gender) received a special media attention. Also these topics were approached by the Defender more broadly. The Defender conducted a [survey](#) and issued specific [recommendations](#). [Sexism in advertising](#) and [inaccessibility of television news for people with visual impairment](#) can be qualified as rather specific cases dealt with by the Defender in the area of services.

## **Discrimination in housing**

A large number of complaints against discrimination in this area result from the fact that there is no legislation on social housing. Municipalities that have a statutory duty to care for the needs of their citizens do not have sufficient municipal housing capacity available to cover the needs of people from vulnerable groups (older persons, families with children, people with disabilities, socially excluded people). Therefore, they often set criteria by which they attempt to distinguish among applicants for a municipal flat. As shown by many cases dealt with by the Defender, municipalities are often unaware that they use discriminatory criteria.

In 2010, the Defender issued a [recommendation](#) for municipalities on how to choose the suitable tenant fairly. The Defender still uses this recommendation in communication with municipalities. The Defender also requested that the Ministry of the Interior improve monitoring of the rules adopted by the municipalities. The Defender also commented on [equal treatment of foreign nationals from third countries](#) with a long-term residence in the territory of the Czech Republic, who also faced unequal access to housing. The Defender repeatedly dealt with the prohibition of discrimination in the area of housing in activities of [housing co-operatives](#) and [real estate agencies](#). [The Defender pointed out](#) that the penalties imposed by the Czech Trade Inspection Authority were too low to deter persons offering housing from discrimination.

## Discrimination in education

The Defender has long tried to ensure that schools, their founders and parents have sufficient information to be able to distinguish instances of permissible differentiation between children and pupils from cases of unlawful discrimination. The Defender has issued (and, in view of the amendments to the Schools Act, gradually revised) three important recommendations on [compulsory preschool](#), [preschool](#) and [primary](#) education.

Education of Roma children and children with disabilities has been a major issue dealt with by the Defender over the past ten years. As for Roma children, the Defender has conducted two key surveys: [share of Roma children in former schools for children with special needs](#) (2012) and [spatial segregation](#) (2018). In the first survey, the Defender [monitored](#) enforcement of judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of D. H. and Others v. the Czech Republic (2007), and in the second survey, examined the causes of a high share of children from the Roma minority in newly established ordinary schools. The Defender proposed in both these surveys a number of recommendations to governmental authorities as well as local governments that are founders of schools. Prior to 2016 when the “inclusion” amendment to the Schools Act entered into effect (Act No. 82/2015 Coll.), many complaints concerned deficiencies in funding of education of children with disabilities. Moreover, most of the lawsuits filed before 2016 were unsuccessful and, therefore, we can be grateful that the new system of supportive measures (e.g. teaching assistants) and funding helped to eliminate the greatest difficulties and that the parents of the children are no longer forced to file actions with the courts.

In many cases, the Defender dealt with procedures adopted by the Czech Schools Inspectorate and criticised it for not applying the Anti-Discrimination Act, or for proceeding [inefficiently](#). The Defender also dealt with cases of failure to adopt reasonable measures *vis-à-vis* students of higher education institutions. In this respect, [exclusion of people with hearing impairments](#) from study programmes for future teachers was often criticised.

## Discrimination in healthcare

The most significant issues in this specific area were the impossibility to donate blood and unavailability of dental care. Transfusion centres excluded [people with visual impairment](#) and [homosexuals](#) from the group of blood donors in the past. The Defender found both these practices discriminatory. Refusal to provide dental care affected both the [Roma](#) and [HIV positive](#) individuals. Dental care was unavailable (in terms of long waiting times) to patients with mental disabilities and autism spectrum disorder. In a related [survey](#) (2018), the Defender found a number of shortcomings and recommended specific measures especially to the Ministry of Health, health insurance companies, the Czech Dental Chamber and healthcare services providers. The Defender also dealt with the opportunity

for fathers to accompany their children during stays in a hospital, provision of spa care in cases of pregnancy or an age limit for assisted reproduction.

The Defender further found that, in most cases, victims of discrimination did not file complaints with the provider or regional authority, as envisaged by the Healthcare Services Act, which impaired the likelihood of any change (eradication of discrimination).

### Legislative recommendations

Since 2012, the Defender has issued eleven legislative recommendations in the area of equal treatment and protection against discrimination. All of them (except for one) are listed in the regular annual reports for the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic.

A reduction of the judicial fee for filing an anti-discrimination action to CZK 1,000 can be considered the greatest success. I am currently striving to achieve reduction of the judicial fee for filing an appeal in anti-discrimination matters to the same amount.

There was also a major breakthrough in the issue of inclusive education, where the Defender's original recommendation of 2012 concerning the right to prefer individual integration of a child with special educational needs in the mainstream education was substantially extended by a comprehensive amendment to the Schools Act concerning "inclusive" education (Act No. 82/2015 Coll.). The Defender participated in preparation of the amendment as one of the mandatory parties authorised to submit comments.

As regards other legislative recommendations, I have been informed that the relevant ministries are either working on them (elimination of mandatory sterilisation of transgender persons for the purpose of administrative gender reassignment) or the Government has tasked them with submitting a specific legislative proposal (legislation on specially-trained dogs for people with disabilities).

Other recommendations (e.g. removal of the subsidiary nature of compensation for intangible damage for discrimination; new rules for education of children with a different mother tongue; introduction of measures to increase transparency in remuneration; incorporation of discrimination by association in the law) have not been accepted yet.

A motion for amendment to the Anti-Discrimination Act ([document of the Chamber No. 424/0](#)) submitted by a group of twelve Deputies in the spring of 2019 is in accordance with the previous recommendations of the Defender. The amendment aims to unify the conditions for sharing the burden of proof and introduce "public actions" (*actio popularis*). Adoption of the amendment would not only significantly help specific people in access to justice (especially victims of discrimination on grounds of age or disability), but would also lead to elimination of discriminatory practices that affect a wider group of people, and strengthen prevention of discrimination.

## International co-operation

In 2010, the Defender became a member of [Equinet](#), the European network of equality bodies. Equinet provides support, information, education and room for sharing experience with organisations promoting the right to equal treatment and protecting against discrimination at the national level. The employees of the Office of the Public Defender of Rights have gradually become part of all working groups and most temporary projects within this organisation. They shared their findings on application of anti-discrimination law and monitored the current trends in case law, surveys and strategies. These were then applied in the performance of the Defender's statutory tasks. In addition, the Defender hosted three Equinet meetings in the Czech Republic in the past few years (meetings of working groups focusing on European anti-discrimination law and the right to equal treatment of migrating EU citizens, and a meeting of the Equinet Executive Board), as well as two important professional events of this organisation:

[Gender Equality in Education](#), 19 to 20 May 2016, Prague

[Equal Pay](#), 31 August to 1 September 2017, Brno

The Defender also provided important statements for [the United Nations](#) (UN), including its committees, [the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance](#) (ECRI), the [European Committee of Social Rights](#) and other international bodies and institutions.

## Projects in the area of promoting the right to equal treatment

The Office of the Public Defender of Rights has implemented two projects that partially or fully dealt with anti-discrimination issues:

[Together towards Good Governance](#) (2014–2015), aimed at increasing efficiency of public administration activities

[Bespoke Civil Service](#) (2017–2018), focusing on promoting equal opportunities for men and women in the civil service

Furthermore, the Office of the Public Defender of Rights was involved in specific projects of non-profit organisations as a partner organisation. The most important examples include:

[Improvement of Anti-Discrimination and Social Legislation for the Benefit of Disadvantaged Women](#), in co-operation with the Alternativa 50+ non-profit organisation

[Systemic Change in Discriminatory Depiction of Women and Men in Advertising](#), in co-operation with the Nesehnutí non-profit organisation

[Pay Attention to Gender Pay Differences!](#), in co-operation with the NORA Gender Information Centre

[22% Towards Equality](#), in co-operation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

[We Are Fair](#), in co-operation with the Prague Pride non-profit organisation

Within the said projects, the Defender got closer to vulnerable groups, expanded his/her findings, supported or contributed to the creation of awareness-raising and educational materials and methodologies, and conducted extensive [surveys](#).

### **Most important Defender's professional events over the past ten years**

Although awareness-raising and educational activities are not explicitly mentioned in the law, the Defender considered them absolutely crucial for fulfilling his/her mission. Each year, the Defender organises approximately ten professional events in the area of protection against discrimination and participates in many others as a co-organiser. The employees of the Office chair or host many professional events. The most important professional seminars, round tables and conferences are listed below.

[Equal Access to Education](#), panel discussion, 20 September 2012, Prague, in co-operation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Office of the Government

[Equality and Non-Discrimination in the Activities of the Public Defender of Rights](#), panel discussion with workshops, 20 February 2013, Brno

[Work-life Balance](#), international conference, 23 to 24 October 2014, Brno

[Impact of the Case Law of the Court of Justice of the European Union on Anti-Discrimination Law](#), professional workshop, 2 December 2014, Brno

[Discrimination in the Czech Republic: Victims of Discrimination and Obstacles Hindering their Access to Justice](#), 1 July 2015, Brno

[Unequal Gender Pay](#), international conference, 22 January 2016, Brno, in co-operation with the Nora GIC

[Strategic Litigation and Fight against Discrimination](#), international legal seminar, 13 November 2017, Brno, in co-operation with Open Society Fund Prague and Open Society Justice Initiative

[Age discrimination](#), practical legal seminar, 27 November 2018, Prague, in co-operation with the Chairwoman of the Social Policy Committee of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament

[Hatred on the Internet](#), professional conference, 16 October 2019, Brno, in co-operation with the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office



## **Special activities of the Defender to commemorate the 10 years of effect of the Anti-Discrimination Act**

[10 Years of the Anti-Discrimination Act from the Viewpoint of the Ombudsman and Non-Profit Organisations](#), roundtable for the non-profit sector, 2 April 2019, Brno

[10 Years Together against Discrimination](#), roundtable for public administration, 23 May 2019, Brno

[Quo Vadis, Equality Body?](#), expert seminar and meeting of former and current employees, 13 June 2019, Brno

[Equal.doc](#), announcement of results of the competition for short documentary films, 21 June 2019, Brno

[Representing Victims of Discrimination](#), seminar for attorneys-at-law, 23 September 2019, Prague

[Anti-Discrimination Act 2009–2019: Ten-year Journey to Fairness](#), international conference, 3 October 2019, Prague, in co-operation with Mgr. Miluše Horská, Vice-president of the Senate of the Parliament

### **On a less serious note**

Although discrimination is a serious problem in terms of both society and the law, we admit that some of the complaints the Defender has received over the past ten years were quite amusing. To conclude, we would like to mention some of them.

- A man complained about discounts in a retail chain, because only red child anoraks were discounted as opposed to blue ones, where the price remained unchanged. He considered this to be discrimination against men.
- A woman objected to discriminatory conduct of a dating site. She complained that the website required its users to upload a digital photograph and did not allow scanning and subsequent uploading of a printed photograph.
- A seventeen-year-old complainant objected to conduct of a retail chain which refused to sell him a box of chocolates containing liqueur (with an alcohol content of 30%), which he wanted to buy as a gift for his mother. He considered this conduct discrimination on grounds of age.
- The complainant notified the Defender of an error in a Slovak textbook. The textbook included information about the weight of the Earth in apples. However, according to the complainant's calculation, the number of apples corresponding to the weight of the planet was different. The complainant objected to discrimination against Slovak students, who had to learn from an inaccurate textbook.



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- A man complained about the length of the military step in relation to women. He claimed that women were smaller on average and, therefore, had a shorter step length, which is why the length of the military step (80 cm) was discriminatory against women.

Brno, on 31 January 2020

Mgr. Anna Šabatová, Ph.D.  
Public Defender of Rights