



**COLLOQUIUM ORGANISED BY THE SUPREME ADMINISTRATIVE COURT OF FINLAND**

**IN CO-OPERATION WITH ACA-EUROPE**

**HELSINKI 25–27 MAY 2025**

**DIALOGUE WITH THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS –  
ADVISORY OPINIONS UNDER PROTOCOL NO. 16 TO THE CONVENTION AND  
THE IMPACT OF THE COURT'S JUDGMENTS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL**

***Questionnaire***

The Finnish presidency of ACA-Europe during 2023-25, in close co-operation with Sweden, has focused on the dialogue between the national supreme administrative jurisdictions and the European Courts, i.e., the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). During the Finnish presidency, seminars have been organised on a variety of issues like the duty of the national courts to make a reference for a preliminary ruling to the CJEU (Stockholm, October 2023), mechanisms of counteracting conflicting rulings from the domestic courts and the CJEU and the ECtHR (Zagreb, February 2024) and the multilevel protection of fundamental and human rights in European administrative courts (Inari, May 2024).

In the upcoming Colloquium, which will be held in Helsinki 25-27 May 2025, the focus will be on the judicial dialogue between the national supreme administrative courts and the ECtHR. In this questionnaire, as well as in the Colloquium, this dialogue is approached from two different perspectives.

The first part of the questionnaire examines the procedure in which a national court can seek an opinion from the ECtHR in a case pending before it, namely the mechanism of advisory opinions under Protocol No. 16 to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR). The aim is to find answers to such questions as: Is the mechanism of advisory opinions perceived as a useful tool? What are the experiences so far? Can we draw any lessons already at this stage? Having in mind that all the participating countries have not acceded to the advisory opinion system, the questions will be different for those States that have done this and the ones that have not.

The second part of the questionnaire will focus on the impact of the judgments of the ECtHR at the national level. While in certain fields of law the jurisprudence of the ECtHR has been well recognised and embedded in the legal orders of the Contracting States, in some other fields the case law has been more contested and even criticised. This may be the case, for example, when the ECtHR is faced with new topics and uses evolutive interpretation of the Convention and its Protocols, or when the judgments are closely linked to politically sensitive areas such as national security or issues that traditionally have belonged to the field of political deliberation. In this questionnaire, the impact of the ECtHR case law is approached from a point of view of two such distinct but similarly pressing issues, namely climate change litigation and summary return of aliens at the border.





In section A of the second part of the questionnaire, we will explore the extremely topical issue of climate change litigation. Even though the ECHR does not contain any particular provisions on climate change or environmental matters, the ECtHR has been called upon to develop its case law in those issues as the exercise of certain Convention rights may be undermined by the serious adverse effects of climate change and the existence of harm to the environment.

In section B of the second part of the questionnaire, we will explore another contemporary issue linked to immigration law. As is well known, the ECtHR has a rich jurisprudence in this field where a wide variety of questions have been assessed under different Convention articles. In this questionnaire, the intention is to focus on a very specific and highly debated topic of summary returns of aliens at the border or shortly after entry into the territory (so called push-backs)<sup>1</sup>. The attention is specifically on those situations in which persons trying to enter a particular state have been denied entry at the border or in its close proximity, be it a land or sea border, and which have been assessed by the ECtHR especially against the prohibition of the collective expulsion of aliens.

In brief, the second part of the questionnaire aims at exploring the impact the case law of the ECtHR in the above-mentioned specific fields has had at the national level, both in terms of legislation and its interpretation by national courts. By looking at the national framework we are able to get a better understanding of how the rights protected by the Convention operate in the legal and political reality of the Contracting States, as the Convention is – as often repeated by the ECtHR – a living instrument anchored to the present-day conditions. Moreover, as novel issues of interpretation linked to changing and evolving challenges are first encountered at the level of the national courts, having a closer look at the national jurisprudence can serve to predict the questions to be raised before the ECtHR. This, for its part, underlines the two-way nature of the dialogue between European and national courts.

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<sup>1</sup> For the definition and principles drawn from the current case law, see [ECHR-KS Key Theme – Summary returns of migrants and/or asylum-seekers \(“push-backs”\) and related case scenarios \(last updated 31/08/2024\)](#).





## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please state the formal title of your court and the name of your country.

## I THE ADVISORY OPINION MECHANISM

*In accordance with Protocol No. 16 to the ECHR, the highest national courts or tribunals may request the ECtHR to give an advisory opinion. These requests concern questions of principle relating to the interpretation or application of the rights and freedoms defined in the ECHR or its protocols. The requesting court or tribunal may seek an advisory opinion only in the context of a case pending before it. It must give reasons for its request and must provide the ECtHR with the relevant legal and factual background to the pending case. Protocol No. 16 came into force on 1 August 2018.*

1. Has your country ratified Protocol No. 16?

- Yes. Please elaborate (e.g., the ratification year, which courts can make a request).  
 **No, our country has not ratified Protocol No. 16. Please continue to Question 11.**

**The following nine questions are addressed to states that have ratified Protocol No. 16:**

2. Has your court or any court in your country requested an advisory opinion from the ECtHR? If yes, what was the case about?

- Yes. Please elaborate.  
 No.

3. Has your court considered of its own motion in the context of a pending case whether an advisory opinion from the ECtHR could assist in resolving a particular question?

- Yes.  
     A request was made.  
     No request was made. Please elaborate on the reasons for deciding not to request an advisory opinion.  
 No.

4. Has a party to the proceedings asked your court to request an advisory opinion from the ECtHR?





- Yes. Please elaborate whether the party's request was accepted or rejected and if rejected, did you give reasons for the refusal.
- No.

5. If your court decided to request an advisory opinion, did you give your view on the question(s) posed? If not, for what reasons?

- Yes. Please elaborate.
- No. Please elaborate.
- Not applicable because our court has not requested an advisory opinion.

6. If an advisory opinion was requested and delivered, was it useful when resolving the case?

- Yes. Please elaborate.
- No. Please elaborate.
- Not applicable because our court has not requested an advisory opinion.

7. Was the advisory opinion cited in the decision of your court? Did your court enter into a dialogue with the advisory opinion or did you simply state its findings?

- Yes, the advisory opinion was cited in the decision of our court. Please elaborate.
- No, the advisory opinion was not cited in the decision of our court. Please elaborate.
- Not applicable because our court has not requested an advisory opinion.

8. If an advisory opinion was requested and delivered, did the advisory opinion have any wider impact on the national legal order?

- Yes. Please elaborate.
- No.
- Not applicable because our court has not requested an advisory opinion.





9. Have advisory opinions requested by other courts (in your country or abroad) had an impact on the national legal order?

- Yes. Please elaborate.  
 No.

10. The ECtHR is under a duty to give reasons for refusing a request for an advisory opinion. Has such reasoning been useful for your court when deciding whether to request an advisory opinion or when deciding how to formulate it?

- Yes. Please elaborate.  
 No.

**The following five questions are addressed to states that have not ratified Protocol No. 16:**

11. Is it known whether ratification is forthcoming?

- Yes. Please elaborate.  
 **No, we do not know whether ratification is forthcoming.**

12. If it is known that ratification is not forthcoming, do you know the reason(s) for this?

- Yes. Please elaborate.  
 **No, we do not know the reasons for this.**  
 Not applicable in the light of the answer to Question 11.

13. After the entry into force of Protocol No. 16 in 2018, has your court dealt with a case in which it might have been useful to be able to request an advisory opinion? If so, what was the nature of the question(s)?

- Yes. Please elaborate.**  
 No.

There have been cases where the option of requesting an advisory opinion might have been useful, for example in environmental matters.

14. Does your court make use of advisory opinions requested by courts abroad as sources of case law?

- Yes. Please elaborate.  
 **No.**





15. Have advisory opinions requested by courts abroad had an impact on your national legal order?

- Yes. Please elaborate.  
 No.

## II THE IMPACT OF THE CASE LAW OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL

### A. CLIMATE CHANGE LITIGATION<sup>2</sup>

*The intersection between climate change and human rights law can be regarded as an important theme for future climate litigation. On 9 April 2024, the Grand Chamber of the ECtHR issued three separate rulings on cases relating to climate change. In the case of [Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland \[GC\], 2024](#), the ECtHR found violations of Article 8 and Article 6.1 of the ECHR. Nonetheless, two other cases – *Duarte Agostinho and Others v. Portugal and 32 Others* and *Carême v. France* – were declared inadmissible. These cases illustrate the challenging issues for national courts in relation to climate change, e.g. with regard to holding governments accountable for inadequate national climate policies through the perspective of human rights, admissibility criteria, interpretation of locus standi and national courts' competence to scrutinize political decision-makers' decisions and inaction.*

16. Are there specific rules concerning standing of individuals in the climate change litigation context before your court?

- Yes. Please elaborate.  
 No.

17. Are there specific rules concerning standing of associations in the climate change litigation context before your court?

- Yes. Please elaborate.  
 No.

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<sup>2</sup> The phrase “climate change litigation” usually refers to cases that raise material issues of law or fact relating to climate change mitigation, adaptation or the science of climate change. Such cases are brought before a range of administrative, judicial and other adjudicatory bodies. For more details, see <https://climate.law.columbia.edu/content/climate-change-litigation> and <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/global-climate-litigation-report-2023-status-review>.





Special rules concerning standing before court apply to associations in general, they are not exclusive to climate litigation. These rules result from the interpretation of *infringement of rights* by the Constitutional Court. The association must prove its relationship to the location or project in question, either by its statutes or by its previous activities.

18. Have there been any climate related cases before your court during recent years in which Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) of the ECHR has played a role? Please elaborate and/or provide examples.

- Yes.
- Article 8 has been only a part of the argumentation.
- Article 8 has formed an essential part of the court's reasoning.
- No.

The first - and so far, the only Czech strategic climate litigation case - *Klimatická žaloba* case relies on the positive obligations of the State stemming from the Paris Agreement and the ECHR. The case has reached the SAC twice. The first time (judgment of 20 February 2023, [No. 9 As 116/2022-166](#), ECLI:CZ:NSS:2023:9.As.116.2022.166), before the *Klimasenorinnen* ruling, the SAC acknowledged the greening of human rights. However, it refused to construct the obligations of the individual Ministries based on Art. 8 of the ECHR as the ECtHR had not yet addressed the climate issues specifically. In the second judgment, this time after the *Klimasenorinnen* ruling, the SAC assessed whether the Czech Republic meets the requirements of the ECtHR's test and found in the affirmative, stating that not only Czech law, but also EU law, must be taken into account, even though the mere fulfilment of EU obligations does not exempt the Czech Republic from its obligations under Art. 8 of the ECHR (judgment of 26 November 2024, No. 9 As 264/2023-128).

19. Have there been any climate related cases before your court during recent years in which Article 6.1 (right to a fair trial/access to court) of the ECHR has played a role? Please elaborate and/or provide examples.

- Yes.
- No.

In administrative cases, the plaintiffs rarely refer to Art. 6(1) of the ECHR. Instead, they invoke the Aarhus Convention and the national human rights framework which, combined with the procedural rules of the administrative judiciary, provides for wide access to justice. In *Klimatická žaloba* case, all plaintiffs including individuals, NGOs and a municipality were provided standing.

20. Have there been climate related cases before your court during recent years in which there has been a link to the rights of future generations? Please elaborate and/or provide examples.

- Yes.
- No.

There are no specific detailed provisions for protecting future generations and no case law concerning the level or scope of the protection.





21. Have there been any climate or other environmentally related cases before your court during recent years in which your court's competence to scrutinize political decision-makers' decision or inaction has been dealt with?

Yes. Most notably, in the **first judgment of the *Klimatická žaloba* case** the SAC elaborated on its competence to scrutinize political decision-makers' decision. It ruled it is not the role of the judiciary to estimate the positive obligation of the state in climate protection that corresponds to the impact of the climate change to the rights of the plaintiffs if there is no precise obligation enacted in legislation: *"It would be contrary to the restraint of the judiciary if the administrative courts were to enter now into the political and legislative processes still underway at EU level with categorical conclusions on what the individualised commitment of the Czech Republic should look like"*.

According to the SAC, it is not for the administrative courts themselves to set the standards by which to assess the unlawfulness of the alleged interference. At the same time, however, they must be prepared to provide effective protection to individuals affected by the consequences of the lack of action by the Czech State authorities in the area of combating climate change and its consequences; this need may increase over time as the consequences of climate change increase.

As a consequence, the SAC suggested that in further proceedings before the first instance court, the plaintiffs should specify in which specific areas the defendants' alleged passivity breached their obligations, which particularly interfere with the individual rights. In the **second judgment of the *Klimatická žaloba* case**, the SAC focused on these specific obligations and the positive obligations stemming from Art. 8 of the ECHR (see above).

22. Have there been cases before your court during recent years in which the court has examined whether the competent national authorities, be it at legislative, executive or judicial level, have met relevant requirements pursuant to the domestic climate framework?

In the **second judgment of the *Klimatická žaloba* case**, the SAC examined whether the Ministries have met relevant requirements pursuant to the domestic and EU climate framework in several areas such as transport or LULUCF (Land use, land-use change and forestry Regulation). It found, *inter alia*, that while the State is not on track to meet the EU requirements, the deadline has not yet expired. Therefore, its inactivity does not present illegal interference. The SAC therefore dismissed the cassation complaint.

23. Has the *Klimaseniorinnen Schweiz v. Switzerland* case had an impact in your country? For instance, have new cases been brought to your court after that case? Please elaborate.

In the **second judgment of the *Klimatická žaloba* case**, the SAC look at the requirements of the ECHR and assessed the sufficiency of mitigation procedures. At the same time, however, the Court found that the present climate action differed from the situation in *Klimaseniorinnen Schweiz v. Switzerland* in that Switzerland is not an EU Member State. Therefore, when assessing the legal framework of the Czech Republic, it is necessary to consider not only national but also EU legislation and EU control mechanisms. These have been significantly refined and the current EU's collective commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels has been reflected both in EU secondary legislation and in the obligations of individual Member States. Even taking into account the conclusions of the new ECHR





case law, the SAC did not identify an obligation for the Czech Republic to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by more than 80%, as requested by the applicants.

24. Can you identify any major differences between the legal questions raised by climate change, on one hand, and environmental matters, on the other hand, addressed so far in your court? Please elaborate and/or provide examples.

The major difference is the **question of shared responsibility** of the Member States in climate change litigation. In the first judgment of the *Klimatická žaloba* case, the SAC ruled that the 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is a commitment for the EU as a whole, not broken down between individual Member States: *“the essence of the collective undertaking resulting from the association of 'regional economic integration organisations and their Member States which have agreed to act jointly' in Article 4(16) of the Paris Agreement lies in the possibility of internal differentiation of the obligations arising from that collective undertaking between the individual Member States, even though they remain jointly responsible for its fulfilment with the EU as a whole. As already mentioned, the specific allocation and implementation of the EU 2020 NDCs at EU level is currently still subject to legislative and political negotiations.”*

Another important aspect of climate litigation is the **admissibility of the action against the Government and individual Ministries**. The SAC declared the action against the Government to be inadmissible, as the Government does not have the status of an administrative authority under the Code of Administrative Justice because, in exercising its management function (coordinating the ministries in dealing with the climate crisis), it does not act in the field of public administration and cannot be subject to judicial review. The SAC also rejected the claim related to the adaptation measures as these consist of increasing adaptive capacity, and not achieving specific targets by a certain date. In this regard, according to the SAC, the defendants were making sufficient progress.

## B. SUMMARY RETURNS OF ALIENS AT THE BORDER OR SHORTLY AFTER ENTRY INTO THE TERRITORY (“PUSH-BACKS”)

*In this questionnaire, the focus is particularly on the cases that have been assessed by the ECtHR primarily under Article 4 of Protocol No. 4 to the ECHR. Consequently, the focal question has been whether there has been a violation of the prohibition of the collective expulsion of aliens. The ECtHR cases in point are, in particular, [N.D. and N.T. v. Spain \[GC\], 2020](#), and [Shahzad v. Hungary, 2021](#). In addition, the existence of a sufficient remedy, in particular whether individuals were afforded an effective possibility of submitting arguments against their removal, has been assessed under Article 13 in conjunction with Article 4 of Protocol No. 4 for example in [Khlaifia and Others v. Italy \[GC\], 2016](#). In [Hirsi Jamaa and Others v. Italy \[GC\], 2012](#), the extraterritorial scope of Article 4 of Protocol No. 4 was confirmed with respect to State’s action on the high seas aiming at preventing migrants from reaching the borders of the State or even to push them back to another State. Furthermore, there are several cases pending at the ECtHR, and three cases concerning alleged summary returns of individuals to Belarus from neighbouring states have been grouped to be heard together on 12 February 2025 by the Grand Chamber.*

25. Is there specific national legislation applicable to returns of aliens at the border within the meaning of the ECtHR case law above? In particular, are there any specific national provisions intended to cover situations where entry is attempted by aliens *en masse* and/or where migratory flows are deemed to result





from actions of a third country with the aim of destabilising the receiving state (“instrumentalised migration”)<sup>3</sup>? Please briefly explain the main points of the national provisions.

The Czech Republic is a landlocked, central European country. Therefore, it does not experience major migratory flows or instrumentalized migration. However, the readmission agreements concluded by the Czech Republic with several countries allow foreigners apprehended at the border to be returned under a shortened procedure.

Also, the residence of foreigners on our territory is regulated by the Act No. 326/1999 on the Residence of Foreigners on the Territory of the Czech Republic. Particularly, legal framework for administrative expulsion of foreigners is set by Sections 118 to 123a of this Act.

The Section 118 paragraph 7 states:

*“(7) The mass administrative expulsion of aliens on the basis of a single decision shall be prohibited.”*

The legislative explanatory memorandum to this Section elaborated on reasons for this enactment: *“In accordance with Article 4 of Protocol No. 4 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the possibility of collective expulsion of aliens (expulsion of several aliens on the basis of a single decision) on the grounds that they can be classified under a characteristic defining their social group (e.g. racial origin, religious beliefs or the same nationality) is prohibited. The proposal respects the requirement of an individual case-by-case assessment.”*

Furthermore, mass expulsion is also prohibited by the Article 19 of EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

26. Does your court have jurisdiction in the field of immigration law? If so, has your court dealt with cases involving alleged summary returns of aliens? In particular, have there been cases where the notion of collective expulsion as defined in Article 4 of Protocol No. 4 has been invoked and/or applied? If yes, please briefly explain the main points of the national jurisprudence.

SAC has jurisdiction in the field of immigration law. However, to date, there have not been any cases dealing with alleged summary returns of aliens as a main legal issue or cases where the notion of collective expulsion of aliens would have been applied.

In some cases, the argument of alleged summary returns of aliens was brought up by the complainant. The court reminded that summary returns of aliens are prohibited under the Czech law. For example, in the judgment from 2017 (No. [5 Azs 273/2017–31](#), ECLI:CZ:NSS:2017:5.Azs.273.2017.31) the SAC overruled the decision of the Regional Court and remanded it for further proceedings because of doubts whether a waiver of the right to appeal was valid:

*“[22] In both the appeal and the lawsuit, the complainant complains about **the non-standardization, speed and readiness of the entire procedure of the administrative authority, acting under pressure, the identical procedure of the defendant against ten foreigners who also 'waived' their right to appeal (at this point the Supreme the Administrative Court draws attention to the prohibition of collective expulsion under Section***

<sup>3</sup> The term “instrumentalised migration” is used, *inter alia*, in Regulation (EU) 2024/1359 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 addressing situations of crisis and force majeure in the field of migration and asylum and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1147.





*118(6) of the and Article 4 of Protocol No. 4 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms freedoms), failure to understand the legal consequences of waiving the right to appeal. The following cannot be overlooked nor the fact that, within the appeal period, the complainant lodged an appeal in which he disputes the factual and legal findings and thus seeks a review on the merits. This fact, in the context of the content of the of the affidavit, casts doubt on the seriousness and voluntariness of the complainant's will in drawing up the 'waiver of the right to appeal'."*

This reasoning was repeated in a number of similar cases.

The need to individualize the assessment of the alien's obligation to leave the territory was emphasized by the Court in the judgment from 2020 (No. [1 Azs 446/2019-30](#), ECLI:CZ:NSS:2020:1.Azs.446.2019.30).

27. Has the case law of the ECtHR in the field of summary returns of aliens and specifically the Court's interpretation of the scope of Article 4 of Protocol No. 4 had an impact on the content of the national legislation and/or on its interpretation by the national courts? If yes, please briefly explain the main developments.

No, there is no evidence of such an influence on our legislation nor on the case law of the SAC.

28. Have any cases been brought against your state in the ECtHR alleging that there has been a violation of Article 4 of Protocol No. 4 (alone or in conjunction with Article 13 of the ECHR) in the field of immigration law? If yes, please briefly explain the main features of these cases.

No, there have not been such cases.

