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## Comparing Human Rights in Europe and Oceania

The 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland *Systems of Protection of Human Rights in Europe and in Australia & Oceania*. Warsaw, (April 24–25, 2017), Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce and the Polish Parliamentary Association.

**Abstract:** The paper reports the ninth International Conference of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland *Systems of Protection of Human Rights in Europe and in Australia & Oceania; Universal's Context – Regional's Specific – Implementations' Conditioning* which took place in Warsaw on April 24–25, 2017. It was organised on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rome Treaties, 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of signing the Treaty of European Union and 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishment of the Australian Human Rights Commission. Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce along with the Polish Parliamentary Association gathered academics, politicians, diplomats and lawyers to discuss human rights in Europe and Oceania.

**Keywords:** *human rights; Europe; Australia; Oceania; Pacific; Sejm*

This year's conference in the Polish Sejm was already the ninth edition of the international meeting debating human rights. The 2017 edition compares European system of protection the basic human (and civic) rights with the norms implemented on the Australian continent. The initiative of organising such annual international conference, held in the political centre of Poland, was taken by the Polish Parliamentary Association.

This conference, which took place in April 24–25, 2017, commemorated three important dates for the human right protection, both in Europe, as well as in Australia. The first, and major occasion was the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rome Treaties. On March 25, 1957, two treaties were signed in Italy that gave birth to the European Economic Community and to the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), commonly known as the Treaties of Rome. Secondly, the Treaty on the European Union, signed in Maastricht on February 7 1992, represented a new stage in European integration, as it legally opened the way to political integration. The last occasion to commemorate was the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishment of the Australian Human Rights Commission. This government body has its aim at overseeing the application of federal legislation into the area of human rights, anti-discrimination, social justice and privacy. The Commission was established by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986.

The conference was preceded by the celebration of the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the academic work of chief organiser, Professor Jerzy Jaskiernia on April 23, 2017. Professor Jaskiernia is the former Minister of Justice (1995–1996), former member of Polish parliament and respected scholar in legal studies, a member of the Committee on Political Sciences at the Polish Academy of Sciences. Currently, he works at the Faculty of Law, Administration and Management of Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, where he chairs the Institute of Law, Economics and Administration.

Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce along with the Polish Parliamentary Association gathered academics, politicians, diplomats and lawyers to discuss human rights in Europe and Oceania during the eighteen thematic panels. The subtitle of the annual conference always remains the same: “Universal’s Context – Regional’s Specific – Implementations’ Conditioning”. Hence, the discussants focused on global system of human rights protection, its regional grouping (European and Australian) or any legal and political aspects affecting implementation of norms.

The opening ceremony took place on April 24, 2017. Besides Professor Jaskiernia, representatives of both the university and the association spoke out. Professor Barbara Zbroińska, vice-rector of Jan Kochanowski University welcomed the audience, while Mr Lino DeBono from Malta, President of the European Association of Former Members of Parliament of the Member States of the Council of Europe, enumerated grand input of the national parliaments into creation of the human rights protection systems. Mr Krzysztof Kwiatkowski, President of the Supreme Audit Office and the former Minister of Justice, was the honoured guest.

First plenary session concerned protection of human rights in Australia and Oceania in the universal tendencies context, which launched first panel *Conditioning of the protection of Human Rights in Australia and Oceania*. Second panel concerned the

axiology of the protection of Human Right is the Australian continent; third – institutions of such protection; fourth – its practise. The fifth panel, entitled *Protection of the right to life and health*, was a discussion over global, European and Polish legal solutions.

Following panel, *Protection of the rights of migrants, refugees and foreigners*, due to its contemporary diligence, took place at the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland. Seventh panel reflected social and economic problems over the human rights protection; eighth – contemporary challenges and international instruments; ninth – the Council of Europe system; tenth – the European Union system; eleventh – the right to court and the judicial system. The last panel here was interesting due to the fact of participation of both theoreticians and practising lawyers. As the author was a co-organizer and a secretary of this discussion unit, it appears worth telling a few words about its course. Crime preventions and unreasonable delays in the proceedings were two main factors in the national judicial system, which were brought to the European courts. The right to court was in turn analysed towards different aspects of daily life, like disciplinary actions at the universities, administrative decisions, auditor's opinion in the case, and barratry (repeated acts of litigation, common at the Polish courts). The Polish Constitutional Tribunal was also taken into investigation regarding its influence over the right to court, as well as its participation in the Conference of European Constitutional Courts. Finally, there were given pros and cons about the two major legal reforms in the Polish judiciary: changing the model of the National Council of the Judiciary of Poland, constitutional organ safeguarding independence of courts and judges, and a personal union of two posts: the Public Prosecutor General and the Minister of Justice.

Twelfth panel raised a problem of the protection of political rights and freedoms; thirteenth – the procedures before the public organs; fourteenth, also very practical – the mechanism of the human rights protection in political systems and international standards; fifteenth, bilingual, held in English and Russian – theory and philosophy of human rights; sixteenth – women's, children's and family rights; seventeenth – the national minorities' rights. Eighteenth and the last panel was focused on the development tendencies of the human rights protections. First day of the conference was also filled with integration initiatives, like sightseeing of the Sejm, lunch at the Deputies' House and official dinner.

Second day of the conference began with the plenary session entitled *Tendencies in increasing the effectiveness of the Human Rights protection in Australia and Oceania*. After the break, there was the final, third plenary session on the new challenges and solutions in human rights. It needs to be added that each panel was chaired by a professor from a certain discipline and was protocolled by a secretary. There were

three official languages of the conference: Polish, English and Russian. Besides 178 participants from the Polish research centres, legal offices or public administration organs, there were also academics from Ukraine, Russia, Slovakia, Germany and Iraqi Kurdistan Region. Post-conference book is expected to be published next year and presented on another Sejm's conference in April 2018.

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