

“A” STATUS NHRI – HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACCREDITATION

Since its creation in 2005 and following an assessment of the compliance with the Paris Principles by the UN Sub-Committee on Accreditation, the **Ombudsman institution was accredited with a “B” status as a National Human Rights Institution.**

The report of the UN Sub-Committee on Accreditation from October 2011 provided to Bulgarian authorities specific recommendations concerning further reinforcing the mandate of the Ombudsman institution. In 2018, the National Assembly adopted the amendments to the Ombudsman Act (amended – State Gazette, issue 7 of 19 January 2018, State Gazette, issue 20 of 6 March 2018) and the Rules of Procedure of the Ombudsman Institution (amended, State Gazette, issue 53/26 June 2018). Following the legislative amendments, the Ombudsman has been provided with powers to protect the citizen’s rights and freedoms against private legal persons as well.

All recommendations of the UN Sub-Committee on Accreditation were implemented and, in October 2018, the National Ombudsman applied for accreditation with “A” status under the Paris Principles. The UN Sub-Committee on Accreditation met in March 2019 and granted the Bulgarian Ombudsman the highest possible status of an UN National Human Rights Institution.

The new status not only contributes to a greater reputation of the institution but also gives it a possibility to protect the rights of the Bulgarian citizens better.

Now, the Ombudsman is able to raise questions related to the rights of the Bulgarian citizens to the highest international legal forums, to take full part in the work of the UN human rights committees and to propose items on the agenda of these forums such as problems related to the rights of the citizens in Bulgaria.

The “A” status allows the Ombudsman to participate and express opinions at meetings of all UN human rights committees and the Human Rights Council. This means that the Ombudsman institution, as a national human rights institution, meets the highest international standards of independence, impartiality, pluralism, as wide a mandate as possible transparency.

Only 12 EU Member State have a national human rights institution accredited with an “A” status in compliance with the UN Paris Principles.

