

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



“Living photography [...] proclaims the dignity of man.”
“Photography helps people to see.”
Berenice Abbot, American photographer (1898-1991)

People. Dignity. An (un?)finished photo series

People stand alone on the street, looking straight into the camera. Quiet, serious. Some have a slight smile in their eyes or on their lips. They look at us eye to eye. Behind each person is an urban landscape, slightly out of focus. It is not clear which city this is, whether they have come to this particular place or if they have any relationship to this street or this house. The person simply stands there, not making any grand gestures, illuminated only by natural light. The subjects of these portraits are not inside a studio. They stand in the midst of the city where people go about their lives and encounter one another.

The Berlin photographer Barbara Dietl has created images of 20 people for the Institute. The power of these portraits stems from their reduction to the fewest possible elements and their quiet focus on each individual. To look at these images is to slowly read each line of the subject's face, considering the details of their clothes, their jewellery, their head covering, their hairstyle or their beard. The portraits do not include the insignia of a profession or a career. We are not looking into their homes. They are not interacting with anyone – only the photographer and the person viewing the photograph. Only the viewer can decide whether the photographer and her subjects have succeeded in “proclaiming the dignity of man” in these images.

“What I associate with human rights is respecting the dignity of every person,
so that everyone is given the same respect, without any differences.”
Dalal Mahra, portrait subject

Did the subjects of these portraits choose particular colours or special pieces of clothing? Whatever the answer, they are presenting themselves as they wish to be presented. An essential element of this photo series was that the subjects had a significant say in how their images were to be captured. This included each subject having the opportunity to work with Barbara Dietl to choose the image that would be used in the Institute's annual report and on its website.

“Human rights are a very sensitive issue, one which requires a delicate
touch when representing them visually. It is important not to reproduce
clichéd images that might seem stigmatising or patronising.”
Abdurrahman Gügercin, portrait subject

Seven of the subjects participated in an interview in which they explained why they took part in this project and what connects them with the issue of human rights.

“I collaborated with the project in order to play an active part in human rights.” Martha Teferra Mekonnen, portrait subject

“Everyone has the same human rights.”
Karla Müller, portrait subject

This series brought 20 individuals, 20 personalities into a relationship with each other. The photo series is complete. Yet it is not. This series presents individuals, not representatives of societal groups or social classes or people who illustrate certain issues. As such, it can never be completed. That could only happen when every person had been photographed.

Every person has human dignity simply by virtue of their innate humanity. Photography sometimes succeeds in reminding us of that fact. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the 20 subjects of these portraits and the photographer, Barbara Dietl.

Foreword

When compiling a review of the events of 2020, one TV broadcaster chose the title “Covid-19 was not the whole story”. It is true that there was more to 2020 than just Covid-19, but the pandemic made a lasting impression on people in Germany during 2020 through lockdowns, contact restrictions, intensive care wards stretched to capacity and many deaths.

We swiftly prepared our responses to this extraordinary situation and engaged in public discourse. Our goal was to hold up human rights as the guiding light in the pandemic, to reassert the rights of people with disabilities to medical care, and to help protect older people. We also called for the rights of children and young people to be respected. After all, human rights must guide all political activity, particularly during a crisis, and crises represent the acid test for a constitutional democracy founded on human rights.

Even now, there is still a human rights dimension to the pandemic. It has brought to light new risks to fundamental and human rights and made existing threats more visible or even reinforced those threats, such as those affecting living conditions in accommodation for homeless persons, refugees or victims of domestic violence.

Racism, antisemitism and anti-democratic sentiments all became more evident during the pandemic. Some even grew stronger. People taken to be of Asian origin faced increased verbal and physical abuse in public spaces. In the aftermath of local outbreaks of the pandemic, some politicians made statements attributing the blame for these outbreaks to migrants. Yet these are the very policymakers who must take a stand against racism, not encourage it. What is at stake here is the foundations of our coexistence: the recognition that all people are endowed with equal dignity and equal rights.

Covid-19 was not the whole story. During 2020 we focused on many other issues where human rights played a role and followed up on them. For example, the Institute repeatedly drew attention to the link between climate change and human rights and worked with European and international partners to find solutions.

Other developments in society also demand responses rooted in human rights. In our strategic planning for 2019–2023, the Institute identified three key responsibilities that it would prioritise in its work. The first responsibility is to strengthen social cohesion. The second responsibility is to make human rights a positive force as humanity experiences a transformation in the very basis of its existence. The third responsibility is to bolster the human rights protection system and preserve safe spaces for civil society. You can find out more about the Institute's work in these areas during 2020 in the following pages.

Whatever the specific issue, one principle always applies to our work: it is our duty to work with researchers, policy advisers and human rights educators to promote respect for human rights and to advance a culture of human rights in politics and society.

This year's annual report will give you an insight into the range and diversity of our work. We hope you enjoy reading it.

Berlin, November 2021

Professor Dr Beate Rudolf
Director

Michael Windfuhr
Deputy Director

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2020 - An Overview

JANUARY

Modernising article 20 of the criminal code

The Institute welcomes the initiative by the Federal Ministry for Justice and Consumer Protection to modernise article 20 of the Criminal Code, which concerns cases of diminished responsibility. This includes replacing the terms “mental deficiency” and “abnormality” – a major step towards reducing stigmatisation.

FEBRUARY

Protecting human rights in Yemen

The Yemeni lawyer and human rights advocate Huda al-Sarari gives the 7th Werner Lottje Lecture, in which she calls for a determined effort to develop and expand governmental structures in her homeland, which has been shattered by civil war. “As long as there is no functioning state in Yemen, it remains incredibly difficult and dangerous to demand our human rights.”

MARCH

Pathways out of hate

Insults, threats and physical attacks on people who stand up for an open society continue to increase. What can you do in the face of open hatred? At the “Hostile Society?” discussion salon held on 03 March at the Museum für Kommunikation, the journalist Hasnain Kazim, Fridays for Future activist Jakob Springfeld and mayor Silvia Kugelmann share their experiences and how they dealt with hate and threats.

APRIL

A supportive and human rights-based EU asylum policy

In a joint statement with the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) of Greece, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Institute calls for reforms to the European asylum system that prioritise refugees’ rights and human rights, along with immediate measures to end the situation on the EU’s external borders where human rights are being violated. The NHRIs stress the need for a fair mechanism to distribute those seeking sanctuary.

MAY

UN Security Council: protecting human rights

Germany takes over the presidency of the United Nations Security Council in July 2020. The Federal Government intends to make protecting human rights a more integral part of the Council’s work. In a joint analysis with the United Nations Association of Germany, the Institute discusses the previous importance of human rights to the Security Council and the next steps that are needed now.

JUNE

Securing the rule of law in Europe

The Institute advises the Federal Government to put the rule of law and the protection of an independent judiciary in Europe at the very top of its agenda for its presidency of the Council of the European Union. “When the independence of the judiciary is under threat in an EU member state, human rights in all member states are at risk,” states Institute Director Beate Rudolf during an online conference on securing the rule of law in Europe and the importance of an independent judiciary.

JULY

Racial profiling: reviewing police practices

In the light of debates around racial profiling, the Institute calls on Federal and Länder governments to review their policing practices. “As a method, racial profiling violates fundamental and human rights,” states Institute Director Beate Rudolf at the presentation of a position paper on the issue. “Under the rule of law, scrutiny of police practices should be a matter of course, both by the police themselves and by external bodies.”

AUGUST

Observing human rights at every stage of value creation and supply chains

In a position paper the Institute states its expectations for the composition of the planned due diligence legislation which will require businesses to respect human rights at every stage of global value creation and supply chains. The Institute argues that a legal framework would promote the role of social considerations and human rights in the future shape of globalisation. European regulations and an international agreement at the level of the United Nations would provide a long-term boost to this trend.

SEPTEMBER

Sinti and Roma in Germany

In partnership with RomaniPhen, the Institute invites applications for a research grant on the topic of Sinti and Roma in Germany. The grant is intended to encourage journalists to explore this issue from a human rights perspective. Grants will be awarded to outstanding research proposals for journalistic contributions.

OCTOBER

Website relaunch

The Institute's website goes online at www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de. The website's new design and structure provides information for those working in the field of human rights at Federal, Länder and local levels. It is a resource for experts in the fields of education, academia, business, NGOs, associations, victims' grass-roots organisations, criminal justice, the law and the media, as well as for anyone with an interest in human rights issues.

NOVEMBER

Listening to children and taking their views into account

On World Children's Day on 20 November the Institute calls on Federal, Länder and municipal authorities to get on with serious efforts to implement children's right to participation. "Children have a right to be involved in all matters affecting them. That means they must be listened to and their views must be taken into account when taking decisions," explains Claudia Kittel, head of the National CRC Monitoring Mechanism.

DECEMBER

Report on the human rights situation in Germany

At a press conference the Institute presents its fifth report on developments in the human rights situation in Germany to the Bundestag. The report covers issues such as human rights questions in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, deporting sick people, vocational education for young people with disabilities and the implementation of the National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights.

Strengthening social cohesion

Social inequality, exclusion and hateful ideologies put social cohesion at risk. The Institute campaigns for an inclusive society that is free of discrimination, one in which all people can make their human rights a reality.

Human rights as a measure of effective pandemic policy

The fight against Covid-19 brought with it massive restrictions on public and private life – and continues to do so. Institute Director Beate Rudolf speaks about the human rights dimension of the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for political responses to be guided by human rights.

Since the outbreak began in 2020, the Institute has published a range of position and information papers. How much can human rights achieve in a crisis situation of this kind?

There is a considerable human rights dimension to the coronavirus pandemic in that combating the virus was – and still remains – not just about protecting lives and health, but allowing the healthcare system to go on functioning. This was all bound up with significant restrictions to legally protected human rights. We are talking here about the human rights to health, to life, to participate in public life, to a private life and to education, and also the rights to assembly and freedom of religion and many other human rights. The pandemic has brought to light new risks to fundamental and human rights and made existing threats more visible or even reinforced them. Look at living conditions in accommodation for homeless persons, refugees or victims of domestic violence, for example.

Human rights provide binding guidelines for state actions and also set limits on those actions. During times of crisis human rights take on particular importance as a bulwark against policies where “necessity knows no law”. Crises represent the acid test for a democratic society based on the rule of law and which is founded on human rights.

You are calling for political action to be aligned with human rights. What does that mean in concrete terms for the pandemic?

Under our constitution, fundamental and human rights are binding. Governments and parliaments at Federal and Länder levels are therefore obliged to align their actions with human rights. That means prioritising policy measures that observe, protect and uphold human rights. When the coronavirus pandemic began, the overarching goals were to protect life and prevent serious damage to health, allied with the need to maintain the provision of intensive medical care. Given the reports of serious progression of the disease, the considerable uncertainty about infection pathways and the lack of comprehensive testing and vaccinations, radical contact restrictions were justifiably imposed in the early stages of the pandemic.

However, when taking decisions under conditions of great uncertainty, governments and parliaments must scrutinise the efficacy of such measures and their impact and make readjustments where necessary. This follows from the principle of proportionality. Constant monitoring of this kind was particularly important during the pandemic due to the fact that the restrictions on human rights became more severe the longer the protective measures were in place. At the same time, political leaders should consider the impact on people in a range of life situations, paying particular attention to people in vulnerable situations. However, the initial discussions about the lifting of restrictions in the spring of 2020 had a different focus. One need only recall how much time was taken up by arguments over resuming Bundesliga football matches in comparison to considering how women and children could access effective protection from domestic violence under a curfew.

Did the Federal or Länder governments pay adequate attention to people in vulnerable situations in their efforts to combat the pandemic in 2020?

It is not possible to give a hard and fast answer to that question. For example, it was a positive that compulsory evictions were suspended in some areas due to the fact that being at home offers better protection against the virus than in accommodation for the homeless. Protecting older people – particularly in old people's homes and care institutions – was another major focus of efforts to curb the pandemic. However, there were no comparable efforts to counteract the isolation experienced by inhabitants of these institutions due to the restrictions on visits and other forms of contact. From a human rights perspective, the longer the situation went on, the more this treatment became inhumane and incompatible with human dignity. Support should have been given to residential and care homes to facilitate safe contacts such as via video calls or meeting outside. Instead, for a long time it was left entirely up to the homes to decide what opportunities for contact they should provide. You might say that responsibility was offloaded onto them. It was not until November that the Bundestag specified the requirement that a minimum level of social contact should be maintained during periods of contact restrictions. It was also right that the oldest people were prioritised for vaccinations when the vaccines became available.

We also observed disproportionate infringements of fundamental rights for refugees in shared accommodation. Time and again institutions of this kind were completely sealed off when Covid-19 cases emerged, instead of placing infected people and their contacts into separate quarantine. This would also have provided better protection against infection for the other residents. Another point that deserves criticism concerns casual harvest labourers. The vast majority of these workers are from abroad and were ordered to stay in “work quarantine” by health authorities where Covid-19 was suspected. People who had been in contact with those infected with Covid-19 were then only allowed to leave their places of residence in order to go to work. Consequently, those affected were exposed to a much greater risk of infection due to their cramped living conditions.

Ever since the beginning of the pandemic a great many conspiracy theories have been doing the rounds and spreading antisemitic ideologies. Do human rights stand any chance at all against narratives like those?

Racism, antisemitism, and hostility towards democracy became more evident during the pandemic and gained strength in some cases. We are concerned by the increasing dissemination of conspiracy theories, which often draw on antisemitic stereotypes. It is no less alarming to see how the unique status of the Shoah is being undermined through comparisons that equate Nazi persecution of the Jews with measures to protect against Covid-19. This is at once a form of antisemitism and an expression of contempt for democracy which calls for politicians and society to take resolute action against it. This has happened many times, and civil society organisations have played a key role in bolstering public debate on the issue and providing information online. What is at stake here is the foundations of our coexistence: the recognition that other people are all individuals with equal dignity and equal rights, and the acceptance of democratically legitimate decisions.

The pandemic also made plain how important it is to combat racism. People believed to be of Asian origin were subject to insults and threats referring to the geographical origin of the pandemic. In the aftermath of local outbreaks of the pandemic, some politicians expressed views that attributed the blame for these outbreaks to migrants. For this reason we must not forget that policymakers above all hold a particular responsibility not to stoke the fires of racism.

Was constitutional democracy able to function during these troubled times? How does its balance sheet look?

In many respects, the rule of law did function. The courts ordered that excessive restrictions be brought into line with our basic laws. For instance, when attempts were made to temporarily suspend any freedom of assembly (an absolutely fundamental right in a democracy) the courts defended that right. Another important corrective took the form of court oversight of steps in the reopening process, measuring those steps against the general principle of equality under the law. That said, oversight of the proportionality of restrictions too often remained toothless as courts failed to demand that the executive disclose the forecasts and impact assumptions that underpinned the law or rule against which legal protection was being sought. In this regard, a second shortcoming to the rule of law became apparent in the form of government by decree that required no official justification. This state of affairs existed up to the change of the Infection Protection Law in November 2020.

In a constitutional democracy it is parliament itself that takes fundamental decisions, not the government as an issuer of decrees. As such it was important that the Bundestag reserved the right in March 2020 to declare a state of epidemic on a national scale, establishing a precondition for the Federal Minister of Health to issue decrees to combat the pandemic. However, the longer the pandemic went on, the more pressing the need became for the Bundestag and Länder governments to take decisions on protective measures. After all, fundamental decisions – such as those which significantly curtail fundamental rights – must be made by the legislature itself.

A first major step towards this was taken in November 2020, with the naming of those measures that Federal and Länder governments could take if infections rose sharply. However, given the experiences of the first wave, this still lacked key specific details. For example, there was a failure to specify that parents could not be forbidden from having contact with their sick children, either in hospital or during quarantine at home. Nor was there sufficient provision to ensure that care homes could only ban visits with the agreement of health authorities.

One demand that keeps coming up in debates is for fundamental rights to be given back. What should be made of this demand?

Public debates have brought to light some essential misconceptions regarding fundamental and human rights. There were those who argued that fundamental rights can have no restrictions and therefore rejected – incorrectly – any restriction as illegitimate. However, another problematic issue was the phrase often repeated by politicians and in the media that fundamental rights would be “given back” when restrictions were lifted. This implies a fallacious belief that parliaments and governments can award and withdraw rights at their own discretion. This is not so. Human rights are inalienable rights to which every person is entitled solely on the basis of their humanity. One point that the coronavirus pandemic makes plain is this: a constitutional democracy requires a profound understanding of fundamental and human rights. Because it is only when politicians, the media and the public at large understand the criteria that permit restrictions of fundamental rights, that human rights will be able to fulfil their binding function as guides and safeguards for our freedoms. For this to happen, we need education on human rights, which is part of the very foundations of a functioning constitutional democracy.

[Who's who](#)

Professor Beate Rudolf has served as Director of the Institute since 2010. Prior to this she taught public law and equality law at the Freie Universität Berlin. Her research focuses on fundamental and human rights, and state structures under German constitutional law, international law and European law.

[Further information](#)

The Institute has made a series of statements on a range of aspects of the Covid-19 pandemic. A summary of these can be found on the Institute's website in the Focus on “Corona und Menschenrechte”.

Businesses:

due diligence on human rights

Work, safety and environmental standards are repeatedly violated at every stage along supply chains. According to the United Nations 2011 Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, companies bear a responsibility to ensure that human rights are not violated when they do business. In order to explore how German businesses can properly exercise due diligence for human rights, the Institute investigated the case of the palm oil sector.

Half of all products in supermarkets contain palm oil. It can be found in confectionery and packaged foods, household chemicals, detergents, and care products. In 2019 some 535,000 tonnes of palm oil and 120,000 tonnes of palm kernel oil were used for these products in Germany. Indonesia and Malaysia account for 87% of palm oil production, with the remaining 13% spread across Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Oceania.

In 2013, around 50 German businesses, associations and NGOs joined the Federal Government to form the Sustainable Palm Oil Forum (FONAP). The Forum campaigns for an end to the use of palm oil from non-sustainable sources in Germany and around the world. Working in close cooperation with FONAP, the Institute produced a study of human rights in the palm oil sector in 2020, with financial support from the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

Sara Phung, lead author of the study and a researcher at the Institute, says, “Human rights violations are a frequent occurrence in the production and processing of palm oil, such as violations of the rights to live in dignity, to bodily integrity, to social security, health, education and to freedoms of expression and assembly. Many people work under unacceptable conditions and have great difficulty making complaints or setting up unions to campaign for improvements – if they can even do so in the first place.”

German businesses can be involved in human rights violations in the production of raw materials and at every stage of the supply chain. However, there have previously been no binding international rules governing transnational business activity. Until now businesses are subject to the voluntary UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The Principles envisage that businesses, regardless of their scale, structure, sector or location, should conduct due diligence for human rights in all their activities. If human rights violations do occur, the businesses are responsible for providing a remedy. However, in 2020 less than 20% of businesses in Germany undertook adequate due diligence with regard to human rights.

Certification systems do not shield businesses from having to assess human rights risks

What is the current process for businesses if they want to establish whether or not they are complying with human rights standards? When asked about the details of their processes, the first thing businesses refer to is their certification systems. “Certification systems can be a helpful tool for businesses that have to handle complex supply chains where they are not able to track every detail for themselves,” Phung goes on. “However, businesses cannot offload their responsibility for complying with human rights onto a seal of approval. They should be scrutinising what the seal covers and in what ways, and where they themselves should be taking action. No business should skirt around identifying and acting on their own human rights risks.”

Working with victims to develop measures to protect human rights

As an example of how an initial survey can be undertaken, the Institute points to the **Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil** (RSPO), the world-leading certification system for palm oil. Once businesses had employed the assessment methods presented in the study, it became apparent that there were gaps in human rights protection. For example, RSPO certification fails to take proper account of child labour or funding for armed conflict. The study also makes specific recommendations on how businesses can develop measures to prevent human rights violations.

“The perspectives of those affected are an essential element, both when a business is calculating its own risks, and also when developing effective measures and complaints mechanisms. Businesses must listen to people at a local level – even if they live in remote areas – and take their experiences into account,” Phung says. “That is the only way to ensure that those affected can be confident about accessing these mechanisms and that the measures will actually address the relevant issues.”

Why businesses should work together to protect human rights

In reality it is not always easy for a business to review the human rights aspects of its own supply chains, particularly if that business only processes small quantities of palm oil. The Institute therefore recommends that businesses support each other in the exercise of their human rights responsibilities. Working together could improve existing certification systems, for example, help obtain living wages or get rid of unacceptable harvest quotas.

Opportunities for collaborations between companies now exist in a range of industries, as Michael Windfuhr, Deputy Director of the Institute, explains: “In the chemicals sector, for example, the **Together for Sustainability** initiative has developed mutual standards. This prevents several businesses each agreeing on different standards with one single supplier. This means there are many different ways of making the complexity of supply chains manageable.” Businesses, associations, trades union and NGOs are also working together through the Federal Government's National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights to develop sector-specific guidelines to help prevent human rights violations along global supply and value creation chains. The Institute has provided intensive support for “Sector Dialogues” in the automotive industry and for the plant manufacturing and engineering sectors and will continue to provide this support in future.

Further information

Phung, Sara & Utlu, Deniz (2020): Menschenrechte im Palmölsektor. Die Verantwortung von einkaufenden Unternehmen: Grenzen und Potenziale der Zertifizierung. Bonn: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ); Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte

“Certification as a building block for human rights protection.” Interview with Michael Windfuhr on our website

Emergency care after sexual violence – victims facing obstacles to care

Around four in every ten German women will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetimes. According to the Istanbul Convention, which has been in force in Germany since 2018, they are entitled to medical examinations (including forensic examinations), trauma therapy and counselling. The Institute conducted a study to investigate the actual state of emergency care in Germany.

When women are subjected to physical or sexual violence, they are in acute distress. In this situation, women need support and counselling as they have to make quick decisions that can have far-reaching consequences not just for their physical and mental health, but also for their protection under the law. According to Article 25 of the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention, state parties are required to provide a sufficient number of easily accessible crisis or referral centres for victims of rape and sexual violence. In order to avoid placing additional burdens on women who have suffered sexual violence, the provision of medical and psychosocial care and the collection of evidence gathering should be easily accessible and available without the need for referrals to other services.

Yet even though the Istanbul Convention has been in force in Germany since 2018, the quality of emergency care varies widely from region to region and crisis and referral centres are the exception, not the rule. The first point of contact for victims is often their local doctor, a hospital, or a specialist advice centre in their area. However, medical practices and hospitals do not offer certain examinations as standard, such as those for sexually transmissible diseases or date rape drugs. There is equally scant insurance coverage for the morning after pill when it is provided by emergency departments.

According to Institute Director Beate Rudolf, “If the necessary treatment cannot be administered on-site, victims can find themselves being sent from pillar to post.” These women have to put up with long journeys and waiting times and constantly recount the violence they have experienced to new people. “Women making their way through these care structures often feel they have to clear a succession of hurdles,” Rudolf goes on.

The next problem arises with the question of whether to involve forensic medical examiners, which is essential if women want to make a criminal complaint. However, forensic medical experts are usually part of specific institutions and their expertise is not available everywhere and cannot always be accessed in acute cases.

Guaranteeing support from trained staff in all cases

Without support, women are hardly able to cope with these demands in situations of such acute distress. The main sources of properly trained support are mainly specialist doctors with an interest in this issue and expert advice centres. Nevertheless, according to these expert advice centres, many women break off the arduous journey through the stages of emergency care before the process is completed.

Where examinations are not carried out or treatment is not administered, however, the consequences for female victims can be serious, both in physical and mental terms. On the one hand, such assaults can have health consequences that only manifest themselves later. On the other hand, failing to gather conclusive evidence or document injuries in a way that would stand up in court means women have few opportunities to hold their attackers accountable before the law.

As part of a project funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) entitled “Guaranteeing qualified and comprehensive emergency care following sexual violence – Implementing Article

25 of the Istanbul Convention in Germany”, the Institute conducted a study of emergency care in Germany between February 2019 and June 2020. Drawing on research and interviews with over 100 experts from a range of disciplines involved in emergency care, the Institute produced a number of recommendations for action. The outcomes of the study were discussed at a virtual conference in October 2020 which brought together expert representatives from medicine, politics, and advice centres.

Securing funding for emergency care

The Institute identified the most pressing need for action in the overloaded and underfunded healthcare system. Hospitals face the challenge of providing round-the-clock emergency care and having specifically trained medical staff available in addition to the regular work of the hospital.

The different regulations governing reimbursement for medical services presents a further structural obstacle. Insurers do not reimburse hospitals for many of the necessary examinations (or will not pay for them in emergency care contexts). Even if they do, the payments may not cover the hospital's costs, causing hospitals to withdraw from existing structures. Better financial and staffing provisions for hospitals would help reduce the burden. In addition to this, payment regulations should be revised and adjusted so that each victim can get the support she needs, and also so that specialist doctors and hospitals are reimbursed properly for their services.

Preserving anonymity for victims of violence

Gaps persist when it comes to the confidentiality around invoicing for medical services. Insurers often categorise certain diagnoses such as broken bones as “accidents”, which cause an accident report form to be sent out in order to assess whether the insurer has a right to take recourse against the patient. However, in cases of domestic or sexual violence, this can expose victims to further risk. Procedures need to be developed for these instances so that anonymity is preserved for the women who are victims of violence.

Progress: Forensic medical examinations no longer depend on criminal investigations

There are signs of progress on the issue of forensic medical examinations. New rules came into force in March 2020 governing so-called confidential forensic medical examinations and are currently being implemented by Länder and health insurers. The new rules now guarantee that a victim can have her injuries and evidence documented in a legally robust way, regardless of whether she is making a criminal complaint. A woman can also access the forensic medical examinations and lab services she needs free of charge, such as tests to identify date rape drugs.

The long-term preservation of relevant evidence makes it possible for women to make complaints at a later stage, not just at the time they were assaulted. The Institute recommends that evidential material should be preserved until the criminal or civil statutes of limitations have expired for the original assault.

Institute Director Beate Rudolf called for the implementation of the new law providing forensic examinations regardless of whether criminal investigations have been started “as a way to guarantee comprehensive and high-quality emergency care for all victims of sexual violence.”

Further information

Fischer, Lisa (2020): Akutversorgung nach sexualisierter Gewalt. Zur Umsetzung von Artikel 25 der Istanbul-Konvention in Deutschland. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte

“Comprehensive emergency care after sexual violence is a human right”. Interview with Beate Rudolf on our website

“There is a widespread lack of political will to implement the CRPD properly”

According to the Federal Government's Report on Participation, around 16% of the population in Germany live with a disability. Numerous barriers make it difficult or even impossible for them to participate equally in the life of society.

Britta Schlegel and Leander Palleit talk about how the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is being implemented in Germany, missing data, and co-leading a team.

Britta Schlegel and Leander Palleit, do you think we are on the right course in Germany in terms of implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

Britta Schlegel: The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) stands for inclusion and self-determination. People with disabilities must be able to participate in society on their own terms and in all aspects of their lives – just like everyone else. That is their right. It is pleasing to see that society increasingly accepts this fact without question.

However, there are still a great many obstacles to overcome on the way to full inclusion. Self-help organisations, charities, advocacy groups and the Institute itself have been drawing attention to problems for a long time now, but little if any progress is being made. There is a nationwide lack of accessible medical practices, for example, a failure to reform the structures of psychiatric care – including phasing out compulsory treatment – and the continued existence of separate structures for education, housing and work. If a child is educated in a separate school, the only way open to them is usually to work in a workshop for disabled people, and they usually live in residential accommodation provided by agencies and services for people with disabilities. Inclusion certainly does not look like that.

What needs to be done now?

Britta Schlegel: We can see that there is still a widespread lack of political will to implement the CRPD properly. This particularly affects those areas which traditionally have not had anything to do with policies concerning people with disabilities, such as construction and housing, education and health. We are campaigning for the rights of people with disabilities to be considered and implemented across the policy spectrum. We want to see thinking about disabilities become part of the political mainstream. After all, the task of implementing the CRPD cuts across the whole policy spectrum.

How do you want to press ahead with the work of the National CRPD Monitoring Mechanism?

Leander Palleit: We want to draw on our expertise in the field of international human rights protection to help ensure that policymakers not only consider the CRPD when developing disability policy and drafting legislation, but that they also interpret the Convention properly. This will continue to be the focus of our work. At the moment we are concentrating on making a difference at the level of the Federal Government. However, in order for us to properly understand the state of implementation in Germany, monitoring at the level of the individual Länder is also very important. We are pleased to see that more and more Länder acknowledge this.

For example, in May 2020 the government of the Saarland commissioned us to monitor the implementation of the CRPD in their state. That means we are now supporting three Länder in their implementation of the convention: Berlin, North Rhine-Westphalia and Saarland. We also want to scrutinise progress at a municipal level more closely, as decisions made there are hugely significant to the everyday lives of many people. Another of our aims is to further expand our

investigation of how other countries deal with challenges around implementation and how we can use our findings for the German context.

Which issues were of particular importance to the work of the National CRPD Monitoring Mechanism in 2020?

Britta Schlegel: One key issue in 2020 was the Covid-19 pandemic and its impacts on people with disabilities. The CRPD commits policymakers to design policies that are inclusive and non-discriminatory, particularly during times of crisis. However, we observed that too little thought was given to the conditions for disabled people in efforts to combat the pandemic. For instance, they were not considered a priority for vaccinations, or were only prioritised at a late stage. The same can be said of how personal protective equipment was issued. It was a matter of great concern to us to see the disproportionately severe restrictions on contact within residential accommodation. These restrictions were focused only on preventing infections and had profoundly negative effects on social participation and mental health.

On that point, disability rights groups sharply criticised the triage plans proposed by medical associations. How did you respond?

Britta Schlegel: The question of triage was no less troubling for us. The point here is that when people with disabilities are triaged, they are at much greater risk of not being treated when intensive care resources are stretched or unavailable. This is due to the fact that medical triage usually focuses on the likelihood of treatment being successful. However, in statistical terms, this is lower for people with pre-existing conditions.

In May 2020 we considered this issue in a discussion with a panel of disabled people and representatives from the Bundestag, Federal Government, as well as from the fields of Medicine and Ethics. In December we submitted an opinion to the Federal Constitutional Court as part of a constitutional complaint brought by people with disabilities on the issue of triage. In our view, the Bundestag has a duty to step up here and create a non-discriminatory legal basis for this matter. For this to happen, people with disabilities will of course have to be consulted and actively involved in the process.

Over the course of last year, you called repeatedly for electronic devices and digital products and services to be more accessible. What makes this point in particular so important?

Leander Palleit: Many digital services are not accessible. However, people with disabilities can only participate equally in society, if online shopping, communications, banking services and long-distance travel and so on are accessible. For this reason, we consulted with politicians on the integration of the European Accessibility Act into German law, in which we made the case for it to be implemented in a thorough and wide-ranging way.

This EU directive aims to promote equal participation for people with disabilities and to establish minimum standards for the whole of Europe by 2025. Regrettably, the majority of representatives in the Bundestag could not bring themselves to pass measures that go beyond minimum standards for accessibility. As a result, this is an issue which will continue to occupy us.

What needs swift attention from politicians?

Britta Schlegel: Policies for people with disabilities can be good and they can be squared with human rights. However, for that to happen, policymakers need to know enough about the situations in which these people live their lives. Unfortunately, there are not enough data and statistics on the implementation of the rights of disabled people in all areas of life, in spite of the fact that Article 31 of the CRPD requires official bodies to collect this information and to use it as a basis for policy. We are campaigning for Federal and Länder governments to prepare and publish reports in line with the rights laid down in the Convention. These should provide meaningful information about the situations in which people with disabilities live their lives.

Leander Palleit: Major studies already exist for the field of vocational education. These show that over 90% of young people with disabilities complete their vocational education outside the mainstream. The consequence of this is that many do not find employment in the regular employment market after completing their training. That is why we have

been working on the issue of how people with disabilities can access recognised vocational training in the light of Germany's human rights obligations. We have analysed how people with disabilities can successfully complete vocational training through standard vocational pathways. We have listened to a range of experts and are now using what we have learned as a basis for our advice to policymakers.

Having a free choice of career means being free to determine how you live your life, being able to participate in society and being able to make your own financial decisions. Young people with disabilities should be just like all other young people in being able to go into standard vocational training after they leave school.

Covid-19 meant the UN Committee for the Rights of People with Disabilities had to postpone the review of the implementation of the CRPD that had been planned for 2021 and no date has yet been set for the next country review. What are your expectations for this review process?

Leander Palleit: International reviews provide an important boost to the further implementation of human rights. It was therefore with regret that we noted the postponement of the country review process. The United Nations report from the first round of the process in 2015 prompted important debates in Germany, such as protections from violence, guardianship law, voting rights and the issue of how the psychiatric care system can manage without using compulsion. As such we are looking forward to the next round, which we hope will take place in autumn 2022.

You are the first managerial team at the Institute to share leadership of a department in an equal way. What have your experiences been of this model of leadership?

Britta Schlegel: We were delighted by the Institute's readiness to have a team fill this leadership position. Thus far, our experiences have been extremely positive. We benefit from our different professional backgrounds and complement each other very well.

Leander Palleit: Yes, I agree entirely. By leading as a team, we can each contribute our own strengths. This means we can provide the best possible support for our colleagues, which also benefits the outcomes of our work. Apart from that, sharing leadership responsibility allows us to continue to work on our own areas of interest. We cannot recommend it too highly.

Who's who

Dr Leander Palleit is a lawyer who has worked in the National CRPD Monitoring Mechanism since 2009. His main focuses are work and political participation. He has been joint leader of the National CRPD Monitoring Mechanism with Britta Schlegel since August 2020.

Dr Britta Schlegel is a sociologist. She joined the National CRPD Monitoring Mechanism in 2014. Her areas of interest are protection from violence, data gathering and women with disabilities. She has been joint leader of the National CRPD Monitoring Mechanism with Leander Palleit since August 2020.

Exploitative working practices in domestic care

In 2019, 4.13 million people in Germany needed care. 80% were cared for in their homes, often by live-in migrant carers. The Institute developed proposals on how to protect live-in carers from human rights abuses.

Most people want to live in their homes for as long as possible. Demand for care and support services in Germany is high, there are too few trained carers and employing carers on a regular basis is too expensive for many people. This all means there is a strong market for migrant workers. According to some estimates, between 300,000 and 600,000 migrant carers are employed and live in private households in Germany. Known as “live-in” carers, they are usually women from Eastern Europe. The majority are brought to Germany by private agencies where they are only allowed to carry out basic caring and domestic tasks. In practice, however, they often carry out a much wider range of work than this.

Live-in care for older people occupies a legal grey area. It is a gateway for extreme forms of exploitation, yet policymakers are generally happy to tolerate it. Some of those employed are severely overworked and experience physical and sexual violence. They also have to cope with breaches of employment law, a lack of regular hours and having to be self-employed (though often in name only). Workers in temporary employment can also face problems accessing medical care.

Regulating working conditions for live-in carers

On behalf of Minor (Projektkontor für Bildung und Forschung) and within the framework of the project "MB 4.0 - Good Work in Germany. Advice for Newly Immigrated Job Seekers and Workers from Poland, Romania and Bulgaria in the Digital and Social Media", funded by the EU Equality Body, the Institute prepared the analysis "Ending Labour Exploitation. Eastern European workers in domestic care in Germany". Using case studies, the publication illustrates typical constellations of problems in the employment conditions of live-in carer, discusses responses and formulates recommendations for policy.

“There is an urgent need to regulate the working and employment conditions for live-in carers,” says Nele Allenberg, Head of the Human Rights Policy Germany and Europe Department, summing up the Institute’s position. “It needs to be much easier to employ people in private households as this will protect carers under German labour and employment laws. Developing a clear job profile and creating a qualification and further training programmes to improve the professional status of live-in caring would enhance this type of employment. Moreover, as long as private agencies are involved in bringing live-in carers to Germany, there will be a need for binding regulations for the practice. As well as this, mandatory quality standards also need to be developed with systematic reviews of their implementation. “If we are to counter exploitative working relationships in a meaningful way, live-in carers must have easy access to multilingual advice services,” Allenberg says. “They need to be fully informed of their rights and given more robust opportunities to make complaints.”

Further information

Freitag, Nora (2020): Arbeitsausbeutung beenden. Osteuropäische Arbeitskräfte in der häuslichen Betreuung in Deutschland. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte; Minor

Promoting self-determination for older persons

How can the rights and dignity of older persons be given better protection? Can digital technologies help? What lessons should be learned from the Covid-19 pandemic? What benefits might be gained from having a UN convention on the rights of older persons? Claudia Mahler, an expert at the Institute, responds to urgent questions.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused radical changes to the lives of many people in 2020. How did it impact on older persons?

Older persons are a heterogeneous section of the population with widely varying life circumstances. As such, there is no simple answer to that question. The risk of falling seriously ill with Covid-19 increases with age, so many older persons drastically limited their social contacts for a long time and were unable to participate in the life of society. As a consequence, many older persons suffered more seriously from loneliness. The restrictions in care homes were particularly severe, even to the point of causing complete isolation in some cases.

However, if we are to draw a positive from this situation, the pandemic has focused attention on the rights of older persons among politicians and in society: their rights to health, to life, to information and to social participation.

Has the pandemic promoted negative perceptions of older persons?

Ageism was and still remains a major problem. Stereotypical perceptions of older persons predominate in the media, such as associating them with overcrowded intensive care wards in hospitals or generalising them as needing help. There was a marked increase in ageism, the derogatory perception of old age.

What needs to change?

Policies for senior citizens do feature on the political agenda nowadays and the interests of older persons have a presence in wider public perceptions. However, that only applies to a few issues such as pensions and care, not to the concerns of the very elderly. While there are now numerous studies on the life circumstances of the very elderly, their findings have not cut through to policymakers and society.

From a human rights perspective it is important to see these people as rights bearers and to promote their rights to participation. Even very old persons with dementia have a right to self-determination in their lives, regardless of whether they live at home or in a nursing or care institution. This is an area where Germany needs to make up ground.

The Covid-19 pandemic served to boost digitalisation in many areas. Could digital technologies help provide better protection for the rights and dignity of older persons?

If digital technologies support older persons in their day-to-day lives, then that is a good thing: eHealth consultations that allow you to see your doctor even during a pandemic are just one such example. A lot of smart home functionality is of interest to older persons as well, such as fridges which let you know when you are running low on supplies and place an order directly with your supermarket.

However, we need to scrutinise who can access support of this kind? In the end, not all older persons can use smartphones or tablets because they lack the necessary digital skills, they do not have access to the internet or they cannot afford a device.

In your view, what are the limits to digital support systems?

The use of artificial intelligence must not be allowed to cause older persons to be left isolated at home. Nor should it be allowed to limit older persons' independence and self-reliance because technology takes over too many tasks from them. For that reason, the growth of digitalisation in care is something that needs careful scrutiny in discussion with all involved. Moreover, we should come together to think about how to use artificial intelligence in such a way that the human rights of older persons are protected.

Complaints mechanisms in geriatric care

How can complaints procedures help people with care needs in residential contexts effectively assert their personal concerns and demands? How should we develop and implement such procedures so that, ideally, they can be used by those affected themselves? The Institute's "Beschwerdemechanismen in der Altenpflege" research project into complaints mechanisms in geriatric care looked for answers to these questions. Alongside asking experts about their opinions, the Institute prioritised listening to the assessments of relatives and of affected people with care needs themselves. The project's goal was to draw up recommendations for the development, design and implementation of more effective complaints mechanisms in geriatric care. The project ran from January 2018 to December 2020 and was funded by the Josef und Luise Kraft-Stiftung charity.

Which human rights treaties can older persons refer to when asserting their rights?

Older people's human rights are currently protected by the two UN human rights covenants (the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Looking ahead, a separate UN convention on the rights of older persons would be helpful. It would make the rights of older persons visible and close existing regulatory loopholes.

A working group at UN level has been discussing the contents and implications of an international human rights treaty since 2010, and the German Institute for Human Rights has been involved in those discussions. What is needed now is the political will to start drawing up a UN convention, and Germany should take a leading role.

Where do the human rights of older persons lack adequate protection?

Older persons must be better protected against violence, both at home and in care and nursing institutions. Compared to other age groups, they account for a disproportionate number of victims. This particularly applies to people who need care or assistance or are isolated due to limited mobility.

Violent treatment is often trivialised. This includes measures that limit or deprive liberty such as restraint in beds or wheelchairs, the use of sedatives or locking doors. Such measures are a well-known human rights issue in the care sector. People often do not know where to turn if they suspect domestic violence may be occurring. While the Youth Welfare Office is responsible for the affairs of young people, there is no analogous office for older persons in Germany.

The Institute has been campaigning for the rights of older persons' for a long time. What specific actions did it take in 2020?

In 2020 we coordinated two workshops with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in order to prepare for the 11th session of the UN Working Group. In those workshops we held intensive discussions with an international panel of experts on how to define older persons as a group and what a future UN convention should protect. The Institute is also a member of a working group of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), which is campaigning for a UN convention on the rights of older persons. Furthermore, the Institute developed recommendations for the design and implementation of effective complaints mechanisms in geriatric care through its research project on this issue.

In addition to your work at the Institute, in 2020 you were appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council to a three-year term as the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons. What was it like starting this new role?

Getting started as the UN's Independent Expert was not exactly easy under the circumstances with Covid-19. Instead of visiting countries and learning about the situation for older persons at first-hand, all my meetings have been held digitally. Virtually, I have already travelled around the world several times. Indeed, that did facilitate some things that would otherwise not have been possible due to diary clashes or time differences, such as taking part in a session of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights or being involved in some very high-level discussions. Nevertheless, I hope very much that I will soon be able to talk to people on the ground.

As the Independent Expert, do you get an insight into the situations of older persons all around the world? What points do they have in common?

Looking beyond national borders, it is clear that in many places, the pandemic has hit older persons particularly hard, especially those who receive care, have impairments or are poor. Climate change with its associated heatwaves and flooding catastrophes is also causing particular discomfort to older persons all around the world. But that does not mean that all older persons need assistance or care.

In times of crisis many older persons are the linchpin of their families, from providing childcare to offering financial support. Nevertheless, ageism is a global problem that prevents older persons from enjoying self-determination in their lives. That is why in my report to the United Nations Human Rights Council this year I made proposals on how to reduce negative perceptions of age and ageism with the aim of stimulating the necessary discussions.

Hardly anyone is happy to call themselves old or campaign for the rights of older persons. For me, it is an important investment in all our futures: after all, we all want to live in dignity in our old age.

Who's who

Dr Claudia Mahler has been working on the economic, social, cultural and human rights of older persons since 2010. In 2020 the United Nations Human Rights Council appointed her as the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons. In this voluntary role she investigates the human rights situation of older persons around the world.

Further information

German Institute for Human Rights (2020): Rechte älterer Menschen. Recht auf Arbeit - Zugang zum Recht - Definition der Gruppe Älterer. Berlin

“Beschwerdemechanismen in der Altenpflege“ research project on our website

Inclusive libraries – spaces for everybody

As non-commercial spaces that provide information, education and culture, libraries play a major role in social cohesion. The range of services they provide should be equally accessible – including for persons with disabilities.

According to the “Report on the State of Libraries in Germany – Facts and Figures 2021–2022”, there are 9,297 public and academic libraries in Germany, with over 223 million visits each year. In order for everyone to be able to use library services, access to information, education and culture must be accessible as laid down by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). For a number of years the Institute has been campaigning to make libraries inclusive spaces.

Libraries and the CRPD

As public institutions, libraries are obliged by Article 9 to make themselves accessible. They are ideally suited as places where people can realise their right to information, as envisaged by Article 21 in the context of the right to freedom of expression and opinion. As places for lifelong learning, libraries must also guarantee the right to inclusive education as described in Article 24. Article 30, which concerns participation in cultural life, explicitly refers to them alongside other institutions.

Accessibility is a precondition for persons with disabilities to be able to exercise their rights. In concrete terms, this means that libraries must not only provide physical accessibility, but also offer accessible media, design their services in an inclusive way and make events accessible.

From a working group to a commission

In 2018, the Institute Library and the German Centre for Accessible Reading (dzb lesen) initiated a working group on accessibility in libraries, both physical and digital. Since then, the working group has been supporting implementing inclusion in libraries by offering training and specialist articles. Its commitment saw it being included in the German Library Association's customer-oriented services commission in January 2020.

The Institute Library organised the first joint online conference in November 2020, which began with a workshop led by Judyta Smykowski from Sozialhelden e.V. on language and imagery about disabilities. Robbie Sandberg from the German Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted and Gottfried Zimmermann from the Hochschule der Medien Stuttgart's competence centre for digital accessibility discussed the current issue of accessibility for online conferences.

The importance of libraries – raising their profile as a policy issue

“When it comes to implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and social cohesion, there should be a much clearer focus in Germany on the importance of libraries,” explains Anne Sieberns, Head of the Institute Library. “Until now the action and policy plans of Federal and Länder governments have failed to address strategic action and development perspectives for libraries.”

The inclusion of the working group on accessibility in the existing commission was a first step towards making inclusion an institutional issue for the German Library Association. In July 2021, two commissions will start work on this issue, each taking a different focus. The Head of the Institute Library was appointed to the commission on libraries and diversity.

Further information

“Inklusive Bibliotheken” page on our website

Protection from violence comes up short for refugee children

According to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, in the first six months of 2020, at least 53% of those who made asylum applications were aged under 18. Many of these minors are living in reception centres and shared accommodation – hardly safe places for children. In collaboration with UNICEF Germany, the Institute has prepared recommendations on how Federal, Länder and municipal authorities can make protection from violence in accommodation for refugees a reality.

Any form of violence leaves its mark on children and all children have a right to protection from violence. Children in accommodation for refugees may be victims of violence themselves or may have to be forced to see it as witnesses. However, many reception centres and accommodation centres lack sufficient trained staff or comprehensive prevention plans that can actually protect children from violence. Federal, Länder and municipal authorities should therefore reform accommodation for refugees, paying particular attention to children. This was the conclusion of a study into protection from violence in accommodation for refugees. The analysis took a children's rights perspective and was based on a survey carried out in all 16 Länder. It was published jointly by the National CRC Monitoring Mechanism and UNICEF Germany in December 2020.

The governments of all the Länder answered six basic questions about protection from violence in accommodation centres and four questions specifically about children. The survey also covered violence protection measures against the background of the Covid-19 pandemic. Analysing the Länder's submissions from a children's rights perspective revealed a number of points. For example, while guidelines on protection from violence exist in all the Länder, these vary greatly in terms of how binding they are, their scope and their applicability. Moreover, in terms of how these violence protection plans are implemented, there is a widespread failure to monitor them systematically, evaluate them or have them independently reviewed.

The study also shows that children's and young people's services in accommodation centres often only intervene where there is an acute risk of harm to a child's wellbeing. There is often no appropriate support for traumatised children. The ratio of support staff to residents is usually far too low, particularly with regard to children. For children, the situation is exacerbated by restrictions due to the pandemic.

Ensuring that children are protected: recommendations to Federal, Länder and municipal authorities

What can be done to guarantee protection for children in accommodation for refugees? What measures need to be put in place to prevent violence? The Institute's analysis of all information supplied by the Länder formed the basis for a range of recommendations to Federal, Länder and municipal authorities.

Without exception, the Länder should make swift improvements to accommodation for refugees or, in some cases, completely overhaul it. Mandatory plans and minimum standards are essential, as are targeted measures to prevent violence, particularly in municipal accommodation. All accommodation facilities in Germany require clear responsibilities and procedures to protect residents from violence. This includes trained staff, age-appropriate minimum staffing ratios and additional funds along with independent oversight of the accommodation and complaints mechanisms for children.

“Children's and young people's services in Germany has a lot of potential to provide support and strength to children and their families in accommodation centres,” says Claudia Kittel, Head of the National CRC Monitoring Mechanism. “However, this potential has not yet had an effect in reception centres and accommodation centres.” In Kittel's view, Länder governments and youth welfare offices need to make some fundamental changes in this area in order to make it

possible for staff in accommodation centres and other facilities to access children's and young people's services outside times of acute risk to children's wellbeing or the imminent emergency removal of a child. All too often this is compounded by a lack of appropriate support for traumatised children. The ratio of support staff to residents is usually far too low, particularly with regard to children.

Children's right to protection from violence

Children's right to protection from violence is stated in Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and covers all forms of physical and mental violence. Germany ratified the Convention in 1992 and thereby obliged itself under international law to implement it. The Convention holds the same status as Federal law. The right to protection from violence also applies unrestrictedly to children living in accommodation for refugees. Along with the CRC, since 2019 articles 44 (2a) and 53 (3) of the asylum laws have required the Länder to guarantee the protection of those at particular risk such as children. This applies in accommodation provided by Länder or municipal authorities, in reception centres and in shared accommodation.

Last but not least, Federal authorities should consider giving children and families the right to decentralised accommodation in municipal areas, along with a significant reduction in the maximum length of stays in reception centres. This is the only way to prevent children from having to live in accommodation centres for long periods of time and being exposed to the risks there.

Aiming for binding minimum standards

Protecting children from violence must become standard practice in accommodation for refugees. However, the structures currently in place are not yet sufficient to do this effectively.

In 2018 the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) worked with UNICEF Germany to publish "Minimum standards for the protection of refugees in refugee accommodation centres". This document has become the standard point of reference and should be developed on an ongoing basis.

Federal authorities should arrange for the introduction of binding minimum standards either as legislation or statutory advice. In 2021 the Institute and UNICEF Germany jointly commissioned a legal opinion on this issue with the aim of identifying how to incorporate minimum standards into violence protection plans.

Further information

Deutsches Komitee für UNICEF e.V., Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte (2020): Gewaltschutz in Unterkünften für geflüchtete Menschen. Eine kinderrechtliche Analyse basierend auf einer Befragung der 16 Bundesländer. Berlin

"Gewaltschutz in Erstaufnahmeeinrichtungen" digital map on our website

"Gewaltschutz in kommunalen Gemeinschaftsunterkünften" digital map on our website

Protecting human rights on the EU's external borders

Faced with high border walls, fences and unlawful expulsions, applying for asylum is becoming more and more daunting for people seeking protection in Europe. The Institute has repeatedly scrutinised the situation on the EU's external borders.

For people seeking sanctuary in Europe, accessing the European asylum system in 2020 was difficult. Land borders with countries bordering the EU are increasingly closed off with fences and border walls. Human rights organisations and civil society have also long deplored the inhumane treatment of asylum seekers at many places on the EU's external borders.

One common example of this treatment is “pushbacks”, when people trying to reach European territory are forcibly returned across the EU's external border by EU member state border guards without reviewing their claims to sanctuary. The border zone between Morocco and the Spanish enclave of Melilla on the African mainland is notable for the regular scenes of so-called “devoluciones en caliente” (literally, “hot deportations”). In these cases, people attempting to cross border fences in order to reach European soil are intercepted (usually by the Spanish Guardia Civil) within the border zone and immediately deported back to Morocco without any proper process.

Significant rise in pushbacks

Two of the key human rights principles that concern the handling of people seeking sanctuary at international borders are the international non-refoulement principle and the ban on collective deportations. The non-refoulement principle is enshrined in numerous human rights treaties and bans the return, expulsion, extradition or deportation of persons where there are grounds to believe that they may be at risk of persecution, torture or serious human rights violations in the destination country. This principle is explicitly referred to in Article 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention and Article 3 of the UN Convention against Torture. The spirit and purpose of the ban on collective deportations is to prevent those seeking sanctuary from being returned across borders before they have been identified and their individual grounds for seeking asylum have been reviewed.

2020 was again marked by a series of events at the EU's external borders that were not compatible with obligations under international protection laws for refugees and human rights. Human rights organisations have reported a significant rise in pushbacks by Greek border guards at the border between Greece and Turkey. In a position paper, the Institute took a highly critical view of the situation from a human rights perspective.

The United Nations believed at least 13,000 people were waiting at the Greek border at the beginning of March. The Greek government closed off its border to Turkey and stopped accepting new asylum applications for one month. Water cannons, tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets were used to prevent people from crossing the border.

Joint opinion issued by National Human Rights Institutions

Many refugees are stranded on the Croatian border with northwest Bosnia Herzegovina. For several years the media, organisations and the Croatian National Human Rights Institution have been recording and documenting police violence and illegal expulsions by Croatian border guards. The latter, the Croatian Ombudswoman has instigated numerous investigations in recent years into cases where people are believed to have been forcefully returned to Bosnia Herzegovina without papers and without due process.

In collaboration with the National Human Rights Institutions of Greece, Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina, the Institute published a position paper in April 2020 on the situation on the EU's external borders and planned reforms to the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

Germany held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union from July to December 2020. One of the key focuses of its term in office was the future of the Common European Asylum System. In September the European Commission presented its long-awaited proposal for a new Pact on Migration and Asylum.

A core element of the proposal is to further concentrate the process at the EU's external borders. It includes plans for a screening procedure that would allow stricter controls over people travelling into the Schengen Area. The new procedure is to apply where a citizen of a third country crosses an external border and requests international protection during border checks while not fulfilling the conditions for entry into the EU. It is also to apply to persons brought ashore in search and rescue operations at sea.

The screening process should last no longer than five days and will include identification, health and security checks. According to the Commission's proposal, all member states are required to set up an independent monitoring mechanism to ensure that EU and international laws – including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights – are complied with throughout the screening process. The new monitoring mechanisms should also ensure the prompt and effective investigation of human rights abuses connected to the screening processes including abuses linked to asylum processes and the principle of non-refoulement.

Migration and asylum pact leaves questions unresolved

Whether this mechanism will prove an effective means to prevent unlawful expulsions is open to question. On the one hand, the draft does not clearly state whether the mechanism applies even before the screening process has officially been commenced. In practice, pushbacks generally occur within border zones themselves or at sea: i.e. before any kind of process has got underway. On the other hand, it remains to be seen how the independence of the monitoring mechanism will be guaranteed and what sanctions are available if state actors are found to be committing human rights violations. A further point of criticism concerns the fact that only official bodies are to be supervised and not EU agencies such as Frontex, which is also involved in border controls.

Questions of European asylum law were among the agenda items for a hybrid event on 27 October, delivered jointly by the Institute and the REMAP research group from Justus Liebig University Giessen under the leadership of Professor Jürgen Bast. The event was held at the Representation of the European Commission in Berlin. The Institute had contributed to the work of the expert advisory body. The event included a presentation on the “Human Rights Challenges to European Migration Policy” report which was discussed by representatives from academia, the law, politics and civil society.

Further information

Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, (2020):

Das Vorgehen Griechenlands und der EU an der türkisch-griechischen Grenze. Eine menschen- und flüchtlingsrechtliche Bewertung der aktuellen Situation. Berlin

Press release: „Für eine menschenrechtsbasierte und solidarische EU-Asylpolitik“ on our website

Making human rights a positive force as humanity experiences a transformation in the very basis of its existence

The impact of climate change and pollution on the very basis of human existence has been huge. As well as this, climate change and pollution are also causing radical changes in other ways, such as the growth in digitalisation. The Institute wants to help shape these processes of social and political transformation in ways that are guided by human rights.

“The climate crisis poses a particular threat to the fundamental rights of younger people.”

Faced with storms, floods and droughts, more and more people are losing their lives or livelihoods to extreme weather events. Yet states have a duty to protect people from the effects of climate change. Nina Eschke and Franca Maurer talk about the significance of human rights in the climate debate, why jurisprudence matters and what governments must do now.

A few years ago, human rights hardly ever came up in debates about the effects of climate change. Did the signing of the Paris Agreement make a difference?

Nina Eschke: The 2015 Paris Agreement was the first to include human rights aspects. That was a major development, as the Agreement requires states to develop national strategies to protect people and their livelihoods. It also explicitly stresses that adaptation actions should be gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent. The guidelines for implementing the Paris Agreement agreed at the Katowice climate conference in December 2018 also require states to integrate human rights principles and standards into how they plan and implement adaptation actions and climate policies. For example, this means that people and civil society stakeholders have a right to information and participation when climate goals and adaptation actions are concerned and that the state must be accountable for the measures taken.

Courts both here and abroad are currently grappling with climate change litigation, which demands that states make more efforts to combat the effects of climate change. What significance do these cases have for human rights?

Franca Maurer: The growth in climate change litigation cases being heard by regional and national courts underscores the fact that climate change has a great deal to do with human rights. In November 2020 six Portuguese children and young adults submitted a complaint against 33 European states to the European Court of Human Rights. They are accusing the states of failing to do enough about climate change, thereby putting the future of the younger generation at risk and harming the complainants in their rights to life and to respect for a private and family life. This was followed in April 2021 by a case brought against Switzerland by a group of senior citizens. In 2019, a group of children and young people made a complaint about several countries to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. All these proceedings concern states' failure to take adequate steps to control climate change.

The German Federal Constitutional Court issued a decision in March 2021 stating that the whole younger generation is at risk because German lawmakers have not yet produced any specific climate protection rules for the period after 2030. Germany has since caught up in this regard, passing a new climate law in June 2021 that includes provisions to achieve climate neutrality by 2045. However, the legislation does not include specific measures to achieve this binding goal. Climate change litigation also met with success in national courts in France and the Netherlands, whose governments must now pursue more ambitious climate policies.

National Human Rights Institutions are getting more and more involved in debates about climate change. What is your role in these debates?

Nina Eschke: It is the role of National Human Rights Institutions to use their expertise to look into the human rights situation in their country. If climate change and its consequences put human rights at risk, engaging in political debates on the issue is quite within their mandate. This was why the annual conference of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) in December 2020 took climate change and human rights as its theme. In the conference's closing statement GANHRI stressed that National Human Rights Institutions should "act as a bridge and [...] provide a platform for exchange between policymakers, civil society and other stakeholders." GANHRI members thus commit themselves to an active role in promoting human rights-based climate measures, such as by monitoring climate protection measures. We can only hope that these plans will be implemented swiftly and thereby contribute to protecting the climate and human rights in equal measure.

How is the Institute contributing to these debates?

Nina Eschke: In 2020 the Institute played a key role in preparing and delivering the GANHRI conference in December. The conference was attended by high-ranking representatives of UN institutions, specifically the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Environment Programme and the Development Programme. During the conference the English-language handbook, "Climate change and human rights. The contributions of National Human Rights Institutions", was presented, which the Institute had produced in collaboration with CIEL, the Center for International Environmental Law. The Handbook sets out the human rights and environmental standards and mechanisms that are relevant to this issue. It also describes the activities of National Human Rights Institutions around the world concerning climate change.

Franca Maurer: As a member of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), the Institute plays an active part in debates at a European level. In May 2021 ENNHRI published a comprehensive position paper on the subject of the increased number of climate change litigation cases at the European Court of Human Rights. The Institute contributed to the paper. ENNHRI considers national climate policies and practices in a selection of European countries (including Germany) and the legal questions that arise from the European Convention on Human Rights. The publication shows how these issues can be addressed in the light of case law from the European Court of Human Rights, international law, and human rights standards and principles, as well as recent developments in case law from the various European states.

State obligations

States have a human rights obligation to protect their populations from the possible consequences of climate change and to facilitate access to fundamental rights such as those to health, food and water. On the one hand, this means that they must put measures in place to achieve the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement. Industrial countries like Germany which account for the largest shares of pollution and consume the most resources hold a particular responsibility to minimise the wide-ranging negative impacts of climate change both at home and in other parts of the world. On the other hand, states are also required to ensure that the actions they take to implement the goals comply with human rights principles and standards.

What is the picture at a national level?

Franca Maurer: The Institute continues to draw public attention to the connection between climate change and human rights here in Germany as well. Michael Windfuhr, Deputy Director of the Institute, addressed the Bundestag's committee on human rights and humanitarian aid in May 2021, when he spoke about how to make adapting to climate change and tools for protecting the climate as sensitive to human rights as possible. He also explained how the international human rights system can contribute to a more holistic approach to climate protection. The Institute has also advised other government institutions on how to design climate policy in a way that is oriented towards human rights.

What key steps are required for human rights to be made a more integral part of climate policy?

Nina Eschke: The Covid-19 pandemic brought international climate negotiations to a standstill in 2020. This makes it extremely important that the November 2021 negotiations at the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow should continue and be successful. For example, when designing and implementing the design and implementation of the emissions trading system envisioned by Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, state parties should comply with human rights and lay down robust social and environmental standards. The parties must also ensure that those affected can participate, as well as creating a complaints mechanism that allows access to remedies.

Another key international process is the United Nations Human Rights Council's October 2021 resolution recognising the human right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Germany voted in favour of the resolution. The next step is for the UN General Assembly to recognise this right, as it did when recognising the human rights to water and sanitation in 2011. In addition to this, states – including Germany – must ensure that this newly recognised human right to a healthy environment actually makes an impact at a national level. This means, for example, that all relevant national stakeholders, including civil society groups, should be involved in the development of corresponding programmes and in drafting legislation.

Franca Maurer: If human rights and climate policy are to be more closely interlinked, stakeholders in the UN human rights protection system need to speak out on climate change and explain how it is linked to protecting human rights. Not all countries support this. This means that countries like Germany and the European Union need to explicitly recognise the relevance of human rights to climate change and to support the UN rights protection system to that end.

Who's who

Nina Eschke has been a researcher at the Institute since 2014. She works on climate change and the environment, as well as human rights in a national and international context.

Franca Maurer has been a researcher at the Institute since 2020. She works on issues of climate change and the environment and business and human rights.

Further information

German Institute for Human Rights (2020): Climate change and human rights. The contributions of National Human Rights Institutions. A handbook. Berlin

“Klima und Nachhaltigkeit” page on our website

Strengthening the human rights protection system and protecting spaces for civil society activity

Around the world the institutions of constitutional democracy and democratic processes are under threat. The Institute is campaigning to make the human rights protection system fit for purpose, to protect the institutions of constitutional democracy and space for civil society activity.

“There is an existential threat to the UN human rights protection system”

The Covid-19 pandemic has placed a huge burden on the work of the human rights committees of the United Nations. But this is only the tip of the iceberg, argues Michael Windfuhr, himself a member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

What is the role of the UN's treaty bodies in protecting human rights?

Unlike the United Nations Human Rights Council, which is formed of delegates from the member states, the ten treaty bodies include independent experts. The experts assess how far the various countries have gone in implementing the human rights obligations they accepted by ratifying the various human rights agreements, and, where necessary, recommend improvements.

Under certain circumstances, victims of human rights violations can bring their complaints to the committees. In several cases, the committees' decisions have led to fundamental improvements in human rights in the country concerned. The same applies to the committees' work on interpreting and developing human rights agreements.

Were the UN committees able to carry out their work during the Covid-19 pandemic?

At first, there was no thought of holding state dialogues or even carrying out inspection visits to state parties. From the beginning of the pandemic to the end of 2020, just one UN committee held a digital dialogue with a state. It was not until the spring 2021 sessions that other committees switched to an online review process for some countries. Their work was complicated by technical difficulties, a lack of interpreters, unstable internet connectivity and the inability to plan with confidence. With committee members right around the world, joint online sessions had to bridge up to 15 time zones.

A lack of opportunities for informal conversations on the fringes of in-person meetings also made it harder for experts with different regional and academic specialisms to work together. Nevertheless, despite these adversities, the committees continued their work as best they could. The informal working group on Covid-19 also undertook important work. It collated the opinions on combating the pandemic from the various human rights protection bodies and developed joint standards for committee work under pandemic conditions.

Since the pandemic began the human rights bodies have been working under exceptional circumstances, but they were facing challenging working conditions even before then...

The complications caused by the pandemic are just the tip of the iceberg. The UN's continuing financial woes and the chronic underfunding of the human rights protection system mean that the human rights bodies in general are faced with existential challenges, a situation that is particularly serious for the treaty bodies.

Their members and staff at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights have long struggled with a lack of session time and human resources. In early 2019 it was only just possible to avert a threatened cancellation of some committee sessions. Moreover, failures to pay contributions on time or in full put some in-person sessions at risk in 2020, a fact which only the pandemic prevented from receiving wider attention.

UN Treaty Bodies

The ten UN treaty bodies are committees of the United Nations that monitor the implementation of international human rights treaties. The independent experts on these committees conduct country reporting reviews and prepare specific recommendations for state parties. They also provide interpretations of individual rights and provisions of the human rights treaty for which they are responsible.

With the UN's coffers empty, is it realistic to expect more funds for human rights bodies in the foreseeable future?

That comes down to the political will among the UN member states who decide on the budget. In the face of growing responsibilities for the committees and a major backlog in the review of country reports and individual complaints, the General Assembly approved a formula in 2014 to calculate how many sittings are required along with the necessary financial and staffing resources. However, neither the funds nor staffing capacities calculated under this formula have yet been delivered. The effect is that some planned sitting weeks have not taken place.

The human rights system depends in large part on voluntary contributions from states. In 2021 Germany significantly increased its voluntary contributions, which sent an important message to other countries. Nevertheless, the system needs to receive adequate funding from the regular budget. Sadly, those countries that are all too happy to avoid scrutiny of their human rights performance have little interest in providing a proper budget.

Can victims of human rights abuses continue to expect support from the treaty bodies?

The goal of our work continues to be to prevent human rights violations by improving protection at a country level and to provide the best support we can to victims, even if the process often demands a great deal of patience of them.

In recent years the UN committees have set in motion a wide range of measures to improve the coordination and efficiency of their work, such as by simplifying the country report process and coordinating reporting cycles. There is an urgent need for a digital case management system for individual complaints and emergency actions, which we hope to see set up in the near future.

Some of the new working practices will continue beyond the pandemic as they make it easier for people to participate. However, working digitally cannot be used as an argument for making cuts. There is a strong consensus among the 172 members of the UN committees that working online is no replacement for standard working practices or in-person meetings for committee members.

How can National Human Rights Institutions support the work of the treaty bodies?

National Human Rights Institutions play a major role for the treaty bodies. Their expertise contributes to the success of country reviews, they publicise the committees' decisions in their own countries and work towards implementing those decisions.

In addition, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) raises awareness of the work of the UN bodies, the financial challenges they face and discussions about reforms. It also campaigns for UN member states to support the treaty bodies.

Who's who

Michael Windfuhr has been Deputy Director of the Institute since 2011. Since 2016 he has served as a member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. He also chairs the CSR Forum's working group on business and human rights, which advises the Federal Government on the issue of corporate responsibility.

Human rights and the rule of law are two sides of the same coin

Around the world, human rights and the institutions that protect them are under increasing pressure. A series of public debates at the Institute in 2020 focused on how the rule of law and the observance of human rights can be secured and expanded in the face of the challenges they face today.

Recent years have seen a growth of political movements in Europe and around the world that inflame hateful prejudices. These movements cast doubt on human rights and the value of a multilateral, rules-based political system. National and international monitoring mechanisms and the institutions that hold states accountable for human rights violations are under increasing pressure, and the legitimacy of international monitoring procedures is often questioned. In some countries this is happening more or less openly due to the actions of governments who want to avoid being held accountable for human rights violations. In other countries, groups within society are to blame.

Even if human rights protections in Germany are on a firm foundation, a glance at other countries such as Poland, Hungary or Turkey shows how important it is to respond swiftly to attacks on democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Such attacks target independent judiciaries, a free and pluralistic media, scrutiny by civil society groups and independent academics who refuse to let external forces influence their work.

Anti-human rights discourse in the political mainstream

“As the National Human Rights Institution, it falls to us to respond early to efforts that seek to undermine the protection of human rights. We are therefore deeply concerned by the gradual creep of populist anti-human rights discourse into the political mainstream,” states Institute Director Beate Rudolf. For her, one point is clear: “Human rights and the rule of law are two sides of the same coin. Human rights limit and guide the actions of the state. Independent courts protect human rights when governments, parliaments or administrations infringe them. Conversely, human rights also protect the rule of law by ensuring that legislation is transparent and comprehensible; they allow the actions of authorities to be held to account before the law and preserve the independence of the judiciary.” For this reason, the Institute is campaigning for a culture of human rights, in which policymakers take Germany's obligations to human rights seriously and the population demands respect for human rights.

Protecting the institutions of the rule of law and due process

The Institute held two well-attended online conferences in 2020 on the issue of how the rule of law and observing human rights can be secured and expanded in the face of current challenges in Europe.

Under the title of “Securing the Rule of Law in Europe. The importance of an independent judicial system” the conference took place on 25 June, in partnership with the Ombudsman of the Republic of Poland for Citizens’ and Human Rights and delegates from the Hanseatic City of Bremen federal state. It was supported by the Poznań Human Rights Centre.

“The rule of law matters because it guarantees respect for all other values, including those of democracy and our fundamental rights,” stressed EU Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders in his keynote speech. Against the backdrop of concerted attacks on the independence of the judiciary, such as government control of judicial appointments in Poland and sanctions of judges who criticise the government's judicial “reforms”, attendees discussed the measures available to the EU and its member states to secure and expand the rule of law in Europe. As it does in other contexts, the Institute expressed its support for the introduction of an ongoing monitoring system for the rule of law in EU member states. It also recommended that receiving funds from the EU budget be made conditional upon upholding the

independence of the judiciary. “The independence of the judiciary is not a question of national sovereignty. It is about shared European standards and our fundamental rights,” stated Institute Director Beate Rudolf. In her view, independent judicial oversight is the only way to prevent the European Union from providing direct or indirect financial support to governments that undermine the rule of law and human rights. Rudolf also argued that EU citizens in all member states should be confident that their fundamental rights are protected by an independent judiciary.

“If the European Union allows EU rights to be ignored, that does not bode well for European integration,” warned Adam Bodnar, Ombudsman of the Republic of Poland for Citizens’ and Human Rights. He also expressed his hope that the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) would play a major role in upholding the rule of law.

Human rights: the foundation of peaceful coexistence

Protecting human rights and the role of the ECHR also formed the subject of an online conference marking “70 years of the European Convention on Human Rights. Protecting human rights in Germany and Europe”. The conference, which the Institute organised in partnership with the Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection, took place on 9 December, at the beginning

of Germany's Presidency of the ministerial committee of the Council of Europe. The conference marked the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights, which member states of the Council of Europe signed on 04 November 1950 in Rome. Today, the ECHR secures freedom and self-determination for 830 million people. Anyone who feels the exercise of their human rights is being infringed can make a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights as a last resort if domestic human rights protections have failed.

Why the European Convention on Human Rights matters

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) forms an agreed set of shared minimum human rights standards in Europe. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) is responsible for its interpretation. The 47 member states of the Council of Europe must obey its judgements and are also required to change laws which are adjudged to have been the cause of human rights violations. The Court's judgements have made a great contribution to strengthening human rights protections in the Council of Europe's member states.

It has also prompted major protection to fundamental rights in Germany, such as in criminal procedure, parental rights of access and the conflict between press freedoms and the protection of privacy. The Court's decisions have proved particularly important in cases that were politically and socially very controversial. One example was of a child murderer threatened with torture to make him give away the location of a child he was believed to have abducted, and which was still believed to be alive, and in cases of preventative detention.

The General Secretary of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić, called for the rights enshrined in the ECHR not to be taken for granted. In her view, upholding human rights would take a sustained effort on the part of governments and a commitment to multilateralism.

Federal Foreign Minister Heiko Maas recalled that it was only five years after the Second World War when Germany's European neighbours invited it to join the Council of Europe and to accept the obligations that entailed. “Germany became part of a community that was guided by the fundamental principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. That leap of faith had a fundamental influence on our foreign policy, and still does today,” Maas said. Federal Justice Minister Christine Lambrecht also praised the signing of the European Convention on Human Rights as a milestone in human rights protections in Europe. She stressed the significant role played by ECHR jurisprudence in interpreting human rights, which had proved an important stimulus for changes to German law. Stephan Harbarth, President of the Federal Constitutional Court, referred to the regular dialogue that takes place between the Federal Constitutional Court and the ECHR, noting how the ECHR aims to set international standards for consistent jurisprudence beyond national borders.

“The fact that states are subject to the binding decision of an international court like the European Court of Human Rights reaffirms that any exercise of state power is bound to human rights,” stressed Institute Director Beate Rudolf, along with her view that the ECHR refutes all those who would place the state, the nation or an ideology above the people. In her view, all European states must, both jointly and severally, take resolute action if a state disregards the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights.

Further information

“Rechtsstaat” page on our website

“Menschenrechte und Rechtsstaat stärken”: Interview with Institute Director Beate Rudolf on our website

Human rights education strengthens cohesion in a democracy

Human rights are the foundation of constitutional democracy. This makes human rights education especially important for people who act on behalf of the state, such as police officers and teachers. During 2020 the Institute became more involved in educational work for these professions.

A democracy can only exist if people know their rights and can assert these rights for themselves and for others. This happens when people start engaging with human rights and the values that underlie them from a very early age and continue to do so throughout their lives. This is why human rights education should be a core element of any educational context in a constitutional democracy, be that in nurseries, schools, extra-curricular education or in professional and vocational training.

Using human rights as a yardstick for professionalism

Human rights education means learning and discovering what human rights are and how we can use them for ourselves. It also raises awareness about the importance of solidarity, protecting people from discrimination, inclusion and participation. These are the principles and values that play a key role in the life of every person and in the collective life of a democratic society.

“Human rights education helps people stand up for their own rights and for the rights of others,” explains Sandra Reitz, Head of the Human Rights Education department. “It could be within the family environment, at school or a club, just as much as in your day-to-day professional life.” In Reitz’s view, this is why human rights education has a major role to play in initial and ongoing professional training for fields such as care and social work. She believes human rights education is especially important for people who act on behalf of the state, such as police officers and teachers. In this context, the Institute has delivered a range of events and discussions to advise the police and the Bundeswehr, teachers and civil society organisations on the requirement to remain neutral in political education and in schools.

Compass - a handbook for human rights education

Teachers are a crucial source of information about human rights, as well as being key defenders of our rights. After all, they make an essential contribution to guaranteeing everyone’s right to access education and to providing educational services in a way that is as non-discriminatory, inclusive and participative as possible. Another of their roles is to hold up arguments that infringe human rights for critical scrutiny.

In 2020 the Institute published its new and fully revised translation of “Compass – Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People” for educators. “Compass” offers practical activities and methods on a range of human rights education issues to support those working in education. It was originally issued by the Council of Europe in partnership with the Federal Agency for Civic Education and is in great demand among educators.

Further information

Focus on “Menschenrechtsbildung in Pandemie-Zeiten” on our website

The Institute

Mandate and Function

The German Institute for Human Rights is Germany's independent National Human Rights Institution under Article 1 of the Law on the legal status and the mandate of the German Institute for Human Rights (DIMRG). It strives to ensure that Germany respects and promotes human rights domestically and abroad. The Institute also supports and monitors the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which end it has set up two national monitoring mechanisms. As the centre of expertise on domestic implementation of human rights, it advises policymakers and civil society, provides information about human rights and brings a human rights perspective to political and social debates.

Research and advice

The Institute conducts interdisciplinary and application-oriented research on human rights issues and monitors the human rights situation in Germany. It advises a range of stakeholders on implementing international human rights treaties. These include policymakers at Federal, Länder and sometimes municipal levels, as well as the judiciary, legal practitioners, business and civil society organisations. It reports to the German Bundestag and prepares position papers for national and international courts and international human rights bodies. It supports those working in education to enshrine human rights in the initial and ongoing professional training for careers where sensitivity to human rights is required, as well as in helping design human rights education for school and non-school contexts.

The Institute sees itself as a forum for exchange between the state, civil society, business, practitioners, and national and international stakeholders.

Informing and documenting

One key role for National Human Rights Institutions is to share information about the human rights situation in their own country. The DIMRG therefore requires the Institute to report annually to the German Bundestag on the development of the human rights situation in Germany and to report on its activities.

In addition to this, the Institute's public library provides research literature and human rights journals. Its holdings include the largest collection of human rights educational materials in Germany. The Institute offers a range of services through social media and other online platforms which provide information about human rights issues, as well as documenting the key human rights treaties and how they are being implemented in Germany.

Politically independent

The Institute is a politically independent body committed solely to human rights. As a National Human Rights Institution, its work is based on the Paris Principles of the United Nations. The DIMRG has governed the Institute's legal status, mandate and funding since 2015. The Institute is a registered association funded by the German Bundestag with funding from third parties for individual projects.

National Human Rights Institutions

National Human Rights Institutions dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights exist in 118 countries. Their work is based on the Paris Principles. These principles, proclaimed by the United Nations in 1993, constitute the international standard for the role and the functioning of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). Institutional independence is a central principle. The German Institute for Human Rights is in full compliance with this standard and has therefore been accredited with "A" status. Only NHRIs accredited with this status have the right to speak and participate on United Nations bodies such as the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva.

National Monitoring Mechanism for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Germany ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its optional protocol in 2009. Article 33 (2) of the Convention requires state parties to establish an independent monitoring mechanism to scrutinise and support the implementation of the Convention. This task was entrusted to the Institute in 2009, which set up the National CRPD Monitoring Mechanism for the purpose.

The Monitoring Mechanism is responsible for raising awareness about the rights of people with disabilities and supporting the implementation of and compliance with the Convention. The work of the Monitoring Mechanism includes research into the Convention and how it is being realised in Germany. It advises policymakers at Federal, Länder and municipal levels. It also supports the judiciary, legal practitioners, business and civil society in interpreting and implementing the Convention. The Monitoring Mechanism also works closely with state agencies and NGOs.

National CRC Monitoring Mechanism

Germany has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols, committing itself to upholding children's rights. In 2015 the Institute was entrusted with the task of supporting the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Germany, to which end it set up the National CRC Monitoring Mechanism.

The Monitoring Mechanism helps raise awareness of children's rights and, where necessary, calls for compliance with the Convention. The Monitoring Mechanism advises policymakers at Federal, Länder and municipal levels, as well as helping the judiciary, legal practitioners and civil society interpret the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and implement it in a child-centred way. It works closely with National Human Rights Institutions in other countries and informs the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child about the implementation of children's rights in Germany. The Monitoring Mechanism works in close partnership with civil society, state agencies and research institutions. Of course, it also works with children and young people themselves: after all, participation (in the sense of Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) is the very foundation of its work.

A global network

As Germany's National Human Rights Institution, the Institute works closely with the United Nation's human rights bodies, the Council of Europe and the European Union. It sees itself as a bridge between national and international levels. The Institute provides regular reports to international human rights bodies on the human rights situation in Germany. It also contributes its expertise to support the realisation of human rights in Germany and the development of human rights protection internationally. In turn, the Institute feeds international developments into legal and political debates within Germany.

Supporting the work of the UN

Country review process

The Institute regularly contributes to UN treaty bodies' country reviews for Germany by providing "parallel reports" on the human rights situation in Germany. The UN treaty bodies are required to review the implementation of their respective human rights treaties. The Institute is also involved in the United Nations Human Rights Council's universal periodic review process.

UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights oversees the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). All members of the treaty bodies provide their services on a voluntary basis and without staffing support from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Since 2017 the Institute has provided specialist expertise to support the work of the German member of the committee, Michael Windfuhr, Deputy Director of the Institute. This support includes background research for the country report process or legal questions in the context of preparing general comments and opinions on the interpretation of the ICESCR. The Institute also assists Mr Windfuhr with the handling of individual complaints. This support is funded by the Federal Foreign Office.

UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances

The UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances reviews the implementation of the UN International Convention for the Protection from Enforced Disappearance, which came into force on 23 December 2010. Until 2023 the Institute will provide specialist expertise to support the work of the German member of the Committee, Barbara Lochbihler. This support includes background research on the situation in various countries and legal advice. The Institute also assists with the conceptional development of measures to increase levels of ratification of the Convention against Enforced Disappearance, and also in bringing wider attention to the work of the committee. This support is funded by the Federal Foreign Office.

UN Expert on the Rights of Older People

In May 2020 the United Nations Human Rights Council appointed Claudia Mahler, researcher at the Institute, as its independent expert on the rights of older persons. In this voluntary role for the United Nations, she investigates the human rights situation of older persons around the world. The Institute has provided specialist expertise to support the Independent Expert since May 2021. This support is funded by the Federal Foreign Office.

United Nations Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

The Institute provides information for key stakeholders in Germany working on the rights of older persons on the work of the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG-A). In partnership with the Federal Ministry for Families, Seniors, Women and Youth, the Institute holds regular expert discussions with civil society organisations and academics. It makes the outcomes of these discussions available to the public. The aim here is to promote better networking among German stakeholders and to enrich discussions at the UN working group in New York with useful examples and input.

Partnerships with National Human Rights Institutions

There is a global network of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) currently represents the interests of 118 NHRIs around the world. It coordinates working groups on human rights issues and monitors compliance with the UN's Paris Principles, which form the set of regulations for NHRIs. It also campaigns for NHRIs to be given rights to participate in all UN committees engaged with human rights issues.

There are also regional networks in Africa, America, Europe and the Asia-Pacific area. These networks support the establishment of NHRIs in their respective regions, organise training and discussions and draw up joint position papers as part of regional and global human rights bodies.

Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions

The Institute is an active member of GANHRI and chairs its Working Group on Business and Human Rights. The Working Group aims to improve collaborations between National Human Rights Institutions in the field of business and human rights. It is also campaigning for a binding UN treaty on business and human rights. The Institute also plays an active part in GANHRI's working groups on the rights of older persons and the rights of persons with disabilities. It also contributes to discussions on climate change and human rights.

European Network of National Human Rights Institutions

The European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) comprises over 40 National Human Rights Institutions in Europe and speaks up on human rights issues at a European level. As a member of ENNHRI, the Institute works with other NHRIs to prepare position papers, reports and recommendations for European stakeholders such as the Council of Europe and the EU, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and the OSCE. It is also a member of various ENNHRI working groups, such as on economic, social and cultural rights, and on the rights of persons with disabilities. The Institute serves on the Finance Committee which advises the secretariat of ENNHRI on finance and budgetary issues.

Partnership with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights

The Institute has been the German research partner of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights in Vienna since 2011, on behalf of which it prepares legal and sociological studies of the human rights situation in Germany. These studies include access to justice, data protection, the rights of victims of violence and children's rights. The Institute's reports form a basis for the production of comparative reports analysing the concerns and associated problems at an EU level. The Agency has Focal Points in all 27 EU member states.

Supporting the work of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

The Institute has been an active member of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions since 2013, as part of which it serves on a committee for greater inclusion in libraries.

Facts

Annual Financial Report 2020

Income

Institutional allocation from federal government	€3,085,000
Income from projects with third-party federal funding	€1,902,543
Income from projects with third-party Länder funding	€181,238
Mixed income	€1,356,100
Total income	€6,524,881

Expenditures

Human Rights Policy Germany & Europe	€412,908
Third-party mandates / projects funded by third parties, Human Rights Policy Germany & Europe	€1,029,935
International Human Rights Policy	€203,870
Third-party mandate / projects funded by third parties, International Human Rights Policy	€661,884
Human Rights Education	€180,961
Communications	€653,862
Third-party mandates / projects funded by third parties, Communications	€31,569
Library	€210,383
Administration (overhead)	€1,337,438
Board of Directors / Management	€522,013
Third-party mandates / projects funded by third parties, Board of Directors / Management	€ 14,468
National CRPD Monitoring Mechanism	€376,720
Third-party mandates / projects funded by third parties, National CRPD Monitoring Mechanism	€442,397
Third-party mandates / projects funded by third parties, National CRC Monitoring Mechanism	€446,473
Total Expenditure	€6,524,881

2020 Result

€0

Notes on the Annual Financial Report

In 2020 the German Institute for Human Rights received an institutional allocation of €3,085,000. The Institute receives this **institutional allocation**, which constitutes its core funding, from the German Bundestag each year. It is intended to ensure that the Institute has adequate financial resources, as required by the Paris Principles of the United Nations for an independent National Human Rights Institution. In 2020 the allocation included an extra €17,000 to adjust for increases in staffing costs associated with increased staffing costs due to collective bargaining agreements.

In addition to the institutional funding, the income section includes three additional positions used to **record third-party funding**. How they are allocated depends on the respective allocation and accounting modalities.

(1) A total of €1,902,543 was received from projects with **third-party federal funding**. Projects with third-party funding are reported separately in the annual financial report, as separate accounting is done for the funding for each of these projects vis-à-vis the respective funding body. These expenditures, like the institutional allocation, are subject to the Federal Budget Code.

(2) **Projects with third-party Länder funding** are also reported separately, again due to the separate accounting. These expenditures are subject to the budget codes of the relevant German Länder. €181,238 was received from German Länder by way of third-party funded projects in 2020. Other funds received by the Institute from the Länder are accounted for along with the Institute's funds and are therefore included under mixed income.

(3) The **mixed income item** is made up of income from third parties which is accounted for with the institutional allocation. This includes fees for lectures by employees of the Institute. The mixed income item is also used to record income from lump-sum administrative fees charged to third-party funded projects and (1) and (2), which flow into the institutional allocation. Mixed income for 2020 amounted to €1,356,100.

The income derived from **third-party federal funding (1)** funded the research performed to support the work of the German member of the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances and of the German member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Federal Foreign Office was the source of funding for these projects.

Funds also came from the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) to support the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing and for the National CRC Monitoring Mechanism and a project for emergency care following sexual violence.

The Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection funded a project for qualifications for judges.

The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs funded the National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights research and consultancy project, along with a project to raise awareness of jurisdiction in guardianship cases in relationship with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community funded the Institute's work on two projects in 2020: the co-ordination office for the Independent Anti-Gypsyism Commission, and a project addressing anti-gypsyistic profiling associated with combating "transient criminals".

Projects with third-party Länder funding (2): This item includes the allocation from the Land of Berlin to fund the Monitoring-Stelle Berlin project (CRPD Monitoring Mechanism for Berlin). Other projects funded by the Länder are currently accounted for together with institutional funding and are therefore listed under mixed income (3).

Mixed income (3) includes income from contracts with third parties which is accounted for as part of institutional funding. They comprise funds from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) for a project on implementing human rights in development policy and a project on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in development collaborations. The funds also include research contracts with the Institute on land rights in Ethiopia and human rights due diligence in the palm oil industry; funds also came from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) for FRANET reporting which the Institute took over for the FRA in 2020.

In addition to this, the Josef und Luise Kraft Foundation commissioned the Institute to investigate complaints mechanisms in geriatric care. North Rhine-Westphalia supported state-specific work in North Rhine-Westphalia by the National CRPD Monitoring Mechanism, and the Land of Bremen commissioned an evaluation of its CRPD action plan. Aktion Mensch is funding a project on access to justice for persons with disabilities.

The Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) supported projects on parks management in the Democratic Republic of Congo; the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs supported the publication of a commentary on CEDAW (UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women); and the Minor Project Office for Education and Research on behalf of the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration supported the preparation of a study of the exploitation of Eastern European workers in Germany.

The Paris Principles of the United Nations call for National Human Rights Institutions to be financed primarily through institutional funding, to ensure that they have free choice of the issues they explore and how they conduct their work. Third party funding for specific purposes should be subordinate to an institution's own funds. This requirement was narrowly missed in 2020. Funding for specific projects across all three categories amounted to 53% of the Institute's income in 2020. In 2020, the Institute also only raised funding targeted at supporting the strengthening and implementation of work on independently chosen and pre-existing areas of activity. The Institute wishes to thank all its sponsors for their support for its work.

The summary of expenditure shows the funding available for the work of each of the Institute's departments. The "administration (overhead)" item includes the Institute's running costs – e.g. rent and related ancillary payments, IT services and miscellaneous administrative expenses (experts, bank fees, etc.) – and also membership dues for GANHRI and ENNHRI, as well as expenditures associated with all departments.

The financial report of the German Institute for Human Rights is examined by two auditors appointed by the General Assembly. The Annual General Assembly is responsible for formal approval of the actions of the Board of Directors. The General Assembly has issued its approval and confirmed that all allocations were used efficiently and economically.

Funded projects

Ending exploitation at work. Eastern European domestic care workers in Germany

Funded by: Minor

Funding period: December 2019 – June 2020

Supporting the implementation of the National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights

Funded by: Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Funding period: 2017 – 2022

Advice on human rights in conservation

Funded by: KfW Development Bank

Funding period: September 2019 – December 2021

Advice on issues around business and human rights

Funded by: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

Funding period: August 2020 – April 2022

Reporting to the European Agency for Fundamental Rights

Funded by: European Agency for Fundamental Rights

Funding period: commenced in 2011, currently 2019 – 2022

Complaints mechanisms in geriatric care

Funded by: Josef and Luise Kraft Foundation

Funding period: January 2018 – December 2020

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in practice in guardianship law

Funded by: Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Funding period: January 2019 – December 2021

Conceptual development of an independent reporting body to combat gender-specific violence and human trafficking in Germany

Funded by: Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

Funding period: January 2020 – May 2021

“Independent Commission on Anti-Gypsyism” Coordination Centre

Funded by: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community

Funding period: July 2019 – June 2021

Human rights in the palm oil sector

Funded by: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

Funding period: June 2019 – November 2020

Berlin Monitoring Mechanism for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Funded by the Land of Berlin

Funding period: October 2012 – December 2021

North Rhine-Westphalia Monitoring Mechanism for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Funded by the North Rhine-Westphalia Ministry for Work, Integration and Social Affairs

Funding period: since March 2017

Saarland Monitoring Office for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Funded by: Saarland Ministry of Health, Social Affairs, Women and the Family

Funding period: May 2020 – March 2022

Be in the right – win your case

Funded by: Aktion Mensch e.V.

Funding period: October 2020 – November 2022

Racism, antisemitism, right-wing extremism – Strengthening law enforcement & victim protection

Funded by: Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection;

Länder of Berlin, Schleswig-Holstein and Saxony

Funding period: January 2020 – December 2022

Supporting the GIZ "Human rights in development cooperation " programme []

Funded by: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

Funding period: commenced in 2005, currently 2019 – 2023

Supporting the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Funded by: Federal Foreign Office

Funding period: annual funding since 2017, currently in place until December 2023

Supporting the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances

Funded by: Federal Foreign Office

Funding period: September 2019 – June 2023

Preliminary and follow-up work for the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

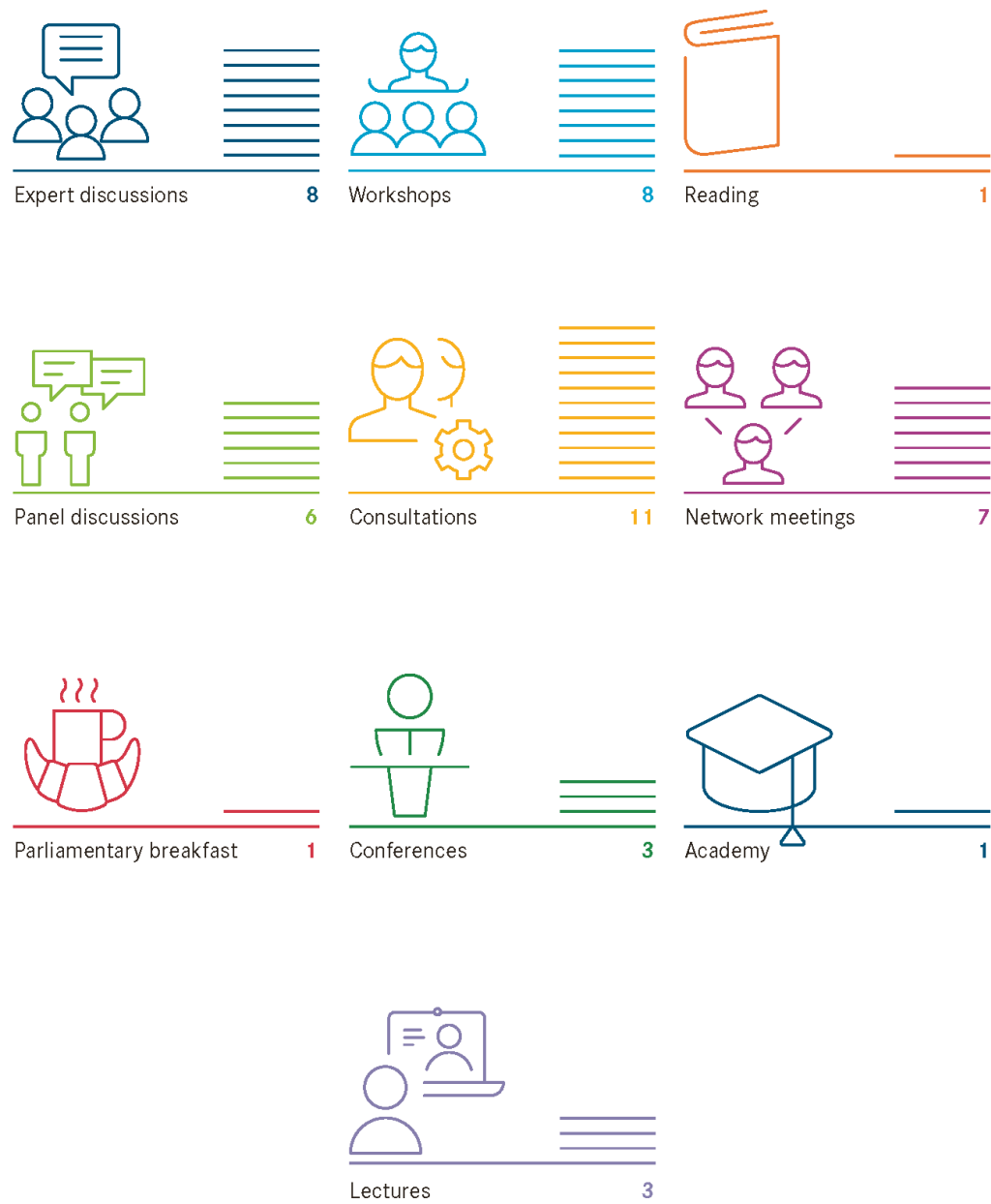
Funded by: Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

Funding period: since 2017

[Further information](#)

“Geförderte Projekte” page on the Institute’s website

Events



Our Partners for Events

Federal Foreign Office

Bread for the World

Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection

Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

United Nations Association of Germany

Deutsche Welle Akademie

German Institute for Development Evaluation

Global Compact Network Germany

German Children's Fund

Deutschlandfunk

EU Agency for Fundamental Rights

Free Hanseatic City of Bremen

Poznań Human Rights Centre

Museum für Kommunikation Berlin

Ombudsman of the Republic of Poland for Citizens' and Human Rights

Stiftung Mercator

UNICEF Deutschland

Justus Liebig University Giessen

University of Oxford

University of St. Gallen

VENRO (Verband Entwicklungspolitik und Humanitäre Hilfe deutscher Nichtregierungsorganisationen e.V.)

Representation of the European Commission in Germany

Overview of Events

Open-door Institute events and other events that drew the attention of a broader public are listed below in chronological order. Other internal events also took place but are not listed here.

09 January 2020 | Berlin

UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing: “Menschenrechte Älterer – Zugang zum Recht”

Expert discussion in partnership with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

09 January 2020 | Berlin

Expert discussion on UN Treaty Body Reform

Expert discussion

09 – 10 January 2020 | Berlin

Introduction to a human rights-based approach: Theory and practice

Workshop in partnership with VENRO

10 January 2020 | Berlin

Discrimination aware language in libraries

Workshop

16 January 2020 | Berlin

Behind closed doors? Risks and opportunities of communication in closed digital spaces

Workshop in partnership with the DW Akademie

22 January 2020 | Bremen

Implementing the CRPD in guardianship law event

28 January 2020 | Berlin

Deniz Utlu & Max Czollek: Gegen Morgen

Reading

04 February 2020 | Magdeburg

Implementing the CRPD in guardianship law event

11 February 2020 | Berlin

Strengthening victims' rights in prosecutions of intimate partner violence

Lecture and panel discussion in collaboration with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and the representation of the European Commission in Germany

12 February 2020 | Munich

Implementing the CRPD in guardianship law event

12 February 2020 | Berlin

Werner Lottje Lecture: “Schwierige Bedingungen für Menschenrechtsschutz im Jemen”

Lecture and panel discussion in partnership with Bread for the World

19 February 2020 | Braunschweig

Implementing the CRPD in guardianship law event

21 February 2020 | Berlin

Gender diversity exchange

Expert discussion

03/03/2020 | Berlin

A Hostile Society? Three stories about hate

Discussion salon in partnership with the Museum für Kommunikation Berlin and Deutschlandfunk Kultur

04 March 2020 | Berlin

33rd Civil Society Consultations of the National CRPD Monitoring Mechanism

Consultations with disability policy groups

06 March 2020 | Frankfurt am Main

Networking meeting with children's rights training and research institutions

11 March 2020 | Kiel

Implementing the CRPD in guardianship law event

26 March 2020 | virtual event

Digital Rights Across Borders

Workshop in partnership with the University of St. Gallen and the University of Oxford

05 May 2020 | virtual event

The UN Security Council and protecting human rights

Web talk in partnership with the United Nations Association of Germany

14 May 2020 | virtual event

The human right to housing and communal accommodation for homeless people in Germany

Parliamentary breakfast

18 June 2020 | virtual event

Event: 9th meeting of federal and Länder disability commissioners for the CRPD

Networking meeting

19 June 2020 | virtual event

5th networking meeting on reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

Networking meeting

24 June 2020 | virtual event

34th Civil Society Consultations of the National CRPD Monitoring Mechanism

Consultations with disability policy groups

25 June 2020 | virtual event

Securing the rule of law in Europe. The importance of an independent judicial system

Online conference in partnership with the Ombudsman for Civil and Human Rights of the Republic of Poland and the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen, supported by the Poznań Human Rights Centre

14 July 2020 | [virtual event](#)

2nd meeting of the expert group on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in practice in guardianship law

27 August 2020 | [Rostock](#)

Implementing the CRPD in guardianship law event

08 September 2020 | [virtual event](#)

Human Rights-Based Evaluation workshop

Workshop in partnership with the German Institute for Development Evaluation

15 September 2020 | [virtual event](#)

Constitutive meeting of the advisory council for the Children's Rights-Based Criteria for Family Law Process pilot project

Event in partnership with German Children's Fund

21 – 22 September 2020 | [virtual event](#)

Virtual Human Rights Academy: National and International Human Rights Protection

Public education event on human rights principles focusing on protection from discrimination

01 October 2020 | [virtual event](#)

Homelessness and the right to housing

Evening lecture series – part of the Human Rights Academy

06 October 2020 | [virtual event](#)

Enforced disappearances and migration

In partnership with Bread for the World

07 October 2020 | [virtual event](#)

Quality criteria for national action plans workshop

Workshop in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

01 October 2020 | [virtual event](#)

An international agreement on business and human rights – strengths and weaknesses of the second draft

Expert panel and consultation with stakeholders

08 October 2020 | [virtual event](#)

The climate change and human rights nexus

Evening lecture series – part of the Human Rights Academy

08 October 2020 | [virtual event](#)

6th networking meeting on reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

Networking meeting

15 October 2020 | [virtual event](#)

What the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities means for guardianship law

Evening lecture series – part of the Human Rights Academy

22 October 2020 | [virtual event](#)

Emergency care after sexual violence

On the implementation of Article 25 of the Istanbul Convention in Germany

Expert discussion in partnership with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

[23 October 2020 | virtual event](#)

Expert discussion on updates to the “NRW inklusiv” action plan

Consultation with disability policy groups in NRW

[27 October 2020 | virtual event](#)

Human Rights Challenges to European Migration Policy (REMAP)

Presentation on the report in partnership with Stiftung Mercator, the Justus Liebig University Giessen and the Representation of the European Commission in Germany

[28 October 2020 | virtual event](#)

UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing: Defining older people as a group

Expert discussion in partnership with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

[03 November 2020 | virtual event](#)

Consultation with Saarland civil society groups involved in the Monitoring Saarland project

Consultations with disability policy groups

[03 November 2020 | virtual event](#)

SDGs and business

Panel discussion in partnership with the Global Compact Network Germany

[05 November 2020 | virtual event](#)

Panel discussion for staff of Federal and Länder representatives

[11 November 2020 | virtual event](#)

35th Civil Society Consultations of the National CRPD Monitoring Mechanism

Consultations with disability policy groups

[12–13 November 2020 | virtual event](#)

Accessibility in Libraries

Workshop and networking meeting

[13 November 2020 | virtual event](#)

Protection from violence in accommodation for refugees – a children’s rights perspective

Presentation of a report in partnership with UNICEF Germany

[20 November 2020 | virtual event](#)

Human rights education and Covid-19

Human rights education networking meeting for education practitioners, academics and activists

[05 December 2020 | virtual event](#)

Independent Commission on Anti-Gypsyism

Hearing

[09 December 2020 | virtual event](#)

The European Convention on Human Rights at 70. Protecting human rights in Germany and Europe

Online conference in partnership with the Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection

[09 December 2020 | virtual event](#)

Consultation with civil society on political participation in the context of implementing the CRPD in Berlin

Workshop for sharing experiences of participation at Länder and district levels

Publications

Valentin Aichele; Peter Litschke; Judith Striek; Nils Vief: Zukunftspotenzial entfalten. Die Aktionspläne der Länder zur Umsetzung der UN-Behindertenrechtskonvention. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 68 pp. (analysis)

Grażyna Baranowska: Disappeared migrants and refugees. The relevance of the International Convention on Enforced Disappearance in their search and protection. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 44 pp. (analysis)

Cremer, Hendrik: Das Verbot rassistischer Diskriminierung. Vorschlag für eine Änderung von Artikel 3 Absatz 3 Satz 1 Grundgesetz. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 34 pp. (analysis)

Cremer, Hendrik: Politische Bildung in der Bundeswehr. Zum Umgang mit rassistischen und rechtsextremen Positionen von Parteien. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 21 pp. (analysis)

Cremer, Hendrik: Politische Bildung in der Polizei. Zum Umgang mit rassistischen und rechtsextremen Positionen von Parteien. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 21 pp. (analysis)

Das Recht auf friedliche Versammlung – Artikel 21 des UN-Zivilpaktes. Allgemeine Bemerkung Nr. 37 des UN-Menschenrechtsausschusses. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 6 pp. (Information no. 33)

Das Vorgehen Griechenlands und der EU an der türkisch-griechischen Grenze. Eine menschen- und flüchtlingsrechtliche Bewertung der aktuellen Situation. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 4 pp. (factsheet)

Development of the human rights situation in Germany July 2019 – June 2020. Report to the German Federal Parliament in accordance with section 2 (5) of the act on the legal status and mandate of the German Institute for Human Rights. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 15 pp. (executive summary) (English version)

Claudia Engelmann; Claudia Mahler; Petra Follmar-Otto: Von der Notlösung zum Dauerzustand. Recht und Praxis der kommunalen Unterbringung wohnungsloser Menschen in Deutschland. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 61 pp. (analysis)

Development of the human rights situation in Germany July 2019 – June 2020. Report to the German Federal Parliament in accordance with section 2 (5) of the Act on the Legal Status and Mandate of the German Institute for Human Rights. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 142 pp.

Development of the human rights situation in Germany July 2019 – June 2020. Report to the German Federal Parliament in accordance with section 2 (5) of the Act on the Legal Status and Mandate of the German Institute for Human Rights. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 14 pp. (executive summary)

Supplement to the National CRC Monitoring Mechanism parallel report. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 11 pp.

Ergebnisse der Evaluierung des Bremer Landesaktionsplans zur Umsetzung der UN-Behindertenrechtskonvention. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 92 pp. (evaluation report)

Fischer, Lisa: Akutversorgung nach sexualisierter Gewalt. Zur Umsetzung von Artikel 25 der Istanbul-Konvention in Deutschland. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 130 pp.

Gleichberechtigung und Nichtdiskriminierung. Allgemeine Bemerkung Nr. 6 des UN-Ausschusses für die Rechte von Menschen mit Behinderungen. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 8 pp. (Information no. 32)

2019 Annual Report. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 96 pp.

Niendorf, Mareike & Reitz, Sandra: The human right to education in the German school system. What will it take to reduce discrimination. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 34 pp. (analysis)

Rechte älterer Menschen. Recht auf Arbeit - Zugang zum Recht– Definition der Gruppe Älterer. Fachgespräche zur Vorbereitung der 11. Sitzung der UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG-A) 2019/2020. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 30 pp. (documentation)

Rechte älterer Menschen. Sozialer Schutz und lebenslanges Lernen. Fachgespräche zur 10. Sitzung der UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG-A) 2019, 2., revised edition. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 24 pp. (documentation)

Standard human rights. Addressing the topics of flight, forced migration, asylum and racist discrimination in education practice. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 102 pp. (education)

Submission on ending immigration detention of children and seeking adequate reception and care for them to the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 6 pp.

Submission to inform the preparation by the CEDAW Committee of a list of issues prior to reporting by Germany. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 11 pp.

Supplement to the parallel report of the National CRC Monitoring Mechanism. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 11 pp.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 3 pp. (factsheet)

Statements

Bericht zur Lebenssituation von Menschen mit Beeinträchtigungen und zum Stand der Umsetzung der UN-Behindertenrechtskonvention in Nordrhein-Westfalen (Drucksache 17/3538). Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 13 pp.

Children's rights in the era of the corona pandemic. Measures based on children's rights support and protect children and young people at times of crisis. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 14 pp.

Corona crisis: Human rights must guide the political response. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 14 pp.

Corona-Krise: Menschenrechte müssen das politische Handeln leiten. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 14 pp.

Das Recht auf gesundheitliche Versorgung von Menschen mit Behinderungen in der Corona-Pandemie. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 11 pp.

Die Einhaltung menschenrechtlicher Standards durch Unternehmen gesetzlich regeln. Erwartungen an ein Sorgfaltspflichtengesetz. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 11 pp.

Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Änderung des Grundgesetzes (Änderung des Artikels 3 Abs. 3 – Einführung des Merkmals sexuelle Identität). Öffentliche Anhörung des Rechtsausschusses des Bundestags am 12. Februar 2020. Berlin:

Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 9 pp.

Erster Entwurf eines internationalen Vertrags zum Recht auf Entwicklung. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 12 pp.

First draft of an international Convention on the Right to Development. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 12 pp.

Hürden beim Familiennachzug. Das Recht auf Familie für international Schutzberechtigte. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 12 pp.

KfW's human rights obligations in conservation work. The example of La Salonga National Park. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 13 pp.

Kinderrechte in Zeiten der Corona-Pandemie. Kinderrechtsbasierte Maßnahmen stützen und schützen Kinder und Jugendliche in Krisenzeiten. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 13 pp.

Menschenrechte Älterer auch in der Corona-Pandemie wirksam schützen. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 11 pp.

Nach den Morden in Hanau. Menschenrechtliche Verpflichtungen zum Schutz vor und zur effektiven Strafverfolgung von rassistischer und rechtsextremer Gewalt umsetzen. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 13 pp.

Racial-Profiling: Bund und Länder müssen polizeiliche Praxis überprüfen. Das Verbot rassistischer Diskriminierung. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 8 pp.

Referentenentwurf eines Gesetzes zum Schutz von Kindern vor geschlechtsverändernden operativen Eingriffen. Referentenentwurf des Bundesministeriums der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz vom 09.01. 2020. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 6 pp.

Stellungnahme des UN-Ausschusses für die Rechte des Kindes zu COVID-19.

Deutsche Übersetzung der Stellungnahme vom 8. April 2020. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 4 pp.

Stellungnahme zu den geplanten Maßnahmen zur Bekämpfung von Rechtsextremismus und Rassismus. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 5 pp.

Stellungnahme zum Antrag der CDU und der Fraktion der FDP „Die Lehrerfortbildung zeitgemäß und passgenau weiterentwickeln“ (Drucksache 17/7763). Öffentliche Anhörung des Ausschusses für Schule und Bildung des Landtags Nordrhein-Westfalen am 17. Juni 2020. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 5 pp.

Stellungnahme zum Fünften Gesetz zur Änderung der Verfassung des Freistaats Thüringen (Drs. 7/897). Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 13 pp.

Stellungnahme zum Gesetzentwurf der Bundesregierung „Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Stärkung von intensivpflegerischer Versorgung und medizinischer Rehabilitation in der gesetzlichen Krankenversicherung (Intensivpflege- und Rehabilitationsstärkungsgesetz - GKV-IPReG)“ - Bundestags-Drucksache 19/19368 vom 20.05.2020 anlässlich der öffentlichen Anhörung des Ausschusses für Gesundheit des Deutschen Bundestages am 17. Juni 2020. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 5 pp.

Stellungnahme zum Referentenentwurf des Bundesministeriums der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz „Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Reform des Vormundschafts- und Betreuungsrechts“. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 10 pp.

Stellungnahme zur schriftlichen Anhörung von Wissenschaft und Zivilgesellschaft durch den Kabinettsausschuss der Bundesregierung zur Bekämpfung von Rechtsextremismus und Rassismus. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 5 pp.

Wer setzt sich mit an den Verhandlungstisch? Stellungnahme zum zweiten überarbeiteten Entwurf für ein verbindliches Menschenrechtsabkommen der Offenen Zwischenstaatlichen UN-Arbeitsgruppe zu Transnationalen Konzernen und Sonstigen Unternehmen. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 15 pp.

Who will join the negotiating table? Position paper on the second revised draft for a legally binding human rights instrument on activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 12 pp.

In partnership with other institutions

Climate change and human rights. The contributions of National Human Rights Institutions. A handbook. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte; Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), 2020, 57 pp. (human rights in practice)

Die Situation an den EU-Außengrenzen und die zukünftige Europäische Asylpolitik. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte; Greek National Commission for Human Rights; Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia, 2020, 13 pp. (joint position paper)

Ebert, Isabel; Busch, Thorsten; Wettstein, Florian: Business and human rights in the data economy. A mapping and research study. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte; Institute for Business Ethics, 2020, 44 pp. (analysis)

Freitag, Nora: Arbeitsausbeutung beenden. Osteuropäische Arbeitskräfte in der häuslichen Betreuung in Deutschland. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte; Minor - Projektkontor für Bildung und Forschung, 2020, 38 pp. (analysis)

Gewaltschutz in Unterkünften für geflüchtete Menschen. Eine kinderrechtliche Analyse basierend auf einer Befragung der 16 Bundesländer. Cologne: Deutsches Komitee für UNICEF e.V.; Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 47 pp.

Heemann, Lisa & Rudolf, Beate: Der UN-Sicherheitsrat und der Schutz der Menschenrechte. Fortschritte, Lücken und Grenzen. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte; United Nations Association of Germany, 2020, 40 pp. (analysis)

Kompass. Handbuch zur Menschenrechtsbildung für die schulische und außerschulische Bildungsarbeit, Ausgabe 2012/2015, neu übersetzt und vollständig bearbeitet. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte; Federal Agency for Civic Education; Council of Europe; Centre of Human Rights Education of PH Luzern, 2020, 604 pp.

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Promising practice. Achieving more sustainability in the Andean mining sector by strengthening National Human Rights Institutions. Eschborn: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit; Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 4 pp.

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Audio and Video

All audio and video content can be accessed at the Institute's YouTube channel, “Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte”.

Audio series: Das Kindeswohl neu denken

Part 1: Ermittlung und Bestimmung des Kindeswohl nach Vorgaben der UN-Kinderrechtskonvention [Using the Convention on the Rights of the Child to help identify and define children’s wellbeing]

Part 2: Entstehung und Reichweite Allgemeiner Bemerkungen des UN-Ausschusses für die Rechte des Kindes [The origins and scope of General Comments by the Committee on the Rights of the Child]

Part 3: Verwirklichung der UN-Kinderrechtskonvention in der Arbeit mit Kindern und Jugendlichen in Not [Making the Convention on the Rights of the Child a reality when working with children and young people in need]

Part 4: Verwirklichung der UN-Kinderrechtskonvention in der Antidiskriminierungsberatung mit jungen Kindern [Making the Convention on the Rights of the Child a reality when providing anti-discrimination counselling to young children]

Kindeswohl neu denken! Supporting material for the four-part series. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2020, 10 pp.

Videos

“Betroffene stehen vor großen Hürden” [Victims are faced with major obstacles] – Anna Suerhoff talks about the 2020 Human Rights Report

“Der Staat muss sich um die Schwächsten kümmern” [The state must look after those who are weakest] – Beate Rudolf talks about the 2020 Human Rights Report

Reading: “Gegen Morgen” [Towards morning] – reading and discussion with Deniz Utlu and Max Czollek.

Online conference: 70 Jahre Europäische Menschenrechtskonvention [The European Convention on Human Rights at 70] (2 parts)

Online conference: Rechtsstaatlichkeit in Europa sichern. Zur Bedeutung einer unabhängigen Justiz. [Securing the rule of law in Europe: The importance of an independent judicial system]

German: Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3

English: Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3

Polish: Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3

Presentation of the “Human Rights Challenges to European Migration Policy (REMAP)” study (Panel 1)

Presentation of the “Human Rights Challenges to European Migration Policy (REMAP)” study (Panel 2)

Online discussion: Der UN-Sicherheitsrat und der Schutz der Menschenrechte [The UN Security Council and protecting human rights]

“Wir brauchen eine inklusive Berufsausbildung” [We need inclusive vocational education] – Leander Palleit talks about the 2020 Human Rights Report

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We wish to express our thanks to all of the staff members who supported our work over the course of 2020 in full-time or part-time capacities. Full-time and part-time positions corresponding to a total of 43 FTE posts were funded from the institutional allocation; 23 FTE posts were funded with project funds.

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As of 31/12/2020

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- Caritas Behindertenhilfe und Psychiatrie e.V.
- Dr Mehmet Gürcan Daimagüler
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- German Trade Union Confederation - DGB
- German Women Lawyers Association e.V. (djb)
- German Commission Justitia et Pax
- Dreilinden gGmbH
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- European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights e.V. (ECCHR)
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Service

Library

The Institute's specialist Library provides printed and electronic literature on human rights. Its collections of materials on human rights education, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of the Child are unique in Germany. The Library hosts readings, offers training on web research into specialist topics, and campaigns nationally and internationally for greater accessibility in libraries.

Holdings

At the end of 2020, there were over 43,000 records on human rights topics in the Library's online catalogue and German union catalogues. By participating in free and low-cost national and alliance lists, the Library is able to provide access to numerous legal and social science journals in addition to the more than 100 journals it subscribes to itself. The Institute joined Springer's DEAL open-access agreement for Germany in May 2020, which makes it possible to access the contents of all Springer journals since 1997. The Library's holdings also include a collection of around 300 publications in language adapted for people with learning difficulties or with German as an additional language.

Germany in the Human Rights Protection System database

The Library's Deutschland im Menschenrechtsschutzsystem database, which can be accessed via the Institute's new website, holds the texts of key human rights treaties along with documents about international human rights bodies' reporting processes on Germany. The database can be accessed free of charge and additional documents are added on an ongoing basis.

Open access to Institute publications

The library regularly uploads the Institute's own publications to the SSOAR, the open access repository maintained by GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences. The library provides metadata for these uploads. According to SSOAR statistics, Institute publications were downloaded 41,084 times in 2020, around 9,500 more than in the previous year. Since 2020, educational materials produced by the Institute have also been available via the peDOCS service run by DIPF | Leibniz Institute for Research and Information in Education.

Accessibility

A parking space in front of the building is available for visitors with disabilities. There are no thresholds in points of access to the Institute and the lift is wheelchair-accessible. The door on the 7th floor opens automatically. A wheelchair-accessible toilet is located immediately adjacent to the Institute.

The Library offers a working space for people with severe disabilities, including ZoomText enlarging software with integrated screen reading functionality (2019), dazzle-free desk lamps, adjustable 27" monitor, large print keyboard and adjustable height desk. The PC is installed with Windows 10 Pro and Microsoft Office 2016 (Service Pack 1) software.

Workspace users can access the Internet and all the Library's electronic services. We will be happy to provide as much extra support as we can.

Opening hours

10am – 5pm, Monday to Friday

The Library is once again open to users by appointment. Please observe the latest information and rules regarding infection prevention: <https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/bibliothek/nutzung-der-bibliothek>.

We will be happy to help you with your research via email (bib-info@dimr.de) or phone (030 259359-10). We can supply copies of articles and book chapters where these exist in our collections only. This service is available by request and on a limited basis.

Human rights: Educational materials and training services

In addition to academic publications, the Human Rights Education department also publishes materials for educators in all educational contexts, academics and the wider public. These materials cover issues such as the right to education. These teaching and educational materials raise awareness of human rights principles such as inclusion, participation and protecting against discrimination and in so doing, encourage learners to stand up for their rights and the rights of others.

The following materials were published in 2020 and are available to download free of charge:

- KOMPASS – Handbuch zu Menschenrechts-bildung für die schulische und außerschulische Bildungsarbeit
- Broschüre „Was sind Menschenrechte?“ (also available as a class set)

As well as providing brochures, the Human Rights Education department also offers a range of seminars and workshops on selected human rights topics. In addition to this, the Institute has organised the “Nationaler und internationaler Menschenrechtsschutz” [National and International Human Rights Protection] Academy since 2004. The Human Rights Academy is a public educational service for anyone interested in human rights issues as well as individuals and organisations involved in human rights work. The Academy aims to familiarise participants with materials, documents and instruments of human rights protection and to support them as they endeavour to make human rights a reality in their own working contexts. Alongside talks, group tasks and text-based learning, the Academy also makes use of creative and experiential methods of human rights education. It also provides resources for human rights work.

The Academy took place digitally for the first time in 2020. Over the course of a 2-day block event on 21 and 22 September, the group of just under 20 participants were given an introduction to the fundamentals of human rights, focusing on discrimination protection. Following this a series of evening talks were held in October, in which experts from the GIHR talked about the focus of their work and discussed current human rights questions. Specifically, these talks covered the issues of homelessness and the right to housing, climate change and human rights and the significance of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for guardianship law.

Websites and social media

Relaunch: Issues in focus

The Institute currently provides human rights-related content across five different websites, including content in English and in language adapted for those with learning difficulties. In 2019 and 2020 the Institute's main website – www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de – was relaunched. The website was completely redesigned and now offers key content in an easy-to-understand, responsive, accessible and contemporary way, all with a fresh new look.

Users can find their way around the website quickly and easily across four key sections: The Institute, Issues, In Focus and Protecting Human Rights. This makes it easy to find information about the Institute and the 15 human rights topics which currently form the focus of the Institute's work. "In Focus" is regularly updated with current issues. In the Protecting Human Rights section, users can find all Institute reports to the Bundestag on the human rights situation in Germany and reports to European and international human rights bodies. The website also contains three databases on Germany in the human rights protection system, law and human rights, and human rights and disabilities. These facilitate targeted research into human rights documents and issues.

Users looking for literature on a human rights issue can search in the Library's online catalogue under "Bibliothek". All Institute publications can be downloaded from the Shop or ordered in printed form if available. The new website provides information for those working in the field of human rights at Federal, Länder and local levels. It is a resource for experts in the fields of education, academia, business, NGOs, associations, victims' grass-roots organisations, criminal justice, the law and the media, as well as for anyone with an interest in human rights issues.

In dialogue: Twitter

The Institute's Twitter channel is reaching an ever-wider audience. By December 2020 no fewer than 12,000 people, institutions and organisations were following it, up from 10,100 a year before. The Institute's Twitter account shares core messages from all press releases and news items and also promotes the Institute's publications, events and job advertisements. The Institute also creates content specifically for Twitter on a daily basis and undertakes campaigns on particular occasions. The scope and scale of the dialogue on this social media platform is expanding day by day. Followers are asking more and more questions, as well as praising, criticising or discussing the Institute's positions. Twitter has established itself as a lively space where we can inform, interact and discuss ideas with our various target audiences.

Expanding our reach on YouTube

The Institute also has an active presence on the YouTube social media platform. Users can access the Institute's latest video and audio content there, including recordings of our events, films in German sign language, explainers and video series on individual topics. Our animated video explaining the country reporting process for the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, "UN-Kinderrechtskonvention: Das Staatenberichtsverfahren kurz erklärt", was particularly popular in 2020. It has been viewed over 3,000 times since 2019. Thousands of viewers and listeners are accessing the Institute's video and audio content via YouTube.

Websites

- www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de
- Online inclusion handbook: www.inklusion-als-menschenrecht.de
- Overview of children's rights implementation: <https://landkarte-kinderrechte.de>
- e-learning course: "Human Rights in Development Cooperation" (in English): <https://humanrights4dev.org>
- Text in easy-to-read language: www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/leichte-sprache
<https://www.ich-kenne-meine-rechte.de>

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