

ENNHRI Annual Conference 2019

14 November 2019 – Brussels, Belgium

'Realising Economic and Social Rights in Europe – the role of National Human Rights Institutions'

Objectives

- Raise awareness of the role and relevance of NHRIs for the realisation of economic and social rights (ESR) in Europe
- Encourage a human rights-based approach to economic and social policies and reforms at the national and European level

Context

Ten years after the economic, financial and social crisis in Europe, some (recent) economic and social reforms still lead to violations of human rights including the right to work, the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion and the right to an adequate standard of living. This in some cases also has a negative effect on the enjoyment of civil and political rights, particularly of certain groups, and is undermining democracy and the rule of law.

International and regional human rights instruments that protect economic and social rights such as the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the European Charter of Social Rights, and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, as well as political commitments such as the principles of the EU Pillar of Social Rights and SDGs, provide a key framework for promotion and protection of rights of individuals including those left behind.

These human rights instruments to which all European states are signatory provide accountability frameworks for policy making and are essential building block to further a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to policy which contributes to improved economic and social cohesion in European societies.

NHRIs' potential

NHRIs work towards the implementation of all human rights, including ESR, and help translate international and regional human rights instruments and commitments to a local reality for all right-holders.

Given their broad human rights mandate and variety of functions, NHRIs can advance the promotion and protection of ESR in many ways:

- NHRIs monitor the situation of human rights, including ESR, at the national level and report the monitoring results to parliaments, the public, the media and to international and regional human rights bodies, providing recommendations on how to improve the realisation of ESR domestically.
- NHRIs advise governments on the potential impact of policies and legislation on the enjoyment of ESR of individuals, including of groups in a vulnerable situation.
- NHRIs bring a HRBA to policy making that integrates principles of accountability, participation, non-discrimination and transparency and advocate for more effective promotion of ESR at the national level and in Europe.
- NHRIs' awareness raising function enables them to address the general public, promote a language of rights, empower communities around their rights and channel the public's voices back to policy makers.
- NHRIs provide information about available remedies when rights are violated. Some NHRIs can also handle individual complaints and intervene before courts (at national and regional level) for the protection of economic and social rights.

Approach

The ENNHRI Annual Conference will bring together European NHRIs with regional and international organisations and civil society to discuss how a HRBA to policies can impact positively on the enjoyment of ESR, and lead to improved economic and social cohesion in European societies.

The programme will include high-level panels and interactive small group discussions, with a specific focus on poverty, right to housing, labour rights, justiciability and promotion of ESR.

International and European experts will introduce rights and policy frameworks and how NHRIs can use these frameworks. Representatives of European NHRIs will share practices on how they use their broad mandate to strive for the realisation of economic and social rights.

The conference aims to result in a set of innovative recommendations for NHRIs on how to further advance the realisation of economic and social rights in Europe, including through the support of ENNHRI and other stakeholders.

A publication with good practices illustrating how NHRIs work on economic and social rights in Europe will be available as a background document for the conference and will be updated given the outcomes of the Conference. A Guide for NHRIs on how to contribute to a HRBA to poverty reduction and measurement will be presented at the Annual Conference.

Agenda

Time	Session	Speakers
9.00-9.10	Welcome by the ENNHRI Chair	
9.10-9.30	Treating economic and social rights as human rights in Europe	Philip Alston , UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights (Video statement)
9.30-11.00	Using international and regional legal and policy frameworks to advance economic and social rights protection in Europe <i>Moderated discussion Q&A</i>	Moderator: Tena Šimonović Einwalter , Equinet Chair, Deputy Ombudswoman of Croatia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michal Windfuhr, UN CESCR Member, German NHRI Deputy Director • François Vandamme, Vice-President of the European Committee of Social Rights • Katarina Ivanković-Knežević, European Commission, DG EMPL • Cecilia Forrestal, Community Action Network, Ireland • Debbie Mulhall, Human rights defender involved in the collective compliant mechanism with the Community Action Network
11.00-11.30	Coffee break	

11.30-13.00	<p>Using variety of NHRIs functions to promote and protect economic and social rights of all</p> <p><i>Moderated discussion</i> <i>Q&A</i></p>	<p>Moderator: Ignacio Saiz/Allison Corkery, Centre for Economic and Social Rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henk Van Hootehem, Combat Poverty, Insecurity and Social Exclusion Service • Juris Jansons, Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia • Judith Robertson, Chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission • Nino Lomjaria, The Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia
13.00-14.00 Lunch break		
14.00-15.00	<p>Zooming in: Exchange on role of NHRIs when working on HRBA to economic and social policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Right to housing • Labour rights • Promotion and Communication of ESR • Justiciability of ESR 	<p>Moderator: Erinda Ballanca, People's Advocate of Albania</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leilani Farha, Special Rapporteur on adequate housing (video-statement) • Olivier de Schutter, Professor at the Université Catholique de Louvain • Stefan Clauwert, Senior Legal and Human Rights Advisor of the European Trade Union Confederation • Katarzyna Gardapkhadze, First Deputy Director of OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights • Branko Lubarda, Judge at the European Court of Human Rights
15.00-16.15	<p>Discussion in small groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty (moderator: Leo Williams, Director EAPN) • Rights to housing (moderator: Maria José Aldanas, Coordinator Housing Rights Watch & FEANTSA) • Labour rights (Mirosław Wróblewski, Head of the Constitutional, International and European Law Department, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman)) • Promotion and Communication of ESR (Koldo Casla, Policy Director, Just Fair, and Research Associate, Newcastle University) • Justiciability of ESR (Sirpa Rautio, Director, Finnish Human Rights Centre). 	

16.15-16.30 Coffee break	
16.30-17.30	<p>Economic and social rights on the human rights agenda in Europe: Connecting the dots</p> <p><i>Moderated discussion</i> <i>Q&A</i></p>
	<p>Moderator: TBC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nina Nordström, Representative of Finland’s Presidency of the EU Council, Head of Mission at Finland's Permanent Representation to the Council of Europe • Birgit Van Hout, OHCHR Europe Representative • Eamon Gilmore, EU Special Representative for Human Rights • Michael O’Flaherty, Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
17.30-17.45	Concluding remarks by ENNHRI Chair