



Committee Members

Committee Chair



Stanisław Piotrowicz (PiS)

Committee Deputy Chair



Jacek Swakoń (PjN)



Zbigniew Cichoń (PiS)



Paweł Klimowicz (N)



Leszek Piechota (PO)



Zbigniew Romaszewski (PiS)



Jan Rulewski (PO)



Piotr Wach (PO)

The Committee deals with issues related to civil rights and freedoms and their institutional guarantees, the administration of justice and public safety, compliance with the law and human rights, civil society institutions and non-governmental organisations. It also considers petitions addressed to the Senate and its bodies.

Like other Senate committees, the Human Rights and the Rule of Law Committee, within its remit, examines the Budget Act and conveys its opinion to the Budget and Public Finance Committee, which is the only committee to present a budget report at a Senate plenary session.

The Human Rights, the Rule of Law and Petitions Committee is one of 16 standing committees in the 7th Senate (2007-2011).

The Human Rights, the Rule of Law and Petitions Committee is a successor of two committees functioning in the Senate of the Second Polish Republic (1922-1933): the Legal Committee - dealing with matters concerning administration of justice and the Rules Committee - dealing with petitions. After the Second World War, the Senate did not resume its activity, as it was abolished by the Communist government following the rigged national referendum in 1946. In 1989, the restored Senate established the Human Rights and Rule of Law Committee. In 2008 the Senate expanded the competences of the Committee and entrusted it with the power to examine petitions filed by citizens. The activities undertaken by the Committee correspond to the scope of activity of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior and Administration. The Committee's meetings are often attended by representatives of the Government and non-governmental organisations. The Committee cooperates with the Commissioner for Citizens' Rights, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Polish Mediation Centre, and independent experts.

The Committee in the First Six Terms

of the Restored Senate

(1989-2007)

Poland's political transformation of the 1990s into a democratic state respecting human and civil rights had a major impact on the Committee's legislative activities. Most of the committee's activity focused on legislative proposals related to the judiciary, persons imprisoned during the communist regime, discrimination issues, prison conditions, as well as reprivatisation and claims for the return of property taken over by the State Treasury. In the 1990s, the Committee contributed to the major reform of the penal code and the executive penal code. The overall aim was to transform penal policy of the state with a view to reducing the prison population. The Committee organised a number of conferences dedicated to correctional facilities conditions, as well as the development of probation and mediation services, i.e. victim-offender reconciliation programmes. These conferences brought some fruitful results. With the adoption of the Probation Officers Act in 2001, the process of evolution of non-professional probation service into professional probation service was started. In 2004, the Committee submitted a bill aimed at changing penal policies based on corrective justice into alternative criminal penalties. In 2004, the Senate voted in favour of the new penal policy advocated by the Committee. Furthermore, the Committee submitted a number of important legislative proposals concerning among others, the repressed Polish independence activists and the repatriated persons' entitlement to compensation for the abandoned property. It also proposed a draft resolution on the establishment of the Victims Day.

The Committee in the 7th Senate

(2007-2011)

After 2007, the Committee has continued to work on legislation concerning persons deprived of liberty. The issues most commonly raised in petitions include all sorts of social benefits, reprivatisation, pensions, electoral regulations, the situation of the disabled and war veterans, and tenants' rights.

Non-legislative Activities

Between 2005 and 2007, the Committee visited detention centers for foreigners, refugee centers and immigrants' registration points. As a result, a number of inspection reports have been produced in respect of the adequacy of immigration procedures in Poland. In 2007, the Committee held a conference on the observance of fundamental rights in Europe, and in 2008 a conference on probation programmes and the role of probation officers in the civil society. In the area of penal policy, the Committee cooperates closely with the Hans Christian Kofoed Association for Social Welfare, Rehabilitation and Resocialisation implementing the Danish programme of support to incarcerated persons and those living at the margins of society. Committee Members take part in international meetings organised by the NATO, EU, UN, and the Council of Europe.