



HUMAN RIGHTS NEWS

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Editorial

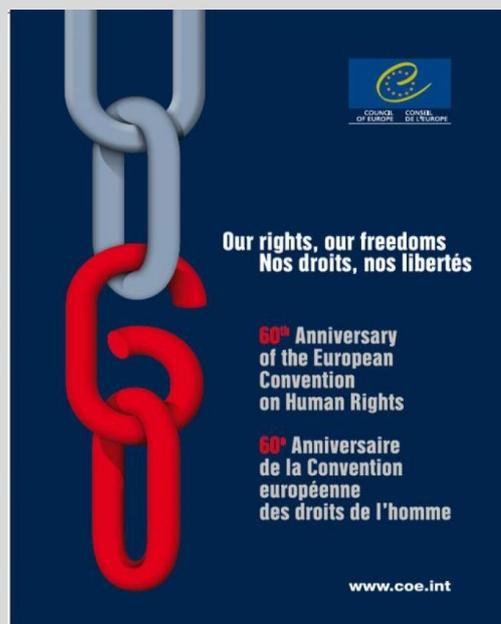
The right to know your rights

Upon the signing of the Charter'77 I considered its focus on violation of human rights by Czechoslovak communist regime to be an excellent tactic manoeuvre to push Gustav Husák's men to the wall. Because they could not publicly refuse to grant civil and political rights to their citizens but at the same time they we were unable to guarantee and implement these rights. It was simply not compatible with the character of the political regime. Right afterwards, however, I came to conclusion that it is not a question of tactics but one of principle. That it is important to protect and promote human rights not only during the totalitarianism but in any regime, even in the most democratic one. We were convinced of it after the Velvet revolution in 1989 and again and again ever since. It is only the emphasis on particular rights that changes with new situations. New aspects of civil and political rights come under the spotlight, as well as partial rights of specific groups that used to be more or less ignored: such as the rights of disabled, children, women, consumers, etc.

Activities of different governmental or nongovernmental organisations that monitor violations of human rights, notify the media as well as the competent authorities and seek a remedy are most creditable. Scientific research and education in the field of human rights is equally important. All of these activities are methodologically preceded by one right: *the right to know one's rights!* If I wish to protect rights of my neighbours, if I wish to exercise my own rights, I need to know what I am talking about, I have to acquaint myself with my rights as best I can.

Therefore we need people who specialise in knowledge and scientific research in the field of human rights and who pass on their knowledge by word and writing to general public. This was the very purpose of the establishment of the UNESCO Chair for human rights education at the Comenius University more than twenty years ago. This bulletin is another modest contribution to fulfilment of its objective.

Prof. PhDr. Miroslav Kusý, PhD.



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The European Convention - an Ageing Lady or a Living Instrument?

60th Anniversary of European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

When an international treaty is being signed hopes run high and scepticism flourishes. When it is ratified great expectations fulfil the air. When it finally enters into force chain of grand things may follow... or not. Fortunately, the story of the European Convention is not a fiasco. Quite a contrary. On September 3, 1953, the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) came into effect and along with functioning of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg it is considered to be the most effective human rights instrument in the world - mostly due to the individual application procedure that enables any person to file a complaint against any of the Council of Europe Member States (in other words, High Contracting Parties to the European Convention). The overload of cases is such that it is said to be a victim of its own success. But 60 years have passed and it would be naive not to expect any criticism of the status quo or evolution of human rights protection. The content of the ECHR underwent several amendments by way of Protocols reflecting development in the perception of rights by the society on the European continent. Original thirteen human rights enshrined in the ECHR multiplied by two by 1988 and the mechanism underwent to major reforms (by Protocol 11 and 14). The long awaited accession of the European Union to the ECHR is finally approaching. In April 2013 the legal instruments were finalised but the completion of internal procedures would be required before its final adoption. Closer cooperation of the EU and the Council of Europe seems particularly important for the process of building effectiveness and credibility of the human rights system in Europe. Will the accession ensure harmonious development of human rights matters in Europe? After six decades dilemmas remain and new challenges arise. Let us resume some current hot issues related to particular rights and freedoms. The right to life (Art 2) evolved from a relative and

hesitant protection to current absolute abolition of death penalty (Protocol 6 and 13) in all countries except for Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. On the other hand, no consensus has been reached on protection of unborn children and perception of euthanasia, although the ECtHR ruled that right to die is not part of Art 2. Will the European Citizen's Initiative "One of us" which fights for an EU-wide ban on funding research that destroys human embryos bring any change in the field of bioethics? Art 3, prohibition of torture, the only absolute right there is. But since no century has better norms and worse realities it is being constantly breached. An ethical question that always pops up puts even the most virtuous in dilemma: is there ever a case when a good result produced by torture justifies the evil act of torturing someone? Prohibition of slavery and forced labour (Art 4) is no less up to date than in the past. Atrocities related to the trafficking in human beings chills up one's spine. By aiming at the police cells and detention premises we could see a daily breach of the right to liberty and security (Art 5), notably in light of current counter-terrorist measures. Article 6, the right to a fair trial, is a fixed star at the ECtHR since it represents the third of all applications submitted every year. Absolutely no punishment without law (Art 7)? The ECHR being the child of the World War II thought of an exception in cases of war crimes, treason or collaboration. Today it is still actual as the international criminal law expands. The perpetrators are being called into account for the most serious atrocities and large-scale human rights breaches even if their legal system does not do so. The affair of unconsented government surveillance of people's private lives through internet opened debates anew on the right to respect for private and family life (Art 8). Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Art 9) is threatened on a surprising scale - it is safer not to manifest one's belief: no cross, no hijab, no freedom. Freedom

of expression (Art 10) faces new challenges posed by controversial cartoonists, information society and social media space. As for the freedom of assembly and association (Art 11), this year the ECtHR ruled the very first time on the dissolution of association in order to protect minority rights (*Vona v. Hungary*). When it comes to right to marry (Art 12), ECHR is accused of being an old conservative lady for insisting that only man and woman can marry, while the younger documents, such as the EU Charter of fundamental rights, do not. Right to an effective

remedy (Art 13) and prohibition of discrimination (Art 14) are faithful companions of other rights and freedoms. ECHR is not a dust-covered piece of a paper but a living instrument in the hands of Strasbourg judges who interpret it and all of us who can initiate the proceeding. It has been a common reference framework for defining the rights and freedoms for the last 60 years and it stood the ground well. *Bon anniversaire!*

Michaela Chládeková (PhD Candidate, FSES CU)

HUMAN RIGHTS NEWS

Slovakia

In 2013 the Office of the Public Defender of Rights, Mrs Dubovcová (Ombudsman), has published two reports dealing with consideration of respecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of minor children living in re-educational centre in Hlohovec and Sološnica created according to the Act No 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (School Act). The research was focused on how the State fulfils its obligations in respect to children who have been taken away from their families and placed into the penitentiary. It focuses on the right to human dignity, right to education and right to subsistence. The results of the Ombudsman's independent research show that the practice in Hlohovec and Sološnica does not guarantee the fundamental rights and freedoms of these children. Several concrete recommendations have been formulated to the competent authorities in order to improve the living conditions of children entrusted to the State's care. (-as-)

Draft of *The National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the Slovak Republic*, prepared by the working group at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, generated a negative response of the conservative groups. While the Strategy was discussed by the Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality a counter campaign started. Some members of the Council, including its chairperson Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Miroslav Lajčák, complained of getting hundreds of e-mails containing personal invectives, insults and threats. Declared reason of those attacks was inclusion of human rights of LGBTI people into the Strategy as well as concerns about so called traditional family. Following the "defamation campaign" – as the Ministry called it – the Government Council suggested postponing the discussion about the Strategy till the summer 2014. Meanwhile expert working groups are supposed to be established and working meetings are supposed to be held on the particular ministries to work on the Strategy. (-zm-)

The National March for Life was held on 22nd September 2013 uniting people who stand for the absolute protection of human life from the moment of conception until natural death as well as for family in its traditional meaning and for parental rights. (-mc-)

Useful links:

HUDOC Database

Access to ECtHR Case law
<http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/>

Official Website of the Council of Europe Treaty Office

All treaties, explanatory reports, status of signature, ratification and reservations
<http://conventions.coe.int/>

Strasbourg Observers

Blog commenting on the ECtHR Case law
<http://strasbourgobservers.com/>

Europe

In August 2013, Poland has finally ratified and acceded to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the 13th Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) that completely abolishes the capital punishment even in times of war. Poland was the last EU Member State to retain the possibility to use the death penalty but the last sentence was executed in 1988. (-mc-)

On 1st September 2013 one year has passed since the creation of the office of EU Special Representative for Human Rights. Among the region oriented representatives, it is the EU's first thematic Special Representative. His appointment was previewed in EU's Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy adopted on 25 June 2012. The EUSR's mandate should contribute to the implementation of the Union's human rights policy in external affairs, ensure its visibility, enhance dialogue with governments in third countries, international and regional organisations on human rights as well as with civil society. His last official visit (9-18 September 2013) headed to China including ethnic Tibetan areas of Qinghai Province and the Tibet Autonomous Region. (-mc-)

World

On September 3-4, 2013, an International Summit was held in Amman, Jordan, fulfilling the wish of His Majesty King Abdullah II. The conference titled „Challenges of Arab Christians“ addressed issues as wars, bombings, kidnappings, desecration, emigration, the emphasis was placed on the importance of religious freedom.(-mc-)

COUNTRY FOCUS

No Water, no Electricity, Explosions and Missiles – a Common Day for Syrian People

Almost three years have passed since the first riots of the Arab Spring erupted throughout the region. Many people believed back then that we are witnessing the dawn of a new democratic era in the Arab world. Today, however, we look at the ash floating through the Syrian air and wonder, if winter snows would not be a more suitable symbol of what was brought upon the Syrian people back in March, 2011.

People of Syria, inspired by the uprisings in other Arab countries rose up against the government and the ruling Ba'athist party led by President Bashar al-Assad. The reasons were numerous, ranging from high unemployment and severe droughts to corruption, state violence and strong repression. Protests consistently grew in numbers and popularity, until the government decided in April to answer with brutal force. Many protesters were taken prisoners, tortured or even killed. What started as an outcry to end the dictatorial rule of the Assad family, quickly turned into a bloody civil

war and a struggle for power that even today, after 30 month of its existence, promises little hope of coming to its end and estimates are that 120.000 lives were lost since the beginning of the conflict. Why it came to this? To cut the story short, the situation in Syria is much more complex and much more precarious than in other countries under international scrutiny, i.e. Tunisia, Egypt, or even Libya.

In other words, Syrian case is very unique: the Assad family belongs to a religious minority of Alawites, a sect falling under the branch of Shia Islamism, while the Sunni Muslims remain in majority. However, the family has strong control over the leading army officers making it considerably reliable. And even though religion is not the most prominent factor of spurring the uprisings, it is continuously gaining on its significance making it a strong motor that keeps the wheels spinning. In other words, religious differences worked as a significant factor concerning the division of support

between government and rebel forces: While the Shia Islamic militant group Hezbollah joined the pro-Assad movement, Sunni Al-Qaeda is steadily gaining its prominence among the rebel groups.

This brings us also to the question of why are the Western countries so cautious in supporting (even discursively) the Syrian opposition. Rebel groups are far from being united and many of them are radically Islamic. This implies mainly two important effects: 1. The West, naturally, cannot support a divided and considerably anti-Western opposition that is linked to terrorist organizations and 2. The toppling of Bashar al-Assad will not improve the chances of achieving stability as the quest for power will continue. Many commentators argue that the chaos that would follow after the fall of Ba'athist government would be much worse than what we see today.

If that would not be messy enough for you, Syria is a geopolitical nightmare. While Russia and China were somehow able to stomach that the Western powers would do what they considered right in Libya, Syria is not the case. Knowing this, even with massive human rights violations from both sides - far exceeding those committed in Libya - United States were from the beginning determined not to get involved. Since Russia and Iran have very strong ties to the Assad government, it was doubtless that if U.S. would decide to intervene in Syria, they would have to face diplomatic outrage of Russia and also possible consequences and retaliations within the region - most probably aimed at Israel.

It was in this context that President Obama hoped to deal with the situation by drawing a red line that was by many perceived as impossible to cross: thanks to this red line, U.S. would be forced to intervene only if Syrian government would use chemical weapons. This step, however, proved to transform a geopolitical nightmare into a geopolitical time bomb.

Recent events brought heated rhetoric, mobilized attention of the whole world and created an immense challenge for the U.S. decision maker. Although Obama expressed determination to confront the regime with a military strike, not very impressive step followed: he decided to ask the Congress for its approval, which was in practice unnecessary and thus considered by many as weak and risky. But

the savior of his diplomatic image came from elsewhere. It was Mr. Putin who took care of the mess and brokered a possibility that Syria would get rid of its chemical arsenal under international scrutiny and by that, he granted the U.S. a reason strong enough not to strike Syria. The outcome is a UN Resolution that binds Syria to get rid of its arsenal and to give international experts "unfettered access" so they can observe the process. Only time will tell, how the resolution will help Syria in finding its Spring.

It is clear that situation in Syria is international as well as domestic issue. People of Syria must continue living. Many of them became refugees and live in camps, others stayed at home and hope they will survive.

Only few people can imagine how it is to live in similar conditions or have friends or family there. Sonia Ibrahimova, a Syrian student born in Raqqa, living in Nitra is a Christian, and sees the crisis of her own subjective eyes. She left Syria few years ago due to the hand surgery, which was cheaper in Slovakia than in her home country. Since she is half-Slovak, she stayed there and started to learn Slovak and study in Nitra. But her friends all have continued their lives in Syria. She told us her story and how she perceives the situation and shared her feelings for us to give us another image of what is going on.

Useful links.

Syria Deeply

An independent digital media project led by journalists and technologists that explores a new model of storytelling around a global crisis
<http://beta.syriadeeply.org/>

ReliefWeb

A leading source for reliable and timely humanitarian information on global crises and disasters since 1996
<http://reliefweb.int/country/syr>

Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network

A network of more than 80 organisations based in 30 countries in the Euro-Mediterranean region.
<http://www.euromedrights.org/eng/>

OCHA Syria Crisis

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on Syrian Crisis
<http://www.unocha.org/crisis/syria>

As you might know, in the Nord Africa and Middle East, Islamic parties or movements are becoming stronger and stronger. In Syria, the conflict includes parameters of religious character. Christians have not occurred in simple situation, since they are chased and killed just because they are Christians. Almost in every family someone died, an enormous inflation occurred, people do not have many to pay electricity or are three days without water. Without humanitarian aid, they would not have money for bread. They are not going out, because of fear. Their property was either bombed, seized or is about to be. But Christians are not only victim, Shiites and Alawiits are facing the same. People are hiding their religion when that could be the only reason to be shot. Women are wearing scarves in order to hide their identity and pretend they belong to the Muslim community. Many people left their home and escaped to the sea, without family, without clothes, only with hope that this nightmare will soon end.

Nevertheless, such struggle you could hardly find among common people. Sonia's neighbors were Muslims and they had very good relationship. Her best friends are Muslims too. But how she tells, "in every state you have radicals – either Christians or Muslim – you cannot talk to, because they are out of their mind". Despite the fact that respect of other religions and freedom of religion are one of the most important human rights, obviously in Syria other rules are valid today.

People there do not have many options what to do. They are mostly waiting – on a bomb or strike to fall down, on the end. Escape to Turkey is mostly for the rich, the middle class and poor are hiding underground or left to the sea. In refugee camps it is not much better, the conditions are bad and opportunities limited.



One might think that leave the home and stayed in camps will save their lives, but nothing is what it seems. Living in camps is as dangerous as staying at home, since these shelters are encircled by rebels and outside the camp's border it is only question of time, when one gets hurt or killed.

Many people blame USA for this crisis. Sonia said that Syria was more safe country than Slovakia is today and does not understand how this could go so far. She never thought of being an unwanted guest in Syria, since she has a little chance to go there now. However, every man has his own reason, why did it happen, although the political factor plays its role for sure. Many people do not believe Assad was able to use the chemical weapons. She does not have information of Assad's people shooting on the streets like rebels do. Rebels do not talk about their action on a bus going from Latakia to Aleppo or death bodies on the road they leave behind. When we asked Sonia on whether or not USA should intervene, she reminds us of Iraq. Ten years after the war Iraq is still place of suicide bomb attacks and not calm place to live. However, for Sonia, there exists a way America could help – by stopping the supplies of weapons for rebels.

What this all mean to human rights question? In Sonia's birthplace, Raqqa, there are no rights, she says. Rebel groups made their own rights, not even according to Koran. However, what is a sad part of the story is the historical – cultural life and memories of Syria that is being destructed and bombed, as well as churches or mosques with long history. For now, the people have no other option than to try to live. Live in consciousness of not knowing how much time they have.

*Kristína Janková and Andrej Chovan
(PhD Candidates FSES CU)*

Source:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43718#.UIPNIEq2Vdg>

A historical period for Lithuania

1 July – 31 December 2013 is a historical period for Lithuania - for the first time it took over the steering-wheel of the Council of European Union (EU). Lithuanian Presidency has declared its focus on adequate response to economic, financial, social and energy challenges. One could say that protection of the human rights is implicit in the declared priorities and is explicit in the declared objectives, as one of the objectives is “Open Europe able to tackle global challenges effectively, promoting democratic values, contributing to safe neighborhood, and actively protecting the rights of EU citizens”¹. For this reason, the efforts are put to remain active in EU citizens’ protection of fundamental human rights both within the EU and abroad. The on-going discussions on adoption of the Council conclusions on the 2013 EU Citizenship Report, the Council conclusions on the evaluation of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), discussions on the internal rules that the Union needs to put in place due to EU accession to the European Convention on Human rights and Fundamental Freedoms or on the effectiveness of EU instruments on fighting hate crimes are only a few examples of the Presidency actions in this regard. The outcomes of the discussions above will contribute to a more consistent human rights protection system within the Union and beyond.

With regard to a situation on human rights in Lithuania, Baltic Pride held in Vilnius on 27 July 2013 is to be mentioned. It attracted the highest public attention and was congratulated by Amnesty International being “a great day for human rights in Lithuania”. Despite the Mayor’s efforts to seal it off in a distant street, the venue of the march was the city’s main avenue and despite minor incidents, the Pride was

considered less controversial than the first held in 2010. Members of the European Parliament Ulrike Lunacek, Sophie in’t Veld, Cecilia Wikström and Leonidas Donskis, as well as Swedish Minister for European Affairs Birgitta Ohlsson and Lithuanian parliamentarians took part in the event.

In the context of international treaties on human rights, the biggest achievement was Lithuanian ratification of two international Conventions. On 9th May 2013, Lithuania has finally ratified the UN Convention on Reduction of Statelessness (1961) and become 54th party to the Convention and on 23rd April 2013, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2006).

Four decisions were adopted by the European Court of Human Rights against Lithuania in 2013, by three of those violation of the Convention were found. The highest public attention was attracted to the case *Varnas v. Lithuania (App. No. 42615/06)*. By the judgment of 9 July 2013, ECtHR found a violation of Article 14 in conjunction with Article 8 for unjustified difference in treatment of remand prisoners compared to convicted prisoners as regards conjugal visits. The applicant was held more than three years in pre-trial detention, and was denied conjugal visits from his wife, despite repeated requests, while convicted prisoners were allowed such visits. The Court stressed provisions of International instruments such as International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the European Prison Rules of 1987 and European Prison Rules 2006 in relation to the rights of remand prisoners, and applied a report of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment supporting such approach.

¹ More on the Lithuanian Presidency Programme at: http://static.eu2013.lt/uploads/documents/Presidency_programme_EN.pdf.

Viera Strážnická et al.: **Medzinárodná a európska ochrana ľudských práv, EUROKODEX, 2013.**

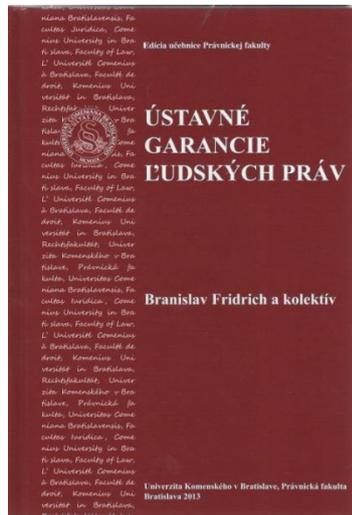
The book provides complex overview and analysis of international and European mechanisms of Human Rights protection. The added value is analysis of individual rights as interpreted and protected by European Court for Human Rights. The value of the book is supported by practical experience of the leading author, prof. Strážnická, former judge of Slovakia at ECtHR. The book is structured for the purpose of lectures and for students, but also attorneys and general public interested in the area of supranational human rights protection may find relevant information.

Authors: *prof. JUDr. Viera Strážnická, PhD., JUDr. Alexandra Strážnická, PhD., LL.M., JUDr. Andrea Erdősová, PhD., JUDr. Ivana Hauerlandová, JUDr. Nina Matis*



Rainer Baubock et al.: **Migration and Citizenship: Legal Status, Rights and Political Participation**, Amsterdam University Press, 2013.

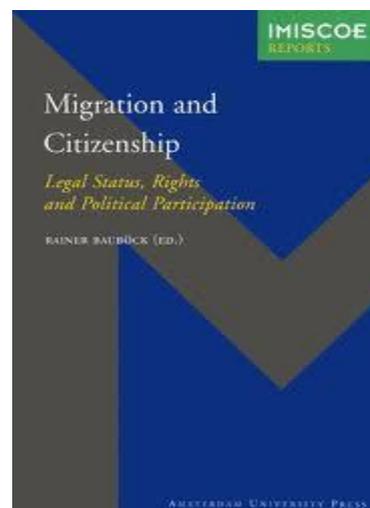
The book focuses on legal and political aspects of citizenship and deals in detail with relation of the migration policy and related aspects of integration of migrants into society. The objective of authors was to highlight the ways in which the difference in legal status that citizenship confers enables governments to set boundaries between citizens and non-citizens in terms of rights and political participation, this volume summarizes current theories and research. It is usable for students, teachers and anyone interested in one of the quickest developed policy in the EU.



Branislav Fridrich et al.: **Ústavné garancie ľudských práv**, Univerzita Komenského, Právnická fakulta, 2013.

The book places great emphasis on the importance of human rights protection in the current globalised society and helps readers to understand the human rights issues from constitutional perspective describing its formal and material foundations. It offers theoretical knowledge on terminology, typology and differentiations of fundamental rights and freedoms. It focuses on interpretation and limits of human rights protection as enshrined in the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, including the EU dimension and EU Charter of fundamental rights.

Authors: *Doc. JUDr. Branislav Fridrich, PhD., JUDr. PhDr. Lucia Mokrá, PhD., prof. JUDr. Ľubor Cibulka, CSc., JUDr. Marián Giba, PhD., JUDr. Tomáš Ľalík, PhD., JUDr. Lívia Trellová*



UNESCO Chair for Human Rights Education

UNESCO Chair people

Prof. PhDr. Miroslav Kusý, PhD.
Prof. PhDr. Silvia Miháliková, PhD.
Prof. PhDr. Ľudmila Malíková, PhD.
Prof. PhDr. Iveta Radičová, PhD.
Doc. JUDr. Branislav Fridrich, PhD.
PhDr. Dagmar Horná, PhD.
JUDr. Alexandra Strážnická, PhD.
JUDr. PhDr. Lucia Mokrá, PhD

Courses on human rights

Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences

Human Rights / International Human Rights protection / European Political Cultures / Democracy and civic engagement / Minority policy of the EU / Ethnicity, nationalism and state / International Organisations / The role of non-governmental organisations / Racism, antisemitism and holocaust / Holocaust in the European history / EU Institutions / The Law of the European Union / Human rights protection in the European Union / Human rights protection in the jurisdiction of European Court for Human Rights / Culture and equality: Theory and practice of multiculturalism / Humanitarian Action and State responsibility / Judicial System of the European Union / Gender equality and employment policy / Ethics questions, transparency and corruption in the public policy / Migration and public policy / Multicultural education / Gender equality policies

Centre for Gender studies at Faculty of Arts

Feministic philosophy / Feministic ethics / Feministic reflection of science / Introduction to gender studies

Faculty of Law

Constitutional guarantees of human rights / Comparative Constitutional law / Protection of human rights and freedoms / Proceeding before the Constitutional Court

Faculty of Arts

Civic participation and public conflicts / Challenges of international migration / National minorities

UNESCO Chair for Human Rights Education was established at Comenius University in Bratislava by agreement between UNESCO and University on October 26th, 1992.

The **main objective** of the UNESCO Chair for Human Rights Education is to promote an integrated system of research, training, information and documentation activities in the field of human rights education.

UNESCO Chair for Human Rights Education is the individual constituent of the Comenius University, at the moment seated at the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences. Its main role is to **provide education in the area of human rights** (teaching of courses with human rights agenda), **publication and research work, cooperation with other scientific and research centres** (e.g. Centre for Gender studies at Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava, twinning universities with UNESCO Chairs and research university centres in the Europe) and increasing of the general knowledge on human rights.

Particular work of the UNESCO Chair, but the very important and unique is organisation of **Human rights olympiad** for secondary schools in the Slovak Republic, with the aim to support education in human rights. This project is properly working for 15 years. The main idea is to strengthen the agenda of human rights in the general education on secondary schools and also to support young active people, potential political leaders, researchers or activists. Almost 300 secondary schools use to participate in the last competition. This unique idea is well-known in the surrounding countries and in the process of starting cooperation and spread competition to Visegrad region.

The UNESCO Chair for Human Rights Education is unique in its character, is **the oldest Chair established in the Europe** and the only one properly and effectively working in the Central Europe Region. This fact, as well as the activities made and organised by the Chair are evaluated on high level by the Slovak Ministry of Education in the process of universities' evaluation as well as in the process of accreditation of the study programmes.

Chair for Human Rights Education is in the **networking of PhD students** studying in different branches at faculties of the Comenius University, while their topic is connected to human rights. Currently, PhD students from Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education are involved.

Members of the UNESCO Chair for Human Rights Education are **servicing as experts and advisors** in the relevant human rights committees and bodies, such as the advisory body - Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for human rights, national minorities and gender equality and Committee for research, education and training in the area of human rights and development education.

The UNESCO Chair for Human Rights Education **communicate its activities** mainly through **web-sites**: the own part within the one of the Comenius University in Bratislava as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Issues. It contains not only information on the history of Chair, but also current development, research project, publications, population activities, offers and calls.

The promotion of the human rights involves also the public lectures, workshops and conferences. The annual workshop connected with specific topic of human rights takes place on 10th December, the **international day of human rights**.

(Lucia Mokrá, PhD. / FSES, Vice-Dean for IR and Legislation, in charge of UNESCO.

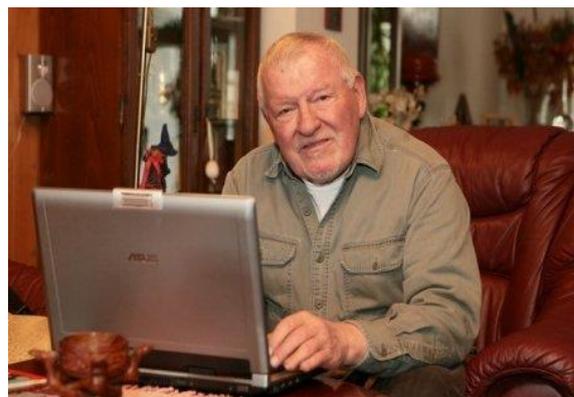
Interview with **Prof. PhDr. Miroslav Kusý, PhD.**, the first after-revolution rector of Comenius University in Bratislava, long-term chairman of institute of political analysis, founder of the UNESCO Chair and its idea guarantor.

What was the driving force for establishment of UNESCO Chair for human rights education?

My past. I studied philosophy and theory of science, but due to the activities the regime did not like I was forced to leave the University. I started to deal with human rights during dissent within Charta 77, when I also started to publish on this topic. I was interested mainly in minority issues. However, all related to the Charta was considered illegal activity. After the revolution I became the Chairman of Institute of political analysis and under this Institute I made an agreement with Frederico Mayor, a Chairman of UNESCO about establishing a UNESCO Chair for human rights education. We say that it was the first one, but in fact the first was established somewhere in South America, however shortly after the establishment it ceased to exist. Our UNESCO Chair has been active for 21 years.

What was in that time the goal of the Chair and how did you function?

Whereas the topic of human rights was tabooed in Slovakia, the main goal was to promote human rights and manage people to realize their importance. Although we experienced a boom of non-governmental organizations that dealt with human rights issues, they organized mainly single actions. We focused on systematic education, especially on Institute of political



analysis, because we were fixed to Comenius University. There we taught double-semester courses of history of human rights and theory of human rights. I was teaching the course, but besides teaching, I was studying as well together with my students. At that time, first brochures started to be published and the experts of human rights already existed. So I looked for some literature and started to do the course. Today, we are based on Faculty of social and economic sciences as a theoretical institute and cooperate with NGOs and Slovak Helsinki Committee that cover the praxis – how it should work, but does not. Together we want to reach the civic involvement and prevent people from falling under the stereotypes.

Who was “the heart” of the UNESCO Chair?

Then as well as today, the UNESCO Chair is a virtual one. It comprises of educationalists who are part of the University and are willing to do more in the human rights field. In the beginning among these people belonged Silvia Miháliková, current dean of FSES and Dagmar Horná. Today, we spread our collective based on Faculty of social and economic sciences, Faculty of arts and Faculty of law.

How about the financial part? How was it then and now? Does UNESCO fully support you?

Regarding the financial issues, it was hard. Although from the beginning the flow of money from the West was good, since we were a new democratic state and a new UNESCO Chair. Later, UNESCO and University started to toss us as hot coal. Apart from our own projects, we rather participate in projects of NGOs that were successful in getting the money. Among these NGOs you can find Milan Šimečka Foundation established by myself or Citizen and democracy. With Milan Šimečka Foundation we cooperated on number of educational actions outside the university. UNESCO started to locate its funds further East towards less developed and developing countries and Slovakia was missing a person who would embark on negotiations. Today, thanks to Lucia Mokrá the situation got better and we can undertake more activities. The part of our financial support is covered by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

What is until today the greatest success of UNESCO chair?

Besides the university courses, it is definitely the Human Rights Olympiad, which takes place already the 16th year on the high schools and secondary grammar schools all over Slovakia. On this Olympiad whole team of mentioned people works, even several others as professor Malíková. A long-term co-operator was also Dr. Dolník from Liptovský Mikuláš, who was willing to take the organizational affairs. I liked the idea that something would be going on outside Bratislava, in particular regions since all other activities were concentrated in the capital. Therefore the final round is organized in Liptovský Ján despite the protests from Bratislava. Mr. Dolník resigned this year and Dagmar Horná took his place.

How important the Olympiad is? What results does it bring?

The Olympiad is of great significance. Firstly, it is about teachers on high school that are dealing with human rights problems and prepare the students for particular rounds. We use the existing school network of regional coordinators. Secondly, annually there is about 4000 participants and 64 out of these, advance to finals. The winners then get different opportunities for internships and during summer are invited to recreational-educational seminar in Bulgaria. We try to make the Olympiad attractive through interesting guests as national MPs, EMPs or Minister of education. The finals are of high professional level. We, pedagogues, are participating on trainings in regions organized for the teachers to give them some ideas from human rights area in order to help them with preparation of students. Of course, we sit in the commissions in the finals too.

What other activities the UNESCO Chair is doing?

In autumn, the Olympiad is the most important activity, since the preparation phase is being on and the seminars in regions are being prepared. Besides, there are always courses on Faculty of arts and Faculty of social and economic sciences offers broad list of human rights courses.

Are we cooperating also with other UNESCO Chairs abroad?

In the 90s, there were about 30 UNESCO chairs all over the world and annually we organized a working meeting in Paris where we shared our experiences. Today there are about 180 chairs, so it will be necessary to organize an international conference for such a meeting. Therefore the cooperation is more bilateral. The closest one is being kept with Bulgaria, where prof. Valčev is covering the chair. He also participated in our Olympiad. The result of cooperation is already mentioned international seminar in Bulgaria. Regarding our region, it is weaker. The cooperation with Czech republic is starting, where the first round of Olympiad will be taking place. We are thinking of doing a common Olympiad as far as there is no language barrier. In Poland the UNESCO chair functioned some time ago, but for several years we haven't heard of it.

Kristína Janková (PhD Candidate at FSES CU)

“10 Years of SlovakAid: A Vision of Development Cooperation for a Changing World” Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic - Pontis Foundation - Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Comenius University in Bratislava - Faculty of International Relations, University of Economics in Bratislava invite you to the international scientific conference; **Congress hall of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and Palugyay Palace, Bratislava, Slovakia; October 16-17, 2013;** <http://www.nadaciapontis.sk/>

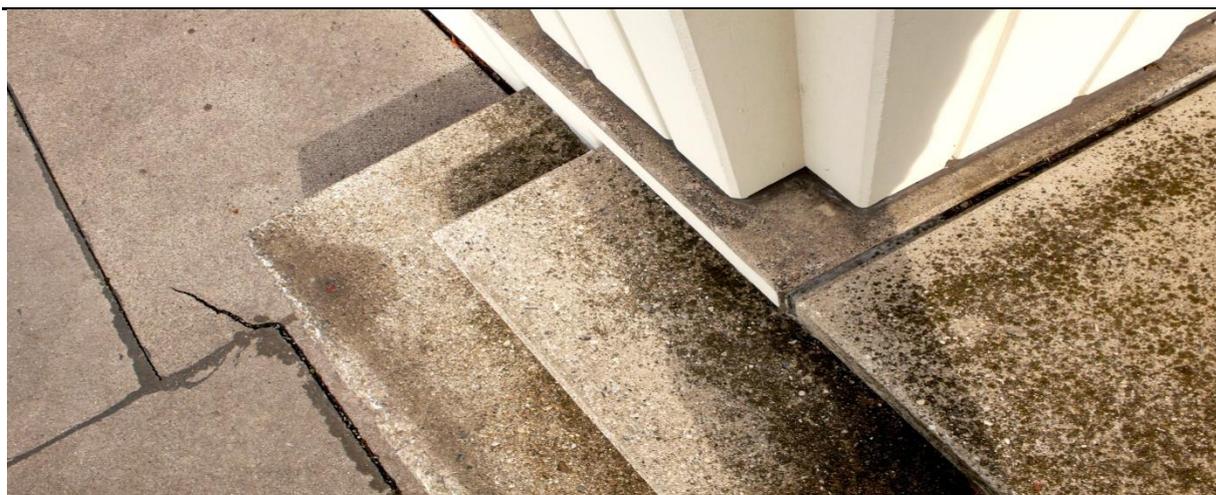
“Re-Inventing Eastern Europe” Euroacademia invites you to the second edition of the international conference; Grand Majestic Plaza Hotel, Prague, Czech Republic; **November 15-16, 2013;** <http://euroacademia.eu/>

“Gender and Globalisation: What do Intersectionality and Transnational Feminism Contribute?” The 8th Biennial International Interdisciplinary Conference addressing gender and globalization; **Keele University, UK; June 24-26, 2014** (Application deadline: November 1, 2013) <http://gallery.mailchimp.com/b191e660f005d37f84a4e431d/files/Gender.pdf>

“Gendered Memories of War and Political Violence Young Researchers Conference” Central European University and Sabanci University invite you to the international conference; **Sabanci University, Istanbul, Turkey; 25-27 April 2014,** (Application Deadline: December 15, 2013); <http://myweb.sabanciuniv.edu/genderconf/>

MA in Human Rights and Conflict Management - application deadline **17 October 2013** - **Scuola Superiore Sant' Anna, Pisa, Italy** - programme in English - divided into residential phase (January - July 2014) and internship phase (September - December 2014) - deep understanding of the linkages between human rights and conflict management in theory and practice, strongly field oriented <http://www.humanrights.dirpolis.sssup.it/en/the-programme/structure/>

14th One World Film Festival Slovakia - "We are changing the world"- cultural and educational event that deals with human rights and global issues in a complex manner - **21-26 November 2013, Bratislava** <http://www.jedensvet.sk/>



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