



HUMAN RIGHTS LAW IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT

An 'implementation crisis' is widely acknowledged to be afflicting regional and international human rights mechanisms posing a grave threat to their integrity and perceived legitimacy. Against this backdrop, regional and international bodies are pursuing efforts to strengthen their mechanisms for ensuring redress for victims of human rights violations and to ensure the swift and effective implementation of their decisions. This situation adds urgency to a debate which is long-established but remains unresolved: what does it mean to comply with international and regional human rights law and what factors influence whether States comply or not?

In order to explore this question in more detail, four leading academic human rights institutions have come together in a unique partnership, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). These are the Human Rights Implementation Centre at Bristol University; the Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex; Middlesex University; and the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria. The Open Society Justice Initiative, part of the Open Society Foundation, will also serve as a partner organisation for the research, which will bring together policy makers, practitioners, and academics.

Aims and objectives

This is an ambitious three-year project that aims to track selected decisions by UN Treaty Monitoring Bodies and the regional human rights bodies against nine countries in Europe (Czech Republic, Georgia and Belgium), Africa (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Zambia) and the Americas (Canada, Colombia, Guatemala) to see the extent to which States have complied with them, and why. In so doing, it will provide some of the broader answers to why States comply, as well as providing insights which can be used by pro-compliance actors. The project commenced in September 2015 and will run until September 2018.

The project will use the selected decisions as a lens through which to identify the role of the various actors, both domestic and international, in compliance. An examination of both regional and international decisions will provide an analysis of the extent to which there may be a difference in the discourse and behaviour of various domestic actors depending on which body issued the decision.

In addition to desk-based research, the project involves a series of semi-structured interviews; participant observation; and stakeholder workshops. These activities are aimed at examining implementation within the selected States both of decisions of UN treaty monitoring bodies and judgments and decisions of regional courts and commissions. The project is looking at case law, policies, practices and mechanisms established to respond to these findings as well as the opinions of key stakeholders.

It is anticipated that the findings of the project will contribute to a better understanding of the factors that influence compliance with decisions from the UN and regional human rights bodies, which can help inform and strengthen the strategies and working practices of these bodies, as well as actors engaging with them such as litigators and complainants, State representatives, and civil society organisations.

For more information about the project please contact us or go to the project webpage:
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/law/hrlip/>

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