

“Human Rights and EU international relations”

EEAS Autumn School 2026

1 - 2 October 2026

European Economic and Social Committee - European Committee of the Regions
Room VMA 21, Rue van Maerlant 2/Van Maerlantstraat 2, 1040 Brussels

Article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union (TEU) on the values of the Union states: *“The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights...”*

Regarding foreign policy, article 3 (5) TEU underlines that *“in its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values....It shall contribute to peace,....mutual respect among peoples.... and the protection of human rights..., as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.”*

Article 21 TEU echoes these fundamental principles setting out the guidelines for the Union’s action on the international scene: *“The Union’s action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.”*

As a global normative and political power pursuing its treaty-based objectives, the European Union (EU) champions human rights and the rule of law both within its borders and in its engagement with partner countries. The EU consistently emphasizes human rights in its international agreements and supports their protection through diverse political initiatives worldwide. To achieve this, the Union unites Member States, national institutions, civil society, and EU bodies under a cohesive "Team Europe" approach and teams up with partner countries.

In an era marked by conflict, war, and rising authoritarianism, Europe’s steadfast commitment to human rights remains crucial to defending a rules-based international order. Far from a mere moral imperative, the EU’s defense of human rights serves as a strategic asset in external relations. By prioritizing human rights based international relations built on mutual respect, the EU reinforces its position as a credible, principled global actor. Integrating human rights into European foreign policies - spanning enlargement, trade, migration, security etc. - enhances the Union’s international legitimacy, expands its global appeal, and inspires partnerships for a shared commitment to a fairer world.

In the same vein, the Union vocally supports strengthening international judicial reviews of human rights through existing international courts. It also engages in joint political action to establish new judicial authorities tasked with prosecuting specific human rights violations.

For the 2026 edition of the EEAS autumn school, post-graduate students and speakers on European and international law will gather in Brussels in the beginning of October. Participating universities are Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, KU Leuven, the University of Strasbourg, Oxford University and Mendel University Brno. Students from the Université catholique de Lille, the University of Gothenburg, University from Białystok, Université de Toulouse, the College of Europe and trainees from EU institutions have been invited to attend.

The EEAS Autumn School is organized in the framework of the [European Public Diplomacy Days 2026](#).



PROGRAMME

1 October 2026

Room VMA 21, Rue van Maerlant 2/Van Maerlantstraat 2, 1040 Brussels

9h00 Introduction and Welcome

Isabelle Le-Galo Flores, Secretary General, European Economic and Social Committee

Petr Blizkovsky, Secretary General of the European Committee of the Regions

Christian Gsodam, EEAS, Principal Advisor “Strategic Communication and Policy Planning”(Moderator)

9h15 – 12h00

The role of Human Rights in EU international relations

9h15 Video messages

Sabine Verheyen, First Vice-President of the European Parliament

Kajsa Ollgren, Secretary General of the European External Action Service

9h45 Academic introduction

Prof Ursula Werther-Pietsch, Universities of Wien, Graz and German Armed Forces Munich

10h00 Keynote

Marta Temido, Member of the European Parliament, First Vice-Chair of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights

10h15 – Round table and exchange of views

Marta Temido, Member of the European Parliament, First Vice-Chair of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights

Helena Boguslawska, European External Action Service Human Rights Division

Friso Roscam Abbing, EU Fundamental Rights Agency

Christina Meinecke, United Nations Human Rights, Regional Representative for Europe

Micha Ramakers, “Human Development, Migration, Governance, Peace and Security”
European Commission, DG INTPA

Philippe Dam, Human Rights Watch’s EU Director for Advocacy in Brussels

Lunch break

13h00 – 15h30

The protection of freedom of thought, religion and belief in EU international relations

13h00

Mairead McGuinness, EU Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief (video message)

Academic introduction

Prof Nazila Ghanea, University of Oxford, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

13h45 – Keynote

Constantinos Alexandris, EEAS STRATPOL, Religion and Diplomacy Advisor

14h00 – Round table and exchange of views

- **Zeljana Zovko** Member of the European Parliament
- **Luca Jahier**, Member of the European Economic and Social Committee
- **José Luis Bazan**, COMECE, Legal Adviser for International Religious Freedom

- **Imam Yahya Pallavicini**, President of European Council of Muslim religious leaders
- **Lukas Gassner**, Member of the Cabinet of EU Commissioner Magnus Brunner
- **Nazila Ghanea**, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

15h30- 15h45 Coffee break

15h45 – 17h45

“Fostering equality and non-discrimination: a human rights based EU foreign policy”

15h45 – Academic introduction

Prof Sophie Robin-Olivier, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

16h30 – Round table and exchange of views

- **Martin Hojsík**, Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for Fundamental Rights and Rule of Law
- **Julia Koch de Biolley**, Head of EEAS Task Force Equality
- **Carina Ohlsson**, Member of European Committee of the Regions (tbc)
- **Isabelle Le-Galo Flores**, Secretary General, European Economic and Social Committee
- **Florence Raes**, Director UN Women Brussels Office

2 October 2026

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9h00– 12h30

International protection of human rights: theory and practice

9h00 Keynote

Pavlo Pushkar, Council of Europe, Head of division of the Department for the Execution of Judgements of the European Court on Human Rights

Exchange with EU Ambassadors on selected cases (online) - Part I

09h45 **Alexandre Stutzmann**, Head of EU Delegation to the Council of Europe and fmr Head of EU Office in West Bank and Gaza Strip

10h15 **Marc Fiedrich**, Head of EU Delegation in Burma/Myanmar

11h00 Academic perspective

Prof Jan Wouters, KU Leuven



Exchange with EU Ambassadors on selected cases (online) - Part II

11h45 **Gautier Mignot**, Head of EU Delegation in Nigeria

12h15 **Baiba Tavaresa**, European External Action Service, Head of Division 'Ukraine' (in person)

Lunch break

14h00 – 15h30

The role of the European Court of Justice as regards the defence of Human Rights at home and abroad

Keynote and exchange of views

Andreas Kumin, Member of the European Court of Justice

15h30 – 17h00 Discussion at round tables

Christian Gsodam - EU Strategic communication and Human Rights

Pavlo Pushkar - Human Rights in war and conflict

Milan Markovic - United Nations and Human Rights

Jörg Wojahn - EU trade policy and Human Rights

Silke Toenshoff – EU local and regional authorities and Human Rights

Jose Antonio Moreno Díaz -International civil society and the protection of Human Rights

Cecilia Pelloso – The role of the EU Special Representative on Human Rights

17h00 Conclusion

