

High-level conference 70th Anniversary Universal Declaration of Human rights



European Parliament, Brussels - Hemicycle, Tuesday, 20 November 2018, 14:30 – 19:30

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT THINK TANK – TOPICAL DIGEST

November 2018

The promotion and protection of human rights is at the heart of multilateralism, a central pillar of the UN system, and a core and founding value of the EU. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which set out a universal core of human rights and fundamental freedoms for the first time. It is a milestone document which over the decades has inspired a rich body of legally binding international human rights treaties. The Universal Declaration, together with other measures which followed, constitute the International Bill of Human Rights. The following publications of the European Parliament's Research Service and its Policy Departments provide background information and analysis on the core principles of human rights as set out in the UDHR: universality, inter-dependence and indivisibility, equality and non-discrimination, while at the same time addressing new challenges in a global and digital world.

[The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its relevance for the European Union](#)

'At a glance' note by Ionel Zamfir, European Parliamentary Research Service, November 2018

Seventy years after its adoption, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has achieved all the significance its drafters had hoped for. It has served as the foundation for the legal codification of human rights, whether at global, regional or national levels. Even though non-binding in nature, it has significantly shaped many national constitutions, and many of its provisions have been incorporated into customary international law. This note shows the important role of the UDHR in guiding EU external policies and its use as a reference for EU legislation.

[Indivisibility of Human Rights: Unifying the two Covenants on Human Rights?](#)

'At a glance' note by Joanna Apap, European Parliamentary Research Service, November 2018

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), initially drafted in 1954 as a single document, are the foundation of the international human rights regime. However, in light of the UN General Assembly's mandate seeking reforms to address fragmentation and improve transparency and accountability, more and more stakeholders are posing the question whether it is time to overcome the Cold War-era ideological rift and to codify the two Covenants in a single document.

EU policies – Delivering for citizens: Human rights

Briefing by Martina Prpic, Rosamund Shreeves and Ionel Zamfir, European Parliamentary Research Service, November 2018

Seventy years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first international document to set common standards for all states, the pivotal role of human rights and their moral, legal and political significance in the international arena are indisputable. However despite a lot of progress in many areas in terms of recognition, codification and implementation, human rights have more recently also come under increased attack from various angles. Illiberal forces aspiring to power and entrenched authoritarian regimes are attempting to undermine human rights and those who defend them. This briefing looks at the EU's approach to strengthening its role and image as a normative power that inspires others through its example.

EU support for human rights defenders around the world

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, European Parliamentary Research Service, November 2018

Human rights defenders (HRD) operate in an increasingly restrictive environment, and face a growing number of threats. The European Parliament has been a long-time advocate for a comprehensive EU policy on HRD and has actively contributed to its shaping. This briefing summarises EU policy on HRD and provides examples of EU action. It elaborates on the European Parliament's role as well as its annual Sakharov Prize.

Towards a binding international treaty on business and human rights

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, European Parliamentary Research Service, November 2018

To prevent human rights abuses by transnational corporations, the UN established an intergovernmental working group in 2014 to draft a binding treaty on human rights and business. After warning at the outset of the risk of undermining the UN Guiding Principles, the EU is now a strong advocate for a treaty encompassing all businesses, not only transnational ones. However, the treaty remains controversial. This briefing provides an overview of the debate and discusses the treaty proposal and stakeholders' positions.

International Criminal Court: Achievements and challenges 20 years after the adoption of the Rome Statute

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, European Parliamentary Research Service, July 2018

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has conducted investigations and trials in connection with some of the world's most brutal conflicts, and has not shied away from investigating even at the highest levels of power. However, the Court has encountered difficulties and inherent limitations: atrocities committed by groups such as ISIL/Da'esh have been out of its reach, and the unwillingness of some states to join or cooperate have put strains on its authority. This briefing outlines the Court's structure, its main challenges and the EU's support.

Towards a global compact on refugees: Strengthening international cooperation to ease the plight of refugees in the world

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, European Parliamentary Research Service, June 2018

The recent large-scale flows of refugees and migrants have exposed how ill-prepared the international community has been to deal with persons fleeing from war, insecurity or persecution. The UN Global Compact on Refugees, which should be adopted in December 2018, aims to achieve a fairer distribution of the responsibilities related to refugees. However, it has been criticised, among other things, for its non-binding character and for excluding victims of natural disasters. This briefing outlines the drafting process and different stakeholders' positions.

The concept of 'climate refugee': Towards a possible definition

Briefing by Joanna Apap, European Parliamentary Research Service, May 2018

Every year since 2008, an average of 26.4 million persons around the world have been forcefully displaced by floods, earthquakes or droughts. With climate change, this number will rise in the future. However, there is neither a clear

definition of such 'climate refugees', nor are they covered by the 1951 Refugee Convention. What are the gaps in the international legal framework, and what could a European framework look like?

Targeted sanctions against individuals on grounds of grave human rights violations – impact, trends and prospects at EU level

Study by European Parliament's Policy Department for External Policies, April 2018

Rather than affecting a state as a whole, sanctions nowadays often target individuals identified as responsible for human rights abuses. But how effective are individual sanctions? This study presents the most recent developments in international sanctions practice, and provides recommendations on how to improve the tool at EU level. It discusses the risks and benefits of adopting a Global Magnitsky-type legislation, which could allow for the designation of human rights abusers worldwide.

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

'At a glance' note by Joanna Apap, European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2018

In the twelve years of its existence, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has actively defended human rights worldwide. Its robust mandate and unique set of mechanisms, such as universal periodic review and special procedures, provide a system for prevention, technical assistance and capacity-building, as well as a mechanism to respond to cases of grave violations of human rights. This note outlines the UNHRC's mandate, structure and functioning.

One step forward and two steps back for human rights in the world

'At a glance' note by Joanna Apap, European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2018

The European Parliament's resolution on human rights and democracy in 2017 calls upon the EU to place human rights at the core of its external relations. It acknowledges progress made regarding the empowerment of women but warns of sexual and gender-based violence as a result of conflict and migration. New challenges for human rights also arise due to technological developments as well as terrorism involving psychological intimidation through the destruction of heritage sites.

Expansion of the concept of human rights: Impact on rights promotion and protection

Workshop report by European Parliament's Policy Department for External Policies, March 2018

Does a broadened human rights concept strengthen or undermine existing human rights standards? The workshop organised by the DROI committee on 24 January 2018 brought together academics, NGO representatives and the EEAS to discuss the risks and benefits of a broadened human rights concept. The report summarises participants' contributions and provides two briefings on the issue, by participants Rosa Freedman (University of Reading) and Malcolm Langford (University of Oslo).

Enhancing EU actions on economic, social and cultural rights within its human rights policy

Study by European Parliament's Policy Department for External Relations, February 2018

In EU human rights policy, economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights have received less attention than civil and political rights. What structural obstacles may be preventing the EU from implementing ESC rights effectively? By analysing three case studies on the right to just and favourable conditions of work, the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to education, this study assesses progress made by the EU in implementing its commitment to respect, protect and fulfil ESC rights in its external action and offers concrete recommendations.

A global compact on migration: Placing human rights at the heart of migration management

Briefing by Joanna Apap, Daniela Adorna Diaz, Gonzalo Urbina Treviño, European Parliamentary Research Service, December 2017

The planned UN Global Compact on Migration (GCM) sets out to manage migration more effectively. A common concern for the UN and EU is to ensure the respect for migrants' fundamental rights. How can different interests and needs be addressed within a strong human rights framework? This briefing outlines the process of developing

the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) with a focus on the EU's priorities and the GCM's compatibility with existing EU instruments and policies.

Implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

Study by European Parliament's Policy Department for External Policies, January 2017

Six years after the endorsement of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), business-related human rights abuse is still a serious problem. Up to now, only 12 National Action Plans have been adopted, and better access to remedy and justice for victims is still needed. This study identifies challenges and opportunities regarding the implementation of the UNGPs worldwide, and offers recommendations for EU institutions, the European Parliament and EU Member States.

Further reading

EU policies – Delivering for citizens: EU support for democracy and peace in the world

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, European Parliamentary Research Service, October 2018

Towards a comprehensive EU protection system for minorities

Study by European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, August 2017

Major sporting events versus human rights: Parliament's position on the 1978 FIFA World Cup in Argentina and the 1980 Moscow Olympics

Briefing by Christian Salm, Historical Archives Unit, European Parliamentary Research Service, June 2018

United Nations Universal Children's Day and the protection of children's rights by the EU

'At a glance' note by Joanna Apap, European Parliamentary Research Service, November 2017

Freedom of conscience around the world

Briefing by Philippe Perchoc, European Parliamentary Research Service, April 2018

Democracy support in EU external policy

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, European Parliamentary Research Service, February 2018

Arbitrary detention of women and children for immigration-related purposes

Briefing by Joanna Apap, European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2016

Vulnerability of unaccompanied and separated child migrants

Briefing by Joanna Apap, European Parliamentary Research Service, December 2016

Human rights in EU trade policy: Unilateral measures applied by the EU

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, European Parliamentary Research Service, May 2018

The vulnerability of women migrant workers in agriculture and the EU: the need for a Human Rights and Gender based approach

Study by European Parliament's Policy Department Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, May 2018

EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)

Briefing by Rafał Mańko, European Parliamentary Research Service, July 2017

The Cost of Non-Europe in Asylum Policy

Briefing by Wouter van Ballegooij / Cecilia Navarra, European Parliamentary Research Service, October 2018

Towards a comprehensive EU protection system for minorities

Study by European Parliament's Policy Department Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, August 2017

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<https://epthinktank.eu/high-level-conferences>

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