Several mechanisms for human rights protection and public oversight exist in the Russian Federation. These are regional and federal ombudsmen; Public Monitoring Committees (PMC), which are independent civil society bodies in each region, with a broad mandate to conduct monitoring of closed institutions; and Public Councils/Chambers (PC). PCs conduct public oversight in places of detention and other social security institutions (elderly institutions, orphanages, institutions for the disabled etc.).

Despite the existence of these mechanisms and institutions, various issues prevail in the field of monitoring and protection of human rights. Many of the regional ombudsman institutions lack knowledge and expertise to fulfil their mandate. Also, the regional ombudsmen often do not consult or work together with civil society organisations due to lack of knowledge and understanding on the opportunities such cooperation can provide. In general, there is a lack of understanding on the roles and competencies of human rights institutions among state institutions and their staff, which creates obstacles to genuine fulfilment of the mandates of the ombudsmen, the PMC and the PC.

BRIEF FACTS

Geography: The Russian Federation is the largest country in the World, occupying a large territory of northern part of Eurasia continent. The capital is Moscow.

Demography: 142.5 million inhabitants (2014 est.); life expectancy at birth is 70 years. Around 190 different ethnic groups, largest group: Russian (77,7%).

Economy: GDP per capita 18,100 USD (2013). One of the world’s largest producers of oil and natural gas.

Official language: Russian

Politics: The Federation consists of federal subjects such as oblasts, republics, krais, autonomous okrugs, and federal cities, all with different degrees of autonomy. It is a semi-presidential republic with the President as the head of state and the Prime Minister as head of the government.


DIHR has been present in the Russian Federation since 2009. Main activities have been working with civil society organisations in North-West Russia and Southern Urals on projects in the following areas: provision of legal aid, support to persons in places of detention, police reform, and human rights education of law enforcement actors. DIHR has also been engaged in training and capacity building of civil society organisations, establishing cooperation between state authorities and civil society; developing mediation procedures; working to improve the transparency of the judiciary, as well as contributing to implementing the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) standards into Russian practice.

DIHR PROGRAMME 2015-2017

In line with DIHR’s International Strategy 2015-2017, our objective in the Russian Federation is to contribute to a well-functioning national human rights system where key state human rights actors have improved capacity to exercise their mandate and work in complementarity for a better protection of the rights of individuals. DIHR’s work in the Russian Federation focuses on increasing knowledge and skills among staff of regional ombudsman institutions and public oversight mechanisms on topics identified as particularly relevant for the partners.
DIHR PARTNERS

DIHR’s main partners in the Russian Federation have traditionally been civil society organisations. This is because state and regional authorities often lack motivation and interest in cooperation with international players on human rights related issues. Also, recently adopted legislation regarding “agents of international influence” and “unwished international organisations operating in Russian Federation” has made it even harder to establish constructive partnerships with state and regional authorities. DIHR’s future involvement in the Russian Federation is currently under review.

Current activities

DIHR and its partners is currently working on strengthening knowledge and awareness of regional ombudsman institutions and public oversight mechanisms on international human rights in three regions: Arkhangelsk, Kaliningrad and Mari El. DIHR and its partners provide courses on identified human rights topics for the staff of the above mentioned institutions.

Moreover, DIHR and its partners work to increase understanding by human rights actor of different roles and functions when it comes to human rights monitoring and oversight. This clarity and consensus is essential in our effort to secure better coordination and exchange between the institutions while implementing their mandates.

DIHR contributes to the project with its expertise on UN human rights mechanisms, Human Rights Based Approach, Human Rights Education and tools for monitoring of ESCR.

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