

# ENNHRI's Leadership Webinar

Tuesday 10 November 2020 – online

## Creating Impacts from EU External Policy on rule of law, human rights and democracy - the Role of and Support for NHRIs

### Objectives

- Raise awareness about recent developments in the EU 'external' policy on promoting and protecting rule of law, human rights and democracy;
- Inspire further NHRI strategic approaches to create impacts for rule of law, human rights, and democracy from European policy instruments, in partnership with European actors;
- Consider opportunities and ways for EU actors to support the establishment and strengthening of NHRIs in compliance with the Paris Principles;
- Provide a space for NHRI Heads of Institution to exchange on challenges and opportunities for EU strategic engagement by NHRIs.

### Context

In 2020, the EU external action has seen a prioritisation of strengthening the promotion and protection of rule of law, human rights and democracy through a range of policy instruments.

These instruments encompass the forthcoming EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024), the new 2020 EU Enlargement methodology, the new strategic vision for the Eastern Partnership beyond 2020, as well as strengthened European tools to tackle rule of law challenges and COVID-19 impacts.

Given their unique standing and legal mandate, NHRIs can be considered as a key contributor to the success of these policy initiatives in driving progress on the ground on rule of law, human rights and democracy: on the one hand, they are integral part of the institutional architecture that serves to realise these values in each country. On the other hand, their engagement is a crucial contribution to the identification of challenges and appropriate responses at EU and national levels. Mirroring previous and ongoing commitments of the EU in its external human rights

policy<sup>1</sup>, the recently-published [FRA report on NHRIs](#), which includes review of three NHRIs beyond the EU, calls for ‘independent, effective and impactful’ Paris Principles-compliant NHRIs in all EU Member States, and shows the value for the EU to engage with NHRIs to ‘gain credible insight into realities on the ground, as well as human rights expertise on EU policies and laws’.

Throughout 2020, ENNHRI has fed into the definition and implementation of these policy initiatives<sup>2</sup>. ENNHRI contributions have highlighted the potential role of NHRIs and the need for enhanced synergies and complementary approaches among new and existing instruments. Responding to emerging challenges and feeding into the European & international processes in 2020, ENNHRI set up a common reporting for [NHRIs on the rule of law](#), identifying country-specific issues and key trends across the region, with specific attention for the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The collegiate European Commission, in its first annual rule of law report, states that NHRIs “play an important role as rule of law safeguard and can provide an independent check on the system in a rule of law crisis”.

## Approach

The Webinar will allow space for an open discussion between NHRIs Heads of Institutions and key EU actors about how to seize opportunities offered by EU external action instruments, through strategic engagement with NHRIs and strengthened cooperation with and support from European actors. Presentations by EU policy-makers will serve to trigger discussions with Heads of NHRIs. Synergies across the variety of European policies teasing out priorities and NHRIs advocacy messages, will be considered.

The event will be preceded by another ENNHRI Leadership Webinar bringing together high-level speakers to discuss the role of and support for NHRIs in the context of EU *Internal Policy* Instruments. Conclusions from this event will be presented at the beginning of this Webinar for a more informed discussion, including on opportunities for synergies and cross-fertilisation between the EU internal and external policies. Webinar conclusions will feed into ENNHRI’s future work, and preparations for its Annual Conference on 2 December 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> The [EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy](#) (2015-2019) included as its first Action the recognition and support of the crucial role of NHRIs as independent institutions, while affirming the EU commitment to support and engage with those institutions that are in compliance with the Paris Principles and to involve them in national consultation processes, such as the Human Rights Dialogues and third countries’ reforms.

<sup>2</sup> ENNHRI submissions on EU rule of law monitoring [here](#) (EU enlargement package), and ENNHRI submission on European Democracy Action Plan [here](#).

## Draft Agenda

Time	Session
9.30 – 9.45	Registration
9.45 – 10.00	Introduction and welcome
10.00 – 10.25	Conclusions from Webinar 1 on EU Internal Policies, and relevance to external engagement
10.25 – 10.30	Break
10.30 – 11.00	<p>NHRIs as key partners for the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024</p> <p><i>Heads of NHRIs' exchange with</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Luisa Ragher</b>, Head of Division for Human Rights, European External Action Service</li> </ul>
11.00 – 11.30	<p>Opportunities for enhanced role and support for NHRIs in the context of the EU Enlargement and Eastern Partnership policies</p> <p><i>Heads of NHRIs' exchange with</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Myriam Ferran</b>, European Commission, DG NEAR, Director Strategy and Turkey</li> </ul>
11.30-11.40	Break
11.40-12.00	<p>Conclusions: Towards more Strategic NHRI engagement with the EU for rule of law, human rights and democracy in the EU</p> <p><i>Heads of NHRIs' discussion</i></p>