

The specialized Committee on Human Rights and National Minorities was established at the Slovak Parliament in 1998. Its competences were extended in 2002, as it was entitled to monitor also the gender equality issues and consequently renamed Committee on Human Rights, National Minorities and the Status of Women.

Legislative powers

The Committee's main task is to review all the incoming legislation from the respect to human rights, rights of minorities and gender equality point of view.

During the recent electoral term the Committee discussed for example the bill on asylum, on the residence of foreigners, on freedom of religion, on nationality, Labour Code, on the principle of equal treatment. It held debates also on the proposals of the government to ratify some of the international conventions (Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions - to mention only the last two).

As all the other legislative committees of the Slovak Parliament also this committee enjoys the right to introduce bills. This year the committee submitted a bill on amending the Act on the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights.

The Committee is responsible for the election of the Ombudsman, the chair of the Nation's Memory Institute (an institution that archives and discloses the totalitarian state security agencies records) and the chair of the Office for Personal Data Protection. As to the budgetary procedure, the Committee participates in the approval of the budget of the Ombudsman, the Nation's Memory Institute, the Office for Personal Data Protection, the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights and the Ministry for Culture (granting subsidies for national minority cultural projects).

Control powers

While fulfilling its control role, the Committee holds debates on the annual reports about the work of the Prosecutor General, the Personal Data Protection Authority, the Ombudsman, the Nation's Memory Institute, the report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the foreign policy of the government and suchlike.

Following the creation of the new government in 2006 the committee held 2 hearings: the Vice Prime Minister reported on his concept of integration of the Roma people; the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family informed the committee about her conception concerning gender equality and the rights of children.

Participation in Foreign Politics

The members of the Committee pay due attention to the human rights problems in other countries as well. They attended discussions on the situation in Cuba, Burma, China, prepared a motion for the plenary on the situation of political prisoners in Belarus and a resolution about the conference on Holocaust held in Iran (a joint motion with the Committee for Foreign Affairs).

Cooperation with other organizations

It cooperates with NGOs, but also with international agencies, such as the UNHCR or UNDP. It participates in the Council of Europe campaign on combating domestic violence against women.

Other

The Committee also deals with individual complaints and petitions.

From time to time it organises fact-finding missions as a reaction to some serious complaints or as a part of considerations related to a particular piece of legislation (for example visit to a refugee camp during discussions on the bill on asylum).

The Committee has recently 11 members, 5 from opposition and 6 from governmental parties.