

Press Release

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Commissioner for Human Rights presents Memorandum on Estonia

Strasbourg, 11.07.2007 - Thomas Hammarberg, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, today presented a Memorandum on Estonia to the Committee of Ministers.

Prepared after a visit by members of the Commissioner's office in 2006, the memorandum contains an assessment of progress made in implementing the 2004 recommendations of the previous Commissioner, Alvaro Gil-Robles. It also contains new recommendations to the Estonian authorities.

The Commissioner urges the Estonian authorities to change citizenship application procedures to ensure that all new-born children of non-citizen parents acquire citizenship from birth. He also encourages authorities to carry through the school language reform, including by providing assistance to establishments teaching in a minority language.

There is also a need to improve conditions of detention in arrest houses, and to reduce the use of detention in the case of minors. In addition, authorities are encouraged to seek the advice of the Bar Association for the resolution of problems in the implementation of the free legal aid mechanism.

The Memorandum calls on authorities to improve conditions of detention in the Tallinn prison, and to prevent the spread of contagious infections. It also urges the re-establishment of a medical programme for drug addicts in detention.

In addition, Commissioner Hammarberg calls on the Estonian authorities to thoroughly regulate the possibility of issuing warrants to carry out searches on the premises of an advocate's office and to evaluate the implementation of recent legislation on the involuntary placement of persons with mental disabilities.

The Memorandum also contains recommendations on tackling domestic violence, violence against children and trafficking in human beings, as well as on HIV/AIDS prevention.

Finally, the Estonian Parliament is urged to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, Protocol 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights, and the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter Providing for a System of Collective Complaints.

On the same day, Commissioner Hammarberg also presented a Memorandum on Denmark and a report assessing the effective observance of human rights in Germany.

The full text of the Memorandum can be accessed via the Commissioner's website www.commissioner.coe.int under "Latest documents".

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