



FP7 PROJECT: FRAME

Fostering Human Rights Among European (External and Internal) Policies

As of Spring 2013 the Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies of KU Leuven ('the Centre') coordinates a large-scale, multi-disciplinary, four-year FP7 project 'Fostering Human Rights Among European (External and Internal) Policies' (FRAME). The consortium consists of 19 academic partners from the EU (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, UK) and third countries (China, Egypt, India, Peru, South Africa, the US). The project was entrusted to the consortium after a highly competitive selection process.

Context – FRAME focuses on the ways in which the EU's internal and external policies can contribute to the promotion of human rights. The Lisbon Treaty has made the respect and promotion of human rights a core value and objective for all the EU's actions and policies. However, the EU is confronted with important challenges in this respect, such as the fragmentation of human rights-related competences between itself and the Member States and the growing contestation by a number of third countries of certain understandings of human rights and of the position of the EU to promote them.

Objectives – In order to have a relevant and positive impact on the promotion of human rights through EU policies, FRAME has set itself a number of research objectives that aim to understand the challenges and opportunities for the EU's human rights engagement and to recommend policies and tools that ensure that these challenges are overcome and opportunities are seized in an optimal manner. Concretely, the research objectives include: (i) a better conceptualization and operationalization of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the EU, other organizations and third countries; (ii) appraising human rights protection systems at the EU, international, regional, national and sub-national levels and their interactions; (iii) clarifying how human rights promotion can be rendered more effective in the maze of EU institutions, competences and policies; and (iv) formulating, disseminating and valorizing policy tools (such as benchmarks and indicators) to monitor and improve the effectiveness of EU human rights policy. The research will be organized around four clusters. Each cluster will cover one broad theme: 'factors', 'actors', 'policies' and 'tools'.

Factors –First of all, the research in FRAME will focus on factors which condition the development and respect of human rights today, such as (i) the various cultural views on human rights, which make it difficult to promote a universal discourse; (ii) the intricate multi-level set of global, regional, national and local institutions that are involved in the promotion of human rights, which complicates the setting up of streamlined human rights promotion programmes, and (iii) the complex interaction of political, economic and cultural conditions contributing to compliance with human rights, which make it difficult to

effectively promote the implementation of human rights. In this respect, the Centre will qualitatively and quantitatively assess human rights compliance, notably through its HERCULES database, which contains a wide number of variables related to human rights. In addition, three country case studies (India, South Africa and Peru) will be conducted in order to assess the dynamics and interactions of the aforementioned factors with the protection of human rights.

Actors – Second, FRAME will seek to identify the most important actors that are of relevance for the promotion of human rights. It will evaluate to what extent their particular relationships with the EU are conducive to progress in human rights promotion. The actors considered are both those with which the EU cooperates for protecting and promoting human rights, as well as those towards which the EU adopts a critical position as a result of a problematic human rights record, such as States which grossly violate human rights, perpetrators of international crimes or irresponsible businesses. Particular attention will go to the relationship of the EU with the United Nations and its human rights bodies as well as to the EU's relation with the Council of Europe and the OSCE. In addition, case studies on the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) will be conducted. The Arab League plays an active role in the Arab Spring events and the OIC, unique for its large membership of muslim countries across four continents, has become a major actor within the UN Human Rights Council.

Policies – FRAME's third angle concerns the various EU policies oriented towards promoting human rights, both internally and externally. This will include the EU's anti-terrorism, migration and border control policies, its stance on human rights in domestic and international conflicts, and the role of human rights in EU development and trade policies. More in particular, FRAME will study how the EU's trade and development partnerships can be used as 'smart incentives' to alleviate the erosion of basic rights in a number of countries, such as access to food, to health, to water and clear air. Case studies will explore the potential for the integration of development and human rights dimensions in EU trade policy in order to benefit least-developed countries.

Tools – Finally, FRAME will develop operational tools that the EU could use for promoting human rights. Based on the research findings, the consortium will elaborate a set of human rights indicators for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of human rights protection in EU policies and actions. A policy toolbox too will be developed to enhance human rights protection within the EU and in third countries. Last but not least, policy proposals will be formulated on how to improve the EU's record in human rights policymaking.

Team – Throughout the consortium more than 100 researchers will work on FRAME. At the Centre, a team of 7 people will work on FRAME, led by Prof. Dr. Jan Wouters, Jean Monnet Chair and Director of the Centre. Dr. Axel Marx, research manager of the Centre, will act as the main project manager. Mr. Nicolas Hachez will act as senior researcher. In addition, 3 junior researchers will be involved. The team will be supported by the administrative coordinator of the Centre, Ms. Dominique De Brabanter. The project will end with an international conference and five outreach events on four continents across the globe. FRAME events will not only engage the wider academic community but also policy-makers.