

HELP in Universities Online Information Event

5 December 2023

Speaking Points for the Opening Remarks by Frédéric DOLT, Head of the Department for the Implementation of Human Rights, Rule of Law and Cooperation Standards, Council of Europe

Welcome the audience and thank them for the great interest in the event (almost **200 participants registered from 37 countries**).

The Council of Europe Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) supports the Council of Europe (CoE) Member States in implementing European standards at the national level. **HELP is the main educational platform of the Council of Europe for legal professionals. Its aim is to train current and future judges, lawyers and prosecutors on human rights standards in Europe.**

Apart from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), HELP covers other instruments like the European Social Charter (ESC) or CoE Conventions in key areas like data protection, violence against women etc. Since 2015, HELP courses also cover the EU perspective, by including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and relevant EU law or CJEU jurisprudence.

HELP's mandate stems from the CoE Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2004)⁴ on the European Convention on Human Rights in **university education and professional training**. It was reinforced with the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation (2019)⁵ on the system of the European Convention on Human Rights in university education and professional training. According to the Recommendation (2019)⁵, member **States are recommended**, among other things, to:

- **ensure university education on the system of the European Convention on Human Rights** in line with the needs and expectations of the different categories of the public,
- enhance the effectiveness of such university education ... by ensuring that each category of the public has **access to the necessary tools** to comply with the obligations stemming from the Convention.

Universities and, in particular, law schools are therefore part of HELP's core mandate. University students (with a focus on law students) are a natural target audience for HELP's online courses.

HELP courses can easily and efficiently **supplement** (rather than replace) the educational materials in the law schools' core curricula. They can also be used by university professors as complement to their academic programmes.

Training is core to human rights protection, especially to those who are at the forefront of preventing, identifying or remedying human rights violations at national level. Training and

educating on these aspects from the earliest of stages is a crucial step for reinforcing respect for human rights by tomorrow's professionals in all stages of their future careers.

Through the **HELP Programme**, the Council of Europe brings its contribution to **securing free, high quality and easily accessible human rights training to future and current professionals across Europe and beyond**.

The courses developed cover a large range of topics that can interest not only law students, but also future professionals in areas like medicine, journalism, business administration, political sciences, even IT. This is because human rights touches upon all areas of life and work and concerns everyone.

Nowadays' reality is the perfect argument against taking democracy, human rights and rule of law for granted. Ensuring respect for these values is an ongoing struggle and anybody can take it up at their level. Involving the young generations in this process, sharing their concerns and feeding their interest for a better world can only be beneficial. There are so many examples of major debates that have been triggered by young people putting their energy to a good cause – to cite just a few - climate (with the case brought before the ECtHR in [Duarte Agostinho and Others v. Portugal and 32 Others \(no. 39371/20\)](#) or data protection (with the cases challenging the data protection framework at EU level which started as a law students' project).

Teaching human rights is one of the most noble of these struggles, as the results will most likely not be of direct benefit to those who have worked the ground, but they will stand as shield when hard times hit and can be the grain of hope to overcome challenges as a society.

Ensuring that future generations will **enter the professional arena already knowledgeable and skilled to protect human rights and prevent, identify and effectively remedy their violation** is a priority for our organization. In this regard, **HELP courses offer a free, high quality and accessible solution** and you will hear more about the means to use them in the sessions to follow, along with other initiatives run within our Department, such as the Open CoE Academic Network.

I wish you a good event and fruitful and inspiring exchanges!