Purpose

The European Parliament’s Subcommittee on Human Rights is holding an Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on 20 November 2018, to look into the human rights dimension of the external policies of the EU and of the Member States. Members of national parliaments will participate in discussions together with Members of the Subcommittee, and with experts and EU institutional representatives on mainstreaming human rights into external action, and on issues regarding business and human rights. Ai Weiwei, the Chinese contemporary artist and activist, will deliver the keynote speech on sustainable development and human rights.

Inside

This publication contains supporting analyses provided by the European Parliament’s Policy Departments to support committees in their work related to the issues that are being dealt with by this meeting. Scan the QR codes or click on the titles for direct access.

Publications

Human Rights - Fact sheets on the EU, updated regularly

The European Union is committed to supporting democracy and human rights in its external relations, in accordance with its founding principles of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. It seeks to mainstream human rights concerns in all its policies and programmes, and it has different human rights policy instruments for specific actions — including financing specific projects through the EU financing instruments. This Fact Sheet explains how the EU includes human rights in the political dialogues conducted with third countries or regional organisations. It also conducts human rights dialogues and consultations dedicated to human rights with more than 40 countries. In addition, nearly all of the 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states have a dialogue on human rights with the EU based on the Cotonou Agreement.

Promoting democracy and observing elections - Fact sheets on the EU, updated regularly

Supporting democracy worldwide is a priority for the European Union. Democracy remains the only system of governance where people can fully realise their human rights and it is a determining factor for development and long-term stability. As the only directly elected EU institution, the European Parliament is particularly committed to promoting democracy. It is continuously engaged in election observation activities, working to strengthen the legitimacy of national electoral processes and to increase public confidence in the protection of elections and human rights. Each year it sends several parliamentary delegations to observe elections or referendums in third countries. This Fact Sheet gives an overview of, among other things, the European financing instruments designed to support the achievement of these goals.
Oversight and management of the EU trust funds - democratic accountability challenges and promising practices - May 2018

This study provides an assessment of the governance and oversight frameworks of selected EU trust funds (EUTFs) and the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRT). It explores how these add to and “mix” the instruments set up under the EU Multiannual Financial Framework. It addresses the issue of their added value in light of the EU Better Regulation guidelines, their impact on the role of the European Parliament as a budgetary authority and the right to good administration. The study recommends, amongst other things, reducing the complexity of the EUTF and FRT governance frameworks, and strengthening their consistency.

Enhancing EU actions on economic, social and cultural rights within its human rights policy - February 2018

This study analyses the progress made by the EU in implementing its commitment to respect, protect and fulfil economic, social and cultural rights (ESC rights) in its external action. This study refers specifically to three ESC rights – the right to just and favourable conditions of work, the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to education. It furthermore identifies structural obstacles that may be impeding the ability of the EU to promote these rights in an effective manner. Drawing upon an analysis of existing EU initiatives designed to promote respect for ESC rights, recommendations are made as to how such initiatives could be strengthened.

Labour rights in Export Processing Zones with a focus on GSP+ beneficiary countries - June 2017

The European Union’s GSP+ scheme provides trade concessions to beneficiary countries and obliges them to ratify and effectively implement key international conventions on human rights and labour rights. The sectoral gains of GSP+ have thus far been concentrated on exports of apparel, textiles and processed fish. Such sectors are often located in Export Processing Zones (EPZs) where the governance of labour rights may differ from the rest of the country and fall below international legal standards. This study examines the apparel sectors of Pakistan, Mongolia and Sri Lanka and the processed fish sector of the Philippines.

Value for money of EU programme funding in the field of democracy and rule of law - June 2017

This study explores the extent to which processes are in place to enable the delivery of value for money (VfM) through EU programme funding in the field of democracy and rule of law. More specifically, the study aims to assess whether and to what extent processes are in place to help deliver VfM from relevant programmes. In particular, it considers the degree of coherence, transparency, accountability and effectiveness, and examines administrative expenses. The study includes a review of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and the Instrument for Stability and Peace.

Human rights provisions in Economic Partnership Agreements in light of the expiry of the Cotonou Agreement - March 2017

The study considers the options for suspending obligations under the EU-ACP Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) in connection with violations of human rights, democratic principles or the rule of law following the expiry of the Cotonou Agreement in 2020. It looks into how post-2020 arrangements can best continue the existing mechanisms for human rights conditionality set out in the Cotonou Agreement. It also proposes measures to improve future versions of human rights clauses, and considers whether there are legal obstacles to the invocation of this clause under general international law, principally under WTO law.

Implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on business and human rights - February 2017

This study reviews the progress of implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) in non-EU countries. Much progress has already been made with, amongst others, relevant key international standards like the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises becoming aligned with the UNGPs, new tools being developed to provide guidance to governments and stakeholders and a basis being set for constructive discussion. Further implementation of the UNGPs is however necessary, especially on access to remedy and justice for victims of business-related abuses.

The budgetary tools for financing the EU external policy - January 2017

The paper provides an overview of the current architecture of EU financing for external policies, and an assessment of the performance of this setup. The funding programmes discussed are: the European Development Fund, the EU external Trust Funds, the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, the EU’s regional blending facilities, the European Fund for Sustainable Development, and the Guarantee Fund for External Actions. It provides an assessment of the current and envisaged tools with regards to added value, coherence, flexibility and simplification, and democratic oversight of EU funding for external action.

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