

SUMMARY OF THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
ACTIVITIES OF THE SEIMAS OMBUDSMEN'S OFFICE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
IN 2011





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INTRODUCTION

Human rights are a fundamental value of the modern society, and they are, as everyone is aware of, inherent rights enjoyed by all people. Caring about human rights is a domestic policy priority of each democratic state.

Attention and assistance to every person in defending human rights and freedoms, building respect for them and promoting dialogue between the individual and government so that the government would properly serve the people – this is the mission statement of the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office, in other words, the purpose and the meaning of the existence of the institute of Seimas Ombudsmen.

Only when people are confident that their rights and freedoms are protected, and in case of a violation, they are effectively defended, their trust in the State or its institutions will increase. Effective protection of human rights and freedoms is ensured through different means: by examining complaints, carrying out investigations on one's own initiative, providing recommendations, acting as an intermediary between individuals and the State, cooperating with public organisations, etc.

The efficiency of human rights protection depends on the public administration sector, i.e. it would be difficult to ensure adequate human rights protection without having improved public administration. State authorities must assess their own activities in terms of human rights protection as well, i.e. they must seek that their actions and decisions would comply with the requirements of legal acts and would not violate human rights. The objective of the Seimas Ombudsmen in this field is to cooperate with state authorities as closely as possible and educate them on human rights and good public administration.

The effectiveness of human rights protection and legal culture in any society is enhanced by the dissemination of information about human rights and freedoms; therefore, the Seimas Ombudsmen seek to disseminate detailed, accessible and understandable information about human rights and possibilities to defend them. The year 2011 was intended for the dissemination of information among the public about the role of the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office and its functions in protecting human rights.

The Seimas Ombudsmen's Office set an ambitious strategic objective for 2012-2014 – to seek that the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office would become an A-level accredited national human rights institution.

In Resolution No. 48/134 of 4 March 1994, the United Nations General Assembly encouraged the Member States to establish national institutions that would promote and protect human rights and approved the principles defining the status of national human rights institutions (the Paris Principles). The requirement for each Member State to have a national human rights institution is set by the European Union as well.

The United Nations International Coordinating Committee usually grants the status of A-level national human rights institution to ombudsmen's offices. In our country, the institution that best meets the requirements set for a national human rights institution is also the ombudsman institution, i.e. the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office.

Our hopes are that we will receive both political and financial support for this significant change in our institution.

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED AND INVESTIGATED BY THE SEIMAS OMBUDSMEN'S OFFICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA IN 2011

In 2011, the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office received a total of 2,503 applications submitted by natural and legal persons, 1,836 of which were newly filed complaints that brought up 2,211 issues.

Complaints received	1,836
Complaints rejected	636
Problems investigated	2,114
Decisions made:	2,114
to recognise a complaint as justified	724
to dismiss a complaint	969
to terminate investigation	421
Investigations initiated by the Seimas Ombudsmen	20
Investigations carried out on the initiative of the Seimas Ombudsmen	13
Problems investigated	29
Decisions made:	29
to recognise the problem as justified	25
to dismiss the issue	0
to terminate investigation	4
Recommendations made by the Seimas Ombudsmen	889
Replies to citizens' applications	71
Complaints handed over by the members of the Seimas	110

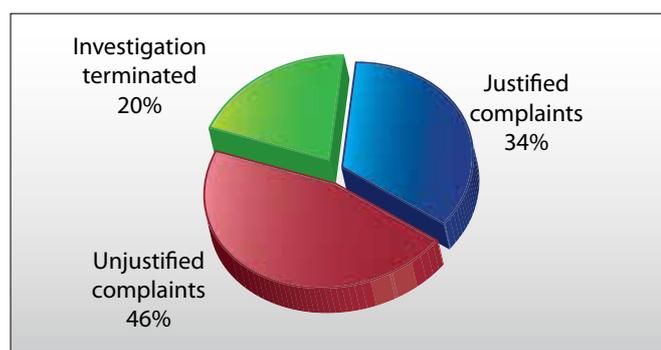
It should be noted that, the number of newly filed complaints exceeded that received in 2010 even by 554 units, or 43%. This was mainly caused by the mass complaints from imprisonment institutions. In 2011, after a thorough investigation of all the complaints submitted by applicants to the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office, 2,114 problems were identified; they were dealt with in substance, and a decision was made in respect of each of them. Out of this number, 34% of complaints were recognised to be justified, i.e. the conducted investigation established the facts of abuse of office, bureaucracy or inappropriate public administration.

A total of 46% of complaints were declared unjustified, i.e. the described facts of inappropriate administration were not confirmed during the investigation. It must be observed that the share of complaints that were recognised as unjustified grew by 7 percentage points, compared to 2010. It is believed that this was determined by the overall increase in the number of complaints from imprisonment institutions.

In the case of 20% of complaints, the investigation was terminated because of the elimination of the circumstances of the complaint, or the applicant withdrew his/her application because it became clear that the complaint was being, had been or must be heard by a court, etc. Investigation of a complaint is also terminated if, under the mediation of the Seimas Ombudsman, the problems raised in the complaint are resolved in good will. In 2011, there were 76 cases where the investigation was terminated because the Seimas Ombudsmen helped both parties reach an agreement on the resolution of their problems. Mediation of the Seimas Ombudsmen between the public at large and state institutions opens up more opportunities to settle disputes in a flexible manner. Furthermore, mediation of the Ombudsman helps accelerate the dispute settlement process, increase the efficiency of decisions made, and create conditions for achieving social peace faster.

Therefore, it is sought at the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office that as many disputes between individuals and public administration officials are resolved by mutual agreement as possible.

1.1. Decisions of the Complaints Investigated at the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office in 2011



1.2. Breakdown of All Complaints Investigated in 2011 by Subject Matter:

Problem	Complaints investigated (%)
Rights of citizens whose freedom was restricted	34
Right to good public administration	27
Right to ownership	11
Right to a secure and ecological environment	7

Right to personal and public security and assurance of public order	5.5
Right to housing	4
Consumer rights	3
Right to social security	3
Right to health care	1.5
Right to a fair trial	1.5
Other rights	2.5

1.3. Recommendations Provided by the Seimas Ombudsmen

Following the investigations of complaints in 2011, the Seimas Ombudsmen provided 889 recommendations to officials of state and municipal institutions. The most important recommendations are given in the table below.

Recommendation	Number of recommendations
Bring to the officials' attention the facts of negligence in office, non-compliance with laws or other legal acts, violation of professional ethics, abuse of office, and bureaucracy, and violations of human rights and freedoms, and suggest that the officials take measures in order to eliminate violations of laws or other legal acts, and the causes and conditions of such violations	527
To propose to a collegial institution or an official to repeal, suspend or amend, according to the procedure prescribed by the law, decisions that contradict the laws and other legal acts and propose to adopt decisions the adoption whereof has been precluded by abuse of office or bureaucracy	143
To make proposals to the Seimas, the Government, other state or municipal institutions and bodies to amend laws and other statutory acts that restrict human rights and freedoms	62
To propose to a collegial body, the head of an institution or superior institution or agency to impose disciplinary sanctions on officials at fault	33
To inform the Seimas, the Government and other state institutions and bodies or the appropriate municipal council about gross violations of laws or deficiencies, contradictions of or gaps in laws or other legal acts	26
Without a detailed investigation of a complaint falling outside the jurisdiction of the Seimas Ombudsman, to give proposals or comments to appropriate institutions and agencies on the improvement of public administration in order to prevent violations of human rights and freedoms	11
To hand over relevant material to a pre-trial investigation body or the prosecutor in cases where any signs of criminal activity have been detected	2

Recommendation	Number of recommendations
To recommend to the prosecutor to apply to the court under the procedure prescribed by the law for the protection of public interest	1
To inform the Seimas, the President or the Prime Minister of the Republic about violations committed by ministers or other officials accountable to the Seimas, the President or the Government of the Republic	1

At the time of the drafting of the present report, 94% of the recommendations provided by the Seimas Ombudsmen were reported to have been taken into account. In the case of one eighth of the recommendations made, replies from the respective institutions are yet to be received.

The Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Seimas Ombudsmen embodies the principle of openness as one of the fundamental principles observed in the activities of the Seimas Ombudsmen – they provide information to the public about their activities, abuse of office and bureaucracy of officials, or any other violations of human rights and freedoms. Openness is a vital aspect of the constitutional principle of the rule of law. For the Seimas Ombudsmen as human rights defenders, who adopt decisions that are recommendatory in nature, the possibility of making public inappropriate activities of officials provides additional means of action.

State or municipal institutions or agencies to which these statements are issued must also publish them on their own official Internet websites, indicating the actions taken by these institutions to ensure that recommendations provided by the Seimas Ombudsmen are implemented.

Information about the Seimas Ombudsman's statements, recommendations and implementation thereof helps the public get acquainted with the objective condition of the institution and efficiency of its activities and decide on how the fundamental constitutional principle providing that state institutions are to serve people is ensured.

2. OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATED BY SEIMAS OMBUDSMAN ROMAS VALENTUKEVIČIUS IN 2011

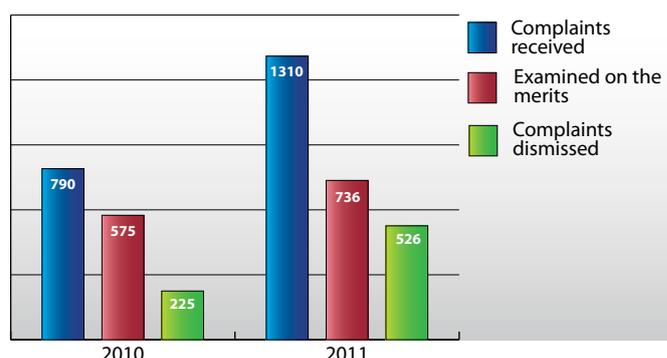
This Chapter contains information about the complaints received and investigated in substance by Seimas Ombudsman Romas Valentukevičius in 2011, the length of investigation thereof, the decisions adopted following the investigation of a complaint, the breakdown of complaints investigated on their merits by institution, the breakdown of complaints investigated on their merits by subject matter, the proposals (recommendations) provided by the Seimas Ombudsman, and the response of state institutions to the submitted proposals (recommendations).

2.1. Complaints Received / Investigated

During the reporting period (1 January – 31 December 2011), Seimas Ombudsman Romas Valentukevičius received a total of 1,310 complaints about issues assigned to his competence, 526 of which were dismissed on the basis of Article 17 of the Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen, and 736 complaints regarding the alleged abuse of office or bureaucracy of officials or other violations of human rights and freedoms in the field of public administration were examined on their merits.

The diagram given below reflects the dynamics in the number of complaints received during the past two years. It can be seen that the number of complaints received in 2011 almost doubled, compared to the number of complaints received in 2010. The growth in the number of complaints received was determined by the following factors: 1) the county reform was implemented in 2010 and almost all the functions of county governors and their administrations were handed over to state institutions, the contents of complaints changed accordingly – complaints regarding the actions of officials of county governor's administrations turned into complaints regarding the actions of officials of state institutions, which caused an increase in the number of complaints falling within the field of competence of Seimas Ombudsman Romas Valentukevičius; 2) the year 2011 was intended for the development of public knowledge about the role and functions of the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office in protecting human rights; thus, this factor also contributed to the growth in the number of complaints.

As it can be seen from the diagram, there was an increase in the number of complaints examined on the merits in 2011, compared to 2010. Furthermore, the number of complaints dismissed in 2011 increased slightly as well. It is noteworthy that the growth in the number of dismissed complaints was determined by the fact that the complaints on the same issue submitted by different persons detained in imprisonment institutions were received several times in 2011. As convicted and sentenced persons may not file collective complaints, each of them applied regarding the same subject individually. For this reason, such applications are registered separately, and this is reflected in the statistics on the number of dismissed complaints.

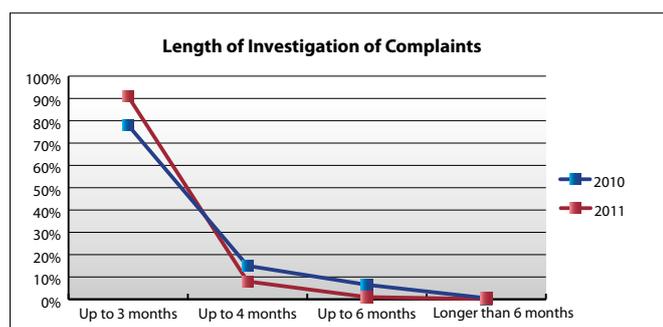


2.2. Length of Investigation of Complaints

Article 18 of the Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen provides that a complaint must be investigated and the complainant must be given a response within 3 months of the day of the receipt of the complaint, except for the cases where the complexity of circumstances, abundance of information, or continuity of actions being complained about necessitates prolongation of the complaint investigation. The complainant is notified of the Seimas Ombudsman's decision to extend the time limit for the complaint investigation. Complaints must be investigated within the shortest time possible.

In the Seimas Ombudsman's opinion, it is very important for people who apply to the Seimas Ombudsman to have the complaint submitted by them examined within the shortest period of time possible. The problem that is relevant for a particular person or the public today may lose its significance after three or more months. Therefore, the Seimas Ombudsman makes every effort that complaints, the investigation of which is assigned to the field of his competence, would be examined within the shortest period of time possible.

The Seimas Ombudsman is pleased to report that the majority of complaints investigated by him, while conforming to the quality standards, in 2010 and 2011 were dealt with within 3 months and faster, though the number of complaints was increasing. The same trend should be observed in 2012 as well. One of the Seimas Ombudsman's objectives is to make his activities more efficient, while maintaining or improving the applicable quality standards, so that the investigation process would take even less time.



2.3. Decisions Made by the Seimas Ombudsman Following the Investigation of the Complaint

Paragraph 1 of Article 22 of the Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen provides that, having completed the investigation, the Seimas Ombudsman takes a decision to:

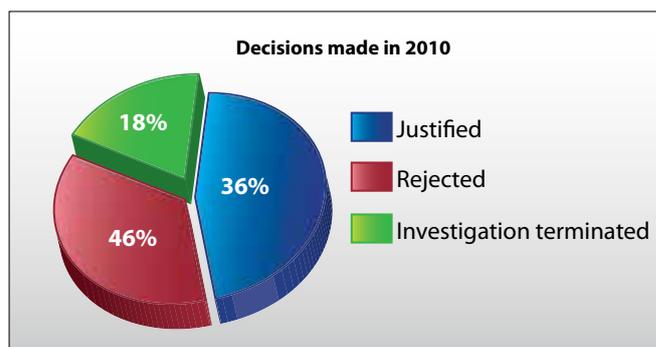
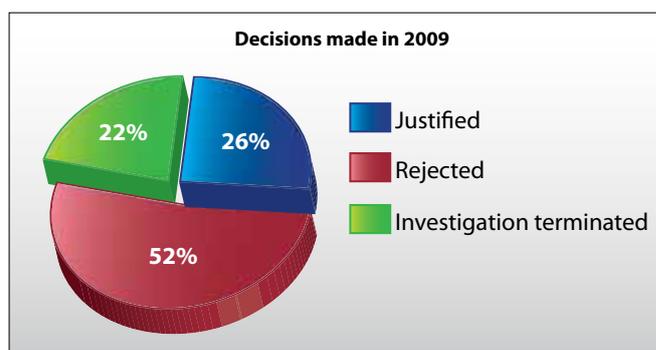
- 1) recognise declare the complaint as justified;
- 2) dismiss the complaint;
- 3) discontinue the complaint investigation.

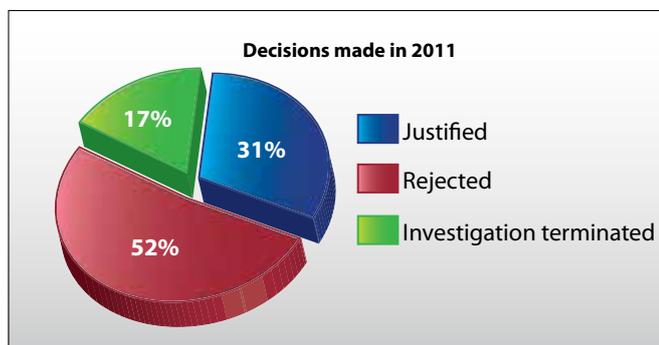
The investigation of a complaint is discontinued if the circumstances

addressed in the complaint disappear during the investigation or the problems addressed in the complaint are resolved in good will through the mediation of the Seimas Ombudsman as well as in other cases established by this Law.

As it can be seen from the diagram below, i.e. when comparing the number of decisions made over the past three years in percentage, the number of decisions to declare the complaint to be justified was larger in 2010 and smaller in 2009 and 2011. The county reform implemented in 2010 could have possibly determined the fact that more decisions *to declare the complaint to be justified* were adopted following the investigation in 2010. At that time people applied to the Seimas Ombudsman and indicated that they had filed applications or complaints with the respective county governors but they had not received any reply after the lapse of the period set for the complaint investigation. As the functions of county governors and their administrations were being handed over to state institutions and subordination was changing, the investigation of applications and complaints of the majority of people had been unreasonably prolonged. Therefore, the Seimas Ombudsman declared such complaints to be justified, and this had an impact on the growth in the number of reasonable complaints received in 2010.

In 2011, when the functions and subordination of officials became definite, the numbers of decisions made by the Seimas Ombudsman in the reporting year were the same in percentage as those of the previous year, which will most likely remain the same in the future as well.





2.4. Breakdown of Complaints Investigated on Their Merits by Institution

The applications referring to the Prison Department under the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania accounted for 53% of all the complaints investigated in 2010. Taking into consideration the large number of complaints regarding the aforementioned institution examined on the merits in 2010, the decision was made to visit imprisonment institutions and carry out on-site investigations, while taking advantage of the possibility to resolve any detected problems through mediation of the Seimas Ombudsman. Visits to such institutions proved to be justified and the number of complaints submitted regarding these institutions was lower by 10% in 2011. However, as it can be seen from the figure above, this number is still large. The complaints were mainly related to inappropriate medical treatment and detention conditions. When there is a lack of available funds in the country, it is hard to ensure adequate detention conditions though they are gradually improved.

The applications against the actions of officials of the Ministry of Agriculture and its subordinate institutions account for another substantial share, i.e. 16% of all the complaints investigated on their merits. It is likely that this situation was determined by the county reform implemented on 1 July 2010. After the counties, which had been implementing the land reform and adopting decisions regarding the restoration of ownership rights to land and forests until 1 July 2010, were abolished, and this function was transferred to the state institution – the National Land Service under the Ministry of Agriculture, people lodged complaints regarding the land reform with the aforementioned institution and regarding the actions of officials of this institution with Seimas Ombudsman Romas Valentukevičius. Thus, consequently, there was an increase in the number of complaints regarding the actions of officials of the Ministry of Agriculture and its subordinate institutions examined by Seimas Ombudsman Romas Valentukevičius in 2011.

Also, the complaints regarding the Ministry of the Interior and its subordinate institutions accounted for another substantial share, i.e. 15% of all the complaints investigated on their merits. In 2010, the complaints regarding the Ministry of the Interior and its subordinate institutions accounted for 11% of all the complaints assigned to the competence of Romas Valentukevičius, and this shows that the number of complaints regarding the Ministry of the Interior and its

subordinate institutions examined on their merits increased by 4% in 2011. Those were mostly complaints that dealt with the detention conditions in custody at the country's police commissariat facilities and violations of the right to good public administration.

2.5. Breakdown of Complaints Investigated on Their Merits by Subject Matter

The complaints, which were investigated on the merits during the reporting period, were related to the alleged violations of the following rights:

Problem	Complaints investigated (%)
Rights of individuals whose freedom was restricted	44
Right to good public administration	25.5
Right to ownership	12
Right to personal and public security and assurance of public order	6.5
Right to a secure and ecological environment	3.5
Right to health care	2
Right to a fair trial	2
Right to social security	2
Consumer rights	1
Other rights	1.5

As it can be seen from the table above, the largest number of complaints investigated on the merits were related to alleged violations of the rights of persons' whose freedoms was restricted.

The complaints regarding the alleged violations of the right to good public administration comprise another large share in the total number of complaints examined on their merits. They were usually recognised as justified.

It is noteworthy that the number of complaints regarding the alleged violation of the rights of individuals whose freedom was restricted (44% in 2010 and 44% in 2011) and the number of complaints regarding the alleged violation of the right to public administration (26% in 2010 and 25.5% in 2011) examined on their merits have remained about the same from 2010 to 2011. Also, the numbers of other complaints investigated on their merits, according to subject matter, was the same as in 2010.

Attention should be paid to the fact that the number of complaints regarding the alleged violation of the right to ownership investigated in 2011 exceeded the 2010 figure by four times (3% in 2010 and 12% in 2011); almost half of them were declared to be justified. At this point, it should be noted that the subject matter (which was previously related to the restoration of ownership rights to land or forest) has been changing – now more complaints are filed regarding the determination of limits of land plots, or inappropriate control of cadastral surveys.

2.6. Recommendations Provided by the Seimas Ombudsman

During the reporting year 2011, the Seimas Ombudsman provided a total of 429 recommendations of different types.

Recommendation	Quantity (percentage)
To draw the attention of officials to certain issues and propose to take certain measures	316 / 73.7
To make proposals to the Seimas, the Government and other institutions to amend laws or other legal acts that restrict human rights and freedoms	33 / 7.7
To propose to suspend or amend decisions that contradict the laws and other legal acts, or propose to adopt decisions the adoption whereof has been precluded by abuse of office or bureaucracy	28 / 6.5
To propose to impose disciplinary sanctions	14 / 3.3
To inform the Seimas, the Government or other institutions about violations of laws, deficiencies, contradictions of or gaps in laws or other legal acts	22 / 5.1
Other recommendations	16 / 3.7
Total:	429

2.7. Response of State Authorities to Recommendations Provided

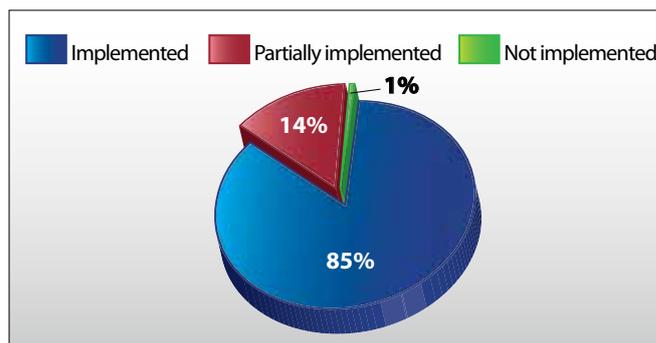
Although proposals provided by the Seimas Ombudsman are advisory in nature only and do not create any rights or duties that would be legally binding on the applicant or the institution being complained against, the proposal (recommendation) provided by the Seimas Ombudsman must be investigated by the institution and agency or official, to whom this proposal (recommendation) is addressed, and inform the Seimas Ombudsman about the results of the investigation (Paragraph 3 of Article 20 of the Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen).

The figure presented in this Section of the Report shows that state authorities take into account the recommendations provided by the Seimas Ombudsman. This means that the legal arguments put forward by the Seimas Ombudsman are convincing. It is also noteworthy that in case the institution to which a recommendation is provided does not take into account the recommendation produced by the Seimas Ombudsman, the institution must notify the Seimas Ombudsman thereof. Then the Seimas Ombudsman does not finish his work yet but continues to correspond with that particular institution trying to persuade the institution that the defensive position in respect of the Seimas Ombudsman does not help the institution to exhaust all of the means available and that it might impair the reliability of the institution. Most frequently, the Seimas Ombudsman persuades the institution and it takes due account of the provided recommendation; therefore, the percentage of complaints that were taken into account is really high.

In the Seimas Ombudsman's opinion, the recommendation that was partially taken into account is a recommendation which was sought to be implemented by the respective institution by taking

certain measures but this was not completed due to the length of the process, for instance, the adoption of new legal acts, or amendment or supplement to the existing legislation. There were more of such recommendations in 2011 (14%) than in 2010 (7%), as the Seimas Ombudsman proposed to amend the legislation more often.

The amendment to Paragraph 2 of Article 6 of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Right to Obtain Information from State and Local Government Institutions and Agencies entered into force on 1 July 2010. The aforementioned amendment provided that statements of the Seimas Ombudsman on the investigation of actions of the employees of the mentioned institutions and information on results of the examination of proposals (recommendations) provided by the Seimas Ombudsman at the particular institution must be published on the websites of state institutions and agencies and of municipalities. Such publicity prompted institutions to respond more amicably to recommendations provided by the Seimas Ombudsman, to wish to take it into consideration and thus demonstrate to the public that they recognise detected violations and agree with the proposal (recommendation) provided by the Seimas Ombudsman.



3. MAJOR PROJECTS IN PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS

This Section briefly reviews the activity related to the dissemination and protection of human rights carried out by Seimas Ombudsman Romas Valentukevičius in 2011.

When considering the annual reports of the Seimas Ombudsmen, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania has emphasised and proposed in its resolutions that the Seimas Ombudsmen should seek that the main direction of the activities carried out by the institution would be not only the investigation of complaints regarding the abuse of office or bureaucracy of officials but also other activities related to the dissemination and protection of human rights. This activity could be best revealed by the projects implemented by the Seimas Ombudsman in 2011, namely:

- own-initiative investigations;
- analysis of legal acts in terms of human rights;
- on-site meetings with residents;

- discussions with officials (round-tables);
- visits to closed institutions.

3.1. Own Initiative Investigations

The right of the Seimas Ombudsman to initiate investigations on one's own initiative is provided in Paragraph 3 of Article 13 of the Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen.

It is through own-initiative investigations that the Seimas Ombudsman can provide, on the broadest scale possible, information to citizens, expand public knowledge about human rights, and draw the attention of the public to problems that could have been avoided if officials had acted in an appropriate and timely manner. These investigations are usually related to the public at large; they are relevant to everyone and therefore, they are made public by the media.

3.2. Analysis of Legal Acts in Terms of Human Rights

Items 7 and 8 of the Paragraph 1 of Article 19 of the Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen provide that the Seimas Ombudsman, while performing his duties, has the right inform the Seimas, the Government and other state institutions and agencies or the appropriate municipal council of <...> the gross violations of law or deficiencies, contradictions of or gaps in laws or other legal acts, and he also has the right to recommend to the Seimas, state or municipal institutions and agencies to amend the laws or other statutory acts which restrict human rights and freedoms.

In its resolution of 26 January 2004, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania indicated that one of the fundamental elements of the principle of the state under the rule of law entrenched in the Constitution is legal certainty and legal clarity: legal regulation must be clear and harmonious, legal norms must be formulated precisely, they may not contain any ambiguities.

In 2011, the Seimas Ombudsman carried out an analysis of the legal acts regulating the examination of applications and complaints submitted by individuals at state institutions ("Protection of the human right to good public administration: problems of legal regulation of the examination of applications and complaints submitted by individuals at state institutions") and of the legal acts regulating the detention conditions of individuals whose liberty is restricted ("Protection of the rights of prisoners and convicts: problems of legal regulation").

3.2.1. Protection of the human right to good public administration: problems of legal regulation of the examination of applications and complaints submitted by individuals at state institutions

It is noteworthy that during the past several years the applications regarding the violation of the right to good public administration

have accounted for the lion's share of complaints investigated at the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office. What kind of violations are those, and what should be improved in order to reduce them? Undoubtedly, it can be said that ambiguous legal regulation is the main reason behind the majority of these violations.

The investigation of the complaints received by the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office led to generalisations allowing to state that the Law on Public Administration contains legal norms that are formulated unclearly and inaccurately, and therefore, they are ambiguous. Due to this fact, state and municipal institutions or agencies, when analysing applications and complaints submitted by individuals, interpret them differently, which could be avoided if the applicable legal regulation is clear and harmonious, and legal norms are formulated accurately.

The Seimas Ombudsman reviewed the Law on Public Administration and the Rules for the Examination of Applications Submitted by Individuals and Service Provided to Them in Public Administration Institutions, Agencies and Other Public Administration Entities approved by Resolution No. 875 of 22 August 2007 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter in this Section referred to as the "Rules"). The aforementioned review revealed that some provisions of these legal acts should be amended or supplemented. In the Seimas Ombudsman's opinion, the definitions of public administration and a public administration entity should be reviewed because currently it is not clear which institutions are engaged in public administration and which are not; therefore, it might be expedient to list, in a separate article in the Law on Public Administration, institutions and agencies to which this Law is not applicable. The examination of applications and complaints submitted by e-mail but not confirmed by an electronic signature is not regulated either. Such applications and complaints are not examined unless the head of the institution decides otherwise. In the Seimas Ombudsman's opinion, applications and complaints submitted by e-mail but not confirmed by an electronic signature should be examined, only it should be provided how state authorities, having received a citizen's application or complaint by e-mail that is not confirmed by an electronic signature, could identify the person who submitted the application or complaint.

The analysis contains even more comments regarding the provisions of the aforementioned legal acts.

3.2.2. Protection of the rights of prisoners and convicts: problems of legal regulation

Having summed up the complaints of prisoners and convicts filed with the Seimas Ombudsman's Office and the information collected during the visits to correctional facilities and the Lukiškės Remand Prison, and in compliance with Items 7 and 8 of the Paragraph 1 of Article 19 of the Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen, the Seimas Ombudsman presented 17 proposals regarding the improvement of legal acts (amendment or supplement to the Penal Code, the Law on Pre-Trial Detention, the Remand Prisons Internal Rules and the Internal Rules of Correctional Institutions) to Minister of Justice Remigijus Šimašius.

All of the proposals presented by the Seimas Ombudsman were approved, some of them have been already implemented, and some of them are being discussed and draft amendments or supplements to these legal acts are being prepared.

The Minister's attention was also drawn to the problem of overcrowding in imprisonment institutions, which is still highly relevant. Overcrowding of imprisonment institutions also constitutes a violation of international legal norms. Under paragraph 18.1 of the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and under paragraph 10 of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, special attention should be paid to the floor space per inmate.

In an overcrowded correctional facility, it is harder to ensure adequate detention conditions that would conform to the requirements of legal acts and applicable hygiene standards, including appropriate conditions to maintain personal hygiene and periodically receive long-term visits. The workload for employees of the health care service is constantly growing, as a result of which the accessibility and quality of services provided to persons may be exacerbated. Particularly, it should be emphasised that convicts, who refuse to live in an overcrowded cell demanding compliance with the terms and conditions provided in the legislation, are imposed penalties for the non-compliance with the requirements of the administration of the institution.

3.3. On-Site Meetings with Residents; Discussions with Officials (Round-Tables); Visits to Closed Institutions

As mentioned above, the year 2011 was intended to expand public knowledge about the role and functions of the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office in the field of human rights protection. This was a priority in the activities of the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office during the reporting year.

Having regard to this priority, in 2011, the Seimas Ombudsman organised a meeting with the residents in the Utena District Municipality and went to meet with local people in the neighbourhoods of the Utena district; in addition, he visited the Utena Regional Environmental Protection Department, the Utena Land Management Division of the National Land Service under the Ministry of Agriculture, the Utena County Chief Police Commissariat, and the custody of the Public Order Division of the Utena County Chief Police.

Reception of individuals is important as people are provided with the opportunity to immediately find out where they could apply in order to protect their allegedly violated rights and with legal advice on site, they are also assisted in drawing up complaints, offered a possible solution to the problem, or the issue that is of concern to them is resolved immediately, on site, by inviting the responsible official.

It is noteworthy that, when going to meet with local people to districts, the Seimas Ombudsman usually visits all state institutions

based in a particular district, where he meets with responsible officials; during such meetings, various issues that are relevant to both officials themselves and the residents and the Seimas Ombudsman are discussed. Officials have an opportunity to enlist problems that they come across while resolving issues assigned to their competence and at the same time ways are sought to resolve them. This promotes cooperation between the Seimas Ombudsman and institutions because the maintenance of amicable relations ensures an adequate response to the recommendation provided or being provided by the Seimas Ombudsman.

Where possible, the Seimas Ombudsman always seeks to produce a result that is favourable to both the applicant and the institution being complained against. Cooperation with state institutions is necessary in order to achieve such results that help strengthening the relations between authorities and applicants and thus avoid expensive and lengthy litigation in courts.

While further continuing the cycle of meetings (cooperation) with representatives of state institutions commenced in 2010, the Seimas Ombudsman met with Vitas Lopinys, Head (the then Acting Director) of the National Land Service under the Ministry of Agriculture and discussed the most common problems specified in the complaints submitted to the Seimas Ombudsman. In addition, the Seimas Ombudsman proposed to tighten the control of the work of territorial divisions. The Director took into account the proposals made by the Seimas Ombudsman and constructive cooperation is currently maintained with this institution, which enables the achievement of results that are more favourable to applicants. Another meeting was held with Diana Korsakaitė, Chair of the National Control Commission for Prices and Energy, to discuss relevant issues related to public administration.

It is obvious that cooperation between the Seimas Ombudsman and state institutions brings positive results in improving public administration and seeking to achieve results that are more favourable to applicants. The future plans of the Seimas Ombudsman are to further continue organising meetings with representatives of various state institutions.

It is noteworthy that, when implementing the priority set for 2011, the Seimas Ombudsman carried out three scheduled integrated inspections in the pre-trial detention and imprisonment institutions; visits were paid to the Lukiškės Remand Prison, Alytus Correctional Facility, and the detention facility of the Vilnius County Chief Police Commissariat.

These inspections revealed poor detention conditions both at the Lukiškės Remand Prison and the detention facility of the Vilnius County Chief Police Commissariat (hereinafter in this Section referred to as the "CCPC"). The worst conditions were witnessed in the detention facility of the Vilnius CCPC, and this should be taken into consideration because detained persons, who have not been imposed any pre-trial supervision measure, i.e. arrest, yet and who, even more so, have not been declared by the court as being guilty for committing a criminal

act, are kept under much worse conditions than prisoners who have committed crimes and are serving prison sentences. The Seimas Ombudsman has, on a number of occasions, emphasised that the keeping of detainees and convicted persons under conditions that do not conform to the requirements of standard legal acts may cause negative physical and psychological experiences, determine inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and create conditions for violating Article 3 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

The deficiencies established during these inspections and the Seimas Ombudsman's conclusions were published on the website of the institution at www.lrski.lt and presented to the Prison Department under the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania, the National Health Service under the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania, and heads of the inspected institutions.

Furthermore, taking due account of specific complaints, visits were paid to the Šiauliai Remand Prison, the Imprisonment Hospital, the Praveniškės Correctional Facility-Open Prison Colony, etc.

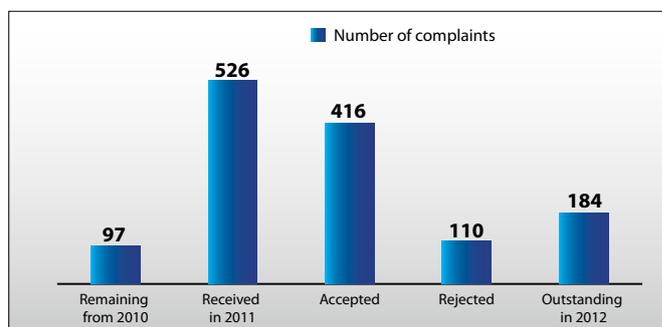
4. PRIORITIES IN THE ACTIVITIES OF SEIMAS OMBUDSMAN ROMAS VALENTUKEVIČIUS IN 2012

To sum up the material provided in this Report, the following priorities and goals in the activities of the Seimas Ombudsman in 2012 could be distinguished:

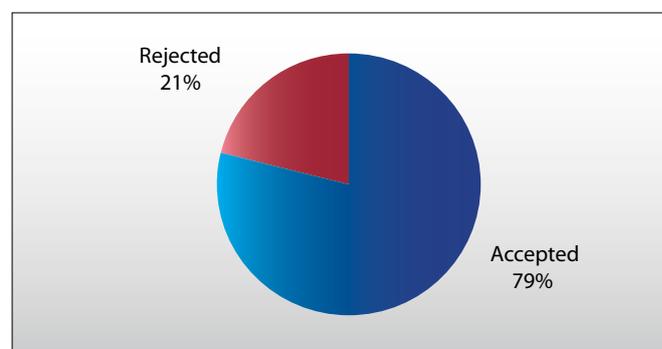
- to shorten the time limits set for the investigation of complaints by maintaining or improving the quality standards;
- to continue close cooperation with institutions by promoting good public administration and immediate resolution of applicants' problems;
- to activate the inspection and monitoring of close institutions in order to reduce the number of violations of human rights of the people kept there;
- to develop informative and educational activities in the field of human rights and freedoms so that applicants are more aware of the possibilities to defend their violated rights.

5. ACTIVITY REPORT OF SEIMAS OMBUDSMAN AUGUSTINAS NORMANTAS

In 2011, the Seimas Ombudsman received over 500 complaints regarding the alleged abuse of office and bureaucracy of municipal officials.



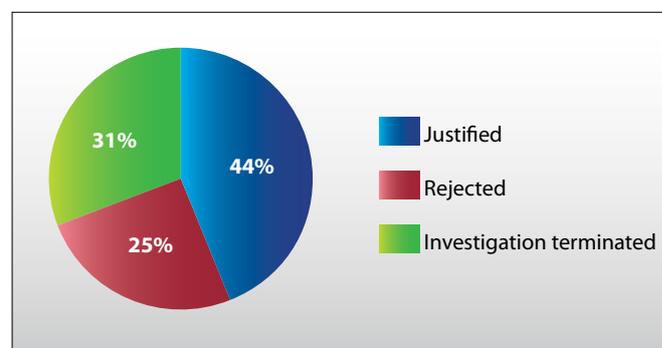
Three fourths out of all the complaints filed with the Seimas Ombudsman are being investigated, while the rest were rejected.



In 2011, over 300 complaints were investigated and almost 500 decisions were adopted.

Complaints investigated	Decisions made	Justified complaints	Rejected complaints	Investigation terminated
327	478	210	121	147

It can be seen from the percentage of decisions made that almost half of all the adopted decisions were to recognise complaints as justified.



In 2011, a total of 110 complaints were rejected. More than half of them were rejected because, in accordance with the Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen, it was expedient to investigate them in another institution first.

Reason	Complaints rejected (percentage)
Expedient to investigate in another institution or agency	55.3
Outside the Seimas Ombudsmen's investigative jurisdiction	14
Complaint regarding the same issue has been investigated already	8.8
Anonymous complaint	4.4
Insufficient data to initiate investigation	4.4
One-year time limit passed from the performance of actions being complained against	3.5
Complaint is to be heard in court	2.6
Complaint resolved or pending in court	1.8
Civil-legal relationships being complained against	1.8
Regarding the activities of local municipal councils	1.8
Regarding employment legal relationships	0.9
Application withdrawn by the applicant	0.9

In 2011, a total of 147 decisions were made to terminate investigation into the whole complaint (or part thereof). Most frequently, investigation was terminated because the problems that had been raised were resolved in good will through mediation of the Seimas Ombudsman.

It should be noted that the institute of mediation is one of the main measures used in the activities of the Seimas Ombudsmen. The essence of mediation is based on the idea that in some cases, where individuals and institutions (officials) fail to reach an agreement, an independent third party, which would objectively assess the situation and give legally grounded advice to both the person and the institution, is needed. This institute helps resolve problems raised by individuals in a more rapid and efficient manner. The Seimas Ombudsman will continue to strengthen this institute and seek that as many disputes between citizens and institutions as possible are resolved in good will.

Reason	Complaint investigation terminated (percentage)
Under mediation of the Seimas Ombudsman, the problems raised in the complaint were resolved in good will	42.2
Expedient to investigate in another institution or agency	16.3
Subject matter of the complaint disappeared during the investigation	10.2
Complaint relating to the matter resolved or pending in court	9.5
Complaint is heard in court	7.5
Not assigned to the competence of the Seimas Ombudsmen	5.4
Civil-legal relationships being complained against	2

Complaint regarding the same issue has been investigated already	1.4
Regarding the activities of local municipal councils	1.4
One-year time limit passed from the performance of actions being complained against	1.4
Complaint withdrawn by the applicant	1.4
Regarding procedural actions and decisions of pre-trial investigation officials	0.7
Procedural decision taken to open pre-trial investigation in relation to the subject matter of the complaint	0.7

The table below lists the institutions regarding the activities of which more than 10 decisions were made in 2011.

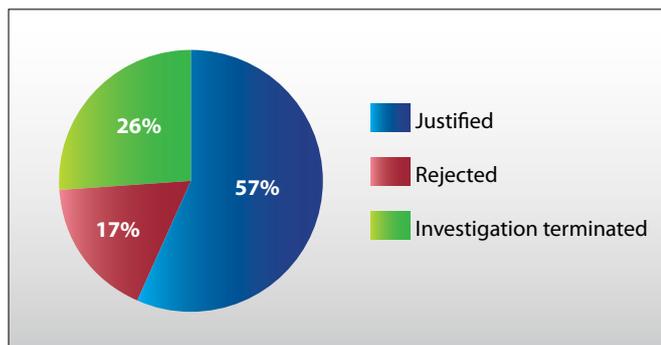
Institution	Complaints received	Complaints accepted	Complaints rejected	Complaints investigated	Decisions made	Justified complaints	Rejected complaints	Investigation terminated
Vilnius City Municipality	193	165	28	134	184	77	65	42
Kaunas City Municipality	74	60	14	35	44	20	5	19
Klaipėda City Municipality	16	11	5	8	12	6	0	6
Trakai District Municipality	16	11	5	9	15	10	3	2
Palanga City Municipality	16	16	0	9	12	7	3	2
Alytus City Municipality	14	13	1	8	10	3	1	6
Vilnius District Municipality	13	12	1	11	18	7	3	8
Varėna District Municipality	6	5	1	8	14	8	2	4

Investigated Complaints by Subject Matter

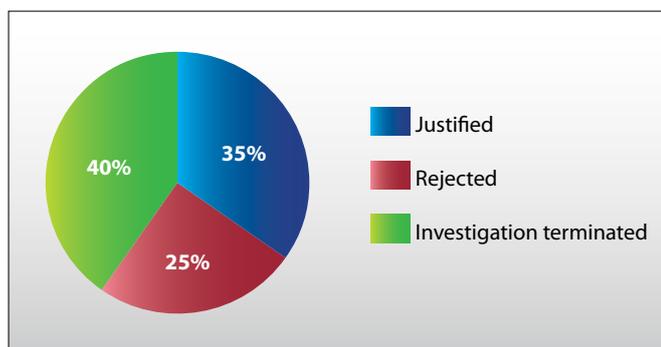
Right	Complaints investigated (%)
Right to good public administration	31
Right to a safe and ecological environment	19
Right to housing	16.5
Right to ownership	9
Consumer rights	8
Right to social security	8
Right to personal and public security and assurance of public order	2
Right to engage in economic-commercial activities	1.5
Other rights	5

As it can be seen from the diagrams below, a particularly large number of justified complaints was related to violations of the right to good public administration and the right to housing.

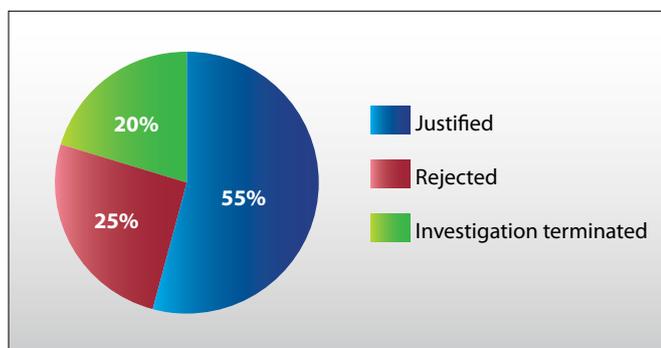
RIGHT TO GOOD PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION



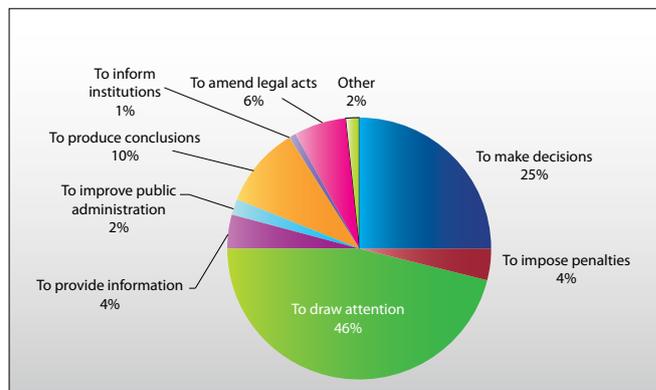
RIGHT TO A SECURE AND ECOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT



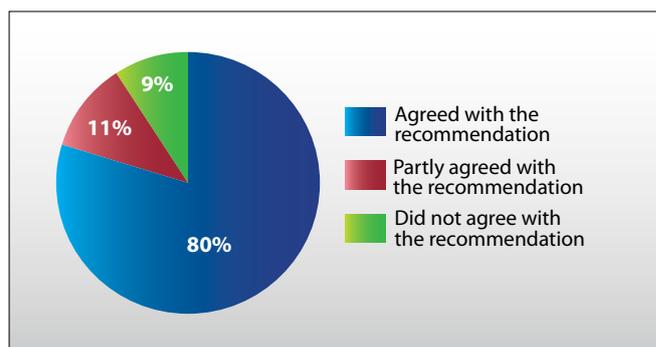
RIGHT TO HOUSING



BREAKDOWN OF PROVIDED RECOMMENDATIONS

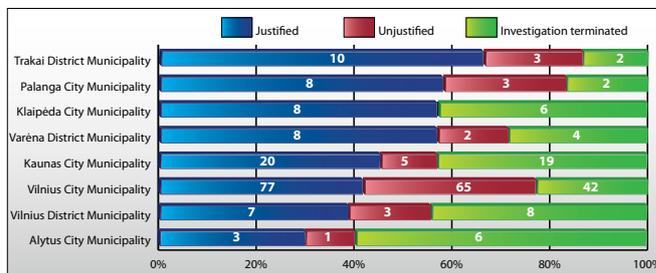


RESPONSE OF INSTITUTIONS TO RECOMMENDATIONS PROVIDED



PERCENTAGE OF DECISIONS MADE

The municipalities regarding which at least ten decisions were made are listed below.



In 2011, the Seimas Ombudsman commenced 11 and completed 7 investigations on his initiative.

6. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE IMPROVEMENT OF LEGAL REGULATION

This Chapter of the Report summarises the major investigations carried out by the Seimas Ombudsman in 2011, which were completed by providing recommendations regarding the improvement of legal regulation.

6.1. Regarding the Legal Regulation of the Reorganisation of General Education Schools (9 May 2011, No. 4D-2009/4-1587)

The Seimas Ombudsman drew the attention of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania to the fact that the applicable legal acts do not provide for the definition of school reorganisation and do not define the fundamentals of the restructuring of the internal organisation of schools; therefore, in practice, this causes certain inconsistencies when dealing with issues pertaining to school reorganisation and the restructuring of the internal organisation of schools. It was proposed to the Government to analyse the possibility of initiating the improvement of the applicable legal acts by formulating the definition of school reorganisation and establishing the fundamentals of the restructuring of the internal organisation of schools.

The recommendation provided by the Seimas Ombudsman was not approved.

6.2. Regarding the Patient's Right to Have Access to His/Her Medical Records (30 May 2011, No. 4D-2011/4-222)

The Seimas Ombudsman noticed that the patient's right entrenched in Article 7 of the Law on the Rights of Patients and Compensation for the Damage to Their Health is limited, i.e. it is provided that the patient, at his request, must be provided with his medical records. In internal legal acts of outpatient clinics, this right is also regulated concisely, and there is no specific, detailed and explicit procedure for the implementation of the aforementioned right provided therein. The insufficient legal regulation creates preconditions to violate human rights; therefore, it is important that deficiencies in the legal acts be eliminated.

The Seimas Ombudsman voiced his opinion that the entrenchment of a clear and detailed procedure on how the patient's right to have access to his/her entries in his/her medical records should be implemented would contribute to the improvement of public administration and ensuring the individual's right to good public administration and proposed to the Minister of Health to consider the possibility of establishing such procedure.

The recommendation provided by the Seimas Ombudsman was approved.

6.3. Regarding the Procedure for the Provision of General Social Services (13 May 2011, No. 4D-2011/4-194)

The Seimas Ombudsman noticed that, in compliance with the provisions of the Law on Social Services, municipalities have been assigned with the task of not only organising and controlling the provision of general social services but also of establishing the procedure for the calculation of the amount of the payment for these services (and organisation of transportation). In the case specified in the complaint, the procedure for the provision of transport services provided to the residents of the Alytus city was established by the society for the disabled, which is the provider of these services, rather than the municipality. This procedure was insufficiently clear and, besides, the application period of this procedure had been expired.

It was proposed to the mayor of the Alytus City to initiate the preparation of the procedure of payment for general social services, which would clearly establish the conditions for the provision of transport services and the payment for these services.

The recommendation provided by the Seimas Ombudsman was approved.

6.4. Regarding the Granting of the Right to Build Centralised Engineering Networks to Private Entities (23 December 2011, No. 4D-2011/4-642)

The Seimas Ombudsman received the applicant's complaint claiming that the Vilnius District Municipality did not allow installing local water management facilities on the land plot and UAB M demands the payment of LTL 70,000 for the connection to the district heating network being built.

The investigation of the applicant's complaint led to the conclusion that the water supply and waste water management facilities were being constructed without complying with the requirement provided in the Law on Drinking Water Supply and Waste Water Management, under which the construction of new public water supply and waste water management infrastructure facilities, where the contracting authority is not a public water supplier or municipality, is possible where there is a tripartite agreement between the municipality, public water supplier and contracting authority (constructor of the facility). The agreement must provide *inter alia* for the sources of financing the construction of the facility of the public drinking water supply and waste water management infrastructure, the conditions of use (operation) thereof and the terms and procedure for transferring the rights of ownership to the municipality or an enterprise controlled by the municipality. Seeking to rectify the aforementioned violation, the Seimas Ombudsman recommended that the Vilnius District

Municipality, UAB Vilniaus Vandenyys and UAB M should conclude the agreement referred to above.

The investigation also established that UAB M demanded that LTL 70,000 be paid for the connection to the engineering network being built; however, in the opinion of the officials of the Ministry of Environment, the request that the aforementioned amount be paid was unreasonable as the maximum amount calculated in compliance with the applicable legal acts for the connection to the engineering networks amounts to LTL 1,200. The Seimas Ombudsman has reasonable doubts as to whether UAB M has not abused its rights, and whether it does not seek to make a profit from the owners of the land plot by demanding that they pay large amounts of money calculated on some unclear grounds. The Seimas Ombudsman indicated that ensuring the provision of drinking water supply and waste water management services under acceptable conditions constitutes a public interest; therefore, the Government was provided with the recommendation to initiate amendments to the applicable legal acts or adoption of new legal acts so that constructors of engineering networks could not abuse their position when resolving the issues related to the connection to the centralised engineering networks.

The recommendation provided by the Seimas Ombudsman was approved.

7. MOST COMMON ISSUES RAISED IN THE COMPLAINTS SUBMITTED BY APPLICANTS

This Chapter of the Report addresses the most common issues raised in the complaints submitted by applicants. Due to the broad nature of these issues and due to the fact that the solution to these issues has an impact on a large part of the society, the respective recommendations are provided to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania following the discussion of each relevant issue, so that these problems are finally resolved.

7.1. Regarding the Management of Municipal Waste

It has been several years that the Seimas Ombudsman has received a number of complaints regarding municipal waste management, particularly, a local charge for the collection of municipal waste from waste holders and waste management. The applicants were most dissatisfied with the fact that the local charge is required to be paid irrespectively of the frequency of the use of a respective building, and also without taking into consideration the fact of provision of containers for municipal waste collection and the place of their installation. Furthermore, individuals often associate municipal waste collection directly with the provision of the service and believe that it is unreasonable to demand payments if the service has not been used.

The Law on Fees and Charges defines local fees and charges as mandatory payment determined by a decision of a municipal council, valid within the territory of a given municipality. The Law entrenches a finite list of types of local fees and charges (in total, 11 types, including a local charge on municipal waste collection from waste holders and waste management).

Taking into consideration this conception of a local charge, a very important problem arises: as this is the payment for the right to perform certain actions or to use a certain object, it means that a person must pay this payment only if he or she decides to exercise the respective right. Based on the current legal regulation, a person is not allowed to choose not to pay the local charge on municipal waste collection. In the existing situation, the local charge on municipal waste collection does not conform to the essence of local fees and charges. The statement that this is the payment for the right to use the municipal waste collection system presupposes the opposite statement: if it is the right to use the municipal waste collection system, it means that there must be the right not to use this system as well.

This presupposes the conclusion that there must be a certain alternative in this case. A person must have the possibility to choose: either to pay the local charge on municipal waste collection from waste holders and waste management, or to conclude an agreement for the provision of the public municipal waste management service.

On the subject of waste collection, the statement of municipalities that an individual or common-use waste collection container does not necessarily have to be assigned to a person as this person can use any container within the territory of the municipality raises many doubts. In the Seimas Ombudsman's opinion, the requirement to pay the local charge should be associated with municipal waste collection from a particular entity, i.e. a particular container assigned to a specific person (persons). In addition, a number of problems arise regarding the distance to the container: it is doubtful whether the principle of equal rights is not violated where the same amount of the local charge is demanded to be paid by the person, who has a container within one's premises, and from the person, for whom a container is placed at the distance of several hundred metres.

Even more discussions arise regarding the facts proving the holding of waste. Based on the current wording of local fees and charges, a local fee or charge may be collected only from waste holders who are defined as waste generators (persons whose activity generates waste) or as persons who have waste in the Law on Waste Management. Thus, in case persons do not carry out any activities (for example, they do not reside) in a particular real estate property, they should not be considered to be waste holders and they should not be requested to pay the local charge. This is the most common issue raised in the complaints filed with the Seimas Ombudsman as a number of persons possess real estate properties that are not used or are visited by them only periodically. Irrespectively of the fact that in such cases persons could not be considered to be waste holders, taking due account of the double nature of local fees and charges (this is the

payment not only for the collection of municipal waste but also for the management of all waste), there would be the grounds for the requirement to pay the local charge applicable to persons who are not deemed as waste holders as well; however, this amount should be lower, i.e. cover only the portion of the local charge on waste management (excluding the collection of municipal waste).

Taking due account of the aforesaid, the following is proposed to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania:

- 1) to take certain measures by establishing that in the field of taxation on municipal waste management all persons must be provided with the actual possibility of choice: either to pay the local charge for municipal waste collection from waste holders and waste management, or to conclude an agreement for the provision of the public municipal waste management service. The conclusion of an agreement for the provision of the public municipal waste management service should be the duty of the administrators of the municipal waste management system, and the non-conclusion of such agreement could be possible only in compliance with the established grounds;
- 2) to take certain measures by establishing that all municipal waste holders are duly provided with the tools of collecting mixed municipal waste, biologically dissolvable waste and secondary raw materials;
- 3) to take certain measures by establishing that persons sorting municipal waste are applied the respective reliefs related to the payment for municipal waste management.

7.2. Control Over the Associations of Multi-Family Apartment House Owners

The Seimas Ombudsman receives frequent complaints that municipalities do not control the activities of the associations of multi-family apartment house owners. The complaints indicate that chairpersons of these associations are not members of these associations, they do not account for the use of monetary funds, they do not submit any reports on the financial activities of associations, they organise home repair works inappropriately, they do not react to members' opinion, they do not provide any information to members, etc. Some applicants also have doubts regarding the legality of the establishment of associations, particularly, the associations administering several multi-family apartment buildings. Individuals lodge complaints regarding the actions of municipalities as members of the associations claiming they do not take care of municipally-owned social housing.

In the opinion of municipal officials, municipal institutions may not resolve any disputes arising in such associations or exert any influence on them because the currently applicable Law on the Associations of Multi-Family Apartment House Owners do not provide for this.

The Law on Local Self-Government provides that one of the independent functions of municipalities is supervision and control of the activities of the managing bodies of the associations of owners of multi-family apartment houses and other premises within the limits of competence as established by the law. Thus, this function of municipalities in fact depends on the existence of appropriate legal regulation.

Neither the Law on the Associations of Multi-Family Apartment House Owners nor other legal acts provide for the procedure of supervision and control of the activities of managing bodies of the associations (the functions of municipalities in this field are not specified) and for the competence of municipalities in respect of the issues of management of the association, control over the organisation of the decision-making process and settlement of disputes between the managing bodies and members of the association.

Taking due account of the aforesaid, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania should be proposed to improve the Law on the Associations of Multi-Family Apartment House Owners by establishing the methods and procedure for the implementation of the function of municipalities – to carry out, within the limits of competence established by the law, the supervision and control of the activities of the managing bodies of the associations of owners of multi-family apartment house owners and other premises (for instance, by providing that the procedure of supervision and control of the activities of the managing bodies of the associations of owners of multi-family apartment house owners and other premises is established by the Government or any other institution authorised by the Government; by regulating that an association of several apartment house buildings may be established only if it is impossible to manage, use and maintain objects of common partial ownership of these buildings separately, etc.).

7.3. Regarding Publicly Beneficial Activities

Individuals, who are candidates to receive social support, filed complaints with the Seimas Ombudsman because the applicants were not granted any cash social assistance if they refused to carry out socially useful activities.

The Law on Cash Social Assistance for Poor Families and Single Residents provide that the social benefit may be granted in cash and in non-monetary form (foodstuffs, clothing and other necessary goods, cards for purchases in food stores, meal cards, compensation of children's costs of meals in schools or day centres, etc.). The aforementioned Law also provides that the municipality has the right to engage persons in socially useful activities under the procedure established by the Government or its authorised institution.

The problem is that no legal act, which would provide for the procedure for engagement of persons in socially useful works (activities), has been passed yet. It should be noted that the procedure for engagement of individuals in socially useful works has not been

and is not intended for the implementation of the Law on Cash Social Assistance for Low Income Families, and it does not regulate the relationships, the need for the regulation whereof arises out of the aforementioned Law.

It should be emphasised that, when engaging persons in socially useful activities, it is necessary to take into account their educational background and work experience. A person who has a university education, for example, in the field of management, should not be sent to sweep streets or mow roadside grass. It is necessary to assess the potential possessed by a human being in the best possible way and use his or her abilities in the field that he or she knows best or would like to work in himself/herself.

With a view to implement the Law on Cash Social Assistance for Poor Families and Single Residents in an appropriate manner, it is necessary to immediately approve the procedure under which persons are engaged in socially useful activities.

Taking due account of the aforesaid, it is proposed to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania to take relevant measures so that the Government or its authorised institution would immediately approve the procedure for engagement of individuals in socially useful activities.



SUMMARY OF THE ANNUAL REPORT 2011

**The Seimas Ombudsmen's Office
of the Republic of Lithuania**

Gedimino Ave. 56,
01110 Vilnius, Lithuania

Phone: +370 706 65105
Fax: +370 706 65138

e-mail: ombuds@lrs.lt
<http://www.lrski.lt>