



THE DANISH
INSTITUTE FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS

STRATEGY

2021-2024

PREFACE

UNITED FOR HUMAN BEINGS AND THEIR RIGHTS

Human rights are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. This was the intention and the wording of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. And this is the spirit in which we continue our work at the Danish Institute for Human Rights.

We must hold high the banner of human rights and constantly stress the importance of basing democracy and the rule of law on respect for the fundamental rights of individual human beings. The focus of the Institute is both on civil and political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights.

The Danish Institute for Human Rights is Denmark's national human rights institution and equality body. The goal of our work at the Institute is a world in which human beings' freedom, dignity and rights are respected – even in a time of many new societal challenges.

It is vital that our work is up to date and relevant, and that it reflects the overall trends that impact our society. The handling of the COVID-19 pandemic has put a great deal of pressure on fundamental human rights, and this has illustrated the pivotal importance of human rights in the management of societal crises and conflicts.

Other current human-rights agendas include dealing with problems regarding refugees and migration, combating discrimination on the grounds of gender and race, as well as climate-change challenges.

Another global agenda is associated with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. These are very relevant for our work when they can support and enhance the protection and promotion of human rights.

We have a very good foundation as an institution. The work of the Institute builds on more than 30 years of experience, and we are constantly endeavouring to learn from both successful and less successful experience. We also place high priority on listening to and entering into dialogue with our surroundings. The inspiration we receive from outside the Institute is paramount in our work. In this context, we would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of this strategy, including researchers, civil society organisations, the Institute's Council for Human Rights, and members of staff.

The Danish Institute for Human Rights must be the focal point for work on protecting and promoting human rights in Denmark and in Greenland. This demands a strong and focused organisation that can prioritise efforts and distinguish between what is essential and what is less essential. An organisation with constant focus on human-rights relevance, on setting standards, and on forging change: both alone and with others.

Our strategy for 2021-24 is the starting point for this work.

Dorthe Elise Svinth
Chairperson

Louise Holck
Executive director

PRESENTATION

The Danish Institute for Human Rights is Denmark's national human rights institution; established by the Danish Parliament (Folketinget) in an act that has also been brought into force for Greenland. We are also an equality body with a special mandate to promote gender equality and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities in Denmark. Our task is to promote and protect human rights.

The Institute is an independent institution and covered by legislation applicable within the public administration, including the Danish public administration act, the Danish access to information act and regulations for financial reporting and processing of personal data, etc. by authorities. The Institute is subject to requirements for sound administration, responsibility and transparency which a national human rights institution must meet in order to be a credible institution with impact.

OUR WORK

The Institute works independently to create practical and permanent improvements that make a real difference in people's everyday lives. In Denmark and Greenland, we monitor and report on the human rights situation. In other words, we keep an eye on whether the authorities live up to their human rights obligations. We advise the Danish Parliament, the government, Inatsisartut (the Greenlandic parliament) and Naalakkersuisut (the Greenlandic government), and we report on human rights to international organisations such as the United Nations. In both Denmark and Greenland, we consider ourselves as a watchdog for human rights.

We are also the national equality body in Denmark. This means that we are to promote equal treatment for everyone in the Danish society, so that everyone has equal opportunities, regardless of gender, race, ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation or similar. We have a special mandate in Greenland to work with the Human Rights Council of Greenland to promote and monitor implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Working with the Danish Parliamentary Ombudsman in Denmark and the Ombudsman for Inatsisartut in Greenland, and as part of a specific mandate under the UN Convention against Torture, we also join inspections of places where persons are under detention. This applies to prisons and closed psychiatric wards, for example.

In Denmark and Greenland, we also work to strengthen support for human rights, for example through information, teaching and communication initiatives, and through policy work. Moreover, we provide assistance in human rights work carried out by civil society organisations.

Furthermore, we are one of the only national human rights institutions with a mandate and capacity to work directly and operationally with partners in other countries and in multilateral fora.

Like our national work, our international work focuses on promoting human rights, and this is usually in a development context in which the activities are primarily financed by development assistance.

Through our international work, we help implement human rights by providing advice and developing capacity with and for relevant actors, including states, and by taking human rights into regional and global fora, for example with respect to sustainable development. We do this in close collaboration with many other national human rights organisations, civil society organisations and international organisations.

Monitoring human rights in other countries is not part of the Institute's international mandate.

OUR EXPERTISE

The Institute places high priority on expertise. Our outset in relation to human rights is based on the law, and the Institute must promote and protect internationally recognised human rights and – in the context of Denmark and Greenland – constitutional freedoms. In addition, the Institute works with and across many professional competences and skills. We achieve the best results when different professional competences and skills are brought into play.

Both our national and international work is widely supported by our own and others' research.

THE HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS OF THE INSTITUTE

The Institute always works to safeguard the minimum standards for human rights.

Following a specific assessment, we can also recommend initiatives aimed at better protection than the minimum protection required by law. The basis for this assessment can be non-legally binding sources such as the UN Paris Principles and recommendations from the Council of Europe and UN bodies.

With outset in existing rights and obligations, the Institute seeks a timely and practical approach to achieving the greatest possible influence on developments in the protection of human rights. In Denmark, this is done through consultation responses, analyses and intervention in individual cases before the courts, for example. Outside of Denmark, this is achieved by supporting legislative reforms, establishing independent institutions, and calling for national implementation of recommendations from international human rights bodies.

MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

MISSION

The Danish Institute for Human Rights is to protect and promote human rights and equality.

VISION

A world in which everyone is guaranteed full respect for their human rights and equality.

VALUES

The Institute has four values.

We take these values seriously. This means that they provide direction for our priorities and decisions every single day. The values are interdependent, they reinforce each other, and they are crucial in ensuring our legitimacy and impact.

Independence

It is vital for a national human rights institution to be, and be seen to be, independent. This means that we make our own decisions and we do not allow ourselves to be influenced by party-political or commercial interests, for example.

Collaboration

Continuous and active collaboration with other actors is a precondition for ensuring that our work is relevant and makes a real difference for people. This applies to work with different actors in Denmark and abroad and to collaboration across professional competences and work areas inside the organisation.

Expertise

The core of the Institute's activities is our high level of professionalism and expertise, as is expected by the surrounding world. We live up to this expectation by, among other things, encouraging employees to specialise and by anchoring tasks with the employees with the most extensive knowledge.

Credibility

We safeguard our credibility, as it is pivotal in enabling us to create the change for human rights we have been put on this earth to do. We are open about what we do, how we do it, why we do it, and who we do it with.

FOCUS AREAS

2021-24

During the strategy period, the Institute will prioritise five thematic and five organisational focus areas in which we want to make a special effort.

As a national human rights institution and equality body, we are obligated to constantly monitor and promote respect for human rights and equal treatment in a broader sense in Denmark and in Greenland. For this reason, we have constant focus on the broad realisation of human rights. Furthermore, we have ongoing focus on the Institute's specific mandate areas: gender, ethnicity and disability, as well as on particularly vulnerable groups, such as children, asylum seekers and people in detention. We will make our voice heard when human rights are challenged, and when people are exposed to discrimination.

The human-rights challenges we work on internationally, can only be resolved through our continued work through partnerships and a rights-based approach. We will also maintain an equal-treatment perspective, including gender equality, across our international programmes and activities.

A prerequisite for good results is a well-functioning organisation that forms the framework for a good workplace with a good working environment. This is in constant focus and we will continue to be attentive to this area.

The background for the selected thematic focus areas is our analysis of where, in the light of developments in the human rights area, there is a need for specific initiatives on the part of the Institute. In this context, we have emphasised that there is pressure on rule of law and due legal process both in Denmark and globally; that new technology is creating human rights opportunities and human rights challenges; that there is a strong need to place human rights at the core of sustainable development; that the business community is a significant human-rights actor, and finally that there is a need for strong backing for human rights in Denmark and Greenland.

The background for the selected organisational focus areas is a desire to reach out to the outside world and to engage in new communities and partnerships. This is how we create the greatest change. We also focus on good communication, because it is crucial that our knowledge is widely disseminated and brought into play. In new ways as well.

The Danish Institute for Human Rights is a complex organisation, partly because we receive funds from many different donors with many different requirements for our management and reporting. Strong and precise resource management is therefore crucial for our professional work to succeed. We will also ensure that we systematically and continuously learn from our experience. Finally, we will focus on reducing the climate footprint of the Institute.

The priority focus areas in 2021-24 are:

Thematic focus areas:

- Human rights, democracy and the rule of law
- Human rights and technology
- A human rights focus in sustainable development
- A business community which respects human rights
- Support for human rights in Denmark and Greenland

Organisational focus areas:

- New partnerships and ways of engagement
- Sharp and clear communication with room for debate
- Strong and precise resource management
- A learning organisation
- An organisation with a smaller climate footprint

THEMATIC FOCUS AREAS 2021-24

HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW

In a number of European countries, we are seeing disturbing developments regarding respect for fundamental principles of democracy and the rule of law. This applies in particular in Hungary and Poland, where the independence of the courts has been challenged, civil society is under pressure and the freedom of the press has been undermined.

In other words, in the past few years we have witnessed setbacks in democracy and the rule of law in some EU member states; setbacks we could not have imagined ten years ago.

Outside Europe too, we see clear indications that the world is moving away from democratic governance and the rule of law guarantees. This applies in Africa, for example, where increasing urbanisation is exacerbating the need for local authorities to be better equipped to guarantee citizens their human rights and rule of law.

Fortunately, the situation is not this bad in Denmark. Nonetheless, in recent years we have witnessed some worrying trends in relation to the defence of democracy and the rule of law, and we are seeing declining respect for some state actors governing the rule of law and due process rights. We have also seen recent legislation that challenges general rule of law and the ban on discrimination.

In the upcoming strategy period, the Institute will:

- In monitoring and reporting the human rights situation in Denmark and in Greenland, focus in particular on rule of law challenges.
- In research and analyses, focus in particular on rule of law challenges.

- In work on equal treatment, focus in particular on rule of law issues affecting minorities especially hard, and on legal redress for victims of sexual harassment, discrimination and hate crimes.
- In work with government institutions internationally, focus on developing their capacity to maintain the fundamental principles of rule of law.

TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

For many years, new technologies have created not just new opportunities such as wider public participation, but also new human rights challenges. A digital society specifically challenges the right to privacy and the freedom of expression, and digitalisation also affects other rights, as well as, more fundamentally, individuals' rights to due legal process. Children, women and minorities are often in a worse position than others.

There are many challenges, and the area is characterised as being both technically and legally complex, while at the same time it is developing extremely fast. Social media and automated decision-making are constantly being developed, and with this new human rights issues also emerge.

One of the areas currently under rapid development the world over is increased automation of public administration, where data-driven algorithms supplement (or replace) human case officers. Automated decision-making raises new issues, for example with respect to discrimination, data protection and administrative legal safeguards.

Digitalisation in the rest of the world is also accelerating. However, the majority of developing countries have weak public institutions and lack legislation in the area. Furthermore, national human rights institutions are also poorly equipped. The use of digital solutions without robust institutions and legislation increases the risk that digitalisation will infringe on the basic rights of individuals.

The digital responsibility of businesses and social media has had a prominent place on the agenda in recent years, but this responsibility and the human-rights challenges associated with it are unclear. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human rights do not specifically describe how businesses are to respond to

human-rights challenges with regard to their digital activities. Businesses are therefore calling for the development of guidelines and tools.

In the upcoming strategy period, the Institute will:

- In analysis and research initiatives, place special focus on the human rights and equality challenges associated with the use of technology.
- Further strengthen our focus on human rights and equal treatment challenges associated with the use of technology and social media.
- In our communication, put the human rights challenges with regard to the use of new technology on the public agenda.
- Place particular focus on human rights issues in relation to the use of technology by young people, and their engagement with social media.
- Establish partnerships with a view to ensure that the use of digital solutions does not infringe on human rights.
- Be a key actor in developing analyses and tools to identify and address human rights impacts connected to businesses' digital activities.

A HUMAN-RIGHTS FOCUS IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have set a global agenda for sustainable development. The SDGs create new opportunities for the realisation of human rights. However, the framework for implementing the SDGs is very flexible, and they do not define precise and binding responsibility. For this reason, we risk the SDGs being implemented with no consideration for human rights.

The Institute wants to strengthen accountability in implementing and monitoring the SDGs, so that they contribute to realising human rights for everyone. For us, this means that state institutions ensure integrated and coordinated action plans; that citizens have the capacity to be involved in and monitor the action plans, and that global and national players systematically use data from the human rights system to accelerate implementation of the SDGs.

In the upcoming strategy period, the Institute will:

- In our work on data and indicators, develop new approaches to ensure that human rights monitoring is applied to accelerate sustainable development with focus on the most vulnerable groups.
- Assist partners and countries to base their strategies for sustainable development on human rights.

A BUSINESS COMMUNITY WHICH RESPECTS HUMAN RIGHTS

Leading responsible businesses and investors increasingly regard their purpose as something other, and greater, than merely generating profits for their shareholders. They take an active part in resolving global challenges such as implementing human rights and the SDGs. States are inviting the private sector to take on this joint responsibility, creating the framework conditions for doing business and entering public-private partnerships so that this can be done.

However, the number of businesses willing to assume responsibility for promoting and complying with human rights is still limited, the framework conditions for doing business are still not sufficiently conducive, and there are examples of public-private partnerships that, despite good intentions such as the green transition, have negative human rights impacts. It is therefore clear that human rights abuses are still widespread in global value chains.

Since the Institute initiated work on human rights and business 20 years ago, more actors have joined, and this helps meet individual companies' needs for external human rights advice. We can see that the analyses and tools we have developed and made available provide inspiration and are widely used. We can also see a shift in the area, moving away from voluntary actions and traditional corporate social responsibility efforts towards more regulated framework conditions for doing business. State actors in many countries are considering initiatives and legislation to promote human rights due diligence and responsible investments, and increase access to remedy. Respect for human rights is crucial in this context.

In the future, the Institute will therefore focus on this shift by influencing positions and generating specific changes in the framework conditions for doing

business so that states protect, and businesses respect human rights, and so that individuals are equipped to claim their rights and seek redress. To support this focus, we will continue collaborate with all the relevant actors, but we will not enter into bilateral service contracts with individual companies.

This collaboration will include contributions to the development and systematic implementation of national action plans, as well as other policy and regulatory initiatives on human rights and business. Furthermore, the Institute's contribution will be to develop tools, knowledge and partnerships which specifically and effectively can be used by states and businesses to internalise and integrate human rights throughout global value chains and business models.

We will also focus on encouraging the financial sector to respect human rights, including incorporating human rights due diligence in investment decisions.

Finally, the labour market partners and businesses play a crucial role in relation to the implementation of human rights and equality in Denmark. In the years to come, the Danish Institute for Human Rights will focus in particular on the effective implementation of the EU directive on parental leave, combating sexual harassment on the labour market, as well as the principles of equal pay and equal representation of men and women in management.

In the upcoming strategy period, the Institute will:

- In national and international work, continue to contribute to the development and systematic implementation of national action plans, and other initiatives on human rights and business.
- Focus efforts nationally and internationally towards encouraging the financial sector to support respect for human rights, including incorporating human rights due diligence in investment decisions.
- Help ensure that the green transition does not take place at the expense of human rights, but instead use human rights as a lever to realise the green transition.

SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN DENMARK AND GREENLAND

Human rights constitute the foundation for our democracy and a shield between citizens and those in power. Many of the firm initiatives by the government and the authorities in connection with COVID-19 have illustrated the importance of the individual rights set out in the Danish constitution and international conventions for all citizens.

However, many, in particular young people, have limited knowledge about the historical foundation of these rights, their implications and importance, and at the same time there is a tendency to take them for granted.

The Institute will work to maintain and increase support for human rights in Denmark and Greenland, including by explaining the positive impacts of human rights, even when they are exposed to criticism.

In the upcoming strategy period, the Institute will:

- Develop a basis in our communication for more debate on human rights and their significance for both individuals and for our society as a whole.
- Establish solid cooperation with civil society organisations, youth and cultural actors, and young people themselves in order to engage with a broad cross-section of youth in Denmark to discuss and actualise human rights and gender equality on young people's own terms, and thereby provide young people with competences to act in accordance with human rights in their everyday lives.
- Focus on increasing knowledge about and support for human rights in Greenland, including by working with the Human Rights Council of Greenland on information about human rights and their relevance in Greenland.
- In our work in Greenland, specifically focus on disseminating knowledge and data in connection with monitoring the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

ORGANISATIONAL FOCUS AREAS 2021-24

NEW PARTNERSHIPS AND WAYS OF ENGAGEMENT

A prerequisite for results and impact is collaboration with others. We will expand our collaboration with new actors and partners.

The fact that we are a national human rights institution gives us unique access in many countries. Our sister organisations in other countries monitor, protect and promote human rights, but their capacity and effectiveness vary. Therefore, we will expand our bilateral collaboration with other national human rights institutions.

In the upcoming strategy period, the Institute will:

- Join new alliances and closer collaboration in Denmark with actors in universities, civil society, etc.
- Take the lead in more direct bilateral partnerships with our sister organisations in other countries.
- Seek partnerships with youth organisations.
- In our international work, enhance our presence in other countries.

SHARP AND CLEAR COMMUNICATION WITH ROOM FOR DEBATE

A prerequisite for strong and dynamic human rights is that they are communicated and debated. We want to create a broader basis for this.

The Danish Institute for Human Rights must be the source of the most recent knowledge about human rights in Denmark and the forum for debate on current human rights issues. The Institute must also constitute an objective and very clear voice in the human rights debate, which is based on thorough and predominantly research-based analytical work. We will also reinforce our ability to set the human rights agenda. This applies not least in ensuring constant backing for all human rights.

In the upcoming strategy period, the Institute will:

- Communicate our work in new ways to reach a wider audience.
- Create a new basis and new fora for the human rights debate.

STRONG AND PRECISE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Human rights work brings with it great obligation, not least in utilising the resources allocated to the area in the most responsible manner. In this way we can generate the greatest impact with the resources we have available.

In the upcoming strategy period, the Institute will:

- Ensure that our administration is strong, efficient and costs-conscious.
- Create more flexible administrative structures that contribute to the Institute's competitiveness.

A LEARNING ORGANISATION

The Institute will remain relevant, if we continue as a learning organisation. For us, this means that we acquire knowledge by systematically documenting and learning from our results, that our work is based on research-based analyses, evidence and data, and that we in our international work have extensive knowledge about the countries we work in.

In the upcoming strategy period, the Institute will:

- Further develop our ability to monitor, document and communicate the effects of our work.
- Systematically carry out context analyses in our international work, in which we regularly include our research capacity.

AN ORGANISATION WITH A SMALLER CLIMATE FOOTPRINT

We are all responsible for looking critically at our own behaviour and doing what we can to reduce our climate footprint. Obviously, this also applies to the Danish Institute for Human Rights.

Therefore, as an organisation, we must reduce carbon emissions and choose climate-friendly solutions when we can.

Part of this development will be to draw on the new opportunities of working more virtually.

In the upcoming strategy period, the Institute will:

- Reduce our carbon footprint by 15 per cent per employee in 2022 compared to 2019 figures.
- Climate compensate for the remaining carbon emissions.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

These strategic priorities will form the basis for the specific overall targets for the Institute, which the board adopts every autumn and regularly follows up on. They form the basis for annual targets of the individual departments.

In the international project work, the priorities will also be anchored and reflected in individual thematic programmes.

Prioritisation in choices of countries and establishment of regional offices will also be submitted to the board for approval, and priorities for individual initiatives will be anchored in specific thematic programmes and reflected in these.

The Board will have annual overall deliberations on national as well as international efforts by the Institute in order to assess whether there is a need for changes or adjustments in the strategic directions and initiatives set out and ensure momentum and current relevance in the work of the Institute.

**THE DANISH
INSTITUTE FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS**

