



**REPORT OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNION FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND SECURITY POLICY**

**2022 ANNUAL REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS
AND DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD**

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After the political shift in Afghanistan, UNDP, with the financial support of the EU, launched an eight-week workshop for women entrepreneurs in the western zone. These workshops, which focused on business issues, were launched for 4000 women in Herat, Farah, and Badghis provinces. After completing the business training course, the businesswomen participated in the practice market to put what they learned into practice. One of the teachers is opening a market stall.

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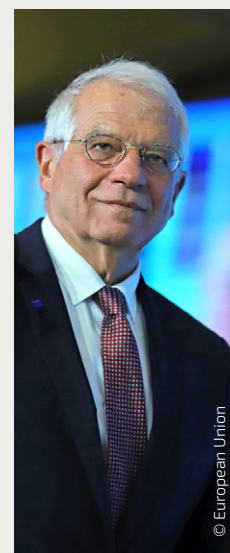
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FOREWORD BY HR/VP JOSEP BORRELL



Josep BORRELL
 High Representative
 of the European Union
 for Foreign Affairs and
 Security Policy

2023, the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and 30 years since the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action is the year to turn the tide on human rights and democratic decline. Turning the tide means going back to basics: the need for robust advocacy of the UN charter, of international law, of international humanitarian law and accountability. We need to rebuild trust, rejuvenate human rights and put people at the centre. The many human rights anniversaries we celebrate this year give us inspiration. We will be creative and innovate in reaffirming the principles of universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights. We celebrate these anniversaries in close partnership with the United Nations, in a Team Europe spirit and with all who join the cause of upholding and advancing human rights and democracy around the world.

These anniversaries come at a challenging moment. We publish this edition of the Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World once again in a world marked by war on

the European continent and unprecedented attacks on democracy and violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law in multiple countries worldwide.

The attacks on Ukraine's sovereignty, territory and democracy continue, with unspeakable suffering and negative impact on the enjoyment and protection of human rights in Ukraine and beyond. Meanwhile we continue to be confronted with dire situations in Russia, Afghanistan and Myanmar, while new crises in Iran and Sudan have emerged. These are just a few of too many crises to highlight and of course, they are happening alongside protracted situations of conflicts and instability, such as in Syria and Yemen.

In this current global environment, the EU has called out human rights violations and abuses wherever they occurred, and called for justice, accountability and an end to impunity. In an unprecedented mobilisation, the EU has been more active than ever before to underline that these acts are illegal, need to stop immediately and will have consequences.

As this report will show, the EU has stepped up its action in 2022 to defend democracy and counter the violations of international law, including international humanitarian law, as well as human rights violations and abuses. Using the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024) as our roadmap, the EU has led more initiatives in multilateral fora than ever before, building new cross-regional alliances proving that multilateralism works. We have also strengthened our collaboration with and support to the International Criminal Court.

The EU has held more dialogues and consultations to forge new partnerships for human rights and democracy. The EU has also extended more cooperation and support to partners, including civil society organisations and human rights defenders, namely through the reinforced envelope of EUR 30 million for the EU's Human Rights Defenders Protection mechanism. The EU has also adopted more

restrictive measures in response to human rights violations and abuses, under geographic sanctions regimes and the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, which now also includes listings for acts of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict.

At a time of an alarming rise in authoritarian regimes and their assault on democratic values across the globe, it is imperative to demonstrate, through concrete action, the EU's continued commitment to democracy. The establishment of a Team Europe initiative on Democracy was a critical milestone that will help deliver democracy support in a more efficient and strategic manner. Furthermore, it is paramount to maintain support for the organisation of credible, inclusive, and transparent electoral processes. In 2022, the EU deployed 18 Electoral Missions and consistently advocated for the implementation of their recommendations.

All of this work comes at a critical moment, a moment of challenges, but also of opportunities. 2023 is the year to turn the tide, to reinvigorate the global human rights movement and to make the universality of human rights and democratic principles more relatable in the daily lives of all of us.

INTRODUCTION

2022 has been marked by a multitude of crises and the return of war to the European continent, with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine causing an array of violations of international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Russia's war continues to violate human rights in Ukraine and constitutes a serious attack on the rules-based global order and on democracy. In our interdependent and interconnected world, the dire consequences of the ensuing energy and food shortages, economic slowdown and rising prices affect millions of people. In particular, the most vulnerable, who are often still battling multiple challenges resulting from the COVID 19 pandemic, are most affected. Moreover, the war is connected with and has further exacerbated the spread of disinformation around the world and the attacks against democratic values and principles

In a year of extraordinary mobilisation, the EU condemned Russia's large scale violation of international law in all available multilateral and regional fora. The Union reacted to the war in Ukraine with bold, principled action and strong solidarity while continuing to deliver and drive a resolute international response to the ongoing backsliding of democracy and human rights, increased climate crisis and the continuing effects of the COVID 19 pandemic.

In the face of serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law which may amount to international crimes, the EU stepped up its already **strong support to justice and accountability** mechanisms, notably to the swiftly opened investigation into the situation of Ukraine by the Chief Prosecutor of the **International Criminal Court**, national prosecution efforts as well as the United Nations Commission of Inquiry and to civil society organisations and journalists who are documenting and reporting on human rights violations and abuses. This strong support to

strengthen accountability is important to be replicated in other human rights and international humanitarian law crises around the world.

The EU also took action regarding several other conflicts, such as in the context of Afghanistan, Iran, Ethiopia, Myanmar and Belarus, as well as the continuing crisis in Syria, which were a strong focus in our bilateral engagement, as well as at multilateral level. At all times, the Union sought to advance practical political solutions and enhance the respect for and protection of human rights.

The EU moved fast to impose a number of restrictive measures in reaction to serious human rights violations and abuses, notably in Russia/Ukraine but also regarding Iran under geographic **sanctions** regimes. Under the **EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime**¹, listings targeting persons and entities from China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Libya, South Sudan, Eritrea and Russia as well as the Wagner group and its members were renewed in 2022, and new listings prepared in 2023.

Alongside this resolute and strong reaction, the EU has further stepped up its work to uphold and advance human rights, democracy and the rule of law across the world, in all areas of external action, continuing the implementation of the comprehensive **EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024)**², under the guidance of the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Eamon Gilmore. The EU continued to use all the political and financial tools at its disposal to address human rights crises, to work with partners to better promote and protect human rights and democracy, to focus on the most vulnerable and to fight all forms of discrimination around the world.

1 [Council Decision \(CFSP\) 2020/1999 of 7 December 2020 concerning restrictive measures against serious human rights violations and abuses](#)

2 [Council conclusions on the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024, 12848/20, 18 November 2020](#)

The EU invested significantly in **multilateral engagement** and conducted an unprecedented outreach to partners, seeking to forge alliances to respond robustly to attacks on the international system, including on the UN Charter. Alongside the strong mobilisation to address the situation in Ukraine, the EU continued to **lead in UN human rights fora** on initiatives addressing human rights violations and abuses in **Afghanistan, Belarus, Burundi, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Myanmar**. The EU also played a leading role on important thematic issues such as the **Rights of the Child, Freedom of Religion or Belief**, human rights impacts of **environmental degradation and climate change**, and human rights aspects of **digital technologies**. As a strong advocate of multilateralism, the EU remains vigilant in the defence of the integrity and functionality of the global human rights system as a whole. The **second strategic dialogue with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights** in June 2022 fortified an already strong partnership as well as concrete collaboration to advance human rights globally.

The EU also upgraded **bilateral human rights diplomacy and action**, conducting more bilateral human rights dialogues and visits than in 2022, including by the EU Special Representative for Human Rights. A central feature was the practical support to partners to address their respective human rights challenges as well as sharing the EU's experience in dealing with the same.

The report also shows the EU's continued determined and impactful support to women's rights, also through the implementation of the **EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment** in the EU External Action 2021-2025 (GAP III)³, including the fight against all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Seeking to counter a "gender backlash" in many countries around the world, the EU has been a **vocal advocate of women's and girls' full enjoyment**

3 [EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action 2021-2025 \(GAP III\)](#)

of all human rights, including access to education and employment, public and political life. The EU supported multiple actions boosting women's rights and condemned exclusion and violent repression of women and girls, for instance in Afghanistan and Iran.

After its adoption in 2021, the **EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child**⁴ was brought into implementation across the world. Much attention was paid to the protection and support of children in the Ukraine, who were particularly affected by the war and displacement. In the European Year of Youth, the EU enhanced involvement of youth delegates in multilateral fora and build a network of young influencers in support of global cooperation. The EU also adopted the **Youth Action Plan (YAP)** in external action, which will further enhance consultation with and ensure meaningful participation of youth.

The increased envelope of the **Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy Programme**⁵, launched in December 2021 (EUR 1.5 billion for the period 2021–2027), provided a crucial base for enhanced EU support in all areas. This programme preserves key features of its predecessor (the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, EIDHR), including its focus on civil society support, global scope and independence of action.

Substantially increased support for the new phase of the **EU Human Rights Defenders Mechanism** was signed in September 2022 (EUR 30 million for four and a half years). Between 2015 and 2022, ProtectDefenders.eu supported nearly 60,000 defenders at risk and their families, notably environmental, land and indigenous peoples' rights defenders, women human rights defenders and labour rights

4 EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child: https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/eu-strategy-rights-child-graphics_en

5 Strengthening human rights and democracy in the world: [EU launches a EURO 1.5 billion plan to promote universal values](#)

defenders, who remained under severe pressure around the world. The **24th EU-NGO Human Rights Forum**⁶ on 14-15 December 2022 focused on 'Stop Impunity – The Road to Accountability and Justice'.

In the context of democratic backsliding and increasing pressures on civic and political rights, the EU has aimed to promote inclusive decision-making processes and participatory models of governance with a stronger focus on women and youth. The launch of the **Women and Youth in Democracy** program will enhance the participation of women and youth in public affairs. As part of a global effort to strengthen coalitions among those committed to democracy, the EU's projects and programmes were mobilised to follow-up on the first **Summit for Democracy** convened by the United States of America, with the Commission co-leading 'democracy cohorts' on '**Youth political and civic engagement**' and '**Deliberative democracy and citizen assemblies**'.

The launch of a **Team Europe Democracy** initiative involving 14 EU Member States alongside the Commission will enhance coordination at the EU level and enable more efficient and strategic delivery of democracy support in three key areas: **Accountability and Rule of Law, Political and Civic Participation, and Media and Digital**.

The EU supported the organization of credible, inclusive, and transparent electoral processes through the deployment of 18 electoral missions, including **Election Observation Missions to Lebanon, Timor Leste, Kenya, Colombia, Lesotho, and Sao Tomé y Príncipe**. Additionally, the EU enhanced **social media monitoring** by systematising the role of social media analysts responsible for monitoring online election campaigns, covering areas such as information manipulation, political advertising, hate speech, and online violence, particularly against women,

⁶ <https://www.eu-ngoforum2022.eu/>

Ahead of its 10th anniversary in 2023, the European Endowment for Democracy continued to support civil society organisations, pro-democracy movements, civic and political activists, and independent media platforms and journalists who cannot be supported by other donors and existing EU instruments.

As the report shows, the EU has been strongly mobilised in the defence and promotion of human rights and democracy around the world, including stepping up communication and outreach efforts and enhancing engagement with multiple stakeholders, including human rights defenders and businesses. **This Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy is fully aligned with the Action Plan** in order to detail progress in the implementation of the lines of action and priorities. Regular interaction with the European Parliament and frequent meetings with civil society allowed for in depth discussion on progress on the Action Plan objectives and further activity.

The Report shows the crucial importance of action at all levels, the full, coherent use of EU instruments, and of a Team Europe effort with the involvement of all EU institutions, EU Member States, EU Delegations around the world and the EU Special Representative for Human Rights. In the current global context, it is even more important to work in partnership with like-minded actors, international organisations and partner countries as well as civil society actors, human rights defenders and other stakeholders. While 2022 has been a challenging year, the EU will build on efforts to be more proactive, innovative and creative when it comes to human rights. We ended 2022 looking forward to 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and will continue to defend the universality and indivisibility of human rights, and fend for equality, diversity and inclusion, for dignity, freedom and justice for all.

EU SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights, Eamon Gilmore, continued to work under the authority of the High Representative/Vice-President (HR/VP) Josep Borrell. The EUSR is charged with promoting EU foreign policy on human rights, as well as compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL) and support to international criminal justice.

Through 2022 in his high-level and targeted engagement, the EUSR contributed to the coherence, visibility and effectiveness of the EU's human rights action and activities in the field of international humanitarian law (IHL). He has a central political role in guiding the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020–2024 and the Action Plan continued to be the main vehicle for driving his work at all levels.



The EUSR continued to strengthen the EU's bilateral engagement with third countries through constructive consultations, country visits and human rights dialogues. These included with Pakistan, United States, Uganda, Egypt, India, Ethiopia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Indonesia, ASEAN, Saudi Arabia, South Sudan, Zimbabwe and Colombia.

Throughout the year, the EUSR focused on several serious human rights and IHL situations, as crises erupted around the world. His work was profoundly marked by Russia's invasion of **Ukraine**. A month into the invasion, the EUSR travelled to the Polish-Ukrainian border to meet the mostly women and children fleeing the country. He retraced their journey by traveling to Ukraine itself in June (having previously visited in October 2021) and visiting Bucha and Irpin where he heard testimonies from victims of the Russian aggression. Russia's actions has led to a heightened awareness of the importance of international criminal justice, including by increased support for the International Criminal Court. The EUSR actively worked to highlight the need to capitalise on this momentum and move from an era of impunity to an age of accountability. He stressed that accountability for Ukraine could set a standard for fighting impunity all over the world.

The EUSR also kept his focus on the human rights and humanitarian crisis in **Afghanistan** and worked closely with the EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan and the EEAS Advisor for Gender and Diversity in this regard. The EUSR met with both international and Afghan human rights organisations, including over 170 civil society representatives of the Afghanistan Human Rights Coordination Mechanism, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Afghanistan. He strongly focused on the humanitarian situation, alleged violations of IHL, the protection of human rights defenders and women's and girls' rights.

The situation in **Ethiopia**, particularly with regard to human rights and IHL violations in Northern Ethiopia, remained a priority. The EUSR undertook a visit to Ethiopia, where he met with high-level governmental officials, and urged cooperation with the UN International Commission of Human Rights Experts, as well as the implementation of the recommendations of the joint investigation carried out by EHRC and OHCHR.

During his visit to **South Sudan**, the EUSR conveyed serious concern over the grave human rights and IHL violations taking place, especially sexual and gender-based violence against women. In addition, he discussed the need to enhance accountability, and to take concrete measures to end impunity. He also encouraged swift implementation of the Roadmap for the South Sudan peace agreement.

The EUSR travelled to **Uganda**, where he met with high-level governmental officials, including President Museveni, members of the opposition, and civil society. The main issues raised were the use of torture, extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances, freedom of expression, the right to education, shrinking civil society space and lack of accountability in relation to violence by the security forces.

He also visited **Zimbabwe** and underlined interconnection of human rights, democracy, rule of law, economic development, trade and investment in all his discussions. He emphasised the crucial importance of the upcoming elections for Zimbabwe's future. He underlined the EU's readiness to support with an Election Observation Mission, and the need for a timely invitation.

The EUSR visited **Pakistan** and India. In Pakistan, he spoke to government, civil society and business, and he urged the country to make tangible human rights progress in order to continue to avail of GSP+ benefits that have turned the EU into the country's biggest import market.

His visit to **India**, the first ever visit in the history of the mandate, resulted in in-depth discussions on domestic issues including minority rights, as well as on human rights regional hotspots in Asia and global challenges. At the Raisina Dialogue, the EUSR participated in the panel discussion on the wider implications of new technologies and artificial intelligence.

With the deterioration of the situation in **Myanmar**, the EUSR deepened his dialogue with the opposition National Unity Government, and publicly raised human rights violations including the imprisonment and execution of opposition leaders. His close engagement with ASEAN and Indonesia during his visit to Jakarta served to address human rights crises in Asia, in particular in Myanmar.



EUSR Eamon Gilmore meets internally displaced persons in Malakal (South Sudan), November 2022.

The EUSR also travelled to **Egypt**, following the adoption of the National Human Rights Strategy (2021-2026). In his discussions, including at ministerial level, he raised the provisions of the strategy, which pertained to the treatment of prisoners and other detainees, the revision of crimes punishable by death penalty and the legislation governing pre-trial detention. He also raised individual cases and held discussions on the application of the NGO law and its bylaws.

In an important moment ahead of the G20 Summit in Bali and the first-ever EU-ASEAN Summit in Brussels (December 2022), the EUSR conducted a visit to **Indonesia**. During the visit, he co-chaired the 4th **ASEAN-EU** Policy Dialogue on Human Rights and met with the Indonesian government, local human rights bodies and civil society. The EUSR underlined EU interest in deepening human rights cooperation with both ASEAN and Indonesia as like-minded partners vital for the resolution of regional and global issues.

The EUSR continued to build on his engagement with **Saudi Arabia** with the first very visit in the history of the mandate in November 2022. The EUSR co-chaired the second edition of the EU-Saudi Arabia Human Rights Dialogue in Riyadh and held bilateral meetings with the Saudi government. He raised concerns regarding the recent increase in executions and travel bans imposed on human rights defenders following their prison release. The EUSR acknowledged Saudi reforms, notably in the area of women's rights and the ongoing codification of the Penal Code, and encouraged their acceleration.

As the EU's human rights engagement with Beijing continued to be limited, the EUSR addressed the situation in **China**, in particular in the Xinjiang province, through exchanges with the High Commissioner for Human Rights, civil society organisations and like-minded partners. He also raised the situation of Uyghurs in Xinjiang with a number of Muslim states.

The EUSR worked for continued attention to the situation in **Belarus** and pushed for strong international support to civil society and democratic forces. He also wrote to journalists and media workers imprisoned in Belarus and began a social media campaign on political prisoners.

The EUSR broadened his engagement in Central America, notably **Nicaragua** and **Guatemala** and continued to maintain high-level political contacts with **Brazil, Mexico and Colombia**, both through the Human Rights Dialogues and sustained engagement and regular contact at political level. Regarding **Colombia**, the EUSR continued to "double hat" as EU Special Envoy for the peace process in Colombia and visited the country in December to engage with the new Government.

The EUSR continued to enhance his engagement with the **United States** through a bilateral visit in March and through co-chairing the EU-US Consultations on Human Rights during the same visit. He also travelled to London to attend the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief hosted by the **United Kingdom** Government and held bilateral discussions with the Minister for Human Rights, Lord Ahmed of Wimbledon.

Multilateral and regional engagement continued to be a core part of the EUSR's work. Throughout the year, the EUSR participated in discussions and events at the **Human Rights Council** and in the UN General Assembly High Level week. He also met with relevant UN bodies and officials, including the new High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk.

At the regional level, the EUSR expanded his cooperation with the African Union, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Council of Europe – which included a visit to Strasbourg – and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. As a concrete deliverable of the **EU-AU Human Rights Dialogue**, the EUSR and the African Union

Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security participated in an EU-AU Human Rights Council side-event on education and digitalisation as well as a third expert seminar on Transitional Justice.

EU human rights dialogues with third countries continued to be a critical branch of the EUSR's work. Throughout the year, he co-chaired or opened Human Rights Dialogues or consultations with **Colombia, United States, Brazil, Georgia, Mexico, South Africa, Taiwan, Moldova, ASEAN, and Saudi Arabia**. These dialogues allowed for a frank and detailed consideration of human rights issues in both the third country and the EU. The EUSR also co-chaired the second edition of the **EU-OHCHR Strategic Dialogue** with the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet.

Civil society's insight, information and advice continue to be invaluable to the work of the EUSR and the treatment of civil society on the ground continues to be a clear barometer for the trajectory of human rights and democracy in a given country. The EUSR met with local civil society and human rights defenders in all of his missions and engaged with civil society extensively in the preparation and follow up of those missions. The EUSR also addressed several major civil society events and international conferences throughout the year, including as in past years, the EU-NGO Human Rights Forum, where he underlined the need for greater accountability throughout the world for human rights and IHL violations.

To **broaden the constituency for human rights**, the EUSR increased his engagement with non-state actors, including the private sector, notably with industry leaders on corporate social responsibility and business and human rights, academics, lawyers, journalists and philanthropists. He also used his social media presence to engage with broader audiences, giving them a close up on human rights in the EU's foreign policy. In his **public diplomacy work** in the second half of the year, the EUSR focused on calling for stronger action in the lead up to the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2023.

01. PROTECTING AND EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS

1.1 Protecting people, eliminating inequalities, discrimination and exclusion

THE DEATH PENALTY

Throughout 2022, the EU continued to reaffirm its strong opposition to the death penalty under all circumstances and used all diplomatic tools at its disposal to advance the cause of worldwide abolition. The death penalty is a cruel and inhumane punishment, which fails to act as a deterrent to crime and represents an unacceptable denial of human dignity and integrity.

8th World Congress against the Death Penalty – 15-18 November 2022 in Berlin - saw unprecedented political mobilisation and over 1200 delegates from 125 countries.

As every 3 years, the World Congress against the Death Penalty (WCDDP) brought together all those working to advance towards the worldwide abolition of the death penalty. Steady progress is being made to reach this goal, especially in Africa, which is set to be the next abolitionist continent. In this edition of the WCDDP, Liberia and Zambia announced their intention to abolish the death penalty in 2023. This would continue the positive trend of 2022 during which Papua New Guinea, Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea abolished the death penalty.

15-18 NOVEMBER 2022
BERLIN, GERMANY

8th WORLD CONGRESS AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

Organized by **ECPR** **EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR POLITICAL RESEARCH**
Hosted and sponsored by **German Foreign Office**
Co-sponsored by **Swiss Federal Foreign Office**
Co-funded by **the European Union**
www.ecpm.org

The EU backs this initiative with funding support and through high-level participation. Speaking at the opening ceremony, EUSR Eamon Gilmore reiterated the EU's opposition to capital punishment in all cases and circumstances. He emphasised the importance of both political engagement and development cooperation to eradicate this cruel and inhuman practice.

The Congress saw unprecedented high-level official participation (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, 15 Ministers), and more dynamism, participation and diversity. At least 9 abolitionist countries from the Global South attended, alongside parliamentarians, National Human Rights Institutions and their main international network, and many NGOs.

The 2022 Congress took place in an important year for abolition as the UN General Assembly resolution on a Moratorium on the Use of the Death Penalty received the highest number of yes votes ever, including 3 from African countries: Ghana, Liberia and Uganda. For its part, the EU provides new funding opportunities under the Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy Programme (indicative budget EUR 10 million).

In 2022, Papua New Guinea, the Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea abolished the death penalty. This positive trend correlates with the intense work of human rights defenders, supported by international, regional and national organizations.

The EU continued to raise the abolition of the death penalty in its political dialogues and human rights dialogues with those countries that still sentence people to death. The EU also issued a number of public statements welcoming positive steps towards abolition or, in some cases, deploring the use of the death penalty, and calling on those countries that still apply it to consider introducing a moratorium as a first step towards abolition. This was done for instance in the case of Afghanistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia. In response to increasing

executions in the United States of America, the EU also led on a joint statement in the Council of Europe, where it called on the remaining 24 States of the United States of America that continue to practice capital punishment to establish a moratorium on executions, as a first step towards complete abolition.

The EU continued to raise its opposition to the death penalty in all relevant multilateral fora, in particular at the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe. By way of example, in 2022 the EU played an important role in the preparation, negotiation and adoption of the biennial resolution calling for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty during the Third Committee session of the United Nations General Assembly, which received the highest level of support ever since its first presentation in 2007. As in previous years, to mark the European Day against the Death Penalty and the World Day against the Death Penalty on 10 October, the EU and the Council of Europe issued a joint statement reaffirming their opposition to the use of capital punishment in all circumstances, and their commitment to the abolition of the death penalty worldwide. Numerous EU Delegations marked this significant date by organising debates, publishing op-eds, and conducting other public awareness activities.

The abolition of the death penalty is one of the thematic priorities of the Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy Programme 2021-2027. Projects that received support through the 2018 global call for proposals under its predecessor EIDHR (EUR 8.1 million) continued to be implemented in China, India, Malawi, Equatorial Guinea, Niger, the Philippines, Taiwan, Uganda, the US, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Malaysia, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. These focus on training within the judiciary, public awareness raising, the creation of national networks, the monitoring of the use of the death penalty, advocacy for legal reform and dialogue on specific issues such as the use of death penalty for counterterrorism and drug-related offences.

TORTURE AND OTHER CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

Although the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment is absolute under international law and cannot be justified under any circumstance, it continued to be challenged in many parts of the world in 2022, with often total impunity for perpetrators.

In a statement on the **International Day in Support of Victims of Torture**, issued by the High Representative on 26 June 2022, the EU condemned the numerous reported cases of torture, extrajudicial killings and other atrocities in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The High Representative called for full accountability for all serious human rights violations and abuses,

The EU continued to use all its available political and financial tools to combat torture through its external action. This ranged from speaking out against human rights violations and abuses, to urging states to comply with their obligations under international law - notably to investigate allegations of torture and to bring perpetrators to justice - and to provide protection and redress to victims.

The EU raised the issue of torture and ill-treatment in most human rights dialogues with partner countries. In the year that marked the **35th anniversary** of the entry into force of the UN Convention against Torture as well as the **20th anniversary** of the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, the EU spared no effort to urge countries to ratify the Convention and its Optional Protocol and to honour their commitments through effective implementation.

Both through political dialogue and financial support, the EU continued to promote effective justice systems, the right to a fair trial, access to justice and legal assistance as well as the improvement of detention conditions of persons deprived of liberty, which are priorities of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024.

Throughout the year, the EUSR for Human Rights, Eamon Gilmore, strongly engaged on the issue of torture and other ill-treatment, in particular the detention conditions and the treatment of persons deprived of liberty.

At **multilateral level**, the triennial UN resolution on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, led by Denmark, was adopted without a vote on 10 November 2022 at the 77th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Third Committee.

Together with Argentina and Mongolia, the EU remained at the forefront of the [Global Alliance for Torture Free Trade](#), currently involving 63 states committed to end the trade in goods used for torture and capital punishment globally, as inspired by the respective EU Regulation⁷.

The EU further supported the OHCHR in following up on UNGA resolution 73/304 on Torture-Free Trade adopted in June 2019. It welcomed the [report](#) from the UN Group of governmental experts on torture-free trade published on 30 May 2022, which recommended that the UNGA establishes a forward-looking process in view of **common international standards** in this field. The EU continued to strongly condemn arbitrary arrests and detentions, calling on states to uphold international law. It continued to support international efforts in this field notably in the framework of the G7.

In 2022, the **EU funded projects** worldwide aimed at eradicating torture and other ill-treatment. Under the Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy Programme, civil society organisations were supported in various areas of anti-torture efforts, from prevention to victims' redress. A global project addressed the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on detention conditions in more than 20 countries whilst other projects provided tailored responses to countries' needs related to torture and detention. As torture remains a core priority

⁷ Regulation (EU) 2019/125 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 January 2019 concerning trade in certain goods which could be used for capital punishment, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (OJ L30, 21.1.2019).

for the thematic programme, in 2022 the EU designed an innovative partnership model to support the global movement to eradicate torture more strategically over the coming 4 years. At country level, some EU Delegations issued specific calls for proposals for civil society organisations' projects to tackle torture and related human rights violations. In Mexico, for instance, the Delegation invested almost EUR 1.7 million in three projects that began in 2022, focused on the challenge of disappearances.



© Bianca Moreira

Group of young detainees in Brazil (Vitória de Santo Antão, Pernambuco), June 2022, EU funded project on Covid and detention, with OMCT.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Assistance to human rights defenders through both political and financial means is one of the flagship EU human rights activities, having a direct impact on individuals, groups and organisations defending human rights.

In 2022, human rights defenders continued to face threats and attacks such as killings, arbitrary detention, smear campaigns or judicial harassment. They are also increasingly victims of illegal online surveillance, transnational repression or criminalisation due to ill-motivated "foreign agent" or counterterrorism laws.

To counter this trend, the EU raised specific cases of human rights defenders at risk in **all its human rights dialogues**, subcommittee meetings and consultations (e.g. dialogue with [Colombia](#) or [India](#)). The protection of human rights defenders was also discussed in EU-supported civil society seminars preceding human rights dialogues (e.g. EU-Brazil and EU-Mexico seminars). The EU also continued to make its voice heard with public statements and declarations to support human rights defenders at risk (for instance on cases in [Iran](#), [Russia](#), or [Mexico](#)). Global support for human rights defenders was voiced by The High Representative on the occasion of the [World NGO Day](#) in February 2022 and during the [24th EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights](#) in December 2022.

EU Delegations and Member States' embassies engaged and met with human rights defenders, monitored trials, and visited human rights defenders in detention. Annual meetings between EU diplomats and human rights defenders have become an established practice in non-EU countries, increasing the visibility of human rights defenders where appropriate and allowing for in-depth analysis of the challenges they face. Some EU Delegations provided awards to Human Rights Defenders (for instance in [Uganda](#)).

The support and protection of human rights defenders is also a **priority for the EUSR for Human Rights**. Throughout 2022, the EUSR continued to raise individual cases of human rights defenders, particularly those in long-term detention, and to meet with human rights defenders, both in Brussels and during country visits. He availed of every opportunity to express support and solidarity directly to the defenders themselves or their families. He raised specific cases during visits to several countries, including India, Uganda, Pakistan, Egypt and Colombia and in other bilateral contacts, notably with Cuba and Brazil. He also participated in a number of high profile events aimed at raising awareness and visibility around their work and the need for their protection, such as the ProtectDefenders.eu [beneficiary meeting](#) in September, or the Front Line Defenders Dublin Platform in October. The EUSR was very active on individual cases on social media, notably regarding Belarus. He also highlighted the situation of Palestinian prisoners on hunger-strike and their deteriorating health conditions.

The EU remained active in **multilateral fora** in particular in the United Nations Human Rights Council and the United Nations General Assembly. The EU actively collaborated with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, regularly exchanging information on cases and thematic priorities. The EU advocated for the recognition of human rights defenders in several UN General Assembly resolutions. At the Human Rights Council, the EU highlighted the critical role that human rights defenders play in the protection and promotion of human rights and spoke out in their defence inter alia [during the interactive dialogues](#) with several Special Procedures.



EU representative assisting, as observer, to trial of Human Rights defenders in Honduras.

Mexico- public campaign and field visits

The EU Delegation in Mexico promotes the visibility of Human Rights Defenders. In May 2022, the EU commenced a joint activity (with Member States, Norway and Switzerland) entitled Protejamos SusVoces (“Protecting their Voices”). On a voluntary basis, and depending on capacity and resources, some Member States will accompany up to five HRDs/journalists. The “accompanying activities” could range from arranging meetings with HRDs/journalists and communicating about them, visits on the spot where the HRDs/journalists are present or active, inviting them to high-profile activities (such as National Day receptions or for relevant international days) and following investigative or judicial proceedings. The EU Delegation will facilitate exchanges between EU Member States to learn from each other’s working methods and best practices. Thus far, seven Member States, Norway and Switzerland and the EU Delegation, have agreed to “accompany” about 30 HRDs with different profiles and from various states across Mexico.

The EU remained a major donor in supporting and protecting human rights defenders, most notably under the EIDHR. The instrument funds the EU Human Rights Defenders mechanism ProtectDefenders.eu⁸ (EUR 35 million for 2015-2022). The latter has provided support to around 58,000 human rights defenders at risk and their families since 2015, through multifaceted assistance and the combination of short, medium and long-term action. Its activities range from direct support for individuals, groups and organisations, temporary relocation programmes, training, capacity building and outreach to the most vulnerable and marginalised, to advocacy at global, regional and local levels.

In 2022, ProtectDefenders.eu provided support to more than 6,500 of the most-at-risk human rights defenders. In particular, the mechanism addressed attacks and repression against defenders in more than 110 countries, including Colombia, Russia, Belarus, Brazil, and DRC, among others.

In November 2022, the third phase of the EU Human Rights Defenders Mechanism implemented by the ProtectDefenders.eu consortium [kicked off with EUR 30 million for 2022-2027](#) financed under the Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy Programme.

The **EU emergency fund for human rights defenders at risk**, directly managed by the EU since 2010, continued to operate in 2022. The fund supported at least 1,600 human rights defenders and their family members since 2014. This direct financial support contributes to effectively implementing the EU guidelines on human rights defenders. Crucial assistance was provided through small grants, which served to cover costs related to temporary relocation, subsistence, medical and legal support, prison visits, security (increasingly digital), equipment and training. An increasing number of human rights defenders supported by the EU work on freedom of expression and the media, freedom of association and labour rights, governance and anti-corruption issues, the rights of LGBTI

⁸ EU Human Rights Defenders mechanism ProtectDefenders.eu: <https://protectdefenders.eu/>

persons and environmental, land and indigenous peoples' rights as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and in human rights law. In 2022, the emergency fund also provided assistance to staff members from independent National Human Rights Institutions and legal professionals facing risks for defending human rights.

The **Human Rights Crises Facility**, established in 2014, continued to provide flexible grants to civil society and human rights defenders working in extremely difficult conditions and where the publication of a call for proposals would be inappropriate. In 2022, five projects started to provide support to human rights defenders through re-granting, direct support and protection, capacity building and networking, some specifically targeting country contexts where the situation of human rights and their defenders sharply deteriorated. These actions enabled the work of a variety of human rights defenders groups, such as media outlets, diaspora groups and those trying to prevent new legislation that shrinks space for civic actors. The Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy Programme continues the Crises Facility, with an enhanced budget to help meet increased challenges.



Felicitá Ávila, an indigenous leader been awarded, by Team Europe ambassadors and government representatives, with the 2022 edition of European Prize for Human Rights Defenders in Honduras.

TACKLING MULTIPLE AND INTERSECTING FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

Equality is a core value guiding the EU's internal and external policy. The EU human rights guidelines on non-discrimination in external action continue to guide the EU's activity, with special emphasis on multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination across all actions.

The EU is strongly committed to support the elimination of racial discrimination in all its forms through its external action. The High Representative issued a declaration on behalf of the EU on the **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**⁹. Moreover, in March 2022, the Council adopted **conclusions on combating racism and antisemitism**¹⁰ deploring the alarming rise in racist and antisemitic incidents in EU Member States. All EU Member States committed to develop national action plans on combating racism and antisemitism by the end of 2022, implementing the 2020 EU Anti-racism Action Plan and the 2021 EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life¹¹. The Commission is monitoring progress at national level, it encourages EU Member States to appoint special envoys or coordinators on combating antisemitism and to adopt and actively use the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism.

The second **EU Anti-racism summit** was held on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, on 21 March 2022. The Summit focused on preparation and adoption of national action plans against racism and racial discrimination and the important role of young people and racialized youth in combating racism and discrimination.

9 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/21/international-day-for-the-elimination-of-racial-discrimination-21-march-2022-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu/>

10 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_4990

11 [EUR-Lex - 52021DC0615 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/lexUri.do?uri=CELEX:52021DC0615-EN)

At the **United Nations**, the EU continued engaging constructively in the work of the Human Rights Council in the field of fight against racism and intolerance, closely following deliberations on the follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and in the negotiations on related resolutions of the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. The EU also actively participates in UN working groups on the fight against racism, feeding in information in EU legislation, policies and activities in this field.

Racial discrimination was at the agenda of several human rights dialogues, including the one with South Africa in September 2022.

The EU also works to eliminate multiple other forms discrimination, employing all tools at its disposals and as covered in a number of ensuing chapters of this report.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

In 2022, which marked the 30th anniversary of **the 1992 UN Declaration** on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, FORB remained a key priority of the EU's external human rights policy.

The EU consistently raised concerns about violations of freedom of religion or belief in political dialogues with partner countries, including human rights dialogues and consultations in particular with countries of the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, Central Asia and South-East Asia. For instance, FORB was an important element of the EU-India human rights dialogue¹², or of the regional EU-ASEAN human rights dialogue¹³. In a number of cases, the EU organised **targeted seminars and conferences** in follow-up to human rights dialogues.

12 https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/india/10th-eu-india-human-rights-dialogue_en#:~:text=The%2010th%20EU-India,and%20promoting%20all%20human%20rights,

13 <https://asean.org/joint-press-release-4th-asean-eu-policy-dialogue-on-human-rights/#:~:text=Jakarta%2C%2026%20October%202022%3A%20The,Policy%20Dialogue%20on%20Human%20Rights.>

In June 2022, in Manama, the EU co-organised **with Bahrain** a conference on FORB "Broadening the Tent: Freedom of Religion and Belief". The three-day meeting brought together Bahraini and European policy and decision makers as well as civil society representatives from faith/belief-based sectors in a structured dialogue to better understand their respective journeys regarding FORB, how they practically encompass and work with diversity of religions and beliefs and how to reinforce the respect of FORB at the regional and global levels. Through networking, visits and structured dialogue, the participants were able to better understand the EU's and Bahrain's respective perspectives on FORB and explore further activities and cooperation in the framework of the EU-GCC dialogue or other frameworks.

As conflicts are multiplying around the world, the EU also stressed the importance of ensuring the protection of religious heritage sites and places of worship. The **EU condemned all acts of unlawful destruction of cultural heritage**, which are often committed during or in the aftermath of armed conflicts around the world, or because of terrorist attacks, and urged all parties to armed conflicts to refrain from any unlawful military use or targeting of cultural property.

The EU unequivocally condemned all acts of violence based on religion or belief including acts committed in the name of religion. The High Representative issued an EU Declaration¹⁴ on the **International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief** with a clear message that "*victims of persecution and discrimination must not be silenced and those responsible must be held accountable*".

Freedom of religion or belief has also remained a priority for the **EU Special Representative for Human Rights**. The EUSR delivered opening remarks at the 8th meeting of the Istanbul Process on 16

¹⁴ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/08/21/international-day-commemorating-the-victims-of-acts-of-violence-based-on-religion-or-belief-22-august-2022-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu/>

February 2022 and addressed freedom of religion or belief, as well as the situation of religious minorities, during his country visits, for instance during a visit to Pakistan.

To identify violations of freedom of religion or belief worldwide, the EU continued to **engage regularly with religious or non-confessional actors, humanists, and human rights NGOs** working on freedom of religion or belief through meetings in Brussels and by EU Delegations.

On December 2022 the European Commission appointed Frans van Daele as Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU. In close coordination with the EUSR, the Special Envoy will support cooperation with national authorities and other stakeholders in countries suffering from discrimination on grounds of religion or belief. He will also support intercultural and interreligious dialogue, including between representatives of different faiths and the setting up of joint initiatives, and he will work on the prevention of extremism on grounds of religion or belief in third countries.

The EU's commitment to protecting and promoting freedom of religion or belief is anchored in **multilateralism** and in particular in its engagement in the UN human rights fora and UN-led initiatives and is based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination and universality.

The EU once again presented **resolutions on freedom of religion or belief** in the UN human rights fora in Geneva and New York, which were adopted by consensus. The EU continued to work closely with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation on its resolution to ensure the complementarity of their respective resolutions and universal ownership.

On the occasion of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the EU Delegation, together with the United Nations Office in Geneva and the Permanent Mission of Israel, organised the lighting of candles on the UN Place des Nations in Geneva.



© EU Delegation to Geneva

The EU continued **support for the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur** on freedom of religion or belief, which was extended for a further period of three years and called on countries that have not yet done so to issue standing invitations to the mandate holder.

The EU contributed actively to interactive dialogues with the mandate holder, for instance during the 49th session of the Human Rights Council on the topic of the **rights of persons belonging to religious or belief minorities in situations of conflict and insecurity**. Therein, the EU underlined that states have the obligation to ensure that persons belonging to minorities may exercise fully and effectively all human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full equality before the law. The EU stressed that persons belonging to minorities have the right to profess and practise their own religion, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination.

In New York, the EU led a **cross-regional Joint Statement in defence of freedom of expression and the right to criticize and change religion**. The text contained a clear message on the importance of free speech on religious matters, and called on the repeal of blasphemy and apostasy laws. On 21 October 2022, the EU Delegation to the UN in New York hosted a side-event on '[Freedom of Thought](#)

– [The Forgotten Freedom that we need to remember](#)', featuring the new Special Rapporteur on FoRB, Ms Nazila Ghanea. Against the backdrop of the stabbing of Salman Rushdie, the theme focused on the right to have or not to have a religion, and the right to change or criticize any religion or belief, a right that needs protection.

The EU engaged actively with like-minded countries during regular meetings of the **International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief** (co-chaired by Canada and the US) including during meetings in London, Geneva and New York.

The EUSR for Human Rights participated in the UK **Ministerial on Religious Freedom in London in July 2022** and underlined the EU's strong commitment to freedom of religion or belief, as well as the commitment to work closely with all actors to promote freedom of religion or belief.

The EU also maintained regular contacts with regional organisations, including OSCE and ODIHR. The EU continued to engage with the UN Alliance of Civilizations within the UN through bilateral exchanges and participation in events.

Building inclusive and resilient societies is one of the core challenges reflected in the current multilateral agenda (Agenda 2030 and the Istanbul Process) and continues to guide many EU initiatives as well. In 2022 the '[Global Exchange on Religion in Society](#)' project, which aimed to connect civil society actors from all around the world (whether faith-based or of more secular orientation) working on faith and social inclusion, concluded its work.

On the programming side, the EU continued to finance three regional projects in the Middle East and Africa with more than EUR 5 million from 2018 to 2022. The projects aimed to improve cultural pluralism and intercultural understanding related to religion or belief. The implementation of six civil society projects in the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia as a result of the dedicated 2017 global call for proposals on freedom of religion or belief under the

EIDHR, with a final EU contribution of EUR 5.18 million came to an end. The projects supported the facilitation of dialogue processes, inter-cultural understanding, the promotion of non-discrimination, awareness raising, advocacy, as well as monitoring, research and capacity-building.

In Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, an EU-funded project trained and supported more than 300 young people to create and carry out their own dialogue initiatives. The activities showed the power of culture and arts to bring young people together and helped them to connect, address traumas due to conflicts, and understand that “learning to live together” is necessary for peace.

In Niger and Nigeria, the EU-funded project Zaman Tare supported the development of cultural and artistic material on tolerance and respect for cultural and religious pluralism by local artists, as well as the organisation of community-based art exhibitions and training of journalists on media neutrality and impartiality. The activities showed concrete impact, with incidences of violence drastically reducing in both countries, resulting in more peaceful communities.

In Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, the project “Advancing Inter-religious dialogue and FoRB in Southeast Asia” implemented from 2019 to 2021 contributed - despite the short timeline - to changes in policy, practice and awareness among fellows of a network of religious and traditional peacemakers.

HUMAN RIGHTS OF PERSONS BELONGING TO MINORITIES

The EU remained a **steadfast supporter of the the rights of persons belonging to minorities** throughout 2022 and continued to advocate and uphold the rights of national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities in line with the UN declaration, including in multilateral fora.

As part of its neighborhood, development, and humanitarian policies, the EU continues to be committed to **fostering Roma¹⁵ equality, inclusion, and participation** in its external action. Given that Roma people continue to suffer from disproportionate discrimination, anti-gypsyism and socioeconomic exclusion in their daily lives within the EU and outside, more efforts by the EU, EU Member States and partner countries remain necessary to meet the commitments of the 2020 EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation.

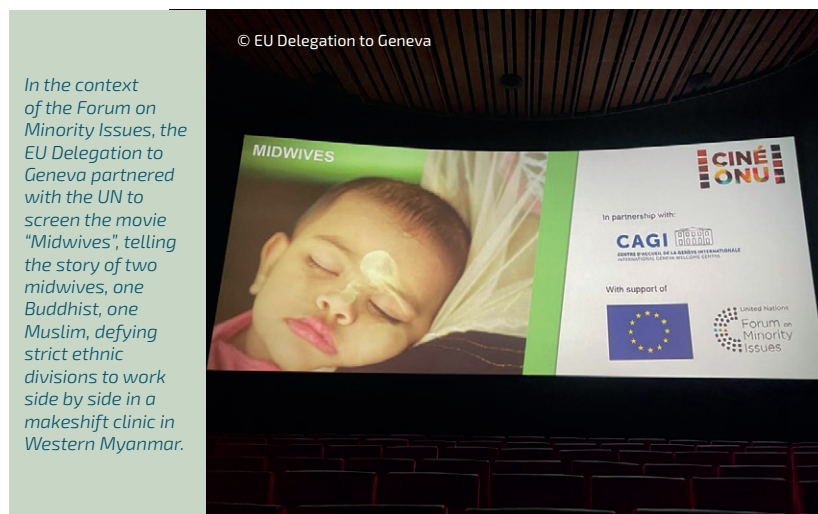
It plays an important role in the accession negotiations with partners from the Western Balkans that have all completed, in 2022, the adoption of new Roma inclusion policy documents for the next five to ten years, in line with the EU Roma Strategic Framework. The Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy programme, as well as the Economic and Investment Plan for Western Balkans¹⁶, remain key tools, amongst others, to help partners strengthen their action to support Roma inclusion, equality, and economic and social participation.

At the **global and multilateral levels**, the EU has continued to call on all states to respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights of persons belonging to minorities, including national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities, expressing concern about persistent cases of violations and abuses of minorities' rights, including in Myanmar, Ethiopia, Türkiye and China.

The 15th session of the **UN Forum on Minority Issues** convened on 1 and 2 December 2022 to analyse practices, challenges, opportunities and initiatives in addressing conflict prevention and the protection of the human rights of minorities, in line with the principles and rights

¹⁵ In line with the terminology of European institutions, the umbrella term 'Roma' is used here to refer to a number of different groups (e.g. Roma, Sinti, Kale, Gypsies, Romanichels, Boyash, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom, Abda...) without denying the specificities of these groups.

¹⁶ European Commission, Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, 6 October 2020: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_1811



enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and other relevant international instruments.

The EU emphasised the importance of strengthening societies' defence mechanisms, including institutional advocates and human rights defenders, and called for a strengthened role for independent National Human Rights Institutions, and for strengthening access at the local, national and international levels to effective legal remedies especially for women and girls belonging to minorities. The **EU further continued to oppose all forms of incitement to violence or hatred, and hate speech, online and offline**, while preserving the full articulation of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

GENDER EQUALITY

In 2022 the EU played a key role in promoting gender equality beyond its borders. Particular efforts were put in place to strengthen gender mainstreaming across all policies and activities.

The commitments in the Action Plan 2020-2024 and the **EU Gender Action Plan III 2021-2025 (GAP III)**, continued guiding the work of the EEAS and the European Commission. Overall, in 2022, the share of new external actions (programmes and projects) that contributed to gender equality has continued to increase substantially, reaching an all-time high of 70%.¹⁷

The EU also continued to design interventions specifically targeting gender equality. The Gender for Development **Uganda** (G4DU) Action of 2022 (EUR 60 million) is a first EU contribution to the Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on demography and social inclusion. The objectives of G4DU are to improve inclusive access and participation in schools for adolescent girls, including their transition to secondary level or other learning pathways; improve opportunities for adolescent girls to learn, in safe and well-managed schools and increase access to SRHR and reduce incidences of SGBV in schools and communities. In a Team Europe approach, significant funding from both the German and Belgian Federal Governments will complement the EU contribution to increase the scope and impact of the Action.

In **Cameroun**, the programme "Appui à la société civile au Cameroun et à sa contribution à l'égalité de genre, la paix et la cohésion sociale dans les régions en crise" of EUR 17 million supports the civil society and its contribution to gender equality, peace and social cohesion in crisis regions.

In Asia, the "EU-Vietnam Women-led Green Partnership Programme" of EUR 15 million aims at supporting women in all their diversity to influence decision-making processes on climate change and environmental conservation policies and actions in **Vietnam**.

¹⁷ See: the 2022 Annual Report on the implementation of the EU's External Action Instruments - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu).

In Latin America, in **Bolivia**, the EU also adopted a EUR 3.5 million programme “Fight against gender-based violence”. In parallel, efforts for gender mainstreaming across all external policies and sectors were strengthened, including in the humanitarian sphere.

The EU remained a **vocal advocate of women’s and girls’ full enjoyment of all human rights at multilateral fora**, including in the Human Rights Council, driving key country and thematic resolutions. In October 2022, the EU engaged in the Third Committee for a strong resolution on elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, expressing that tradition or religious custom cannot exempt states from eliminating violence against women, including femicide. **The EU continued to engage actively with the UN system**, in particular UN Women, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). Finally, the EU continued to promote the work of women human rights defenders and women’s (rights) organisations.

The EU engaged in the **G7 and G20** on gender equality as well as human rights more generally. In the course of 2022, the EU played a pivotal role in the Working Group on Gender Equality under the German Presidency of the G7, for instance as it relates to gender mainstreaming in all ministerial tracks and the design of a new accountability framework. G7 Leaders endorsed in July 2022 the first deliverable of this framework, the gender-gap dashboard. The EU also participated in the second G20 Ministerial Conference on Women’s Empowerment convened by the Indonesian G20 Presidency in August 2022 to exchange best practices and bring attention to critical issues to close gender gaps in the post-Covid-19 global economy.

The EU **actively contributed to the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** held in March 2022 with the priority theme: ‘Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes’. Its outcome – “Agreed

Conclusions” - include important recommendations, notably on gender mainstreaming in these areas. Moreover, threats against media workers and journalists were recognized for the first time in the final agreed conclusions – an issue the EU has been very vocal about for years.

Masculinity is about equality



Olof SKOOG
Head of the EU
Delegation to New
York

The EU organised a number of events during the 66th session of the CSW, and the **High-level event of the EU-led Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls** focused on the role of men and boys in eliminating gender-based violence; speakers also included UNFPA Executive Director Natalia Kanem, PRs Egriselda Gonzalez Lopez from El Salvador and Collen Kelapile from Botswana, as well as the UN Secretary-General, Spotlight champion and rugby player Siya Kolisi and EU Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen.

The EU continued to implement the **EU Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security (WPS)** and its Action Plan, which was reaffirmed through comprehensive Council Conclusions on WPS issued in November 2022¹⁸. The EU Ambassador for Gender and Diversity Stella Ronner-Grubačić took action to engrain the gender perspective in EU diplomacy, political dialogue and policy decisions. Promoting gender-responsive leadership plays an important role in achieving this goal, and significant efforts were carried out in this regard in 2022.

¹⁸ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/257856/Council%20press%20release_Conclusions%20on%20women,%20peace%20and%20security_14.11.2022.pdf

In addition, the EU continued to put gender equality, women's empowerment and the implementation of the WPS agenda at the heart of its **regional partnerships**, such as with the Council of Europe (CoE), the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organisation of American States (OAS), the OSCE and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and was a driving force behind the Regional Acceleration of Resolution 1325 Mechanism. The WPS agenda continues being implemented by **CSDP missions and operations**.

Gender equality, women's and girls' enjoyment of all human rights and their empowerment were consistently raised in **bilateral political and human rights dialogues and consultations** with partner countries. The EU also supported the full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) across the world.

The EU, its delegations across the globe as well as CSDP missions and operations **celebrated prominently key international days**, such as the International Women's Day on 8 March and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November.



Stop gender violence. National campaign in Mauritania to prevent violence against women. Youth, artists, members of civil society, women, men, all participated in the painting of several walls in key locations.

The EU continued its efforts to prevent and end **sexual and gender-based violence** globally: to support and protect survivors of such crimes, and hold perpetrators accountable. The EU addressed the root causes of violence while strengthening legal frameworks and institutions as well as education, improve services for survivors and access to justice for victims, support women's rights organisations and CSOs. The growing EU-led **Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls** remained an important initiative for the EU in the UN framework. The European Commission continued in 2022 as an active co-leader in the **Generation Equality Forum Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence**, launched in 2021.

EU-UN Spotlight Initiative - the largest global initiative (EUR 500 million) targeted at eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030 – actions continued in its third year of implementation and present solid achievements in most countries, including¹⁹:

- National budgets to address all forms of violence against women and girls increased eightfold.
- Over 1.6 million women and girls have been provided with gender-based violence services.
- 2.5 million young people joined in- and out-of-school programmes promoting gender-equitable norms and values.
- Nearly 130 million people were reached through behaviour change campaigns in at least 29 languages.
- USD 179 million allocated to civil society, women's and grassroots organizations so far, 78% to national, local and grassroots organizations.

Through social media, the Spotlight Initiative's **flagship digital engagement campaign on ending violence against women and girls (#WithHer)** was an effective way to challenge harmful gender norms

¹⁹ Spotlight Initiative Global Annual Narrative Progress Report 2021, June 2022. <https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/publications/spotlight-initiative-global-annual-narrative-progress-report-2021>

and stereotypes. With participation of EU and UN representatives, civil society partners, and international content creators, the campaign reached over 146 million users across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

In 2022, gender remained a key component of **EU's humanitarian aid and activity**. The EU kept supporting the prevention, mitigation and response to sexual and gender-based violence in emergencies, including **conflict-related sexual violence**, through funding and advocacy activities. From both the humanitarian and development budgets, the EU supported targeted actions to prevent, mitigate and respond to gender-based violence with some EUR 41.3 million, including the preparation of cases to be brought to courts under Universal Jurisdiction. The EU furthermore remained an active member of the **Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies** initiative implementing the Road Map 2021-2025. In addition, in 2022, DG ECHO allocated approximately EUR 23.4 million in targeted funding to sexual and reproductive health services. Lastly, the EU continued to mainstream gender in all humanitarian projects by means of its gender-age marker. The latest data from the period 2018-2021, shows that more than 90% of all eligible EU-funded humanitarian projects consistently included gender and age considerations.

In terms of **advocacy**, the EU organised a high-level event with a focus on preventing and responding to gender-based violence at the **first-ever European Humanitarian Forum** in March 2022. In addition, the EU, Belgium and the Democratic Republic of the Congo hosted a **high-level event during the 76th UN General Assembly** in September 2022, focused on accountability to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. Moreover, the EU has closely liaised with the **UNSG Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict** to implement the Framework on cooperation between the Government of Ukraine and the UN on prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence.

The EU continued supporting the **International Fund for Survivors of Conflict Related Sexual Violence Fund** with EUR 2 million, which is a mechanism to facilitate access globally to reparations and other forms



Violence is always a choice #AskYourself

To mark the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, the Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro and Europe House, in cooperation with their partners, organised the campaign #ZAPITAJ_SE (Ask Yourself), which is dedicated to this burning social problem. The core of the campaign was a photo exhibition accompanied by strong psychological messages.

The photos are accompanied by strong psychological messages, created with the help of the Association of Psychologists of Montenegro. Their purpose is to make the viewers question themselves and analyse their internal processes, which can lead to, justify or support violent behaviour.

Some of the messages are as follows: that violence is not innate but learned, that suppressing emotions leads to violence, that it is always a conscious choice, that jealousy is not love, that violence shows weakness not manliness, and that supporting the abuser is complicity.

of redress to victims and survivors of conflict related sexual violence. In the three pilot countries, it so far benefitted 3,868 survivors with interim reparative measures (IRM): 158 survivors in Guinea, 1,093 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 1,366 in Iraq (1,088 in Dolhuk and 278 in Sinjar). EU-funded allocations have been directed to DRC, Central African Republic, Guinea, Iraq, Nigeria and Türkiye with Syrian survivors.

During 2022, again, the EU supported more than 500,000 women and girls by providing services in access to justice, health care and social welfare related to **female genital mutilation (FGM)** through the joint programme on the elimination of FGM implemented by UNFPA. Prevention efforts are showing a positive impact; more than 2,000 communities in a number of countries have publicly announced that they are abandoning this practice, 80 million people were engaged through digital approaches and campaigns promoting the elimination of FGM²⁰, and 120,600 girls were saved from undergoing the harmful practice.



© EU Delegation to Rwanda

Team Europe Advocacy campaign against sexual and gender based violence in rural Rwanda with local drama group.

²⁰ Additional information is contained in the Rights of the Child section.

The EU support to the **joint programme on ending child marriage** with UNICEF and UNFPA continued to focus on gender transformative approaches focused on facilitating traditional, religious and community leaders to engage boys and men and the community in general in dialogues that promote positive masculinities. Overall, it reached over 4 million boys and men with messages addressing harmful masculinities and gender norms, and engaged over 16 million people through community platforms in reflective dialogues towards discriminatory social and gender norms and harmful practices. A total of 7,848 service delivery points were supported to strengthen girl-responsive services to prevent and mitigate child marriage.

A large-scale awareness raising campaign in Montenegro:

#TellTheWholeStory was implemented together with the Association of Judges, Ministry of Justice of Montenegro, Supreme Court of Montenegro and CSOs Women Rights Centre and SOS Telephone for Women and Children Victims of Violence - Podgorica, to encourage victims to use their right to legal aid. Following the awareness raising initiative, the number of requests for free legal aid in cases of domestic violence increased by 113% - for the first five months of 2022, the total of 42 requests were approved which is a significant increase compared with the same period in 2021, when 20 requests were approved.

Ending discrimination and violence against women is the **focus of some regional and bilateral programmes**. For example the regional programme in the Eastern Neighbourhood, 'EU4Gender Equality: Together against Gender Stereotypes and Gender-Based Violence', implemented jointly by UN Women and the UN Population Fund, aims at increasing capacities on evidence-based violence prevention, targeting perpetrators of domestic violence. In addition, the European

Union/Council of Europe Partnership for Good Governance for Eastern Partnership countries – Phase III – also targets gender equality and gender based violence at national and regional level.

In follow-up to the EU-AU Summit in February 2022, **European and African** partners launched in December 2022 a new Team Europe Initiative to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in Africa, particularly among adolescent girls and young women. The intention is to ensure a wide and balanced coverage across Western, Central, Eastern and Southern African countries. Funding from the EU budget notably includes EUR 60 million for 2023–2027, and EU Member States are expected to make significant new financial commitments in the coming years in line with the above objectives.

LGBTI

The EU continued **to stand up for the rights of LGBTI persons** and LGBTI human rights defenders around the world and showed strong commitment to protecting and promoting their full enjoyment of human rights, including as part of the implementation of the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy and the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy²¹.

On the **multilateral level**, the EU continued to promote the rights of LGBTI persons in the UN system. The EU Delegation in New York remained an active player in the UN LGBTI Core Group consisting of NGOs' and UN Member States' missions for advancing rights of LGBTI persons. Intolerance and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity was also addressed in the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The EU continued engaging with UN Special Procedures under the Human Rights Council, namely the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

21 LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-25: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/lgb-tiq-equality-strategy-2020-2025_en



© EU Delegation to Honduras

International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT) celebration in Honduras, where the EU participated assuring its support in promoting LGTBI rights.

The EU raised the topic of rights of LGBTI persons in **human rights dialogues** with the countries across all regions. The human rights of LGBTI persons also featured in dialogues with partner countries benefitting from the EU's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP+) and the EBA (Everything but Arms scheme).



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Together with the Netherlands Office Taipei and the Taipei City Government, the European Economic and Trade Office have brought the Amsterdam Rainbow Dress Foundation to Taiwan. A dress made up of the 68 flags where being LGBTI is punishable by law.



Members of the LGBTI community in Rwanda during Isano Fashion show.

The Declaration by the High Representative on the behalf of the EU on the **International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia** on 17 May²² was widely disseminated to all audiences around the world. EU Delegations across all regions raised the rainbow flag. EU Delegations in Latin America, North America, Western Europe and countries in the Global North were very engaged in public activities, largely owing to the more open political atmosphere. EU Delegations also convened seminars and conferences with LGBTI activists. In China, the Diversity Week, a local initiative jointly prepared with EU Member States, enabled engagement with local audiences. In Vietnam, the EU Delegation sponsored the Hanoi Pride 2022 and the EU Ambassador shared the opening speech of the event with the local LGBTI community and all participants, calling for the respect of equality, inclusion, respect for human dignity and diversity. In Geneva, the EU Delegation joined the social media campaign 'Diplomats for Equality', and participated in the Pride Month campaign.

22 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/05/16/international-day-against-homophobia-transphobia-and-biphobia-17-may-2022-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union/>

The EU provided **technical and financial assistance to tackle violence, hatred and discrimination against LGBTI persons** in candidate countries and potential candidates for EU accession. The joint work with the Council of Europe through the Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye 2019–2022 (Horizontal Facility II) has been successful, as demonstrated by the adoption of same-sex civil partnerships in Montenegro, or the recent adoption of national LGBTI action plans by Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2022, three contracts were signed with civil society organisations under the EIDHR Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS) for projects aiming at protecting and defending rights of LGBTI persons in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

The EU increased support to **civil society organisations and human rights defenders** in their efforts to protect and advance rights of LGBTI persons. In particular, EUR 15 million were earmarked for the promotion of equality, inclusion and diversity under the Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy programme.

The EU continues to offer a **rapid response mechanism to protect individual LGBTI rights defenders at risk**. Between January 2020 and December 2022, approximately 850 LGBTI rights defenders have received support from the Protect Defenders Facility (e.g. emergency grants, temporary relocation, capacity-building and training). Moreover, in 2022, the EU allocated small emergency grants to LGBTI rights defenders under the EU Emergency Fund for Human Rights Defenders at Risk. Since the start of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, Ukrainian LGBTI activists and organisations have benefitted from a more direct and faster procedure for accessing EU funds, under the "direct award" modality.

EU **humanitarian aid** is adapted to the needs of different groups, including LGBTI persons, in line with humanitarian principles. The EU has, inter alia, funded safe protection projects and services targeting LGBTI populations in Türkiye and Bangladesh.

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

During 2022 the EU continued its multiple activities to uphold, promote and strengthen the rights of the child, in implementation of the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024, the **Strategy on the Rights of the Child**²³ and the **European Child Guarantee**²⁴ adopted the previous year.

The EU continued to field initiatives to strengthen the rights of the child in **multilateral human rights fora**. At the 49th session of the Human Rights Council, the EU and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean countries sponsored a resolution on realizing the rights of the child and family reunification, which was adopted by consensus. The resolution stressed that all unaccompanied children and children separated from their families due to climate change, armed conflict, humanitarian and other disasters, or for their own protection, should have their rights upheld without discrimination of any kind, including by family reunification procedures.

Moreover, the EU's support was instrumental to civil society's successful campaign for a **Guidance Note on child rights mainstreaming** in the framework of the Secretary General's Call to Action for Human Rights. During the UN General Assembly Third Committee, two resolutions, one on **protecting children from bullying** and another against **child, early and forced marriage (CEFM)** were adopted by consensus strengthening language inter alia on multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, inclusion, inclusive and equitable quality education, participation of girls and the link between climate change and CEFM. To underscore its commitment to meaningful participation of children and youth in the issues that directly affect them, the EU co-hosted a side-event, with UNFPA, Israel, Uruguay, Chile, Portugal and Greece, on **Best Practices for Children's Meaningful Participation in Policy Making**.

²³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0142>

²⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1428&langId=en>



The associations Samu Social and Empire des Enfants have implemented an EU-funded project to contribute to the social, health protection and economic resilience of very vulnerable street children and young people in the wake of the risks inherent to COVID 19 in Senegal.

© Samu Social Dakar – Senegal

In its external action, the EU continued to implement the Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child and the Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict. The EU allocated approximately EUR 82.7 million to **child protection in humanitarian settings, including to children associated with armed conflict**. Through the EU Regional Trust Fund, concrete projects continue in response to the Syria crisis, in support of **inclusive, equitable and quality education** for Syrian refugees and vulnerable children in host communities in neighbouring countries. Support to children affected by armed conflict continued also in Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, Afghanistan and Colombia. In view of the massive impact on women, children and girls of the conflict in Cameroon, all new EU projects funded through the EIDHR included components to promote women's and girls' rights in regions affected by crisis, as well as protection, conflict prevention and crisis/conflict resolution.



The **European Forum on Children's Rights** on 27-20 September 2022 gathered over 430 participants, including many children. A special focus was on child participation, key actions under the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and children in conflicts. The European Commission launched a new European Child Participation Platform to connect existing child participation mechanisms at local, national and EU level, and involve children in the decision-making processes at EU level.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has had particularly serious impacts on the rights of children, with millions displaced internally and as refugees. Inside the country, millions of children receive food, water, medicine, emergency health care, education and child protection through EU's humanitarian partners. The EU and its Member States adopted a Political statement on the protection of forcibly displaced children from Ukraine. Member States have also made it possible for more than half a million Ukrainian children to attend schools in the European Union. The European Commission, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, issued a guidance document on supporting the inclusion of Ukrainian refugees in education²⁵.

²⁵ [SWD-2022-185-inclusion-displaced-children-Ukraine-in-education.pdf \(schooleducationgateway.eu\)](#)

The European Child Guarantee helps the coordination efforts at national level, with special focus given to children from institutions and children at risk of trafficking and abduction. Undocumented, unaccompanied and separated children, as well as children from institutions, have required specific attention given their increased vulnerability. The EU works to ensure continued education, including through School Education Gateway.

The EU continued to **support education** in approximately 100 countries worldwide, and has been working with partner countries since the beginning of the pandemic to minimise the impact on learning and the well-being of children. The EU in 2022 remained a leading voice in the area of education in emergencies and protracted crises, having set a target of 10% of humanitarian aid earmarked for education in emergencies and 10% of overall funding under the NDICI Global Europe to education.

Recalling the commitment to a **zero-tolerance policy on child labour**, the EU supported the 2022 Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour and reaffirmed its commitment to contribute to



Laya, aged 13, is an IDP who resides in Mali. She does the manual extraction of the gravel that she then sells. She carries out this activity to help her parents with family expenses.

global efforts implementing the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 8.7 to full elimination of child labour in all forms by 2025. The European Commission proposal for a Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence requires EU companies to perform due diligence to address human rights – including child labour – in their supply chains. In addition, the Commission adopted a proposal for a regulation on forced labour (COM(2022) 453 final) to prohibit the placing and making available on the EU market and the export from the EU of products made with forced labour, including forced child labour.

The EU has been a particular driver on **children's rights and safety online** on the global stage. The new BIK+ Strategy (Strategy for a better Internet for kids), adopted in May 2022, set forth an overall policy framework targeted at a safer and better online experience of children and young persons²⁶. The strategy has global implications for EU external action joining forces also with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to further promote guidance on how to effectively implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocol No. 2 to explicitly address children's rights in the digital environment. The Safer Internet Forum took place in a hybrid format on 27 October 2022 with a theme of A Digital Decade for children and youth: BIK+ to protect, empower and respect.

Given that the circulation of images and videos of sexual abuse of children has dramatically increased with the development of the digital world, the Commission presented in May 2022 its **proposal to prevent and combat child sexual abuse online**, including obligations for online service providers to detect, report, remove, and block child sexual abuse material on their services. The establishment of an EU Centre on child sexual abuse as a decentralised agency to enable the implementation of the new Regulation and support removal of obstacles to the internal market is also proposed.

²⁶ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/strategy-better-internet-kids>

MIGRATION AND MOBILITY – MIGRANTS, REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Following Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine, almost a quarter of the population of Ukraine has been displaced. In parallel, millions of Ukrainian citizens fled to the EU Member States. In an **unprecedented effort**, less than two weeks after the start of Russia's aggression, the Temporary Protection Directive²⁷ was activated for the first time and, on 4 March, the Council unanimously **granted those fleeing the war in Ukraine the right to temporary protection in the European Union**. So far, almost 4 million of registrations for Temporary Protection have been recorded across the EU, giving refugees access to education for children and teenagers, medical care which includes at least access to emergency care and treatment of illness, access to labour market and accommodation.



"Casas de la Alegría" (Houses of Joy) project

In Costa Rica, the "Casas de la Alegría" (Houses of Joy) project seeks to improve the living conditions and promote decent livelihoods in agriculture for migrant families, particularly by contributing to the labor/human rights of seasonal migrant workers and their families. 12 houses of care were established and operated during 2022, providing health services, shelter, education, food and a safe environment for the children of seasonal workers.

²⁷ Council Directive 2001/55/EC, of 20 July 2001, OJ L 212, 7/8/2001

In addition to the Temporary Protection measures, which reduced the vulnerability of people fleeing the conflict, a **Common Anti-Trafficking Plan** was adopted on 11 May 2022 to address the risks of trafficking in human beings and support potential victims among those fleeing the war in Ukraine.

More generally, the EU strengthened efforts to eradicate trafficking in human beings, notably its work across regions to uphold the standards and principles of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. After having evaluated the EU legal framework, on 19 December 2022, the Commission adopted a proposal for an amendment of the **Anti-trafficking Directive**. The legislative package also includes the fourth report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings, with data on recent trends and challenges, as well as information on the implementation of the EU Strategy and of the Common Anti-trafficking Plan.



EU-funded maternity ward helps Syrian refugees in Jordan

The International Medical Corps team at Irbid Hospital examine a newborn baby. More than 8,000 successful deliveries have so far taken place at the hospital.

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Regarding the management of the EU's external borders, in the course of 2022, **Frontex finalised the recruitment of fundamental rights monitors**. 46 monitors are working at present, observing the activities undertaken by Frontex and documenting their compliance with applicable fundamental rights standards. They also monitor the procedures related to border management and return and the environment in which those are implemented. The monitors not only assess compliance with all fundamental rights, but also play an important role in flagging challenges, risks and opportunities for the promotion of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, EU and international law. They are trained to be able to provide advice on ensuring fundamental rights compliance in all border management and return activities to the relevant authorities on the ground.

In November 2022, the European Commission proposed an **Action Plan for the Central Mediterranean**, highlighting the legal obligation for EU Member States to provide assistance to any persons found in distress at sea until the point of safe disembarkation, irrespective of the circumstances that lead people to be in such a situation. This obligation is established in international customary and conventional law, as well as Union law.

On the multilateral level, the EU kept contributing to the **international debate about the rights of migrants, refugees and displaced persons** and to the discussions at the UN on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The EU also sought to improve the human rights-compliance of the management of its external borders, including through interaction with the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, and international organisations. In the context of the **EU-OHCHR Strategic Partnership**, a first expert exchange on migration between the European Union and the UN OHCHR was organized in January 2022 that focused on the proposed EU Pact on Asylum and Migration and the human rights challenges faced by migrants crossing the Mediterranean from Libya.

1.2 Empowering people

EMPOWERING WOMEN

The EU remained committed to gender equality and women's empowerment, preventing and ending sexual and gender-based violence, addressing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and ensuring and strengthening economic, social and political rights for women.

The EU took every opportunity to ensure that the international community remains united and increases efforts to make the promises of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action** and the **Programme of Action on the International Conference on Population and Development** a reality. Particular emphasis was on sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as removing barriers for the empowerment of women and girls, including social, political and economic empowerment.

Efforts were also strengthened to support the **role of women in peace processes** through various forms of capacity-building, networking and mentoring activities. The EU promoted women's political empowerment both through programming activities, human rights dialogues and activities in multilateral fora.

The EU and UN Women have partnered up to implement the project 'Promoting Women, Peace and Security with military actors in transition countries in Africa' (EUR 2.78 million, 2022-2025). The project aims to ensure that military actors can effectively enhance women's participation in the armed forces, with a particular focus on the Central African Republic and Mozambique. It promotes the equal participation of women in the security sector at all levels, including in the military. It supports the inclusion of gender perspectives in the planning and conduct of operations and activities in stability operations and (post-) conflict settings.



in Afghanistan, UNDP, with the financial support of the EU, launched an eight-week workshop for women entrepreneurs in the western zone. These workshops, which focused on business issues, were launched for 4000 women in Herat, Farah, and Badghis provinces.

Furthermore, the project Supporting Arab Women at the Table: Women as Actors in Peace Processes provided mentorship for women leaders and mediators across the Middle East and North Africa (EUR 3 million, 2020-2023). Implemented by the Arab Reform Initiative, the project aims to increase women's meaningful inclusion in political and peace processes in five MENA countries: Libya, Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Palestine. It will increase women's ability to influence the outcomes of political and peace processes. In 2022, several national dialogues (in Yemen and in Iraq) and an informal peace process event in Libya were organised.

In partnership with the UN, the EU continues to provide funding for studies on gender mainstreaming and gender responsive support across community-based activities and recovery measures under its **EU-UN Support to the States in Central Asia for their citizens returned from conflict zones project** (EUR 1.44 million, 2021-2022).

The EU continued to monitor the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. After several months of in-depth discussions with Afghan women, the EU set up a **Forum for Afghan Women Leaders** (AWLF) in March 2022. It engages over 60 Afghan women leaders both from the Afghan diaspora and within Afghanistan through a structured, continuing dialogue, and aims to ensure the participation rights of Afghan women in the country's political dialogue.

The **Advancing Women's Participation in the Syrian Political Process project** (EUR 1.33 million) continued in 2022. Similarly to the AWFL, it aims to strengthen women's participation in the political process, by increasing local mediation and dialogue efforts.



The picture shows executive members of 'Temsale Domestic Workers' Association established in Bahir Dar, Amhara Region discussing about a campaign for the ratification of an ILO convention on domestic workers by the Ethiopian government. The EU, through a Civil Society Fund III (CSF III) project implemented by the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions and Comunità Volontari per il mondo Associazione, is supporting the establishment of these associations for advocating for respect of the rights of domestic workers.

Women's economic empowerment was fostered through programming activities and by promoting policy and legal framework reforms to ensure women's access to the labour market in line with international labour standards, access to resources and finance, and promoting an enabling business environment for women entrepreneurs, including in the digital economy.

The EU continued to promote gender equality for example in the WTO and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), bilaterally through Free Trade Agreements and unilaterally through the Generalised Scheme of Preferences. As a strong proponent of the Buenos Aires Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment from the outset, in 2022, the EU launched a project with the International Trade Centre that will help **to better understand how to apply a gender lens to the work of the WTO**. Four webinars held in autumn of 2022 explored concrete ways to apply a gender lens to trade facilitation, e-commerce, government procurement and investment facilitation.

The Commission is also closely collaborating with the ILO on **equal working conditions**. DG TRADE and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland are funding the Trade for Decent Work project implemented by the ILO (EUR 7.1 million 2019-2022). The aim of the project is to improve the application of ILO fundamental Conventions with selected EU trading partner countries, including the ILO fundamental Convention 100 and 111 on equal remuneration and non-discrimination.

In June 2022, the EU concluded negotiations for a comprehensive trade agreement with New Zealand that includes, for the first time, a **dedicated article** within the trade and sustainable development (TSD) chapter **advancing gender equality and women's economic empowerment** in the Parties' trade and investment relationship, for instance through cooperating on and advancing trade-related

gender issues and measures. The modernised EU-Chile trade agreement, that includes a dedicated Trade and Gender Equality chapter, was politically concluded in December 2022.

Under the **EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP)**, the EU monitors respect by beneficiary countries for the principles of core international conventions on promoting women's rights and gender equality.

The **Team Europe Initiatives (TEI)**²⁸ had an increased focus on gender equality: the TEI 'Gender Equality through Women's empowerment' in Zimbabwe, aims at increasing women's participation and influence in decision-making and the economy. Another flagship TEI called 'Investing in Young Businesses in Africa' empowers early-stage businesses and young entrepreneurs in Africa by extending financial and technical support at the early stages of their development (EUR 4.6 billion).

The flagship **WeEmpowerAsia (WEA) EU-UN project** funded by the EU until August 2022, sought to operationalise and incentivise the application of the framework in companies. It increased women's leadership and participation within the private sector through capacity-building training for women entrepreneurs and implementing gender-sensitive business practices. Implemented in China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, some of the results of the project include the training of more than 3,000 women entrepreneurs to initiate and expand their businesses; activating more than 1,500 companies to commit to Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), and contributing to policy processes in support of gender-equal economies in the Asian region, mobilising over 300 key advocates.

28 A detailed overview of Team Europe Initiatives can be found on the Capacity4Dev portal at: Dashboard | Team Europe Initiative and Joint Programming tracker (europa.eu).

In October 2022, the **5th Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Meeting on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society** was held in Madrid. The 42 UfM Member States adopted a Declaration with concrete and operational recommendations, actions and measures focused on four priority areas for gender equality and women's empowerment, including promoting the transition to formal employment for female workers; support and encourage women's entrepreneurship and STEM leadership. A [high-level regional conference entitled "Women for the Mediterranean"](#), shaped the Roadmap for the coming years.

Numerous initiatives under implementation had implications for women's empowerment. The 2021-2027 **Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon Europe**, supports gender studies and research, women's access to research funding and careers²⁹.



In Niger, "Fada" is a space to speak and exchange, traditionally reserved to men and boys, aimed at deciding on actions to be taken at local level. With the support from the EU Delegation in Niger, the movement "the girls' fada" has amplified in 2022.

29 An EU-funded R&I project, [Gender STI](#), addresses the challenge of integrating a gender perspective in science, technology and innovation (STI) bilateral and multilateral dialogues between Europe and third countries.

They benefited from training in public speaking, communication and community management. As true actors of change, they accompanied the EU Delegation in Niger throughout the year to celebrate women's and girls' rights. In the framework of the European Year of Youth, they animated a debate on gender equality on Europe Day. They also took part to a field mission organised by the EU and the UN in the framework of the Spotlight initiative, where they raised awareness to local communities on girls' rights in Niger.

EMPOWERING CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Conference on the Future of Europe demonstrated how children are committed to shape our democratic life and the future of Europe. To this end, the EU has stepped up its commitment to empowering children and youth. The European Commission and the High Representative adopted the **Youth Action Plan (YAP)** in European Union external action for 2022-2027, the first-ever policy framework for a strategic partnership with young people around the world.

It is one of the deliverables of the 2022 European Year of Youth and also builds on the external dimension of the 2021 EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. Ensuring that youth have the tools and opportunities needed **to fully develop and participate in decision-**

Ahed is 22-year-old resident of Zaatar camp. She is a writer and rapper. She regularly visits UNFPA's Women and Girls Safe Space, adjacent to one of the clinics. She sings to raise awareness about issues that concern girls such as early marriage.



making processes on issues that directly affect them, to build a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable future is at the heart of this plan. The YAP recognises the important and positive contribution of young people in efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Three pillars of action will help shape the EU's partnership with young people in partner countries:

- Partnership to **engage**: increasing young people's voices in policy and decision-making;
- Partnership to **empower**: fighting inequalities and providing young people with the skills and tools they need to thrive;
- Partnership to **connect**: fostering opportunities for young people to network and exchange with their peers worldwide.

The YAP also supports the **implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda**, which promotes the role of young people in building lasting peace, contributing to justice and reconciliation and countering violent extremism at global, regional and national levels.

To enhance meaningful youth participation and partnership the EU launched the **EU@UN youth delegates programme**, which will support gender-balanced and diverse youth participation in multilateral fora and strengthen their capacity to effectively contribute to multilateral policy-making. The first two EU Youth Delegates under this programme have already been assigned to the EU Delegation to the UN in New York. The EU has further supported the establishment of a UN Youth Office.

Inclusive and equitable education systems that are ready to support the digital and green transitions, **opportunity driven vocational education and training, and higher education and mobility** are a key priority under the EU's Global Gateway strategy. The EU shares good practices, based on the recent EU policy on inclusive education which includes the Council Recommendation on Pathways to School



© EU Delegation to Nicaragua / 2022

Primary school students from the city of Ocotol, located in northern Nicaragua, express their ideas on gender equity as part of the "Cuéntame Europa" activity organized by the European Union in Nicaragua to promote universal values among children and youth.

Success³⁰ and its accompanying Staff Working Document³¹, aimed at improving quality and inclusion in school education as well as, on green education, the Council Recommendation on Learning for the green transition and sustainable development³², as well as GreenComp, the European Sustainability Competence Framework³³.

Under the EU Strategy on the rights of the child, the Commission committed to establish, jointly with the European Parliament and child rights organisations, an **EU Children's Participation Platform**, to connect existing child participation mechanisms at local, national and EU level, and involve children in the decision-making processes at EU level. This platform was developed in close collaboration with children.

30 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32022H1209%2801%29&-qid=1671106078506>

31 <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2f5457d7-3edb-11ed-92ed-01aa75e-d71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-277177871>

32 [Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on learning for the green transition and sustainable development 202/C/243/01. OJ C 243, 27.6.2022](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A2022C0243%2801%29&-qid=1671106078506)

33 [JRC Publications Repository - GreenComp The European sustainability competence framework \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A2022C0243%2801%29&-qid=1671106078506)



© Canva

On World Children's Day, the EU reinforces its commitment to combating for a fairer world for children, an inclusive world where no child is left behind.

RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Implementation of the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (CRPD) proceeded in 2022, in close consultations with civil society, representative, experts, Member States and other stakeholders. Upholding the human rights of persons with disabilities in its external action and supporting their social inclusion and participation in all areas of life remains a stated EU commitment in line with the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030.

Under the Human Rights Action Plan 2020-2024 the EU continued to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in its external action by raising their rights in dialogues with partner countries, supporting the implementation of the CRPD and fostering its global ratification. In its bilateral engagements and political dialogues, the EU continued to urge partner countries to **safeguard non-discrimination and equality before the law** of persons with

disabilities and take proactive measures to further social inclusion through de-institutionalisation and the promotion of independent living.

In March, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights met with the **UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities**, Gerard Quinn, at the outset of the latter's official visit to Brussels focused on the EU's performance in ensuring disability rights and implementation of the CRPD. Among issues discussed was the need to design the international humanitarian aid for Ukraine as disability sensitive and avoid the institutionalization of refugees with disabilities.

The 15th session of the **Conference of States Parties** to the CRPD (New York, 14-16 June 2022) garnered a wide participation from civil society and social partners. Roundtable discussions focused on the innovation and technology advancing disability rights, economic empowerment and entrepreneurship of persons with disabilities as well as the participation of persons with disabilities in climate action, disaster risk reduction and resilience against natural disasters. The EU delivered an oral statement during the general debate. The EU organised a **side event with** the participation of **other regional organisations** such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the League of Arab States, the African Union, the Organization of American States. The European Disability Forum and the International Disability Alliance also participated.

The EU contributed to statements and communiqués on gender equality in the framework of the G7 and G20 to always include an **intersectional perspective** with a focus on specific needs and rights of women with disabilities.

In line with the commitments presented during the Global Disability Forum in February 2022, progress has been made in taking into account the specific needs of persons with disabilities to ensure their full participation in **humanitarian action**, including in emergency

preparedness activities. The use in EU programming of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) disability marker further increased in 2022.

In 2022, the Commission funded 259 **humanitarian assistance projects** that took into consideration and mainstreamed the needs of persons with disabilities, among other beneficiaries and 35 humanitarian aid projects specifically targeted at persons with disabilities. Since the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, DG ECHO has given **particular attention to the needs and risks faced by the persons with disabilities affected by the hostilities**.



Human rights, inclusivity and women's empowerment (Dance & Fashion Performance MONGO IV on the occasion of Europe day 2022). First time in Gabon that people with a handicap are included in a fashion show.

HUMAN RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS

The EU is particularly seized with the situation of older persons given that Europe is undergoing profound demographic changes brought by growing life expectancy and reduced birth rates. Studies estimate that by 2050 the population between 65 and 79 years will have grown from around 100 million to nearly 150 million. This presents key challenges to **ensure intergenerational fairness, and**

good living standards for all, young and old. The EU promotes and actively participates within the UN and amongst partners in a regular and comprehensive discussion on ageing issues and adequate and sustainable solutions for the needs of older persons, feeding into the global discussions information on our ongoing public policies.

The 12th session of the **UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing** took place in April 2022. The EU issued a statement and actively participated in identifying steps to improve the promotion and protection of older persons' human rights and dignity, highlighting the contribution of older persons to sustainable development and economic security.

The EU also participated in the UNGA Third Committee, the Human Rights Council, and the Commission for Social Development. Furthermore, the EU co-hosted, together with the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, the 2022 International Human Rights Conference on Drafting a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons. These fora provided valuable opportunities to debate measures and initiatives aimed at **improving the situation of older people**.

The European Commission continued to work towards a horizontal EU Equal Treatment Directive going beyond the existing legal framework, **seeking to cover non-discrimination on all grounds**, including age, in essential fields such as education, health care and access to and supply of goods and services available to the public. In complement to such measures, the **European Pillar of Social Rights** includes the principles on equal opportunities, work-life balance, old-age income and pensions, access to high quality and affordable healthcare and long-term care as well as access to essential services. In September 2022, the European Commission presented a **European Care Strategy**³⁴ considering care needs from infancy and throughout people's lives until old age and aiming to improve

34 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_5169



Community members access free clinical outreach services in Rabulu Village in the province of Ra. (Western Division).

© Medical Services Pacific (MSP), Fiji Islands.

the situation for both carers and care receivers and to shift from a low-investment, low-quality, low-access model of care to a high-investment, high-quality, high-access one.

RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The EU is committed to the international advancement and recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples, as confirmed by the EU's support for the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)**. In 2022, the EU supported the implementation of the UNDRIP at country level, through its programming activities and through its political and human rights dialogues.

The voices of indigenous peoples are important in informing the EU funding programmes and projects. Indigenous peoples' rights and interests in Arctic raw materials extraction were considered carefully, drawing from best practices and guidelines. The EU engaged Arctic stakeholders and rights holders, creating spaces for dialogue and policy inputs.

The EU delivered a statement at the launch event of the **International Decade of Indigenous Languages** (2022–2032) at the UN General Assembly on 25 April 2022. The EU noted that the Decade will provide a crucial framework to draw attention to the critical status of many indigenous languages across the world and will spur action and mobilization of stakeholders and resources for their preservation, revitalization and promotion and stressed the importance of its Global Action Plan to guide joint efforts.

The EU engaged actively in the 22nd session of the **Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues** on 25 April to 6 May 2022 under the theme “Indigenous peoples, business, autonomy and the human rights principles of due diligence including free, prior and informed consent”. The EU also participated with its statement in the 15th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which took place from 4 to 8 July 2022.

In 2022, the EU constructively engaged in the negotiations on the annual resolution on the rights of indigenous peoples. On the **International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples on 9 August** the High Representative issued a Declaration on behalf of the EU³⁵ paying tribute to the International Decade of Indigenous Languages and highlighting concern for the alarming number of killed indigenous and environmental rights defenders.

In 2022, the EU provided additional funding of EUR 5M to the **Indigenous Navigator**, an open-source, community-based data collection system and mapping tool led by indigenous peoples for indigenous peoples. Building on international human rights instruments, including the UNDRIP, it provides timely global reports on the situation of indigenous peoples and indigenous women and thereby supports international advocacy and the building of alliances with strategic partners within the human rights fora.

³⁵ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/08/08/international-day-of-the-world-s-indigenous-peoples-9-august-2022-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union/>



Project #PIAH is funded by the UE and executed by Ayuda en Acción, together with FUNACH, GOAL and MIMAT. The project allowed 600 women and young people to enhance their entrepreneurial skills, and more than 40 women and young people were certified to train in entrepreneurship issues. More than 4,000 indigenous and Afro-Honduran women and youth benefited.

The **EU worked closely with the ILO** on promoting rights of indigenous peoples, including in the countries that have not ratified the ILO’s Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169.

The EU’s ProtectDefenders.eu mechanism provides **significant support to defenders of indigenous peoples’** rights, in particular through accompanying protection measures and emergency grants. Human rights defenders working on environmental, land and indigenous rights represent more than 25% of the total number of beneficiaries.

1.3 Promoting fundamental freedoms and strengthening civic and political space

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Promoting freedom of expression and independent media is a priority of the Human Rights and Democracy Action Plan. Throughout the year, the EU has continued a more vocal and **active stance in support of independent journalists and free media**, and stepped up practical support, including through EU Delegations around the world.

The EU **constantly raises individual cases of journalists at risk in political and human rights dialogues with partner countries**, as for instance with Mexico, Brazil, Algeria, Vietnam, Pakistan or Mongolia, including at high level through the EUSR for Human Rights. In 2022, the EUSR continued engaging in support of independent journalism, embattled media workers and freedom of expression offline as well as online. These issues were high on the agenda of his visits, for example, to Pakistan and Uganda, and were in the focus of his meetings with Philippine journalist Maria Ressa as well as some of his multilateral activities at the UN and OSCE.



In the context of social protests in Peru, in December 2022, human rights defenders and social leaders demand guarantees for the right of social protest.

© CRES



© EU Delegation to Tunisia

The "Lina Ben Mhenni Prize for Freedom of Expression" supports a rapidly evolving Tunisian media landscape. It is open to free thinkers, journalists, bloggers, influencers and other citizens activists in Lina Ben Mhenni mode for free, independent and credible information.

The legal and non-legal provisions elaborated and approved by the European Commission (Recommendation on Safety of Journalists, Anti-SLAPP initiative, Media Freedom Act) are becoming an important part of the dialogue with our partners.

Access to information, a non-discriminatory internet and fight against internet shutdowns³⁶ continued to be part of EU action and bilateral diplomacy including through regular meetings and exchanges with expert organisations.

A global call for Financial Framework Partnership Agreements was launched in December 2022 to select organisations with the capacity to put in place coordinated actions and build mechanisms to support journalists building resilience to crisis.

³⁶ See also Chapter 4.

SAFETY AND PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS

The safety and protection of journalists are at the centre of EU advocacy for media freedom in international fora and in cooperation activities with main stakeholders such as the Council of Europe, OSCE, UNESCO and civil society organizations. Freedom of expression, media freedom and journalists' safety are periodically debated with Member States.



World Press Freedom Day calls for the safety and security of working journalists while calling governments to meet their responsibility to uphold the right to freedom of expression.

In 2022, one of the EU's priorities was support to journalists and independent media in both Afghanistan and Ukraine. In Afghanistan, two programmes for media inside the country and working from abroad were agreed with UNESCO and Internews. In Ukraine, emergency funding for support to media outlets is channelled through our networks in the field, civil society organizations and trusted partners like the European Endowment for Democracy. This support includes provision of protective equipment, cybersecurity, training and support to salaries for active journalists.



It is thanks to Illia Ponomarenko and many others, who endanger their lives, that we know what is really happening in Ukraine.

EU institutions in Brussels and EU Delegations around the world have **strengthened** their **response to attacks against journalists**. They are producing or coordinating public statements (as for Belarus, Russian Federation, Lebanon, Mexico), and social media interventions to give visibility to EU support, and observing trials of journalists requiring special protection.

COUNTERING DISINFORMATION, HATE SPEECH, EXTREMIST AND TERRORIST CONTENT

The EU has **strengthened its work against disinformation**, adopting comprehensive Council Conclusions on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) in July 2022. Recalling the commitment to substantially enhance their resilience and ability to prevent, detect, mitigate and counter hybrid threats, cyberattacks and FIMI, the EU vouched to increase resilience capacities, cooperation also in support of partner countries and engagement in multilateral fora. In addition to multiple efforts to identify and counter incidents of disinformation through **Strategic**

Communication (EUvsDisinfo), the EU works with like-minded partners to develop FIMI methodology³⁷ that is both effective as well as in full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and with continued strong emphasis on promoting freedom of expression, independent media, and the protection and safety of journalists and human rights defenders. The EU contributes to the development of global framework for the fight against disinformation and actively participates in the G7 Rapid Reaction Mechanism to identify and respond to foreign threats to democracies.

In 2022, the **EU Internet Forum (EIF)** continued addressing challenges and priorities concerning the moderation of illegal content, as well as legal, but harmful, content online. The EIF is working on a handbook to provide guidance to technology companies on how to best define this type of content and limit its amplification and spread.

The **EU-funded Civil Society Empowerment Programme (CSEP)** has supported civil society, grass roots organisations and credible voices against online radicalization since 2017. Using the positive power and tremendous reach of the internet, it empowers these different groups to provide effective alternatives to the messages coming from violent extremists and terrorists, as well as ideas that counter extremist and terrorist propaganda. An evaluation conducted in 2022 provided valuable lessons learned for campaigns in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) work in the future.

Additionally, throughout the year, the European Commission provided a series of strategic communication **workshops, events and trainings** for both practitioners and policy makers, covering a

37 For instance, under Horizon Europe's area of intervention for research on democracy and governance, two 2023 calls for proposals will fund (total allocated budget: € 18 M) research to address gaps in the domain of foreign information manipulation and interference: [HORIZON-CL2-2023-DEMOCRACY-01-01: Detecting, analysing and countering foreign information manipulation and interference](#); and [HORIZON-CL2-2023-DEMOCRACY-01-02: Developing a better understanding of information suppression by state authorities as an example of foreign information manipulation and interference](#).

wide range of topics including **combatting hateful narratives and disinformation campaigns, as well as bolstering digital skills and media literacy**. Examples of initiatives that have offered capacity building and exchange of good practices opportunities for relevant practitioners, are the RAN (Radicalization Awareness Network)³⁸, which offers various training opportunities for organizations engaged in the fight against radicalization and extremism, and the CERIS (Community for European Research and Innovation for Security)³⁹, which periodically organize thematic events on a variety of topics, including the fight against corruption, disinformation and fake news.

Disinformation Review: weekly summary of disinformation

EUvs
DiSINFO



EUvsDisinfo is the flagship project of the European External Action Service's East StratCom Task Force. Since 2015, its core objective is to increase public awareness and understanding of the Russian Federation's ongoing disinformation campaigns affecting the EU, Member States, and countries in the shared neighbourhood, and to help citizens in Europe and beyond develop resistance to digital information and media manipulation.

38 https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/radicalisation-awareness-network-ran/about-ran_en

39 https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/ceris-community-european-research-and-innovation-security_en

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND PROTECTION OF THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY AT RISK

In 2022, the EU reinforced its action to uphold academic freedom in the world and protect the academic community at risk. Both human rights and higher education policies served this purpose. EU Delegations continued to play a key role in monitoring and reporting on violations of academic freedom in third countries.

In 2022, **academics, scholars and students continued to receive support from the EU Human Rights Defenders Mechanism**. Moreover, in response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the EU has been supporting students and staff from Ukraine, as well as the Ukrainian higher education sector as such. In this context, the EU launched the MSCA4Ukraine scheme, a EUR 25 million worth project providing fellowships for researchers who had to flee Ukraine to continue their research in academic or non-academic organisations established in EU Member States or Horizon Europe associated countries.

The EU also continued to be a major partner and the largest donor of the **Global Campus of Human Rights**, which has provided a safe space for students and scholars who had to flee their countries for standing up for human rights and democracy. In 2022, the EU continued to support the Global Campus' **Scholarship Programme for Afghan Scholars** and Students at Risk. In the course of the year, some 37 scholars and their families benefited from this programme in 14 host universities of the Global Campus network.

Since 2022, the EU funds **Inspireurope+** under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and coordinated by Scholars at Risk Europe. Inspireurope+ facilitates transnational cooperation in support of researchers at risk across Europe and beyond, through regular sharing of expertise and good practices, trainings and guidance for researchers and their prospective employers or hosts, network-building, mapping, and continuous policy input.

Along with 49 countries, the European Commission is a full member of the **European Higher Education Area (EHEA)**/Bologna process and of its Working Group on Fundamental Values. The Rome Ministerial Communiqué of 2020 commits EHEA members to **upholding fundamental values in higher education, including academic freedom**. In 2022 the EHEA Working Group worked on indicators and monitoring of all fundamental values' dimensions in the Communiqué.

In January 2022, the European Commission published a **Staff Working Document on tackling foreign interference in research and innovation**⁴⁰. It is designed to support Higher Education Institutions and Research Performing Organisations in their endeavour to safeguard their fundamental values, including academic freedom, integrity and institutional autonomy and to protect their staff, students, research findings and assets. One of the chapters of the document is devoted to fundamental values, particularly academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Signing a democracy pledge and supporting scholars who work on research topics that external actors seek to suppress are included in the document as examples of measures to strengthen commitment to academic freedom and integrity at institutional and individual levels.



© Global Campus on Human Rights

Scholarship Programme for Afghan Scholars and Students at Risk

⁴⁰ See <https://op.europa.eu/s/yFdz>

1.4 Reinforcing Economic, Social, Cultural and Labour Rights

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

The EU continued to deliver on a **comprehensive agenda to promote and protect economic, social and cultural rights** in its external relations, including in its public diplomacy, bilateral human rights dialogues, development cooperation and action in multilateral human rights fora.

In 2022, the EU human rights guidelines on **safe drinking water and sanitation** continued to be a reference framework and working tool to advance the right to water around the world. For example, the EU delivered statements to promote the right to water and sanitation at the yearly UN High Level Forum on the progress of the implementation of the SDGs including SDG 6⁴¹. In November, the EU delivered a statement at the Social Forum in Geneva, as the Forum was dedicated to exchanges of views on good practices, lessons learned and challenges in the implementation of the International Decade for Action on "Water for Sustainable development". At the Human Rights Council session in June, the EU and India co-organised a high-level side event on "Realising gender equality in the realisation of the rights to safe drinking water and sanitation". This event brought together speakers from UN Water, UNICEF, the Special Rapporteur on the right to water and sanitation and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

The EU **promoted integrated and multi-disciplinary approaches** to address challenges to the realisation of SDG 6 and its interlinkages with climate change, environmental degradation, peace and security, the right to food, the right to education, the right to health and the right to housing and other rights. The EU is consistently trying to mobilise support to SDG 6. In 2022, the EU campaigned to create a **UN Special Envoy on Water** to help put water on the top of the

41 SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation.



political agenda and engaged actively in ensuring that the human rights dimension of water would feature prominently during the discussions of the UN Conference on Water in March 2023.

In order to reinforce the delivery on this commitment, the EU adopted the **NDICI-Global Europe "Global Challenges" thematic programme** for 2021-2027. In this programme, **action 6: 'Water security for all'**, with a budget of EUR 32.4 million, is dedicated to strengthening the role of the UN system to advocate and coordinate global actions to tackle water challenges.

On 5 October 2022, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on Access to water: its external dimension⁴². The High Representative provided opening and closing remarks with references to the key role of water both as a human right in itself but also its intersections with other rights and in particular with climate change and biodiversity.

At the multilateral level, the EU and Member States successfully supported **initiatives promoting economic, social and cultural rights** in the Human Rights Council and the UNGA Third Committee. The EU contributed to the reports of the UN special procedures, interactive dialogues, resolutions and joint statements on these

42 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0346_EN.pdf



© EU Delegation to Mauritania

Right to work - Literacy training for women in the fish-processing sector in order to improve their resilience, empowerment and economic inclusion.

topics. Furthermore, the EU worked to **strengthen the link between climate change, the environment and human rights** in multilateral fora. As a major new development in that context, on 28 July 2022, the UNGA, with the support and leadership of the EU and its Member States⁴³, adopted a **resolution recognizing the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right**, following the first recognition of the right by the Human Rights Council in 2021.

2022 was a year marked by a global effort to accelerate achievement of SDG 4 (“ensure inclusive and equitable **quality education** and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”) culminating in the Transformative Education Summit hosted by the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres. At the Summit, the EU showed its strong commitment to change course and build back better for achieving inclusive and equitable quality education for all. On this occasion, UN Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohamed, announced the EU as “global champion for education transformation” by a title shared with four countries: Argentina, Sierra Leone, Japan and Qatar.

⁴³ The resolution was presented by Slovenia, Switzerland, Costa Rica, Maldives, and Morocco. It was adopted by vote: Nobody voted against. China, Japan, Russia and India abstained.

The EU has put education at the heart of the post-pandemic recovery, **almost doubling its global spending for education to over EUR 6 billion for the period 2021-2027**. The EU announced at the 2022 International Day of Education that at least 10% of its international partnerships budget with Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific, and 10% of its humanitarian aid budget, will go towards education⁴⁴. **Together with the EU Member States, as Team Europe, the EU provides over half of the official development assistance to education worldwide.**

The EU continued to play an active role in stepping up reform efforts together with others, particularly by joining the Leadership Group of the global education coordination mechanism led by UNESCO.

The EU’s **Global Gateway**⁴⁵ strategy further strengthens EU investments by mobilising much needed additional resources for enabling environments for teaching, training, and learning at all levels. As evidenced by the Global Gateway Investment Package on Education, Skills and Technical and Vocational Training announced at the 2022 EU-Africa Summit, the Global Gateway invests in quality education, including digital education, paying particular attention to the inclusion of girls and women and other vulnerable groups and lifelong learning in pursuit of full and equal participation in social, economic, and political life.

Furthermore, the EU initiated several **joint statements on digital education in multilateral fora and co-organised high-level events** on this topic both in Geneva and in New York. An example is the successful high-level event in Geneva in October co-chaired by EUSR Gilmore and the African Union Commissioner Bankole Adeoye on “Realising the Right to Education Worldwide through Digital Transformation” which brought together the UN Special Rapporteur on Education, UNICEF, ITU, private sector and civil society.

⁴⁴ EC and HRVP Statement on the International Day of Education 2022.

⁴⁵ Global Gateway is Europe’s offer for connecting the world and will mobilise up to EUR 300 billion by 2027 for developing global infrastructure and supporting the green and digital transitions around the world.

A major preoccupation worldwide in 2022 was the rising food prices and the eminent food crises partly due to the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the bread basket of the world. In September 2022, during UNGA, the EU co-shared the **Global Food Security Summit** at the highest political level with the US, Senegal and Spain, bringing together 18 countries representing all regions and the UNSG in a proactive approach to the global food crises. The Summit urged increased attention on the medium-term effects of the war in Ukraine, especially due to shortage of fertilizer impending food availability and preventing the current crisis from spiralling into famine problems in 2023.

The EU continued to promote the **respect for cultural rights**, ensuring the expression of diversity and cultural identity in particular in EU statements in multilateral fora and through its public diplomacy as well as promoting the preservation of cultural heritage as directed by the Council Conclusion of 21 June 2021⁴⁶.

LABOUR RIGHTS

The **Communication on “Decent Work Worldwide”** adopted by the European Commission on 23 February 2022 reaffirmed the EU's commitment to champion decent work both at home and around the world and highlighted the EU's policies and initiatives with outreach beyond the EU. The Communication underlines that the EU promotes decent work across all sectors and policy areas in line with a comprehensive approach that addresses workers in domestic markets in third countries and in global supply chains.

At the multilateral level, the EU continued contributing to setting and ensuring labour standards through the **ILO**. The EU continues being one of the most active regional groups, with the aim of improving international standards, contributing to the supervision of their application in the context of country cases and protecting the ILO's

⁴⁶ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9837-2021-INIT/en/pdf>

supervisory system that ensures an independent monitoring of the application of labour standards. At the **International Labour Conference 2022**, the EU supported the integration of the right to safe and healthy working conditions into the framework of ILO fundamental principles and rights at work.

The European Commission also promotes international labour rights in its **dedicated bilateral dialogues with third countries**. Furthermore, the Commission supports multi-stakeholder processes, such as the Global Deal Initiative, in order to develop, implement and strengthen international labour standards. The Commission also engages in giving effect to the ILO's MNE Declaration that provides direct guidance to enterprises on achieving decent work in supply chains, through its projects, such as the “Sustainable Supply Chains to Build Forward Better” project which uses supply chains to advance decent work in five sectors in five countries: coffee in Colombia, electronics in Vietnam, fisheries in Namibia, rubber gloves in Malaysia and textiles and clothing in Madagascar.



Women migrant construction workers at a Safe and Fair Programme (SAF) training session on violence against women, labour rights and entitlements in Pathum Thani Province, Thailand.

© ILO/Pichit Phromkade

On 14 September 2022, the European Commission adopted a **proposal for a Regulation on prohibiting products made with forced labour on the market of the EU**.⁴⁷ It covers all products, made in the EU for domestic consumption and exports, as well as imported goods, without targeting specific companies or industries and builds on internationally agreed definitions and standards. The proposal is currently in the legislative procedure.

The **EU trade and investment agreements with third countries** include obligations to comply with international labour standards and promote decent work through national laws and practices, including effective labour inspection. In particular, the **Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD)** chapters of free trade agreements (FTAs) signed by the EU reaffirm the parties' commitment to the decent work agenda, and call for the ratification and effective implementation of the ILO fundamental and other up-to-date Conventions⁴⁸. In line with the outcome of the EU TSD policy review, which led to the adoption in June 2022 of a Communication entitled 'The power of trade partnerships: together for green and just economic growth', the EU will further strengthen the enforcement of labour-related commitments in future free trade agreements, notably by including the possibility to apply trade sanctions in serious instances of non-compliance with the ILO fundamental principles and rights at work.

⁴⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_5415

⁴⁸ Following the ILO's 110th International Labour Conference held in May/June 2022, the principle of a safe and healthy working environment was added to the ILO's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and the related Occupational Safety and Health Conventions (No. 155 and No. 187) were elevated to the status of fundamental ILO Conventions.

EU-Central America Conference on informality, freedom of association and fight against child labour

took place in Guatemala City on 29-30 November 2022 and brought together representatives from national authorities, employers and trade unions from the six Central American countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama) as well as key stakeholders and EU representatives. The aim of the event was to contribute to strengthening labour rights compliance and promoting decent working conditions in the six Central American countries, with a particular focus on freedom of association, fight against informality at work in rural areas and the full elimination of child labour. The conference contributed to the implementation of the TSD chapter of the EU-Central America Association Agreement.

On 25 November 2022, the European Commission's DG Trade and the ILO conducted their **annual trade-related dialogue** following up on elements on occupational health and safety issues in FTAs, the Commission's legislative proposals on forced labour products, corporate sustainability due diligence and GSP, and country reviews of India, South Korea, Kenya, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Guatemala.

Regarding **development cooperation**, in 2022 the EU adopted a Financing Decision for an Action on "Fair, Accountable and Inclusive Trade and Business", under the Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy Programme. It will support projects that contribute to fighting child labour and forced labour for a total amount of EUR 10 million. The Action also ensures the continuous promotion and implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights worldwide through enhanced participation of civil society actors in human rights due diligence processes through additional funding of EUR 10 million.



The picture shows executive members of 'Temsalet Domestic Workers' Association established in Bahir Dar, Amhara Region discussing about a campaign for the ratification of an ILO convention on domestic workers by the Ethiopian government. The EU, through a Civil Society Fund III (CSF III) project implemented by the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions and Comunità Volontari per il mondo Associazione, is supporting the establishment of these associations for advocating for respect of the rights of domestic workers.

The EU extended until 2023 its **support to the Better Work programme**, a partnership between the International Labour Organisation and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) aiming to improve working conditions and respect of labour rights for workers in the garment industry, in particular women workers, enhance compliance with fundamental international labour standards and boost the competitiveness of apparel businesses. So far, the Better Work programme has cooperated with 1762 garment factories all over the world, providing assistance to almost 2.8 million workers (among them 69% female workers) through, among others, more than 1000 training sessions. Better Work helped the factories to comply with labour standards, including in the area of occupational safety and health and gender equality. It cooperated with labour inspections to conduct joint factory visits and to build their capacity for checking the compliance with labour standards.

In the area of gender equality, Better Work developed and implements the GEAR programme aimed at preparing female workers for supervisory roles, along with training factory managers on how to identify, support, promote and retain female talent (after a pilot in Bangladesh, GEAR is expanded to Vietnam and Sri Lanka). The EU contribution allowed the extension of Better Work operations to Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Madagascar.

1.5 Supporting the rule of law and the fair administration of justice

HUMAN RIGHTS AND COUNTER-TERRORISM

The Action Plan reaffirms that human rights and democracy will be promoted consistently and coherently in all areas of EU external action (e.g. trade, environment, development, counter-terrorism). It commits to **responding to counter-terrorism measures that could threaten closing civic space or democracy as well as to disproportionate measures** imposed under state of emergency. In 2022, the EU provided continued counter-terrorism (CT) support to its key partners guided by the EU Council Conclusions on addressing the external dimension of a constantly evolving terrorist and violent extremist threat⁴⁹ and by the EU Strategic Compass for Security and Defence⁵⁰.

Through regular political dialogues on counter-terrorism with priority countries, and through multilateral coordination, **the EU systematically encourages partners to strengthen their capacity to prevent and respond effectively to radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism, while adhering to their human rights obligations.** The EU promotes the prevention and countering of

49 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/57229/st10179-en22.pdf>

50 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/21/a-strategic-compass-for-a-stronger-eu-security-and-defence-in-the-next-decade/>

violent extremism (P/CVE) as a policy priority and highlights the essential role of civil society in prevention and de-radicalisation, hence the need to involve them regularly. The EU also emphasises that P/CVE and counter-terrorism policies and measures should not negatively affect, limit or impact women's full enjoyment of their human rights. All CT projects with partner countries promote a criminal justice approach in full respect of human rights.

In all dialogues and consultations with partner countries, as well as international and regional organisations, initiatives and other multilateral platforms, **the EU has continuously advocated that human rights and rule of law principles be integrated into counter-terrorism policies**, by means of, for example, developing an evidence-based criminal justice system. Similarly, the EU has sought to safeguard civic space and civil society operations with regard to countering the financing of terrorism in its support to partners' efforts to comply with Financial Action Task Force (FATF) anti-money laundering and combatting the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) standards.

The EU is committed to multilateral cooperation in addressing the global threat of terrorism, in full compliance with the rule of law and international law, including human rights law. To this end, the EU has **proactively supported and promoted human rights compliance and the principles of international law**, in all aspects of the global counter-terrorism efforts and in all its strategic partnerships, including at multilateral level.

The EU is an active member of the **Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF)** and serves as its co-chair alongside Morocco since September 2022, and with Egypt since February 2023, prioritising gender mainstreaming in counter-terrorism during its tenure. The EU previously co-chaired the Capacity Building in the East Africa Region Working Group with Egypt for several years. In this capacity, the EU contributed to better understanding the challenges and solutions on "The role of Women in Counterterrorism", organising two successful

events in Dakar (Senegal) and New York (US) with Egypt before the end of their co-chair tenure in September 2022. The EU is also an active member and donor of the three GCTF-inspired institutions (the Hedayah Centre in Abu Dhabi, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund in Geneva/GCERF, and the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law in Malta/IIJ) that mainstream a human rights-based and 'whole of society' approach in supporting the development of P/CVE programmes. The EU-funded 'Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism Programme' (STRIVE Global) was renewed for a period of another three years, 2022-2025.

Further, the EEAS manages a **Network of EU CT/Security Experts deployed in EU Delegations in up to 20 priority countries**. Some Experts have a regional portfolio, others have a multilateral focus. All newly appointed EU CT/Security Experts undergo training on human rights and international law in EU external relations. The Experts work closely with the focal points on human rights within each EU Delegation to best integrate this dimension into their daily work, as well as into CT-P/CVE projects on the ground.

In addition, **several civilian common security and defence policy (CSDP) missions** support the development of local CT-P/CVE capabilities while observing human rights and rule of law principles. In December 2022, the Council adopted a decision establishing a CSDP military partnership mission to support Niger in its fight against terrorist armed groups.

With the enlargement countries, full alignment of their legislation with the "EU Acquis" is promoted and monitored, thus ensuring further support to human rights and inclusive approaches.

THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

The EU continued to support the global fight against impunity, accountability mechanisms, in particular for the most serious crimes under international criminal law, and to provide justice and redress for the victims of atrocities. In that context, **the EU provided political, diplomatic and financial support to the International Criminal Court (ICC)**⁵¹. This year, following the request of the ICC Prosecutor calling for exceptional voluntary contributions, the EU provided additional, financial assistance to the Office of the Prosecutor (EUR 7.25 million), including for its investigative capacities.

The EU also supported international criminal tribunals and ad hoc national tribunals, as well as truth and reconciliation commissions and redress mechanisms to protect the rights of victims to justice and reparation.

Throughout the period, significant work was conducted to ensure that support to the ICC, including the ratification of the Rome Statute, remained high on the EU's policy agenda and is reflected in relevant EU human rights dialogues and consultations with partner countries.

The EU continued to **promote the universality of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court** also through its annual demarche campaign encouraging the ratification of, or accession to, the Rome Statute.

Since the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine **there has been a significant mobilisation for international criminal justice and support to the ICC**. Cooperation with the ICC was considerably strengthened, as the ICC Office of the Prosecutor joined the Joint Investigation Team (JIT), as a participant. The JIT is supported by Eurojust, via the agency's new Core International Crimes Evidence Database allowing secure preservation, storage and analysis of

⁵¹ In accordance with Council Decision 2011/168/CFSP and the 2011 action plan on its implementation, as well as part of the implementation of the 2006 Agreement between the ICC and the EU on cooperation and assistance.

20th Anniversary of entry into force of the Rome Statute

The International Criminal Court has jurisdiction over the four most serious international crimes:

- Genocide
- War crimes
- Crimes against humanity
- Crime of aggression

1998 120 countries agree in Rome on a statute to establish an International Criminal Court to prosecute perpetrators of the most horrific crimes

1st July 2002 The Rome Statute enters into force and the International Criminal Court (ICC) becomes operational

2022 124 countries from all regions of the world have ratified the Rome Statute of the ICC

Key principles governing the ICC

- Universality**
The Rome Statute sets **one standard for all** – no one is below or above the law.
The ICC is an independent and impartial judicial institution to which 124 states are parties. Each new accession to the Rome Statute increases the collective strength of the international rule of law system.
- Fighting against impunity**
Ensuring fair trials and providing justice to victims
Preventing and deterring future crimes
- It is a fundamental safety net to victims when justice is not possible at the national level. Protecting the Court's neutrality and judicial independence is crucial to its proper functioning.**

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Marking the 20th anniversary of the International Criminal Court in 2022, HRVP Borrell underlined in a statement on behalf of the EU that, as "the world's first and only permanent international criminal court, the International Criminal Court plays a crucial role in a shared rules-based global order and in advancing the fight against impunity for international crimes." The above social media cards summarize the ICC's trajectory, core functions and key principles.

evidence related to international crimes. The EU has been supporting Eurojust in the ongoing setting up of the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA) within the JIT. It will provide a standing structure for enhanced coordination on the collection, preservation and analysis of evidence related to the crime of aggression for any future trials.

The EUSR for Human Rights has emphasized the **need to capitalize on this development and to make this 'Ukraine momentum' a standard for fighting impunity all over the world.** The EUSR continued promoting support to the ICC, engaging with the ICC Prosecutor and participating in high level international meetings, conveying the EU's unwavering support.

Support to the ICC has also continued in multilateral and regional fora such as the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council, as well as in the context of the African Union.

The EU has continued to offer **technical assistance to countries that required it for domestic implementation of the Rome Statute.** In line with the principle of complementarity, the EU provided support to the criminal justice systems of a number of countries including Afghanistan, Myanmar, Georgia, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Guinea, Mali and Uganda.

Further, the EU continued to **support a number of international criminal tribunals and mechanisms**, including the Special Criminal Court in the Central African Republic (CAR), the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, and the international Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), which is mandated to perform a number of essential functions previously carried out by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

1.6 Closing the accountability gap, fighting impunity and supporting transitional justice

In 2022, the EU continued to implement its policy framework on support to transitional justice. This included raising the topic with non-EU countries, in bilateral dialogues as well as with regional organisations, such as the African Union.

Transitional justice featured among the EU priorities for cooperation with a number of countries under the Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy programme. In Central African Republic, for example, the EU continues supporting the Special Criminal Court. The EU has also been providing expertise to help the Central African authorities lay the foundations of the 'Commission Vérité, Justice, Réparations et Réconciliation' which is now a reality. The Institut Francophone pour la Justice et la Démocratie, an important partner for the EU, is supporting the young institution. In The Gambia, the EU also continues with its long-standing support to the democratic transition and, in October, 2022 a EUR 9 million project with a strong focus on transitional justice was adopted.

The EU-African Union (AU) discussions on support to transitional justice at continental level advanced well in 2022, following the commitment of earlier EU-AU human rights dialogue. The formulation of the new EUR 5 million project entitled "European Support to Transitional Justice in Africa" was completed and the action document was formally approved in late September 2022. Steps have been initiated to directly entrust its implementation to a consortium of specialised agencies. Also, a second AU-EU expert seminar on Transitional Justice took place in November in The Gambia, focusing on practical case studies in Europe and Africa and including keynote speeches delivered by EUSR Gilmore and AU Commissioner Bankole Adeoye.



The 24th EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights took place in Brussels under the theme "The road to accountability and justice - Human Rights in Crisis and Conflict".

In July 2022, a financing decision was adopted to create a **Global Observatory on the Fight Against Impunity** for serious human rights violations with a budget of EUR 20 million. This flagship initiative will contribute to close the accountability gap and to amplify the voice of victims of serious human rights violations and abuses. Acts such as genocide, crimes against humanity and other serious human rights violations or abuses will fall under the scope of the Observatory, in line with the framework for targeted restrictive measures under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime (EUGHRSR).

The Impunity Observatory will contribute to addressing major challenges as to the need to gather information, share knowledge and learn from each other, create synergies, provide support to victims of serious human rights violations and abuses, strengthen capacities of CSOs, in particular local actors, establish partnerships and networks at local, national, regional and global levels, and promote international criminal justice. It will be an important source of information for international accountability mechanisms (ICC, OHCHR) and for the EU, and will encourage multi-stakeholders' dialogue and coordination of actors involved in fighting impunity from different perspectives (judicial, NGOs, academic, etc.).

The Council prolonged the sanctions under its **EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime** against individuals and entities responsible for serious human rights violations and abuses worldwide for an additional year, until **8 December 2023**. This means that sanctions will continue to apply to all **17 individuals and 5 entities listed**. To note that the EU has also addressed human rights violations and abuses through its geographical sanctions regimes.

During 2022, the EU continued to provide strong support to the **responsibility to protect (R2P) and Atrocity Prevention**, promoting its operationalisation through the integration of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) elements in relevant EU and Member State policies

and instruments. In the EU's early action, this is taken into account in a range of tools linking strategic foresight with conflict and atrocity prevention. This includes the EU's Atrocity Prevention Toolkit⁵², the EU Conflict Early Warning System (EWS) and the Conflict Analysis Screenings (CAS) in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Lessons so far identified show the importance of dedicating sufficient attention and resources to prevention, including early analysis and action, preventive diplomacy, dialogue and mediation.

The EU supported the UN Special Advisors on the R2P and on the Prevention of Genocide and their Joint Office politically and through financial assistance, including on the development of Atrocity Prevention Guidelines for Practitioners. The EU also backed the idea of using country specific examples for promoting R2P, welcoming related statements by the Special Advisors.

At the UN General Assembly debate on R2P (June 2022), following the adoption of **Resolution 75/277 which integrates R2P across the UN system**, the EU delivered a statement on behalf of its Member States and also aligned itself with the R2P Group of Friends statement⁵³.

In Geneva, R2P is largely operationalised through **EU support for the establishment, renewal and follow-up of investigative mechanisms**. In 2022, with crucial support of the EU, the Human Rights Council created the Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. Among other actions, the EU led on resolutions on Afghanistan, Burundi, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Belarus, Eritrea and DPRK.

⁵² https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu_r2p_atrocity_prevention_toolkit.pdf

⁵³ <https://www.globalr2p.org/resources/2022-gof-r2pdebate-statement/>

The EU continued to campaign actively for the universal ratification of the **Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide**. In 2022, several meetings with the UN Special Advisor for the prevention of genocide took place. All EU Member States cosponsored the Human Rights Council resolution on the prevention of Genocide, led by Armenia. On the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime (9 December), the High Representative Josep Borrell published a statement⁵⁴ highlighting that genocide is an odious international crime that has no place in a civilised world.



54 https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/international-day-commemoration-and-dignity-victims-crime-genocide-and-prevention-crime-2_en

02. BUILDING RESILIENT, INCLUSIVE AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES

2.1 Enhancing democratic, accountable and transparent institutions

The year 2022 confirms a persistent decline of democracy and continuous tendencies toward autocratisation in the world. The V-Dem Institute assesses that, in 2022, 72% of the world's population (5.7 billion people) live in autocracies and only 13% of the population (1 billion people) live in liberal democracies⁵⁵.

REINFORCING ALLIANCES GLOBALLY: BUILDING ON THE SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY PROCESS

In the current context, at global level, strengthening alliances with democratic partners, international organisations and civil society is key. Against this background the EU played an active role in the follow-up to the Summit for Democracy convened by the US. The EEAS and the European Commission have been actively involved in the **'Year of Action' for democracy**, working on concrete deliverables ahead of a second Summit in March 2023. The European Commission co-led work of democracy cohorts on 'Youth political and civic engagement' and 'Deliberative democracy and citizen assemblies' building on initiatives such as the 'Conference on the Future of Europe' which constitutes a unique example of participatory democracy at EU level. Through the project **"Supporting Team Europe Democracy – STED"**, International-IDEA has monitored the commitments taken by governments at the Summit for Democracy and indexed them on a website, which provides useful resources and comparisons⁵⁶.

55 https://www.v-dem.net/documents/29/V-dem_democracyreport2023_lowres.pdf

56 <https://summitfordemocracyresources.eu/commitment-dashboard/>

DELIVERING BETTER: SUPPORTING DEMOCRACY COLLECTIVELY WITH TEAM EUROPE DEMOCRACY

The **Team Europe global initiative on Democracy (TED)**, improves the coordination between the EU and its Member States which contribute to foster the impact of EU's democracy support in 3 priority areas - Accountability and Rule of Law, Political and Civic Participation, and Media and Digital. In 2022, TED Secretariat started its activities including reaching out to democracy partners. This pillar of the TED is implemented by a consortium of GIZ and ENABEL, which also started to set up networks of EU Member States and democracy practitioners at operational level.

The research component of the TED, implemented by International-IDEA, the European Partnership for Democracy, Carnegie International and Reporters without Borders, started providing evidence for informed decision making. It supported financially the European Democracy Hub⁵⁷, the Case for Democracy⁵⁸, the Global State of Democracy (GSOD)⁵⁹, Varieties of Democracy⁶⁰ and the World Press Freedom Index.⁶¹ These projects explored the regression of democracy in 2022 and looked for tailored responses. The European Democracy Hub has produced reports on the democracy support extended by the EU and its Member States.

DEEPENING DEMOCRACY AND RULE OF LAW IN THE ENLARGEMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD REGIONS

Through the financial assistance in the **enlargement and neighbourhood regions**, the EU continued to support reforms aimed at strengthening democracy, preventing and tackling corruption, and reinforcing the protection of human rights.

57 <https://carnegieeurope.eu/specialprojects/EuropeanDemocracyHub/>

58 <https://www.v-dem.net/our-work/policy-collaborations/case-for-democracy/>

59 <https://www.idea.int/our-work/what-we-do/global-state-democracy>

60 <https://www.v-dem.net/publications/democracy-reports/>

61 <https://rsf.org/en/rsf-s-2022-world-press-freedom-index-new-era-polarisation>

In November 2022, the European Commission adopted a new multi-country action plan, which focuses on four actions. Among them, the action 'EU-Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Türkiye – Phase III' aims at improving the capacities of Western Balkans and Türkiye to uphold the rule of law and ensure protection of fundamental rights and freedom of expression. Likewise in February 2023 the European Commission launched the European Union/Council of Europe Partnership for Good Governance for Eastern Partnership countries – Phase III aiming at strengthening the rule of law in the Eastern Partnership countries, fostering implementation of key judicial reforms, and combating discrimination and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups and women⁶².



© EU-EOM

EU Election Observation Mission to Timor-Leste attending FRETILIN political party meeting in Maliana, in the west of Timor-Leste.

62 See the ongoing projects **EMBRACE**, **SHAPEDEM-EU** and **REDEMOS**, funded under HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01-04 - Democratic politics in the EU's neighbourhood. More projects will be funded under the call **HORIZON-CL2-2023-DEMOCRACY-01-08: Political perspectives for the Eastern Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans**

MONITORING ELECTORAL PROCESSES TO CONSOLIDATE AND DEEPEN DEMOCRATISATION

In times of democracy decline, it is paramount to support the organisation of credible, inclusive and transparent electoral processes. In this context, **EU Election observation** remains a key tool to support democratic governance, contributing to increase the quality of electoral processes, and to promote wider human rights, the rule of law and democracy principles. This is particularly important in a time where manipulation of information, which jeopardizes citizen's ability to make informed choices, is an increased threat. In 2022, the EU deployed 18 electoral missions in all the regions of the world:

- **Election Observation Missions (EOM)** were deployed to Lebanon, Timor Leste and Kenya, Colombia, Lesotho and Sao Tomé y Príncipe.
- **Election Expert Missions** were deployed to Papua New Guinea, Angola, The Gambia, Philippines, and Nigeria.
- **Election Follow-up Missions** were deployed in Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Senegal, and Kosovo*.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ advisory opinion on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

Supporting peace through elections: First EU Election Observation Mission to Colombia

Upon an invitation by Colombia's electoral authorities, the EU deployed for the first time an EOM to observe Colombia's legislative (13 March) and presidential elections (29 May and 19 June 2022), the longest observation mission in EU history. These elections represented an important step in the implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement, with the creation of 16 seats in Congress to represent the victims of the conflict.



Election Day in Colombia (19 June 2022).

All three election processes were peaceful for the most part, although they were not spared of the backdrop of violence that exists in several part of the country. The EOM assessed that the three elections were well organised, and EU EOM observers found polling staff carried out their duties with competence and transparency. Voter turnout was the highest in Colombian elections in over 20 years, leading to a peaceful hand-over of power to the opposition.

The EU EOM made 24 recommendations to enhance the conduct of elections in Colombia and to support efforts to bring them fully in line with international obligations and standards for democratic elections. Colombia rapidly took up a number of recommendations and launched several political and electoral reform initiatives, well in line with international best practice.

While it had a modest start in 2021, **social media monitoring in election observation** has become more prominent with the inclusion of a dedicated social media analyst specifically in charge of monitoring the online election campaign, in all the 6 EU EOMs

deployed in 2022. The assessment of digital election-related content comprises a wide range of aspects such as political contestants' online campaign; relations between election management bodies and online platforms; information manipulation; political advertising; hate speech and online violence especially against women.

Recommendations for the election-related online environment are included in EU EOM Final Reports and are addressed to partner governments and to relevant stakeholders that are active online. EU EOM recommendations duly reflect the existing standards and ensure a fair balance between the need to protect freedom of expression and the need to promote electoral integrity. In December, "**Guidelines to Observe and assess online election campaign**" were endorsed by the 'Declaration of Principles for international election observation Community' (DoP).

A SYSTEMATISED FOLLOW-UP OF THE ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSIONS' RECOMMENDATIONS

The EU is constantly encouraging the implementation of the recommendations of EU EOMs. They contribute to reinforcing the capacity of electoral management bodies and public administrations by promoting inclusive legislative frameworks and their effective enforcement. **Election Follow-up Missions** are deployed to assess their status of implementation and further engage with local stakeholders to promote awareness and active work on the recommendations.

EU Delegations also contribute to the implementation of recommendations with political tools and support through development cooperation. For example, the EU EOM recommendations to Liberia, together with the assessment of the Election Follow-up Mission of 2021, were used as a door opener for discussing key challenges linked to women's participation in the political sphere and the use of technologies (biometrics) for voter registration

purposes. In 2022, the EU **supported electoral management bodies (EMBs)** in many partner countries, including Kenya, Central African Republic, Zambia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Malawi. Election support projects provide capacity building to EMBs in specific fields or help drawing lessons learnt. In the Western Balkans, the EU continued to promote the implementation of election observation recommendations through engaging politically and technically with local stakeholders, including civil society, in close coordination with OSCE/ODIHR.

GIVING A PUSH TO THE COLLABORATION AMONG INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL OBSERVERS GROUPS AND PROMOTING 'CITIZEN ELECTION OBSERVERS'

In December 2022, the EEAS and the European Parliament hosted the 15th Implementation Committee meeting of the organisations which have endorsed the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation⁶³ (DoP) and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers that constitute the **basis for credible international election observation** around the world. One of the outcomes of the meeting was the full support and commitment to **further strengthen the cooperation** of international election observation missions **with citizen observers** that are now fully recognised as human rights defenders.

DoP members debated the **role of social media** during campaigns and best approaches for international observers to integrate an analysis of discourses on social media in a campaign context, together with the impact of new electoral technologies, best practices for their adoption and implementation while avoiding the risk posed to electoral integrity by the possible lack of transparency.

⁶³ The declaration was commemorated at the UN on 27 October 2005, and is now endorsed by 55 intergovernmental and international organizations, which are engaged in the process of improving international election observation.

In 2022, the EU also **supported domestic observers'** organisations in several countries, such as in **Central African Republic** with the Réseau Arc en Ciel and in **Mali** with the MODELE. Moreover, **collaboration with regional observation organisations** continuously took place, for example in Kenya in August where the EU EOM engaged with the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Commonwealth observation missions.

STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF PARLIAMENTS

The flagship project "**INTER PARES | Parliaments in Partnership - EU Global Project to Strengthen the Capacity of Parliaments**" which ended in December 2022 has promoted parliamentary democracy around the world, through peer-to-peer engagement and in a Team Europe approach by facilitating exchanges with EU Member States' parliaments.

In its four years of implementation, INTER PARES supported 15 parliaments in partner countries across all continents. In most of these countries, EU support to the parliaments will continue through a follow-up project managed by the EU Delegations at country level.

INTER PARES has produced relevant knowledge on parliamentary matters, including a series of e-learning modules and toolkits, and served as a convener of the global community of practice around parliamentary development, reinvigorating the AGORA platform (the leading **global knowledge platform on parliamentary development**) and supporting an Inter-Parliamentary Union initiative to develop international indicators for democratic parliaments.

A second phase of INTER PARES will run from January 2023 until December 2025.

INTER PARES Partnership with the House of Representatives of Malaysia (Dewan Rakyat)

Between 2021-2022, INTER PARES has supported the Parliamentary Special Select Committee on Women, Children's Affairs and Social Development of the Malaysian Dewan Rakyat on gender-sensitive law-making and oversight, through a series of online workshops, with contributions from the Swedish Parliament, the development of a guide on gender-sensitive law-making and oversight and a study visit at the Italian Chamber of Deputies, in collaboration with the Irish Parliament, resulting in:

- The creation of a sub-committee on gender equality and gender-responsive budgeting;
- Regular engagement with CSOs for work planning and input into legislation;
- Designing and piloting a legislative gender impact assessment tool for bills
- The submission by the committee of an official recommendation to government to initiate gender impact assessment, including financial considerations, for policies and bills put forward by all ministries.

STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY NETWORKS AMONG CIVIL SOCIETY

In countries in transition, such as in Guinea, Chad, Burkina Faso, Sudan and Mali, the EU helped the authorities to include Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in national inclusive dialogues. CSOs are also trained to meaningfully contribute to ongoing reflections on governance and state reforms in their respective countries, both at national and local levels.

As an example, in 2022 the global project **SANCUS: Strengthening Accountability Networks among Civil Society** contributed to strengthen democratic accountability, adopting a common approach to support a diverse set of civil society-led accountability initiatives in 26 countries around the world. In **Zambia**, Transparency International successfully advocated for the Enactment of the Public Debt Management Act No. 15 of 2022 and established a network of investigative journalists enhancing their capacity to scrutinise public financial management processes. In **Brazil**, 13 state governments reported reforms attributed to the Transparency and Public Governance Index. In **Palestine**, an innovative digital platform was launched to improve citizen participation in policy consultations and budget processes. In **Indonesia**, the project allowed citizens to actively monitor the selection of Supreme Court judges.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The EU support to the **Venice Commission** (*the European Commission for Democracy through Law of the Council of Europe*) allowed it to absorb more of the growing number of requests for legal opinions it receives each year (from around 30 to now close to 50). The EU supports the Venice Commission inter alia through the joint programmes with the Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye and the Partnership for Good



Launch of the European Year of Youth page.

Governance in the Eastern Partnership. For instance, the Venice Commission has collaborated with the **Constitutional Court of Mongolia** at their request to work on the legal framework for political parties. The Venice Commission supported the **Constituent assembly in Chile** in their endeavour to draft a new Constitution that is more inclusive and further reflects the principle of separation of powers. The Venice Commission Quick Response Mechanism (QRM) is a key element of the rule of law programmes with Council of Europe in the enlargement and Eastern neighbourhood regions. By December 2022, Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine had made use of the QRM channelling 42 requests for opinion via the Partnership for Good Governance phase II.

2.2 Promoting responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making

STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The implementation of all of the five projects awarded in 2017 under a global call for proposals for a “**Pilot Programme to Strengthen the Capacity of Political Parties**” ended in 2022. They promoted multi-party systems, fair and transparent political party financing policies and democratic internal organisation of political parties and strengthened the role of **women and youth** in political parties across a number of countries. The experience and lessons learned of this pilot are taken into account in a new global programme on support to political party systems to be launched in 2023 as part of the **Youth and Women in Democracy Initiative**.

PROMOTING YOUTH POLITICAL AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

Young people are too often excluded from political, economic and social decision-making processes. In 2022, the EU dedicated a stronger attention to put Youth at the centre of its action as a prerequisite to build stronger, more legitimate, inclusive, peaceful and democratic societies. Under the new **Youth Action Plan**, one of the main flagship programmes is the **Women and Youth in Democracy (WYDE)** program that will support women and youth participation in public affairs as citizens, voters, politicians, candidates, and elected officials.

Through this programme, the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) is developing a global index on Youth Political Participation. EPD started their scoping study in 2022 and will be able, in 2023, to set the corner stone of this important source of data and missing

advocacy tool. The global index on Youth Political Participation is a deliverable of the Youth Democracy Cohort, set up within the framework of the Summit for Democracy.

In the context of the **2022 European Year of Youth**, young people from the enlargement and the neighbourhood countries participated in EU Policy Dialogues in Brussels. The EU-funded the **Western Balkan Youth Lab project**, based on the **EU-wide European Youth Dialogue** process, represents a good example of strengthening youth participation in the region. The project reinforced formal and informal mechanisms of youth participation by organising two policy labs in the course of 2022: one focused on youth employment, the other on mental health.



Building Trust in Media in South East Europe and Turkey - Phase 2

The project, implemented by UNESCO, supports media accountability, media internal governance and media literacy, focused primarily on the work of press councils, addressing challenges triggered by the spread of disinformation, introducing media literacy curricula in schools, and enhancing professional and ethical standards in media outlets.

The picture shows workshops organized by the Albanian Media Institute (AMI), UNESCO's partner, in five high schools across the country.

Supporting Youth political and civic engagement

In the framework of the Summit for Democracy, the European Commission teamed up with the governments of Nepal and Ghana, the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), AfricTivistes, the European Democracy Youth Network (EDYN) and International IDEA to co-lead a democracy cohort on 'Youth political and civic engagement'. The cohort seeks to promote youth political and civic engagement to help young people better understand democratic principles and the proven link between democracy and long-term stability and prosperity; to promote diversity and inclusion within youth groups and in the advocacy of youth; to support young people and youth organisations in their efforts to assess democratic institutions and processes and advise on possible reforms.

More than 40 organisations have joined the Youth Democracy Cohort from all over the world. EU funding was mobilized to support the participation of youth representatives in the co-hosted Summit for Democracy events in Zambia, Korea and Costa Rica in March 2023.

The cohort developed a menu of possible commitments to strengthen youth participation to be adopted by participating states. It worked on a plan to provide micro-grants to grass-roots organisations so that they can disseminate, advocate for, and measure these commitments. The cohort also compiled a handbook on youth participation and worked on a global index on youth political participation.

2.3 Supporting independent and pluralistic media, access to information and the fight against disinformation

Given the importance of media freedom for democracy, the **EU has further strengthened the support to independent and pluralistic media**, in the EU itself and around the world. In 2022, the EU has also further strengthened its work to fight disinformation and adopted Council Conclusions on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI).

In several countries (as Kuwait, Pakistan, Algeria, Brazil, Mexico) press freedom and support to independent media were at the agenda of dialogues with authorities and civil society on legislative reform.



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On 7 April 2022, the European External Action Service, in cooperation with the EU Delegation to BiH, brought together leading international journalists and young journalists from the Western Balkans to discuss media integrity in the age of disinformation. Twenty young journalists from the Western Balkans region travelled to Sarajevo to participate in this discussion, as a part of a broader study visit aiming to give them a chance to learn from top experts in the profession, but also from each other.



2022 EU-Western Balkans Media Conference

The conference gathered around 180 participants from the Western Balkans and the EU for an open discussion on the challenges that the journalists and media professionals in the Western Balkans are facing: media development trends, changing information, gathering patterns, and new trends in countering information manipulation and foreign interference.

Dedicated EIDHR and FPI programmes continued to be implemented or were launched (in the Western Balkans, West Africa, Afghanistan, South America) in the framework of bilateral programmes with partner countries managed by headquarters or by the EU Delegations.

The European Commission supported the organization from 23 to 25 November 2022 of the first **Assises Europeennes du journalisme** to raise awareness on the needs of independent media while creating a space for a dialogue with civil society and promoting the support to freedom of expression and independent media in the Mediterranean region, with a special focus on youth.

The Commission provides substantive financial support to Civil Society in the **Western Balkans and Türkiye**. EUR 218.5 million are already allocated for the period 2021–2023 under IPA III. Support is provided via multiple channels and modalities, including grants to civil society organisations and technical assistance to build their capacities. The Commission also committed an additional EUR 19.5

million through an action grant to the European Endowment for Democracy to implement a flexible re-granting scheme for pro-democracy support to civic actors and media, e.g. start-up funding, core and bridge funding, support to small-scale initiatives, in fast changing environments.

In the **Eastern Neighbourhood**, significant EU support is focusing on the promotion of media pluralism, media freedom, financial sustainability, support skills, professionalism and safety of journalists, media legislation, in fact-checking skills, risk assessment for working in warzones, support to public broadcasters, new media development, professional and ethical standards of the media, support to local/civil media initiatives.

A new edition of the **EU-Western Balkans Media Conference** took place on 10–11 November in Tirana, gathering WB media community and experts from the EU and beyond to raise awareness on media freedom and FIMI and present EU newest media assistance programmes for the region. Tailored campaigns and outreach activities accompanied the first EU funded studies on FIMI in Albania and Kosovo, and a new study under preparation for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Additionally, under the EU-Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Türkiye, the EU funded specific actions in support of the application of media actors' rights and responsibilities in line with European standards, and the improvement of the media legal framework in the Western Balkans.

In the **Southern Neighbourhood**, a new programme for support for Media covers all the region⁶⁴. The programme aims at ensuring that the sector remains independent, plural and resilient, is able to defend against current threats and can promote critical civic-minded thinking among diverse populations.

⁶⁴ <https://south.euneighbours.eu/project/core-support-for-independent-media-in-the-southern-neighbourhood/>

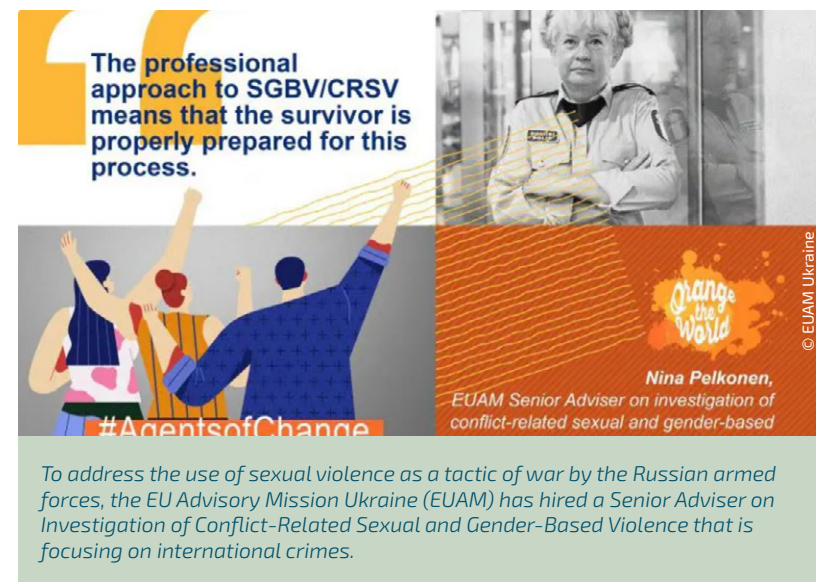
2.4 Reinforcing a human rights and participative approach to conflict prevention and crisis resolution

COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW

The **Strategic Compass for Security and Defence**, adopted in March 2022, stipulates that EU remains strongly committed to promoting and advancing human security and the respect of and the compliance with International Humanitarian law (IHL) and Human Rights Law (HRL) and the protection of civilians, including humanitarian personnel, in all conflict settings, as well as to further developing the EU due diligence policy in this regard.

When carrying its conflict analyses of countries at risk of violent conflict, the EU assesses, among other factors, the respect of human rights and the compliance with international humanitarian law. The **EU Conflict Early Warning System (EWS) and Conflict Analysis Screenings (CAS)** consider a country's lack or insufficient respect of human rights or implementation of international humanitarian law as potential drivers or triggers of conflicts. As such, and when relevant, they may provide recommendations aimed at improving the respect of human rights or the implementation of international humanitarian law. In 2022, the EU conflict prevention work strengthened its focus on human rights in its analyses and recommendations, calling for instance on capacity building and awareness on human rights and strengthened use of international human rights mechanisms for preventive purposes.

Promoting **compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law** is a key priority for EU crisis management structures at the Headquarters and in the field. To take forward this priority, human rights and gender equality aspects are included into the planning processes and mainstreamed into the mandates of CSDP missions and operations and into their strategic reviews.



For instance, human rights, gender equality and IHL expertise and considerations were included in the planning of a new CSDP military partnership mission to support Niger (Conflict Management Concept developed in 2022, the **EUMPM Niger** was established on 12 December 2022). In addition, nearly all CSDP civilian missions have at least one human rights expert position and military missions and operations have at least a human rights focal point to ensure the operationalisation of this priority in the field setting. IHL modules are included in training third countries' armed forces through EU military training missions, with a focus on child protection where relevant. In addition, the Integrated Methodological Framework (IMF) of the European Peace Facility (EPF) provides the policy framework for assessing and identifying the required measures and controls for assistance measures under the EPF.

The **work on developing EU Human Rights Due Diligence Policy** on security sector support has continued throughout 2022 with a view to finalizing and approving the policy in 2023. The policy would

set out an EU-wide policy framework to ensure that human rights and IHL due diligence is exercised consistently across different EU instruments and tools providing security sector support.

Throughout 2022, the EU crisis management structures at the HQ and in the field continued to support the implementation of **human rights compliance framework projects** in the field of peace and security funded by the NDICI – Global Europe instrument. Such programs include inter alia the support to G5 Sahel countries internal security forces in fighting impunity and strengthening ties with local communities in Mali and Burkina Faso (implemented by the Danish Institute for Human Rights) and in Mauritania, Niger and Chad (implemented by the OHCHR), the Human Rights Compliance Framework Project for the G5 Sahel Joint Force (implemented by the OHCHR), the Civilian Casualties Identification, Tracking and Analysis Cell of the G5 Sahel Joint Force (implemented by CIVIC), and the support to Provost Marshals and Legal Units to enhance Military Justice (implemented by Expertise France).

In addition, the EU Delegation to the AU, African Union Commission and UN OHCHR finalised a package of EUR 10 million to support African Peace Support Operations (PSO) to further institutionalize the **AU Human Rights Compliance Framework for African PSOs**. This multilateral cooperation framework aims to strengthen accountability for civilian casualties, violations of International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law and applicable standards of Conduct and Discipline, including sexual exploitation and abuse, by personnel of AU/African Peace Support Operations. The implementation of the programme started in 2022 and it addresses the whole cycle of the compliance framework from prevention, to monitoring, investigation, response and accountability, as well as assistance and remedy for victims of abuse. The programme runs for 36 months.

HUMAN RIGHTS MAINSTREAMING

In the **Council Conclusions on Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)**⁶⁵ adopted on 12 December 2022, the EU Member States commit to increase the efficiency of civilian CSDP, including by systematically mainstreaming human rights and exercising human rights due diligence in compliance with international human rights law, as well as promoting the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda.

In 2021-2022, the ISPD conducted jointly with the operational headquarters of military and civilian missions and operations a **Follow-up Baseline Study on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality into CSDP**. The purpose of the exercise was to measure progress against the baselines established in 2015/16 and to formulate new recommendations to improve further human rights and gender mainstreaming within CSDP structures. The Report, issued in May 2022, formulates recommendations on the need to develop policies on and to further conceptualise human rights due diligence, sexual and gender-based violence, children and armed conflict agenda as well as the need to work towards

Technical Assessment Mission in the frame of EU Monitoring Capacity (EUMCAP). The EUMCAP was deployed on 20 October 2022 along the Armenian side of the international border with Azerbaijan with the objective of monitoring, analysing and reporting on the situation on the ground.



© EU Delegation to Armenia

⁶⁵ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/12/12/council-approves-conclusions-calling-for-a-renewed-impetus-towards-the-civilian-common-security-and-defence-policy/>

gender-responsive leadership, increased representation of women and making additional dedicated expertise and resources available, particularly in military missions and operations. It also recommends to allocate more resources for IHL and ensure that IHL is sufficiently addressed by CSDP missions and operations.

Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) **civilian missions** contribute to the implementation of the EU policy on gender equality and Women, Peace and Security (WPS)⁶⁶ in various ways by gender mainstreaming, integrating of WPS perspectives into their activities and specific work on gender equality. The missions continued to implement the **Civilian Operations Commander Guidelines on gender mainstreaming**; the tools include among others gender focal point structures, gender analysis, internal gender actions plans and collection of sex-disaggregated data. The Human Rights Advisers of each civilian CSDP mission is engaged in providing training to relevant staff members on the Human Rights Based Approach, whilst senior management remains responsible for the implementation of the guidelines. The civilian missions also implemented various communication and awareness raising activities, for example during the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.

As a general rule, the civilian CSDP missions have dedicated **gender advisers** at the Head of Mission's office and a network of gender focal points. In addition, some of the missions have Gender Advisers at the operational departments to further support specific gender equality and gender mainstreaming activities. There are regular online meetings with the Gender Advisers and once a year an in-person meeting of all human rights and gender advisers (civilian and military); in 2022 the meeting was in June. Gender perspective and WPS agenda are included in various training activities and gender mainstreaming capabilities are supported by specialised training. In 2022, there were four training sessions for the Gender Focal Points.

⁶⁶ For more on the EU's active Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, please see chapter on gender equality.

In order to enhance efforts to increase women's participation in the civilian CSDP missions, a **Strategy and Action Plan to Enhance Women's Participation in Civilian CSDP Missions** was agreed upon at the end of 2021. Implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan fully started in 2022. This included for example review of the Personnel Job Descriptions Handbook, mentoring programme for women run together with the European Centre of Excellence for Civilian Crisis Management and revision of selection procedures.

In October 2022, **Operational Guidelines on Engagement with Civil Society** were issued to the civilian CSDP missions. These guidelines provide a toolbox for more structured engagement with civil society, recognising civil society as key partners of the missions. This is part of a shift in mind set towards a people-centred approach.



© MohammadAL-Saadi, EUPOL COPPS

In May 2022, the Palestinian Civil Police (PCP), in partnership with EUPOL COPPS, with the financial support of Luxemburg and Finland, hosted the first Palestinian Police Women Conference. The conference marked the first step of the process leading to the establishment of the Palestinian women police network, which aims to empower women and strengthen the status of female officers in the security sector. As a follow up to the conference, EUPOL COPPS supported the PCP in designing the institutional outfit of the network, including its composition, objectives and tasks. In December 2022, the president and the board of the network were elected, marking the final step towards becoming an affiliate of the International Association of Women Police (IAWP).

03. PROMOTING A GLOBAL SYSTEM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

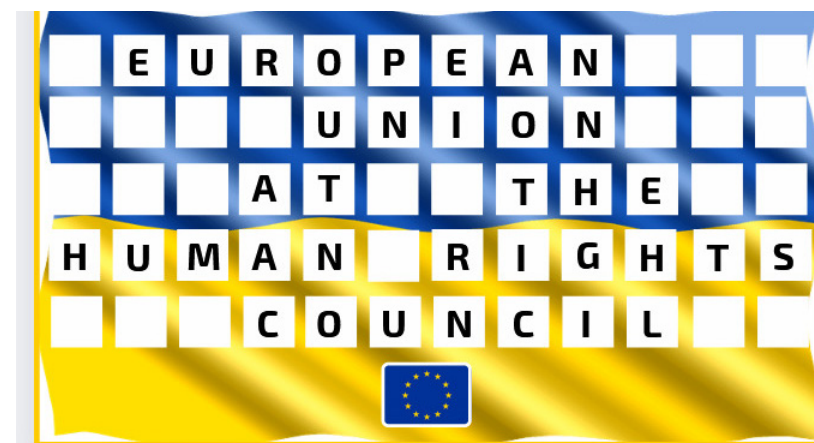
3.1 Multilateral cooperation

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine had not only a devastating effect on human rights in Ukraine, but also much wider consequences: the ensuing food, energy and economic crises affected millions of people around the world, and cooperation in multilateral fora, including those working on human rights, was also affected. At the same time, **multilateral fora and regional organisations provided for important public venues to raise and condemn the war and its consequences, adopt clear resolutions, and set up response mechanisms, notably the Commission of Inquiry for Ukraine** created by the Human Rights Council with an impressive level of support. As a direct consequence of its aggression of another Member State, on 16 March 2022, the Committee of Ministers adopted a decision by which the Russian Federation ceased to be a member of the Council of Europe pursuant to a procedure launched under Article 8 of the Statute of the organisation. This fast and strong mobilization speaks to the effectiveness of high-level diplomacy and the importance of the multilateral human rights system, which in parallel continued to carry forward and step up action on multiple other human rights situations and thematic issues.

In 2022, the **EU supported the work of the UN human rights system in addressing human rights violations and abuses**, including through country-specific and thematic statements and resolutions, commissions of inquiry, fact-finding missions and special procedures and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The EU actively supports those who act against human rights violations and abuses and spoke out against reprisals against those cooperating with the UN in the pursuit of the protection and promotion of human rights.

In 2022, together with EU Member States and like-minded partners worldwide, the EU continued to spearhead thematic and country-specific initiatives in the UN human rights fora. The EU has actively boosted **cross-regional cooperation** in these fora to ensure strong results in the increasingly difficult context of challenges to multilateral institutions and many negative trends around the world in human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The EU's leverage in UN human rights fora remained strong and targeted, joint EEAS and Member States' outreach was key to the success of the EU and other initiatives.

The EU continued to support the efficiency and effectiveness of the UN Human Rights Council, and better links with the work of the UNGA Third Committee and synergies with other multilateral and regional human rights fora. Throughout 2022, the **strategic cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights** was further enhanced, including through joint communication activities and events as well as cooperation and joint actions by EU Delegations and the OHCHR.

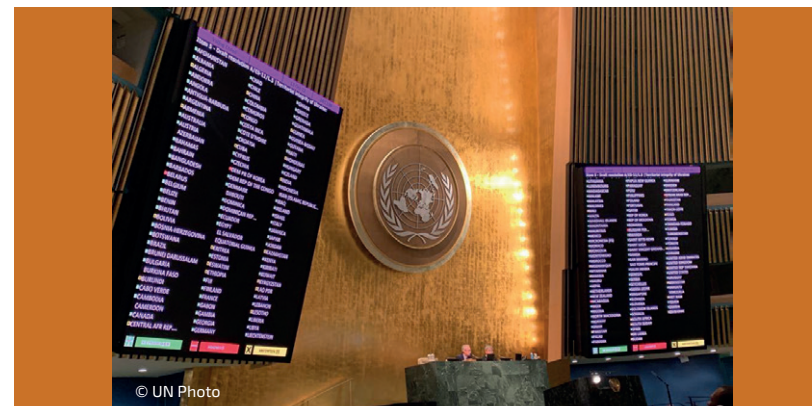


UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Given that Russia blocked any action by the UN Security Council on Ukraine, the UN General Assembly adopted five resolutions on the situation in Ukraine in 2022 after 24 February, all supported and some facilitated by the EU, confirming its engagement in condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine as a severe violation of the principles of the UN Charter. Resolution ES-11/3 of 7 April 2022 on the **"Suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council"** gathered 97 votes in favour and thereby confirmed the UNGA resolution which had set up the Human Rights Council in 2006, setting out a high standard for Council membership.

The **Third Committee session of the 77th United Nations General Assembly** took place between 29 September and 18 November 2022, in a fully in-person format, adopting 51 resolutions and holding 86 interactive dialogues with UN mandate holders and senior officials. The EU continued to actively defend the universality of human rights and to counteract attempts to weaken the international human rights system. The Committee monitored the human rights situation globally and denounced human rights violations and abuses, also using the instrument of the country specific resolutions. The cooperation with like-minded and aligning partners went well, with a strong percentage of alignment with the EU statements. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine had an impact on the work of the Committee and on EU's engagement. It was reflected in a significant number of statements by the EU, including during interactive dialogues.

The resolutions presented by the EU and its Member States delivered very good results. The joint EU-OIC resolution on the situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar was adopted without a vote for a second time in a row, sending a strong message of concern about violations and abuses in



On 12 October, following an intense effort by the European Union, working closely with Ukraine, and in broad consultation with the UN membership, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted a resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine and defending the UN Charter.

the country from the international community. A strong resolution on the situation of human rights in the DPRK was also adopted by consensus, as well as the EU resolution on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FORB). The following resolutions presented by EU Member States were adopted: violence against women and girls; crime prevention and criminal justice; torture; administration of justice; extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions; transplantation and trafficking in human organs; right to privacy in the digital age; and human rights treaty body system.

The EU once again supported the resolutions on the human rights situation in Syria, Iran and the resolution on Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, presented by Ukraine and adapted to the current context. All EU Member States voted against the annual Russian resolution on Glorification of Nazism, given the on-going Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The **biennial resolution on the moratorium on the death penalty** presented by the Interregional Task Force achieved the highest number of yes votes ever since its first presentation in 2007. Progress was achieved across the board on gender equality.



© EU Delegation to New York
EU Ambassadors and Ukraine Ambassador at the Empire State Building.

The **cross-regional Joint Statement** on Freedom of Religion or Belief provided the EU and likeminded countries an opportunity to underline the importance of freedom of expression and FoRB. The **cross-regional Joint Statement on the right to education, digital and human rights**, initiated by the EU and its Member States gathered the support of 73 UN members. It linked the right to education with the digital transformation and human rights, and underscored the importance of economic, social and cultural rights.

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL SESSIONS IN 2022

Throughout 2022, the EU reiterated the universally recognized principle that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. The EU continued to play a leading role at the Human Rights Council both by advancing thematic priorities and addressing country situations of concern through EU-led resolutions and statements and by working cross-regionally and supporting action by others. The EU and likeminded countries have also been instrumental in upholding existing and creating new reporting mandates on country situations, including by initiating

new investigative mechanisms. On the other hand, some other states have been increasingly vocal in presenting a false narrative revolving around accusations of violations of the principle of “non-interference” and the alleged “politicisation” of the Council, in contravention of the principles of the Charter, which the EU strongly opposed.

The Human Rights Council 49th session ended with excellent results for the EU. The EU-led resolutions on Myanmar, DPRK, Rights of the Child and Freedom of Religion or Belief passed by consensus, and the resolution on Belarus was adopted with a good margin of votes. Russia and Russian war of aggression against Ukraine featured prominently throughout the session. The HRC adopted the resolution on the situation of human rights in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression during an Urgent Debate on 4 March, which established an Independent International **Commission of Inquiry** to investigate all alleged violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law in the context of Russia's aggression to Ukraine and laid the ground for the decision to suspend the rights of membership of Russia in the HRC taken by the UNGA in April in New York.



© EU Delegation to Geneva

Ambassador Lotte Knudsen, Head of the EU Delegation to the United Nations in Geneva, reading out an EU statement at the Human Rights Council.

The EU pushed for **strong and swift meaningful action on Ukraine** and raised attention to the situation there throughout the entire session, including in a strong statement during the General Debate under item 4. The EU initiated a Joint Statement on the situation of children in Ukraine shortly after the bombing of the children's hospital in Mariupol, supported by 66 countries and delivered during the interactive dialogue with the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The EU27 also joined the US-led Joint Statement on the principles of territoriality and sovereignty under item 8, supported by 77 countries, and the Poland-led Joint Statement on the human rights situation in Russia under item 4, that enjoyed the support of 51 countries and focused on the domestic crackdown, but referred to the aggression too.

The Council also adopted several other important resolutions, i.a. on **South Sudan, Syria, Nicaragua, Georgia, Human Rights Defenders, disinformation** (presented by Ukraine with a core group) with EU support. Concerning China, the High Commissioner surprised the Council in the first week, confirming her intention to visit the country, including Xinjiang, in May.

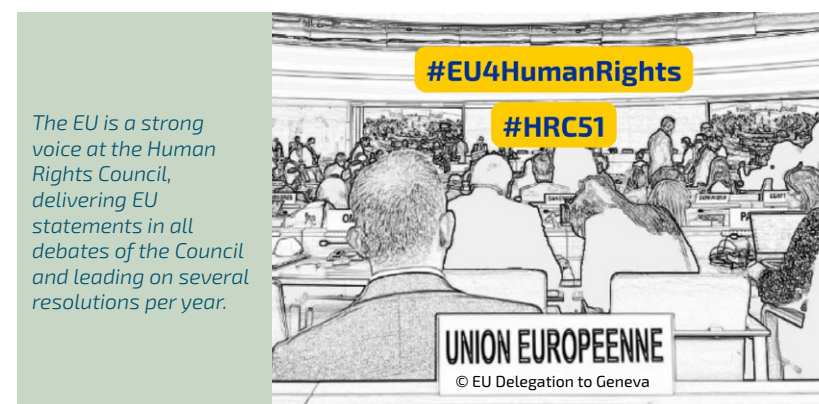
Despite the polarization and the difficult composition of the Council, **at the 50th session of the Human Rights Council**, the outcome was uplifting: out of 24 resolutions adopted, three quarters were consensual (70% on average in the past). EU-led resolutions on Eritrea and on Belarus were adopted with good margins. The EU called for an Urgent Debate on women and girls in Afghanistan and presented a new consensual resolution, addressing the very grave developments in the country and responsive to overwhelming concern of civil society. A resolution presented by the African Group with Libya's support extended the important Fact Finding Mission on Libya. The EU presented a Joint Statement on the human rights situation in Russia in the session which was supported by 47 states.

Several crucial **thematic resolutions** were adopted, several on gender equality and women's rights, as well as on peaceful protests, freedom of expression, and freedom of peaceful assembly. However,

the session saw worrisome push back against women's rights on an unprecedented scale which the EU sought to counter robustly and tirelessly. Similarly, the resolution extending the mandate of the Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity was also targeted by numerous amendments and harsh statements by some countries.

The EU highlighted its commitment to the economic, social and cultural rights with an EU-led Joint Statement on education and digital, co-signed by 104 countries, and the EU-India side event on water/sanitation and gender, which was co-sponsored by cross-regional partners. The EU also led a Joint Statement on food security supported by 54 states. The session also confirmed that environment and climate are increasingly important in the HRC discussions.

At the 51st Human Rights Council session, the EU-led resolution on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan was adopted with a better result than the year before, extending and reinforcing the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, including on accountability. Through the EU-led resolution on Ethiopia, the Council renewed the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts, and the resolution on the human rights situation on Burundi extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur.



The EU is a strong voice at the Human Rights Council, delivering EU statements in all debates of the Council and leading on several resolutions per year.

A historic resolution establishing a mandate of a Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Russia, presented by 26 EU Member States, was adopted. For the first time, the Council created a UN Special Procedures mandate to monitor and report on the human rights record of a permanent member of the UN Security Council. In arguably the most closely observed vote in the history of the Human Rights Council, a draft decision on the situation of human rights in Xinjiang, presented by the US, UK, Canada, Australia, Nordic countries and Lithuania was rejected by a small margins, but still triggered extensive discussion on China. Other country initiatives addressed the situations in Venezuela, Sri Lanka, and Syria as well as Somalia, Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the latter three adopted by consensus with the support of the countries concerned.

The EU continued to highlight the importance of the **economic, social and cultural rights**. Building upon the successful EU-led Joint Statement on education and the digital agenda, delivered at HRC50, the African Union and the European Union held for the first time a joint side event entitled 'Realizing the Right to Education Worldwide Through Digital Transformation', which also constituted a follow-up action to the 17th EU-AU Human Rights Dialogue in 2021.

In addition to its regular sessions, the Human Rights Council continued to react to the emerging human rights situations with the dedicated **special sessions**. On 12 May 2022, it addressed the



EU –
African
Union side
event in
Geneva.

deteriorating human rights situation in **Ukraine** stemming from the Russian aggression. On 24 November 2022, the deteriorating situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of **Iran**, especially with respect to women and children, was addressed, resulting in the adoption of a resolution that strongly deplored the violent crackdowns on peaceful protests and related arrests and created an Independent International Fact-Finding Mission.

3.2 Regional partnerships

THE EU IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

During 2022, the EU continued to act in partnership with the Council of Europe (CoE) to advance human rights, the rule of law and democracy, in the implementation of the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 and the **Council conclusions on EU priorities for cooperation with the Council of Europe 2020-2022**, adopted in July 2020. The EU also started working on the **2023-2024 priorities** to be adopted early 2023. **The high-level dialogue** between the two organisations continued in 2022 with frequent contacts at the highest level, a visible symbol of the strong cooperation between both organisations. At the Turin ministerial meeting in May 2022, the Council of Europe re-confirmed the EU as its 'main institutional partner' in political, financial and legal terms (the EU is the biggest contributor to the CoE's extra-ordinary budget).

The year 2022 was marked by the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine and the strong and rapid reaction of the Council of Europe that followed. **Such an aggression being incompatible with the status of a Council of Europe member state, the Committee of Ministers decided on 16 March that the Russian Federation would cease to be a member of the Council of Europe from the same date.** The 27 EU Member States unanimously supported this decision. Russia remained a High Contracting Party to the European

Convention on Human Rights until 16 September, so the Court remains competent to deal with applications directed against Russia in relation to acts that occurred until that date.

United in its support for Ukraine, the CoE Committee of Ministers adopted the **Action Plan for Ukraine for 2023-2026** in December 2022. It will contribute to the rebuilding process and recovery of the country, faced with the Russian Federation's aggression and immense destruction. It aims to heighten the resilience of public institutions through strengthening democratic governance and the rule of law, and protecting citizens' human rights. It also aims to support Ukraine's European perspective reform agenda, following the decision by the European Council on 23 June 2022 to grant EU candidate status to Ukraine. The overall budget is estimated at EUR 50 million, making it the largest ever budget for a country-specific CoE Action Plan. The EU will contribute to its implementation through its joint programmes with the Council of Europe.

The EU remained fully committed to its **accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)**. The negotiations reached their final stage at the end of 2022 by virtue of a series of negotiations with the other contracting parties on possible amendments to the draft accession treaty.

In 2022, following the European Court of Justice Opinion 1/19, the EU has resumed the negotiations on the accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence.

In May 2022, in Strasbourg, 22 countries members of the European Council ratified the **Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on cybercrime (the "Budapest Convention")** on enhanced cooperation and disclosure of electronic evidence (the "Second Protocol"). This new instrument to fight cybercrime, negotiated by the European Commission on behalf of the EU, achieved an outcome that reconciles measures for an effective criminal justice response with strong rule of law and data protection safeguards.



Intensive cooperation continued on the **rights of the child** in 2022, as the Council of Europe adopted a new strategy providing with extensive synergies with the EU. The EU continued to actively promote the standards of the Lanzarote Convention and co-finance the implementation of the Barnahus model in various countries. In the field of Employment and Social Affairs, the **European Social Charter and the Revised European Social Charter** have continued to constitute important references for the implementation of the EU's European Pillar of Social Rights, including through its Action Plan supported at the Social Summit in Porto on 7-8 May 2021.

The European Commission started a new joint project with the CoE Observatory for History Teaching called "Transnational History Education and Co-operation Laboratory – **HISTOLAB**" to bring together innovative ideas on history education.

The Council of Europe's expertise and benchmarking role is crucially important in the preparation of the EU's annual Enlargement package and the European Rule of Law Mechanism, including the preparation of the next editions of the annual Rule of Law Report". Close consultations with CoE bodies such as the **Venice Commission and GRECO** played an important role in the preparation of the European Commission's annual rule of law report as well as in the preparation of the annual Enlargement Package.

Moreover, the EU addressed a number of issues in the **Committee of Ministers**, including the freedom of expression and media, rights of LGBTI persons and the death penalty. The EU also made statements on human rights cases and developments, in particular referring to the situations in Crimea/Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and the conflict in Georgia.

New issues like human rights in the digital age, the link between human rights and the environment and the impact of the pandemic on individual rights and democratic resilience also received great attention. The EU supported the work done by the CoE for the development of a **global (framework) convention on artificial intelligence (AI)**, human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Given the EU acquis in this area, in particular the proposal for an AI Regulations (AI Act), the Council authorised the European Commission to negotiate the convention on behalf of the EU.

The EU Delegation continued to step up its public diplomacy efforts during 2022 to **raise the visibility of the EU's extensive cooperation with the Council of Europe** on human rights, democracy and the rule of law and to promote the EU's effective commitment to multilateralism and support to Ukraine. One of the most successful activities carried out in 2022 was the slam for democracy event with artists from EU Member States organised in the margins of the World Forum for Democracy, where the EU also had two prominent speakers.

THE EU IN THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

The work of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2022 was guided by the "no business as usual" principle. In the 'Human Dimension' it **focused on the impact that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has on the human rights situation in the region**, adjusting the workplan and topics (three Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings, Human Dimension Committees, ODIHR Seminars) to focus on Accountability for War Crimes, Violence against Women in Conflicts, Rights of Children in Conflicts, Situation of Refugees and Prevention of Trafficking etc. The EU actively participated in all of these discussions, reiterating a strong message of solidarity with Ukraine, calling on Russia to stop the aggression and fully respect **Ukraine's** independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as underlining the need for ensuring accountability for all violations.

Due to Russia's obstruction, the most important annual meeting, the consensus-based Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, did not take place for the third year in a row. The Polish Chairmanship-in-Office (CiO) still offered delegations and NGOs a platform for dialogue through the **Warsaw Human Dimension Conference** (26 September-7 October 2022). The EU and its Member States spoke in all working sessions of the conference, and organized a number of well attended side events (Russia's aggression against Ukraine – Accountability and the Way Forward; Accountability for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence resulting from Russia's War against Ukraine; Safety of Journalists: Dangers of reporting from the war zone in Ukraine, as well as side events focusing on the connection between the domestic repression within Russia and Belarus and their external aggression).

The EU and its Member States joined the unprecedented number of 45 OSCE delegations **invoking the Moscow Mechanism twice in 2022** to report on the ongoing human rights and humanitarian

impacts of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The reports - the first published on 13 April, the second on 2 June - are an essential contribution to an initial collection and analysis of factual information with a view to presenting it to accountability mechanisms that have, or may have in the future, jurisdiction. The invocation of the Moscow Mechanism by 38 OSCE delegations on Russia's Legal and Administrative Practice in Light of its OSCE Human Dimension Commitments also had a strong EU lead.

The deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus was also kept high on the agenda, with numerous statements, side events and a postcard writing initiative marking the **International Human Rights Day and the Day of Solidarity with Belarusian political prisoners** (over 100 postcards were sent by the EUDEL and EU Member States delegations).

In the **OSCE Permanent Council**, the EU proactively raised several issues related to human rights, including marking the World Press Freedom Day, the International Day against the Death Penalty, Gender Equality and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, as well as the International Human Rights Day.

The EU supports the **OSCE's monitoring of serious corruption and organised crime cases in the Western Balkans**, with the aim of identifying systemic issues and providing recommendations to strengthen the judicial response. As of 2022, about 230 cases were being monitored, and an interim analytical report with initial recommendations was produced.

The EU continued to fully support the valuable work of the **OSCE's autonomous institutions** (the ODIHR, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities). The EU and the OSCE share common standards and a similar methodology for the **observation of elections**. The ongoing efforts to strengthen the methodology for observing the use of

new technologies in the electoral process and to encourage the implementation of recommendations from EOMs are examples of effective cooperation to support democracy and promote human rights.

EU COOPERATION WITH OTHER REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

On 24 February 2022, the EU and the **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** organized a virtual webinar on Freedom of Religion and Belief (FORB), inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue with the aim to exchange on the respective established frameworks to protect FORB and to explore opportunities for enhanced coordination and cooperation. The webinar was attended by OIC and EU officials as well as external experts and discussions held in a cooperative and constructive atmosphere identifying a lot of common ground, also regarding possible future cooperation on joint initiatives.

2022 was a critical year for the **EU-African Union (AU)** partnership with a number of high-level events. In particular, the 6th EU-AU Summit held on 17-18 February 2022 in Brussels and the 11th EU-AU Commission to Commission meeting held on 28 November 2022 in Brussels proved decisive to address the urgent challenges, to review progress made in the implementation of joint commitments already taken and spot-out long-term possibilities for cooperation. On all occasions, AU and EU leadership reaffirmed their commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights for all, to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and to respecting democratic principles, good governance and the rule of law.

The **18th EU-AU Human Rights Dialogue**, co-chaired by the EU Special Representative for Human Rights and the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, was expected to close the series of high-level

events of 2022, but did not take place for purely organisational reasons. However, the EUSR and the AU Commissioner had several bilateral meetings throughout the year.

The **EU-AU engagement on human rights** has reached its full level of maturity in opening-up to critical reflection and frank exchanges on sensitive issues such as the right to development and anti-racism, particularly as to people of African descent, in relation to which the EU's and the AU's principled stances differ. This added to the well-established and continuous **interaction and cooperation on human rights** topics such transitional justice processes, business and human rights, and election observation.

Despite the delayed organisation, the **10th AU-EU Civil Society Seminar** took place on 1-2 December in Brussels after a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, throughout 2022 the EU continued to engage with AU human rights organs, particularly the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR), amid bilateral meetings and interventions in public events by the EUSR such as the public session of 73rd Ordinary Session of the African Commission for Human and People's Rights on 21 October 2022 in Banjul/The Gambia.

The EU's engagement with **ASEAN**, in line with the existing strategic partnership, continued to stress the importance of a regional architecture which remains open and rules-based and with a strong commitment to the rule of law, human rights and international law. The EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit was a key event in 2022.

In the context of the **4th EU-ASEAN policy dialogue on human rights** in Jakarta in October 2022, a broad range of human rights issues were covered. The dialogue was also a forum for National Human Rights Institutions from ASEAN and the EU to share best practices on ensuring access to justice as well as the prospects for human rights cooperation between regional and national human rights mechanisms.



The EUSR for Human Rights co-chaired the 4th ASEAN-EU Policy Dialogue on Human Rights in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 24-26 October 2022.

3.3 Bilateral cooperation

HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUES

Human rights dialogues and consultations with third countries remain a key tool of the EU's human rights action. They represent a crucial moment of engagement to advance human rights and concretely follow-up on solutions implemented to address existing challenges. **Forty human rights dialogues and consultations took place in 2022**, mostly in presential format, returning to pre-pandemic levels. The dialogue with Oman was conducted for the first time in September 2022 in Muscat, completing the set of dialogues held with Gulf countries. The Informal Working Group on Human Rights with Israel was held for the first time since 2016, while the Sub-Committee with Egypt and the Dialogue with South Africa were held for the first time since 2019. The dialogue with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia newly established in 2021, was held for the second time, again co-chaired by the EUSR for Human Rights who also carried out a program of visit to Riyadh. Similarly, the 2nd Sub-Committee on Good Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights with the Philippines took place in October in Manila. Moreover, the EUSR co-chaired the

second strategic dialogue with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in June in Geneva, after its establishment in October 2021 to give effect to the further increased EU support to multilateralism and close cooperation with UN organisations. The local dialogue with India, resumed in 2021, was also held in 2022.

Human rights dialogues continue to be guided by the renewed **EU Guidelines on human rights dialogues with third countries**⁶⁷ of February 2021. In their implementation, the agenda of dialogues reflects thematic EU human rights priorities and addresses country situations of shared concern and cooperation in multilateral human rights fora as well as recommendations from election observation missions, where applicable. Dialogues are conducted in a results-oriented manner and follow-up actions are agreed or proposed afterwards, including expert seminars, visits and project activities. Wherever possible, joint press releases publicize the holding of the dialogue and steps of future cooperation. **Civil society representatives** are consulted in the preparation of dialogues and debriefed. In addition to these dedicated dialogues, the EU raises human rights dialogues in political and other dialogue meetings.

TRADE INSTRUMENTS

The European Union's trade policy helps to promote and protect human rights around the world by means of various trade policy instruments, including the EU's unilateral trade preferences and free trade agreements.

Under the **EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences** (GSP), in 2022 the EU continued monitoring compliance with international standards on human rights, labour rights, environmental protection and good governance by countries benefitting from the GSP+ arrangement or undergoing enhanced engagement under the **Everything-But-Arms**

67 Revised EU Guidelines on Human Rights Dialogues with Partner/Third Countries, 22 February 2021: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6279-2021-INIT/en/pdf>

(EBA) arrangement. With the easing of travel restrictions in 2022, the EU actively engaged in dialogue on these issues with beneficiary countries and various stakeholders (including civil society, social partners, and Member States). Several GSP+ monitoring missions took place in 2022, to Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan, while an EBA Enhanced Engagement mission was carried out to Bangladesh. The implementation of the GSP system will be subject to a joint Commission and EEAS report for the 2020-2022 period.

The European Parliament and the Council continued discussions on the Commission's legislative proposal for a **new GSP Regulation for the period 2024-2034**. It reinforces the focus of the GSP scheme on the promotion of sustainable development: it includes a number of additional international conventions (including on human rights and labour rights) to be respected by beneficiary countries, and introduces as ground for the possible withdrawal of trade preferences the export of goods made by internationally prohibited child labour and forced labour.

The EU also continued monitoring **the implementation of the Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapters** of EU free trade agreements (FTAs), whereby the parties are committed to respecting, promoting and realising the ILO principles on fundamental rights at work, as well as to ratifying and effectively implementing the fundamental ILO conventions. In 2022, all TSD committee meetings took place as foreseen. The 2022 Annual Report on the Implementation and Enforcement of EU Trade Agreements⁶⁸, published by the European Commission in October 2022, includes information on implementation of the TSD chapters of FTAs concluded by the EU.

68 [https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/api/files/COM\(2022\)730_0/090166e5f2589cd1?rendition=false](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/api/files/COM(2022)730_0/090166e5f2589cd1?rendition=false)

The EU also continued its engagement on trade and sustainable development with Eastern partnership countries. In December 2022, it was agreed with Georgia to start working on a new TSD Work Plan to cover the period from 2024 to 2026.

On 22 June 2022, the Commission adopted a Communication on '**The power of trade partnerships: together for green and just economic growth**'. The Communication sets out a set of policy priorities and key action points for more results-oriented and priority-based engagement with partner countries on trade and sustainable development, enhanced participation and support for civil society, as well as a stronger focus on the implementation and enforcement of TSD commitments. In October 2022, the Council adopted Conclusions welcoming and endorsing the approach set forth in the Commission Communication, and the European Parliament adopted a respective resolution.

In June 2022, the European Union and **New Zealand** concluded negotiations on an ambitious trade agreement, which includes a comprehensive TSD Chapter that covers labour, women's empowerment, environmental and climate matters and offers civil society organisations an active role to monitor the implementation of the agreement. Negotiations with Chile on an Advanced Framework Agreement concluded in December 2022. Once implemented, the Agreement will directly contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030, and advance joint values and interest, including trade and sustainability, human rights and peace and security.

On 22 June 2022, the Commission updated the Operating Guidelines of the Single Entry Point (SEP), the platform which since 2020 allows all EU-based stakeholders to submit complaints inter alia concerning violations of sustainability commitments by trading partners under the TSD provisions of EU trade agreements or under the EU's GSP.

The update of the Guidelines clarified that the EU Domestic Advisory Groups can also bring complaints through the SEP. The Commission received through the SEP the first complaint raising concerns about labour conditions in the extractive sector in Colombia and Peru, notably linked to the practice of outsourcing and use of intermediaries companies. The Commission also followed up on a complaint regarding human rights issues in Vietnam.

In the field of **exports control**, in 2022 the Commission worked closely with EU Member States within the **Surveillance Technology Expert Group** in view of the publication of guidelines to support exporters in the application of controls of cyber-surveillance items. This works followed the entry into force of the EU Export Control Regulation in 2021, which set the framework for export controls of non-listed cyber-surveillance items that might be misused by persons complicit in or responsible for directing or committing serious violations of human rights or international humanitarian law.

3.4 Civil society and national human rights institutions

Civil society remains a key partner in designing, implementing and monitoring EU external policies. In 2022, the EU continued to promote and protect a safe and enabling space for civil society, both online and offline, making full use of its human rights toolbox.

Following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the EU **responded strongly and with unity in support of human rights and civil society in Ukraine**, addressing the wide range of needs from emergency assistance to people and activists (including evacuation and relocation, shelters, emergency aid, EU integration), addressing gender-based and sexual violence, providing conflict response support (accountability for war crimes, civil protection),

and supporting media (safety of journalists and media, countering disinformation). The EU notably reallocated funds under the Global Europe Thematic Programmes for Civil Society and for Human Rights and Democracy.

In 2022, the **crackdown on civil society continued in many parts of the world**. The COVID-19 pandemic was still used by some governments as a pretext to curtail human rights, including the freedom of association and peaceful assembly. Different types of legislation, often with vaguely worded criminal provisions, were used to crush civic space and limit the activities of civil society organisations (CSOs) or their access to resources, allegedly in the name of national security, anti-terrorism, anti-money laundering or foreign interference. In addition, civil society actors increasingly faced physical threats, harassment, arbitrary detention and even killings.

The **EU firmly condemned all attacks against civil society organisations and undue limitations on the essential work they carry out**. The EU continued to oppose legal and administrative measures curtailing human rights and shrinking civic space, such as barriers to registration of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), restrictions on access to resources and foreign funding, including from the EU and its Member States, onerous vetting rules and burdensome reporting requirements. The EU has **consistently raised all these issues with third countries' authorities**, including in the context of human rights dialogues.

Coordination and **joint work with like-minded partners**, including on the ground, remained key to maximise the impact of EU engagement and counter the trend of shrinking space for civil society. Throughout the year, the EU coordinated its action with like-minded partners through dedicated human rights consultations and within multilateral fora, such as G7, Community of Democracies and at the UN level. EU Delegations continued to be in regular touch with like-minded partners' Embassies on the ground.



The EU Special Representative for Human Rights Eamon Gilmore chairs the first formal consultation on the implementation of the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy with a broad range of civil society actors in Brussels, on 13 June 2022.

A safe and enabling environment also implies ensuring a **meaningful participation for civil society in decision-making**. In 2022, the EU continued engaging in a regular dialogue with civil society at different levels and in different formats, both in Brussels and on the ground, through EU Delegations. During the pandemic, despite all the challenges, the EU maintained or even expanded its engagement with civil society by using new technologies and holding virtual consultations with relevant stakeholders. Consultations were held before human rights dialogues and other high-level political dialogues, or before the launching of calls for proposals. Another opportunity to exchange with civil society and human rights defenders was the **24th edition of the EU-NGO Forum** on 14-15 December. The Forum, which gathered more than 100 human rights defenders from all around the world, NGOs, UN experts, International Criminal Court representatives and EU officials discussed how to fight against impunity and to foster justice and accountability for human rights violations and abuses⁶⁹.

⁶⁹ See box at the end of chapter 5.1 for more information.

The EU also continued its **efforts to promote NGOs' involvement in the work of the UN** General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and other multilateral human rights fora, including by defending NGOs' right to speak and by promoting the open participation of civil society in high-level events held by the General Assembly. The EU, together with other like-minded partners, opposed conditionality through successful votes against limiting the participation of CSOs in resolutions setting modalities for General Assembly events. These votes were largely won and ended a flawed practice according to which any Member State could request the removal of certain organisations from the list of participants. In the same vein, most EU Member States which are members of the ECOSOC supported the initiatives taken twice in 2022 to grant accreditation to NGOs that had been unfairly blocked for many years.

Furthermore, the **EU ensured that its events in the UN include and promote the voice of civil society**. This was the case for the side events in the margins of the High Level Week and of UNGA Third



© EU Delegation to Argentina

*October 28 - San Carlos de Bariloche, (Argentina)
During the visit of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles, the European Union launched a new call for proposals in support of civil society, human rights and democracy with a total budget of EUR 6,136,000 to finance projects in Argentina.*

Committee on freedom of religion or belief, digital technologies and education, Ukraine and Belarus. The EU also cooperated actively with the Geneva-based Task Force on Civil Society.

The EU considers **CSOs also valuable and efficient implementers of human rights, humanitarian aid and development work**, due to their closeness and commitment to communities and their local and topical expertise. The EU remains one of the **leading donors** worldwide to CSOs in partner countries and in 2022 set up a variety of investments to address the shrinking of civic space across the world. Two major global calls for proposals were launched in 2022 in the context of the Thematic Programme for Civil Society Organisations 2021-2027, under which contracts were signed with civil society for a value of EUR 206 million. The first call for proposal aims to establish the next generation of Framework Partnership Agreements, for a total of EUR 56 million. The objective of the second initiative is the development of a EUR 50 million worth EU System for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society, which will seek to systematically monitor and support an enabling environment for civil society, identifying and coordinating responses to threats and opportunities. In addition, agreements were signed with the International Organization for Employer (IOE) to contribute to the **reinforcement of labour rights**, as well as with WINGS to contribute to an enabling environment for **philanthropic actors in partner countries**. Global and regional consultations and information sessions within the EU main platform for development dialogue with civil society and local authorities, the **Policy Forum on Development**, were held on a variety of topics.

Moreover, EU Delegations continued the development of the CSO Country Roadmaps, which present a comprehensive analysis of the **civil society landscape**, its enabling environment and the challenges and opportunities faced by CSOs. In the enlargement region, the EU adopted revised 'EU Guidelines for Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement region 2021-2027', setting out objectives

for EU assistance to civil society, providing a tool for governments to improve cooperation with civil society, and helping to measure progress towards meeting conditions for EU integration.

CSOs remained the main recipients of support also from the EU's Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy Programme, which in 2022 contributed more than EUR 100 million to country-based projects on human rights, mainly working with CSOs. Globally, in 2022 a call for new thematic partnerships with CSOs was launched, including a EUR 5 million envelope focused on the freedoms of association and assembly underlying civic space, aiming to engage young people to organise and participate in public life.

National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) remained essential actors in promoting and protecting human rights worldwide. NHRIs are affected by the shrinking of the democratic and civic space for independent human rights action. This is why the EU, as part of its external action, promotes independent NHRIs and the essential role they play in ensuring the protection of human rights around the world.

In most of its human rights dialogues in 2022, the EU called on third countries to ensure that NHRIs are **independent, receive the necessary human and financial resources, and are systematically consulted in all relevant policymaking and legislative processes**. Emphasis was placed on ensuring that NHRIs and their staff are protected from threats, harassment and attacks.

The EU's political commitment to NHRIs is **complemented by financial support**. The second phase of the NHRI.EU project, which benefits from an EU contribution of EUR 3,75 million, ended in 2022. It contributed to develop NHRIs' effectiveness as human rights defenders in accordance with the Paris Principles. Under the Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy Programme, NHRI.EU phase 3 kicked off in April 2022 (EUR 5 million for three years) to build on achievements of Phase 2. This action aims to further **reinforce NHRI**

promotion and protection of HRDs and civic space, to support NHRIs under threat, to strengthen the accreditation process, to **enhance NHRI action in specific thematic areas** to advance sustainable development through human rights and to continue building the capacity of global and regional networks.

In 2022, the **Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions** continued to implement an agreement signed with the EU in 2020. Its purpose is to increase the capacity of NHRIs to address, in collaboration and partnership with intergovernmental mechanisms, key identified human rights issues in South-East Asia and the Pacific.

In the **Western Balkans**, the EU continued to emphasise the role of Ombudsman institutions and NHRIs in the subcommittees under the Stabilisation and Association Process. The consistent follow-up of these independent bodies' recommendations needs to be ensured and monitored closely.



3.5 Business sector

In 2022, **the EU stepped up work to ensure the respect of human rights by business operators active on the EU market, with implications on their value chains worldwide.** It also maintained its engagement in UN human rights fora and with partner countries to actively promote and support the global implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs).

In February, the European Commission put forward a **proposal for a Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence (CSDD).** Building on international standards, the proposed Directive establishes mandatory due diligence requirements for large companies domiciled in the EU as well as foreign companies with a significant presence on the EU market to identify, bring to an end, prevent, mitigate and account for **negative human rights and environmental impacts in their own operations, their subsidiaries and their global value chains.** The Directive, once adopted, will have positive impacts in third countries, by reducing human rights and environment risks, and promoting international standards in these areas.

In December 2022, the **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive** was formally adopted. This Directive modernises and strengthens the rules on social and environmental reporting, by requiring companies to report according to European sustainability reporting standards. Such standards cover the full range of sustainability issues including human rights.

In the **Asia-Pacific region**, the EU continued its joint engagement with the ILO and the OECD through the 'Responsible supply chains in Asia' project (EUR 9 million, completed in 2022) to promote environmental and human rights due diligence along the supply chains in six trading partners (China, Japan, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam). In addition, under a new Action adopted in 2022, the EU and OECD will partner with three High-Income Countries and major EU's trading partners in Asia, namely Japan, Republic of Korea and Singapore, to promote responsible business conduct practices.

In September 2022, the Commission adopted a proposal for a **Regulation to prohibit products made with forced labour on the EU market.** The measure, that will cover all products, included imported goods, includes provisions on international cooperation to facilitate its implementation and enforcement.



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Supported by EU and Germany, vulnerable rural women in Nicaragua's dry corridor are leading more than 140 hectares of agroforestry systems (shade-grown coffee, fruits trees), contributing to the protection of more than 20 water sources through reforestation and generating economic income for their families.

The implementation of the **EU Conflict Minerals Regulation** is ongoing. In August 2022, the Commission initiated a study to review the functioning and effectiveness of the Regulation, which will serve as a basis for the future review report to the European Parliament and the Council.

The EU actively participated in the **11th UN Forum on Business and Human Rights** (28-29 November 2022), notably to present the Commission proposal for a Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive. The EU also participated constructively in the eight session of the **UN discussions on an international legally binding instrument on business and human rights (22-28 October 2022)**, where it continued promoting an instrument that can effectively enhance the protection of victims of business-related human rights violations and abuses while creating a global level playing field for businesses.

The EU also continued **promoting business and human rights and UNGP implementation through bilateral engagement** with partner countries and **in partnership with international organisations** such as the OHCHR, the ILO and the OECD.

The EUSR continued to engage extensively on business and human rights throughout the year and to enhance dialogue with the private sector, notably with industry leaders. Reflecting the involvement of the private sector in a wide range of human rights issues, the EUSR delivered a keynote address at a conference organised by the private sector, academia and civil society, and intervened at the **African Business and Human Rights Forum**, to **discuss challenges and opportunities for promoting responsible business conduct and corporate accountability in the region**.

The EU-funded 'Responsible business conduct in **Latin America and the Caribbean**' project (EUR 9,5 million) continued supporting the development of national action plans on business and human rights in nine countries of the region (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama and Peru). Implemented in partnership with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the ILO and the OECD. In 2022, countries such as Peru, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador and Mexico took decisive steps to develop and implement National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights through inclusive governance processes. Progress was also made in facilitating access to remedies by victims in cases of business-related adverse impacts, including on human and labour rights and the environment. As part of the project, the 7th Regional Forum on Business and Human Rights was held on 13-15 July in Bogotá, Colombia, with over 2,000 representatives of governments, employers and workers organisations from 54 countries. It discussed the role of the State in strengthening corporate accountability in the region, the need for greater policy coherence in the State's role as an economic actor, the relevance of due diligence as a tool for accountability, and the need to strengthen access to remedy for victims of human rights abuses in business operations.



Bringing education to Myanmar's conflict-affected children.

The EU-funded **Business and Human Rights in Asia** project is a multi-country project covering six ASEAN countries, namely India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Implemented in partnership with the UNDP, ILO and OECD and endowed with a budget of EUR 6.5 million until the end of 2023, the project supports the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) in Asia through the development of National Action Plans, as well as policy discussions and awareness raising on human rights due diligence and access to remedy for victims of human rights violations by business enterprises. The project also offers a platform to exchange views on the policy and legislative developments on mandatory human rights due diligence in the EU and other major actors in the region. There is strong interest by the business community in South-East Asia to be informed and prepared for the adoption and entry into force of the EU legislative proposals.

3.6 Compliance with international human rights and international humanitarian law

The **EU remained active in promoting respect for international humanitarian law** (IHL) across the various areas covered in the *EU Guidelines on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law*⁷⁰. In June 2022, the EU published the fifth report on the implementation of the guidelines, which highlights the activities that the EU carried out in support of IHL in the course of 2021. In December 2022, a virtual event was organised to launch the report at the international level. Overall, the need for IHL compliance and violations of IHL were much more prominently addressed throughout the year, also owing to the developments in Ukraine.

⁷⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/eu-guidelines-on-the-promotion-of-compliance-with-international-humanitarian-law.html>

In March 2022, the EU held its **first European Humanitarian Forum**, with IHL at the center of discussions. It gathered EU Member States, donors and partners from around the world with the aim to foster innovative thinking both at high-level and technical level. Other discussions focused on the protection of humanitarian and healthcare workers from attacks, engaging with armed non-state actors to support IHL compliance, the role of humanitarian civil-military coordination as an enabler for IHL, children in armed conflict, or the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The EU continued to be vocal on IHL matters as an active member or observer in a range of international organisations and bodies, through high-level dialogues and public communication, amongst other. For example, the EU took part in **open debates of the UN Security Council**, including the debate on strengthening accountability and justice for serious violations of international law, the protection of civilians in armed conflict, on war in cities, and contributed with a strong statement to the UNSC open debate on conflict-related sexual violence. The EU co-organised, together with Belgium and DRC, a **high-level side event in the margins of the UN General Assembly Ministerial Week** on promoting accountability for IHL violations, especially sexual and gender-based violence.

The EU's humanitarian aid budget provided financial support to policy initiatives **supporting the protection of humanitarian workers and of healthcare in armed conflicts, engagement with armed non-state actors for IHL**, and strengthening the advocacy and negotiation capacity of humanitarian actors, including frontline workers.

The EU continued supporting the protection of education from attacks in armed conflicts. On a yearly basis, thanks to the funding to **Education in Emergencies** policy, the EU helped provide access to safe and quality learning at primary and secondary levels to nearly 2 million children affected by crises.

The EU, in collaboration with its humanitarian partners, stepped up actions for **Children Associated with Armed Conflict**, funding several projects aiming at improving access to justice mechanisms for children associated with armed conflicts. For instance, in Myanmar, the conflict has made access to education in certain parts of the country almost impossible. The EU funds the Norwegian Refugee Council to provide access to education for vulnerable and conflict-affected communities, and psychosocial support to learners, teachers and caregivers.

In addition, the EU continued to be active in advocating for the **protection from sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflicts**, including through its active membership in the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence.

In 2022 the EU again advocated for and supported the full implementation of UNSC Resolution 2417 that addresses the need to break the vicious cycle of **conflict and food insecurity**.

The EU continued upholding respect for IHL when adopting sanctions and avoid, or, where unavoidable, mitigate, unintended negative impacts of EU sanctions on principled humanitarian action. The EU has **systematically considered the inclusion of humanitarian exceptions in EU restrictive measures regimes** where relevant. In order to promote a better understanding of sanctions regimes and to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the EU issued various explanatory notes and held discussions with relevant key stakeholders involved in humanitarian assistance.

The EU has been continuously engaged in promoting respect and compliance with IHL through **effective humanitarian civil-military coordination** in all relevant contexts, as a framework to protect the humanitarian space, avoid duplication, minimise inconsistencies and maximise potential synergies with security and defence actors. The EU has remained committed to ensure IHL due diligence in the provision of military support to third countries.

The observance of IHL is of crucial importance in a number of country situations that the EU seeks to improve. For instance, the December 2022 Council Conclusions on **Yemen**⁷¹ call on all parties to the conflict to fully respect International Humanitarian Law.

In parallel, the **EU maintained its support for UN agencies, ICRC and INGOs working on IHL advocacy, protection, promotion of women's and children's rights, and reduction of gender-based violence**. The EU's humanitarian aid budget supported UNICEF and Save the Children to document incidents of grave child rights violations. It also supported a regional action by Diakonia and Geneva Call in the Middle East and North Africa region to improve protection of civilians through promoting increased knowledge and respect of international humanitarian norms among armed actors and religious leaders.

In **Nigeria**, the EU was actively engaged in advocating for respecting the voluntary nature and the safety of people when organising returns of refugees to the conflict affected northeast region of the country.

Regarding the humanitarian crises in **Sahel** and the **Lake Chad** region, in addition to the financial commitments the EU was active in co-organising two international events, during which the participants adopted strong messages on respect of IHL and the need to preserve the humanitarian space and to ensure humanitarian access in the conflict affected areas.

On **Ethiopia**, in 2022 the EU continued to be actively engaged on IHL matters, in particular in relation to the northern Ethiopia conflict, denouncing IHL violations through public statements and messages but also by raising the issues at the highest levels in meetings and through coordination with like-minded donors for greater impact. In May, the EUSR for Human Rights concluded a three-day mission to Ethiopia, where he met with high-level governmental officials,

⁷¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/12/12/yemen-council-ap-proves-conclusions/>

including the President. He raised the EU's serious concern about widespread violations of IHL that continued to be committed by all parties, and the lack of accountability.

IHL and international criminal justice were also a prominent part of the **EUSR's** public diplomacy. During his visit to **South Sudan**, the EUSR met with the governmental officials, including the first Vice-President and the Minister of Justice, to convey serious concern over the grave human rights and IHL violations taking place against the population in South Sudan, especially sexual and gender-based violence against women. He also discussed the need to enhance accountability and to take concrete measures to end impunity, and encouraged swift implementation of the Roadmap for the South Sudan peace agreement.

The EUSR kept his focus on the human rights and humanitarian crisis in **Afghanistan**, in cooperation with the EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan and the EEAS Advisor for Gender and Diversity. The EUSR met with both international and Afghan human rights organisations and with the UN. The discussions focused on the humanitarian



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EUSR for Human Rights, Eamon Gilmore, in Ukraine.

situation, alleged violations of IHL, and the protection of human rights defenders, underlining the EU's efforts in the country to support human rights, especially women's and girls' rights. The EUSR also met with UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Afghanistan to discuss how to best promote accountability.

In relation to **Israel/Palestine**, the EUSR discussed pertinent IHL issues and raised his deep concern about the worrying reduction of space for civil society in the oPt. He also raised certain individual cases of administratively detained Palestinians. He met the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, and the three members of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt), including East Jerusalem and Israel, Palestinian Embassy and with Palestinian and Israeli NGOs.

The Russian invasion of **Ukraine** was a top priority for the EU, with a particular focus on addressing the violations of IHRL and IHL. The human rights and humanitarian consequences of the Russian invasion as well as accountability featured in virtually every bilateral and public engagement. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and HRVP Josep Borrell visited Bucha in April 2022, and in the face of the harrowing images of atrocities committed there vouched all possible support to bringing those responsible to justice. The EUSR visited the Polish-Ukrainian border in March and Ukraine itself in June. Throughout these visits, the EUSR underlined the EU's unwavering support to bringing the perpetrators of war crimes and other violations of IHL and human rights to justice. In this context, the EUSR has been involved in diplomatic efforts to secure the establishment of the UN Commission of Inquiry.

In April 2022, the mandate of the **EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform in Ukraine** (EUAM Ukraine) was amended and now includes investigatory capacity of any international crimes committed in the context of the Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, including conflict-related sexual violence. The EU Military Assistance Mission in Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) was launched on 14 November 2022, and has fully integrated International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Law, the Protection of Civilians, cultural heritage, the mainstreaming of gender and the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict in the Mission's training programme.



In May 2022, the Commission announced €1.5 million for a dedicated project to support the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in assisting women and girls in Ukraine by providing sexual and reproductive health services.

The EU has been **active in advocating for respect for IHL in various conflicts, as well as funding humanitarian actions encompassing the promotion of IHL** by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other partners in a number of countries, such as Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Sahel, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Myanmar. The EU has also continued its **funding to ICRC** to conduct activities to enhance its dialogue with authorities and weapon bearers to secure access to violence-affected people by increasing

acceptance of and support for its activities and to promote improved understanding of and compliance to IHL, IHRL, and other norms, with a view to ensuring civilians' protection and access to essential services. In 2022, the ICRC received approximately EUR 131.5 million in funding from the EU's humanitarian aid budget.

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations International Humanitarian Law

What is it?

International humanitarian law (IHL) is a set of rules that seek to limit the effects of armed conflict. It lays out the responsibilities of states and non-state armed groups during an armed conflict.

It requires, among other things:

- the rapid and unimpeded passage for humanitarian aid during armed conflicts
- the freedom of movement for humanitarian workers in conflict areas
- the protection of civilians (including medical and humanitarian workers)
- the protection of refugees, prisoners, and the wounded and sick.

Why is this important?

The rules are designed to protect civilians and humanitarian and medical workers during armed conflicts in any part of the world. Without them, there would be no international standards at all for this.

IHL is based on the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention on protecting civilians in conflict and the 1977 and 2005 Additional Protocols.

While many parts of IHL are now accepted as international customary law (i.e., general practice, accepted as law and which is independent of treaty law), increasingly it is violated by warring parties.

Buildings belonging to relief organisations are attacked, vehicles and convoys hijacked, and staff murdered or kidnapped. Such violence affects civilians and prevents millions of people from receiving life-saving assistance.

These violations continue to be among the most critical challenges for IHL.

How are we helping?

As most humanitarian action takes place in areas of armed conflicts, violations of IHL greatly hinder the EU's ability to fulfil its humanitarian aid objectives of meeting the needs of those affected, and also endanger the security of EU humanitarian partners.

Therefore, as one of the world's largest humanitarian donors, the EU has always been firmly committed to promoting compliance with IHL.

All EU countries have ratified the 4 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. The EU also is the only regional organisation to adopt (in 2005, updated in 2009) guidelines on promoting compliance with IHL.

04. NEW TECHNOLOGIES: HARNESSING OPPORTUNITIES AND ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

4.1 Capacity building and effective monitoring

In 2022, **advocating for and supporting a human rights-based approach to digital technologies** continued to be a key action line of EU's external human rights policies. In line with the EU Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy, the EU continued to take a strong stance in favour of regulating the digital sphere, in order to ensure that human rights are respected both online and offline.

The global reach of technologies and its daily importance for all individuals makes **multilateral and multi-stakeholder approaches essential**. The EU continued to engage very actively, in particular within UN human rights fora, to raise awareness, to advocate for a human rights-based approach to digital technologies, to share analysis and to identify best practices and recommendations on how to ensure a human-rights-compliant digital sphere.

The EU carried out a series of **activities with the OHCHR**. In particular, a joint campaign on internet shutdowns⁷², giving the voice to human rights defenders from across the world. The campaign is just the beginning of the cooperation between the EU and the UN on shutdowns. The EU will continue to call all states to implement the recommendations of the OHCHR 2022 report on internet shutdowns⁷³.

At the high-level week of the 77th UN General Assembly session in September, the EU **co-hosted a side-event addressing violations of human rights online**. The event was moderated by the EUSR for

⁷² https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/420593_fr

⁷³ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/341/55/PDF/G2234155.pdf?OpenElement>

Human Rights, who highlighted the EU's norm-setting efforts firmly based on international human rights law and the need to bridge multiple digital gaps.

Over the past 2 years, the **EU has stepped up bilateral, regional and multilateral dialogue**, promoting a global culture of respect for privacy and ensuring convergence between different privacy systems, to the benefit of individuals and businesses alike. The EU is also actively engaging with Civil Society Organisations to strengthen their digital skills to advocate for digital rights and increase the uptake of digital technologies in support of human rights.

4.2 Promoting human rights and democracy in the use of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence

In multilateral fora and bilateral relations, through public diplomacy and active stakeholder engagement, the **EU promoted the rights to privacy and data protection, condemned internet shutdowns, online censorship, online hate speech, mass and arbitrary surveillance, online gender-based violence, information manipulation, disinformation and cybercrime**. The EU continued to promote **a human rights-based approach** to the design, development, deployment, evaluation and use of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**.

The Council Conclusions on EU Digital Diplomacy⁷⁴ adopted on 18 July 2022, underline that the EU digital diplomacy will be carried out in close collaboration with like-minded partners, and advance a human-centric and human rights-based approach to digital technologies in relevant multilateral fora and other platforms.

⁷⁴ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/07/18/eu-digital-diplomacy-council-agrees-a-more-concerted-european-approach-to-the-challenges-posed-by-new-digital-technologies/>

These external relations efforts both **draw on and complement relevant EU policies and legislation**, also supporting the global sharing of information and awareness-raising on their content and objectives. For instance, the **EU's Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act** which entered into force in 2022, sets out how to optimise both freedom of expression and the safety of citizens online, prevents EU governments from imposing general monitoring obligations and gives agency over content moderation and complex issues such as fighting disinformation to society, incentivising online platforms to invest in content moderation tools and advance the quality of online moderation.

In December 2022, the **EU Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles** was signed by the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament. The Declaration serves as a guiding document for a human rights-based and human-centred digital transformation: to promote and safeguard a digital transition shaped by European values, to respect rights and freedoms of individuals online as they are offline, and to ensure people are empowered to fully enjoy the opportunities that the digital decade brings.

Based on universal human rights standards, these general rules for online platforms have a strong external dimension as the world's first and set an important standard for how to optimise human rights online. Jurisdictions outside the EU can benefit directly from the enforcement of these new platform rules within the EU. For example, research into algorithmic transparency facilitated by the Digital Services Act will have to be made public and will therefore be accessible in third countries. Moreover, the Digital Services Act will require the creation of an auditing industry specialised in algorithms and platforms, which will equally benefit all. Horizon Europe,



the 2021-2027 research & innovation framework program, also published calls for proposals in 2021 and 2022 on tackling biases in AI and on the interplay between AI, big data and democracy⁷⁵.

Similarly, the proposed **Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act)**, published in 2021 and since under discussion by the co-legislators, sets out a legislative framework for artificial intelligence promoting trustworthy, human-centric AI on the European market, independent from its origins. There will be standards and cooperation frameworks to support this approach.

As part of its **bilateral relations**, the EU used some **human rights dialogues** (e.g. with the United Arab Emirates, Mexico) to raise concerns and discuss possible joint solutions on the spread of internet shutdowns, online censorship and mass and targeted

⁷⁵ HORIZON-CL2-2022-DEMOCRACY-01-01: [Artificial intelligence, big data and democracy](#) (call already funding the projects [ITHACA](#), [KT4D](#) and [AI4Gov](#)) and HORIZON-CL4-2021-HUMAN-01-24: [Tackling gender, race and other biases in AI](#) (already funding the projects [AEQUITAS](#), [BIAS](#), [MAM-MOth](#) and [FINDHR](#)).



Among the deliverables of their Strategic Dialogues, the EU and the OHCHR agreed to organize a joint public campaign to raise awareness about the negative impact of internet shutdowns on human rights, on human rights defenders and civil society, and to promote positive messages about the benefits of an open, free and secure internet.

arbitrary surveillance including the targeting of human rights defenders and journalists by spyware. The EU also condemned internet shutdowns through public diplomacy, for instance on the situation in Iran⁷⁶. The fight against unlawful surveillance will be at the heart of political discussions with partner countries in coming years, as emphasised in the 2022 EU Strategic Partnership with the Gulf⁷⁷.

The EUSR for Human Rights promoted the **EU's vision of human-centric and human rights-based digital technologies** in his bilateral engagements, including during his country visits. For example, he addressed the challenges and opportunities of Artificial Intelligence at a panel of the Raisina Dialogue held in New Delhi, India, in April.

76 https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/09/25/iran-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu/?utm_source=dsms-auto&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Iran%3a+Declaration+by+the+High+Representative+on+behalf+of+the+EU

77 [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council - A Strategic Partnership with the Gulf.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Joint%20Communication%20to%20the%20European%20Parliament%20and%20the%20Council%20-%20A%20Strategic%20Partnership%20with%20the%20Gulf.pdf)

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In Geneva, during **Human Rights Council** sessions, the EU interacted with UN Special Procedures during relevant interactive dialogues and other debates. At HRC50 in June 2022, the EU initiated and delivered a cross-regional Joint Statement on Digital and Education which drew the support of over 100 countries in total. The EU engaged actively in the **International Telecommunications Union (ITU)** to ensure that its work on developing information and technology (ICT) standards takes into account the human rights dimension. In particular, the EU emphasized the human centric and human rights-based digital transformation that puts individuals at its center and

78 https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/420593_fr

79 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/341/55/PDF/G2234155.pdf?OpenElement>

delivered a joint statement on "Human-centric approach at the core of the standardization and connectivity", which was co-sponsored by 29 States from all regions of the world.

In New York, during the 77th session of the **UN General Assembly**, the EU showcased its leadership in promoting economic, social and cultural rights by delivering a **cross-regional statement**⁸⁰ on the Right to Education, Digital and Human Rights that gathered the support of 73 UN members from all regional groups.

On 8 September, the first EU-UN digital dialogue on Human Rights and Gender took place in Brussels. Both sides exchanged the latest news on human rights policy, projects, legislation and initiatives.

ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

In April 2022, the EU, the US, and dozens of international partners endorsed a **Declaration for the Future of the Internet (DFI)**⁸¹, setting out the vision and principles of a trusted Internet. Partners support a future for the Internet that is open, free, global, interoperable, reliable and secure and affirm their commitment to protecting and respecting human rights online and across the digital world. 70 partners have endorsed the Declaration, including all EU Member States, and more countries are expected to follow. The Declaration is in line with the EU approach and builds on the Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles⁸², adopted on 15 December 2022.

80 https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/joint-cross-regional-statement-%E2%80%93-un-general-assembly-3rd-committee_en?s=63

81 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_2695

82 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_452

In the **EU-US Trade and Technology Council**, the EU and the US work to curb the misuse of technology threatening security and human rights based on the shared commitment to driving digital transformation and cooperating on new technologies based on shared democratic values and human rights. The need to ensure online protection of human rights defenders was underlined in a Joint Statement published in December 2022⁸³. The EU and the US are discussing a wide range of human rights issues in the digital sphere, including internet shutdowns and unlawful surveillance. We are seeking practical solutions to protect human rights defenders online, including by engaging more with the private sector, and fostering exchange of EU and US protection mechanisms. Human rights defenders, human rights NGOs, UN actors and social media platforms are involved in the discussions.

The EU continued regular engagement with civil society organisations working on digital and human rights through bilateral meetings, and in conferences.

SUPPORT TO HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN THE DIGITAL SPHERE

The EU is aware of the impact of digital technologies on civil society organisations and human rights defenders. The pandemic also brought a **considerable increase of digital threats and attacks on tools and services** needed to develop human rights defence work. Not only are some defenders explicitly targeted, but large-scale, corporate data breaches and security incidents have indirectly affected human rights work globally. In 2022, we continued to witness how spyware is being used against human rights defenders, journalists and politicians.

83 https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/useu-joint-statement-protecting-human-rights-defenders-online_en

The EU financed emergency measures in the field of digital security through the **EU Human Rights Defenders Mechanism** [ProtectDefenders.eu](https://protectdefenders.eu). In 2022, more than 39 emergency grants for digital security and protection measures were awarded, benefiting 113 HRDs working in countries such as Russia, Myanmar, Ukraine, or Sudan. The ProtectDefenders.eu **digital security reinforcement grants for organisations and local communities** contributed to the security set up and training of more than 525 local NGOs staff members. This organisational support strengthened the digital security structure of actors operating in very hostile environments, such as in India or Syria. In addition, more than 190 human rights defenders benefited from an extensive **capacity-building programme**, which provides tailor-made training for HRDs and organisations on a wide array of topics, including digital security and digital risk assessment.



On 25 November 2022, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the EU showed its solidarity towards victims and survivors by kicking off the #16DaysOfActivism against gender-based violence with a participative event on the Place des Nations in Geneva.

05. DELIVERING BY WORKING TOGETHER

5.1 Public diplomacy and strategic communication

In a **year of contested narratives and intense global debate** on international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law, the EU has significantly intensified its communication efforts, using social media tools and campaigns to highlight the importance of and mobilize support for the global defence of human rights and democracy. In practical terms, the EU produced more communication material than ever before. Web features, videos, social media cards, press releases and blogposts by the High Representative were used to highlight the EU's contributions in promoting and protecting human rights in 2022. The EU has also done more fact checking, myth busting and countering disinformation (foreign information manipulation and interference – FIMI).

The **communication material** produced has been shared with the EU diplomatic representations all over the world to maximise its impact. Campaigns and initiatives promoted by the EU representations have been regularly posted on the EEAS website and social media channels. To mark the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the **Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court**, on 1st July, a carousel of slides with main facts and figures on the International Criminal Court was circulated on social media. During the summer, a **joint campaign on internet shutdowns** was run with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, with interviews of leading human rights defenders. The global campaign #OurVoiceOurFuture was also launched on social media platforms, involving **young influencers** from all over the world, to promote multilateralism and the support to human rights: by the end of 2022, the campaign has reached 57 million people across continents.

The EU continued to mark many other international days relevant to the human rights and democracy agenda, as designated by the United Nations or regionally and covered in the thematic chapters above. Like in previous years, **the High Representative issued Statements on behalf of the EU** on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, Day of International Criminal Justice, International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples and International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence based on Religion or Belief. The High Representative also issued Statements to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day, International Albinism Awareness Day, and the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. Together with Commissioners, the HR/VP marked the International Days against Female Genital Mutilation and against Child Labour, as well as World Refugee Day and the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, Universal Children's Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The High Representative also made a **joint statement** with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on the European and World Day against the Death Penalty.

As every year, the EU gave particular prominence to the **International Human Rights Day** celebrated on 10 December to recall the **adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948**. The 2022 Statement kick-started **a year-long celebration of the 75th anniversary** of this landmark document which laid the foundation of international human rights law. The EU supports the campaign of the United Nations seeking to demonstrate the relevance of Universal Declaration for the challenges of today in advancing freedom, equality and justice for all and mobilizing new supporters.

The **EU Delegations** shared the Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU, a web feature and social media cards on their social media and web pages, produced local statements or material, and organised or participated in Human Rights Day events and conferences. For instance, the EU Delegation in Timor Leste



organised a 5-day event, with 300 participants, to present the results of a 4-year capacity building project. The EU Delegation to China produced the video **"Together for Human Rights: Diverse voices, universal aspirations"** with EU high officials, Chinese members of independent civil society and diplomats from EU Member States reading, each one in their own language, the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The EU Delegation to the UN in Geneva made a carousel of slides featuring EU diplomats quoting key articles of the Declaration.

The EU Special Representative joined the **increased use of social media and innovative forms of communication**. In particular, he runs a **public diplomacy campaign** addressing the ongoing human rights violations and highlighting cases of political prisoners in Belarus, including the lesser known ones.

5.2 Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

As the report shows, the EU has been strongly mobilised in the defence and promotion of human rights around the world and continued to **make use of the full range of the unique human rights and democracy instruments and tools** at its disposal to implement the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024. Given the extraordinary developments, **the EU has intensified its work on all fronts and levels**, leveraging its role in

multilateral human rights fora, conducting more bilateral human rights dialogues than in 2021, accelerating thematic work, further enhancing engagement with multiple stakeholders, notably human rights defenders and business, and stepping up communication and outreach efforts.

These activities are prepared, closely accompanied and reviewed with the **EU Member States in the Council Working Party for Human Rights, COHOM**, with a view to maximizing both their impact and reach as well as pursuing a unified and streamlined approach around the world. In addition to negotiating and agreeing EU positions and initiatives, COHOM follows closely the implementation of EU thematic human rights guidelines and the conduct of the human rights dialogues and consultations from a horizontal perspective. Since October 2022, COHOM has been regularly updated on and discussed the implementation of the Action Plan in view of the mid-term review that was to be conducted by June 2023.

The best practices identified in these discussions are incorporated in the work going forward, by EU institutions, including EU Delegations around the world, and Member States alike. Enhanced **staff training** – open to Member States where possible – is conducted to ensure state-of-the-art activity, notably on fast-moving or complex subjects, such as digital technologies or business and human rights. The annual EEAS human rights training week took place in person after a 3 year break (with online participation to allow more colleagues in Delegations and Member States' delegates to attend), and features new elements on academic freedom and strategic communication. Given the fast pace of technological developments, the EU continued to train its staff on **digital and human rights** issues. The Commission started work on a Handbook for Staff working in headquarters and EU Delegations. It will identify safeguards for EU funded projects working on digitalisation to ensure respect of human rights

The structure of this Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World continues to be fully aligned with the Action Plan in order to provide a framework to track progress on priority actions and monitor implementation. Regular interaction with the European Parliament and frequent meetings with civil society, including a full dedicated session on Action Plan implementation hosted by the EUSR for Human Rights, allowed for in-depth discussion on progress in the pursuit of the Action Plan objectives and the need for further action.

Against the background of continuing global backsliding on human rights and democracy and a dramatic scale of human rights violations and abuses, the identification of additional resources and effective collaboration of all invested in human rights and democracy work is ever more important. Going forward, the **Team Europe approach** already applied in this area will be further developed and brought to other lines of actions. The EU will also work more in new alliances with civil society partners and continue to invest into innovative **strategic communication** to amplify the human rights message and mobilize more supporters.



75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



Josep Borrell Fontelles, at the podium of the EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights, 14 December 2022.

The 24th edition of the EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights took place in Brussels in December 2022 and brought together more than a hundred human rights defenders from around the world, NGOs, UN experts, EU staff, and ICC representatives to discuss how to advance accountability and justice, ending impunity.

In his address to the Forum, High Representative Borrell emphasized the EU's strong commitment to contribute to progress in this field. He highlighted some key situations of concern (e.g. Belarus, Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Ethiopia) and announced that the EU would set up a Global Observatory Against Impunity to build a knowledge-base about genocide, crimes against humanity and serious human rights violations.

The 2022 focus of the Forum was chosen against the background of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, which had served as a stark reminder of how war and conflict lead to serious human rights violations and abuses as well as violations of international humanitarian law.

Participants emphasised the key role that transitional justice plays in fostering peace, the need for support from the international community in documenting war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law, and the importance of ensuring a victims-centred approach to international justice as well as the role of the ICC and universal jurisdiction.



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