



On 28th of February, the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), presented their latest position paper, entitled “European Added Value. The EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) Post-2020: A Tool to Close Human Rights Gaps in Europe?”, examining the role of the EU’s post-2020 budget in safeguarding human rights inside the European Union.

Introducing the first part of the paper, Mrs Van Hout, Regional Representative at the UN Human Rights Regional Office for Europe (OHCHR), stated that the European Union is a Union of values, and as such it is strongly committed to the advancement of human rights. “However, we have noted that in the current financial term, there is no link between this strong commitment on the one hand, and EU funding streams on the other”. She continued by saying that “they appear to be two entirely parallel tracks and the position paper we are launching today is an appeal to connect the two.” Furthermore, Mrs Van Hout underlined the fact that there is insufficient scrutiny of the compliance of funding allocations with human rights. “There is no [mechanism] at regional nor at national level to monitor to what extent the projects and programmes that are funded by the European Union, respect the human rights obligations of EU Member States.”

The second part of the paper formulates concrete recommendations to improve the human rights dimension in the EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework. Mr Cahn, Human Rights Officer and co-author of the paper, elaborated on five thematic areas in which human rights mechanisms in European countries are lacking, as they appear regularly and consistently in human rights reviews across a wide range of EU Member States. In his remarks Mr Cahn pointed out that, firstly, the budget should funnel funding to protect and invigorate Europe's civic space, including among others, the freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of religion or belief and democratic participation rights. "They are particularly important for the functioning of our democratic societies. Especially in times when illiberal forces are sweeping the continent, the EU needs to serve as a check."



The remaining thematic areas treated in the paper, focus on discrimination, and in particular the worsening of segregation, as well as the right to live independently and be included in the community, especially with regard to persons with disabilities, children and older persons. "We see an increase in segregation facing a number of groups, including Roma, migrants, and disabled people." The antidote would be the development of an inclusive society and the celebration of diversity, for which EU funding is needed. The paper also draws attention to combatting forced eviction and ending homelessness, by stipulating that the European Union should prioritise funding to halt homelessness and the strengthening of other measures to advance the right to adequate housing.

Lastly, on the human rights situation of migrants, Mr. Cahn also urged the EU to “move away from the temptation to restrict, separate, and detain migrants and move towards alternative measures. The latter would in particular avoid unlawful arbitrary detention of migrants.”