



FP7 PROJECT: FRAME

Fostering Human Rights Among European (External and Internal) Policies

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INTRODUCTION

In June 2013 a large-scale, interdisciplinary, four-year FP7 project was launched on 'Fostering Human Rights Among European (External and Internal) Policies' (FRAME). Drawing on its aim to cast European Human Rights Policies from a comprehensive, multi-actor and global perspective, FRAME is being carried out by a Consortium of 19 academic partners and approximately 100 researchers from Austria, Belgium, China, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Hungary, Italy, India, Ireland, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

The EU is uniquely placed to protect and promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law within and beyond its borders. In spite of the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and its commitment to put fundamental rights and freedoms at the very heart of the EU's external and internal policies, however, the EU has been confronted with a range of challenges to this plight, including the fragmentation of human rights-related competences among its Institutions and in relation to its Member States; the coherence between its internal, external and overall human rights policies; and the growing contestation of the legitimacy of human rights norms in external affairs by a number of third countries.

OBJECTIVES

FRAME's main objective is to provide the necessary building blocks for the development of comprehensive and coherent European Human Rights Policies, including: (i) a sound knowledge base taking into account the evolving factors, concepts and instruments underlying the protection and promotion of human rights at the EU, international and national levels; (ii) a critical examination and appraisal of the EU's real and potential contribution to global human rights governance through its engagement with actors and its wide-ranging policies and instruments; (iii) a thorough scrutiny of the effectiveness of human rights promotion in the maze of EU institutions, competences and policies; and (iv) a set of indicators, tools and policy proposals allowing for a consistent and tailor-made integration of human rights into EU external and internal actions and policies.

In order to achieve the aforementioned objectives, FRAME is organised around 4 Clusters:

- 1) Factors** – The first cluster examines today’s challenges to the protection and promotion of human rights in a global context. It constitutes the foundations of a sound knowledge base for the assessment of EU human rights policies, encompassing the evolving factors, concepts, institutions and instruments underlying the protection and promotion of human rights at the EU, international and national levels. Examples of research include (i) key cultural, economic, historical, legal, political, religious, social and technological factors that facilitate or hamper the protection of human rights in the context of the EU’s external and internal policies; (ii) the conceptualisation of human rights, democracy and the rule of law upon which the EU is founded; and (iii) a comprehensive assessment of the institutions and instruments operating to protect human rights at the various levels.
- 2) Actors** – The second cluster addresses the EU’s multi-level and multi-actor human rights engagement, both in terms of its cooperation with other actors that protect and promote human rights, and its critical positioning vis-à-vis actors which grossly violate human rights. Since human rights are a cross-cutting issue, multiple actors on multiple levels are relevant for ensuring effective and coherent EU human rights policies. To that end, FRAME scrutinises the EU’s engagement with (i) regional multilateral organisations dealing with human rights; (ii) third countries through regional partnerships; (iii) non-state actors and (iv) the Union Institutions and Bodies, as well as its Member States.
- 3) Policies** – The third cluster focuses on four EU policies with particular relevance for the respect, protection and promotion of human rights: (i) development and trade; (ii) violations of human rights in conflicts; (iii) freedom, security and justice; and (iv) external human rights and democratisation policy. These policies cover a good part of the spectrum where the effectiveness, coherence and consistency of EU policy-making vis-à-vis its own human rights standards are called into question. They also encompass those realms where recent events have found the EU unprepared and divided without a common, well-founded human rights-based position to defend. Bearing in mind the Lisbon Treaty’s overarching aims of enhancing coherence in the EU’s external and internal policies, the critical assessment of the instruments available to the EU to integrate human rights concerns into these policies is therefore of utmost importance.
- 4) Tools** – In the fourth cluster, the research findings from each of the other three clusters are brought together to provide a forward-looking perspective on the integration of human rights policies into the EU’s external relations and internal policies. This accumulation and dissemination of policy insights include (i) the appraisal of existing human rights indicators and the development of new indicators to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of human rights protection; (ii) the development of a policy toolbox to enhance human rights protection within the EU and in third countries; and (iii) the elaboration of policy proposals on how to improve the EU’s record in human rights policy-making, along with legal, political and operational guidance to facilitate the implementation of human rights mainstreaming in different EU policies, while ensuring greater coherence between the external and internal dimensions thereof.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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