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Sixth International Sakharov Hearings 45 years later – can we revive the Helsinki Spirit?

On May 20-21, 2020, the Sixth International Sakharov Hearings will take place in Vilnius at the Seimas (Parliament building). During the evening of May 21, a concert will be organized to commemorate Andrei Sakharov's 99th birthday.

The main theme of the 2020 Sakharov Hearings will be **“45 years later: can we revive the Helsinki spirit?”** The Sixth International Sakharov Hearings are the first to be organized since 1985, when the Fifth International Sakharov Hearings were organized in London. Previous Hearings took place in Copenhagen (1975), Rome (1977), Washington D.C. (1979), and Lisbon (1983).

The goal of the Sixth International Sakharov Hearings is to use the principles of the Helsinki Accords of 1975 and the thoughts and ideals of Andrei Sakharov to give a new impetus to the process of securing peace, security and freedom on the European continent and beyond. Clearly, the political developments in the region are if not destructive than at least harmful to the goals of the Helsinki Accords, and Europe finds itself in a downward spiral from which it seems to have difficulty to emerge. The project aims to analyze these issues, understand their origins but above all see how these developments can be countered and the Helsinki spirit can be used to trigger this opposite, positive, process.

Helsinki Accords

The Helsinki Accords of 1975 regulated in the first place the relations between states and defined cooperation on multiple levels, e.g. economics, science, environment and security. A key element in the document concerned human rights, by which the signatory states committed themselves to respect the human rights of their citizens e.g. freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, and to promote and encourage the effective exercise of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and other rights and freedoms.

Andrei Sakharov

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Andrei Sakharov (1921-1989) is the only person in twentieth century Eastern Europe who had the moral authority to function as a source of inspiration to others and is an example of a scholar activist who say it has this civic duty to actively work for a decent society where human rights are respected and civil society is upheld and defended. In twenty-first century Eastern Europe, there is a dire need for such an exemplary figure and benchmark.



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Organizers

The organizers of the Sixth International Sakharov Hearings are the Andrei Sakharov Research Center on Democratic Development at Vytautas Magnus University (VDU), in collaboration with the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other partners and supporting organizations will be solicited later, as the framework of the Hearings becomes clearer

Jury members

At this moment, a dozen persons have been contacted with the request to participate, among them high-ranking statesmen and officials e.g. Prof. Anton van Kalmthout (The Netherlands), Professor Emeritus of Law at Tilburg University; Victor Madrigal-Borloz (Costa Rica), UN Independent Expert on Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; Dr. Fazel Randera (South-Africa), a Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and former personal physician of Nelson Mandela; Justice Renate Winter (Austria), a judge to the Special Court for Sierra Leone; and Alfred-Maurice de Zayas (United States), UN Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order.