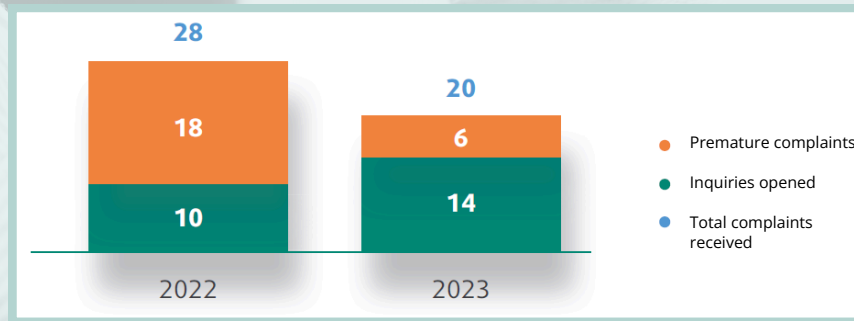


WE HELPED, for example

Illegally sterilised women

With the Ministry of Health, we addressed errors in the handling of claims for compensation relating to illegal sterilisations. We assisted unsuccessful claimants in drafting administrative claims and recorded an information podcast for these individuals.



Long-term foster carers and adoptive parents, who can now draw the full amount of parental allowance from the time when the child is placed in their custody.



People from Ukraine in solving various problems. We also tried to raise their awareness of the Czech legislation in general. We commented on several amendments to Lex Ukraine. In working groups and at domestic and international training events, we pointed out problems with temporary protection in the Czech Republic.

WE ENSURED PROTECTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

Our e-learning course teaches people to recognise discrimination

Our six-part online course on anti-discrimination law is for anyone who wants to understand how to identify and tackle discrimination.

We monitored protection against discrimination

We completed a three-year process of systematically monitoring the implementation of the right to equal treatment and compliance with the prohibition of discrimination in three areas: Roma education; equal pay for women and men; and changes in legislation to improve the protection of victims of discrimination and the enforceability of their rights. We supplemented four monitoring reports with recommendations on how to reinforce protection against discrimination in the Czech Republic.

WHY PEOPLE FELT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST

98	disability	39	race, ethnicity
59	age	7	religion, belief, worldview
48	gender	5	sexual orientation
41	nationality	99	other reason
40	State citizenship		

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES PARTICIPATE IN OUR ACTIVITIES

We try to incorporate the principle of participation – i.e. “nothing about us without us” – into all our activities. Hence:

- We co-operate with an advisory body for monitoring the rights of people with disabilities.
- A group of self-advocates with mental disability collaborated in the preparation of our recommendations and survey.
- The self-advocates drafted comments on the Public Guardianship Act with us and participated in their discussion at the Ministry of Justice.

We believe that people with disabilities should have their voices heard and ought to be involved in solving problems that affect them. We are therefore preparing a recommendation on what participation should look like. However, the principle of participation applies not only to people with disabilities. Children and other vulnerable groups also need to be involved.

WE ARE PREPARING FOR A CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN AND NHRI

The Czech Republic is one of the last European countries where a children's ombudsman and a national human rights institution (NHRI) have yet to be established. After many years, things have finally moved on. Intensive work was underway in 2023 on a law that would create these institutions. The legislative proposal seeks to establish a separate and independent children's ombudsman who would share professional staff and institutional facilities with the Public Defender's office. The Defender, on his part, should become a national human rights institution. If things go according to plan, the children's ombudsman and the Defender should start systematically protecting human rights in the Czech Republic in 2025.



ombudsman
Public Defender of Rights

YEAR 2023 SUMMARY

7 000+	complaints resolved
501	authorities advised of their mistakes
in 97%	of cases, the authorities corrected the mistake after our intervention
5 579	people called our information line
189	legislative comments submitted
21	podcasts recorded
4	newsletters issued
240+	posts published on Facebook

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



WE PUSHED FOR CHANGE

We addressed the possible presence of parents and other legal representatives alongside hospitalised children

We want to improve the situation of children whose parents are not permitted to stay with them in the hospital. We have persuaded the Ministry of Health to issue a methodological guideline that will unify the procedure of health service providers in exercising minor patients' right to have their legal representatives and close persons present as they receive health services.

We summarised the main problems in providing financial assistance to victims of crime

We recommended to the Minister of Justice how to expedite the processing of applications and how to change the law. We prepared simplified application forms.



We intend to change the judicial system, as the judiciary is apparently unprepared to handle matters promptly and efficiently in complex cases

We drew the attention of the Minister of Justice to this issue with regard to the railway accident at Studénka. We believe that in extremely complex cases, judges would benefit – for example – from the assignment of an assistant or a senior judicial officer, or from a reduction in the inflow of new cases into their dockets.

Even people with income have the right to legal counsel

This is especially true if the law requires them to have a lawyer in court. If they cannot find their own lawyer, the fact that they are well off cannot be seen as a reason for the Czech Bar Association not to appoint one for them. The Constitutional Court accepted our arguments and annulled some of the provisions of the Legal Profession Act that had restricted people's right to legal aid and access to courts.

We promote the use of plain language by the authorities

What prevents the authorities from communicating with the public in a clear and comprehensible way?

- Usually, the officials fear leaving the beaten track.
- They lack guidance and support in using plain language.



That is why we published a practical guide on **“How to write clear official texts”**. We informed all the ministries, as well as the regional and municipal authorities about the guide. The road to clarity does not end with the publication of a guide. We are also working with the authorities to make documents easier to understand.

We prepared new **advice for the accused in easy-to-understand language** for pilot testing in selected remand prisons.

In co-operation with the Department of Asylum and Migration Policy of the Ministry of the Interior, we prepared a **template for a decision rejecting an application for international protection**.

It is clearer for the addressees, and faster and easier to convey for the officials themselves.

WE EXAMINED THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF PEOPLE IN 31 FACILITIES

For seventeen years, we have been protecting people restricted in their freedom against ill-treatment. We therefore visit places where these people are or may be present. Since 2018, we have been monitoring the protection of rights of people with disabilities under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Czech Republic.

We thus focus our visits on the conditions of clients in homes for people with disabilities. Many of our recommendations help to change practice.

For example, our recommendations from visits to remand prisons led the Prison Service to adopt clear **rules for the use of cameras in prisons**.

With the Ministry of Health, we addressed the **unsatisfactory conditions in psychiatric hospitals**. These facilities do not provide dignified conditions for their patients and sometimes even threaten their safety and lives.

FACILITIES VISITED IN 2023

- 10 social services facilities
- 7 children's facilities
- 7 facilities providing inpatient psychiatric care
- 1 prison
- 6 police cells



Reports on completed visits to facilities are available in the Defender's Opinions Register (ESO) (areas of law, p. 801 et seq.) or can be accessed via the map of the facilities visited.

WE CONDUCTED SURVEYS

This is especially true of large systemic issues, where we need to prove that the authorities do not follow correct procedures, that their practice is not unified or that they lack methodological guidance. The same step is taken whenever we suspect that the rights of vulnerable people are under threat.

We also always try to suggest ways to solve problems and negotiate with authorities that can enforce the changes.

We conducted the following surveys, for example:

“Protection of animals against cruelty” – co-operation of animal protection authorities

Along with the survey, we also published collected documents titled “Animal Protection” and organised a conference.

Pregnancy and maternity at the workplace

We gathered experience of more than a thousand women caring for a child under the age of six and issued recommendations for employers on how to avoid discrimination at the workplace. We followed up with a practical guide on the “Most frequent cases of workplace discrimination and how to avoid them”.

Regulation of odorous substances

We also pushed for the enactment of odour protection within an amendment to the Air Protection Act.

Children's contact with imprisoned parents

We addressed this topic in many of our activities. For example, we issued recommendations for the Prison Service and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and organised an expert roundtable.

Health support and services in schools and educational institutions

We looked at how schools dealt with the need to provide health support to students while they were at school.

Accessibility and barrier-free use of buildings

We followed up on our survey with a conference.

Deinstitutionalisation

We examined how individual regions were planning the process of deinstitutionalisation and how they involved people with disabilities directly in this planning.

Good practice in the provision of housing for vulnerable people

We looked for examples that proved useful in providing housing across regions and various target groups.

We contributed to the suspension of funding for large institutions

If people are forced to live in an institution, their lives and environment should resemble as much as possible that of a normal household and community. This cannot be guaranteed in large facilities with many clients. We therefore engaged in communication regarding the National Recovery Plan (NRP) investments and prevented funding for the construction of new such institutions. We also helped to redirect NRP funds from exclusive support of residential social services to a support for services provided in outreach and outpatient form. In doing so, we contributed to the gradual implementation of the right of people with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community, as guaranteed by Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

