



Consolider-Ingenio

“Human Rights Age” (HURI-AGE)

The twenty first century; the age of human rights?

More than sixty years have passed since the creation of the Universal Declaration of Rights. During this time, dozens of international treaties on human rights have been passed, the great burden of colonialism has been brought to an end and democracy has become the most widely spread political system in the world. As well as this, an incipient international system has been established to guarantee human rights; as evidenced by the International Court of Law, this has been particularly effective in

continental Europe. Systems for co-existence have been developed in societies which are increasingly multicultural, while technical and scientific changes– along with the recognition of social, economic and cultural rights– have helped to improve the quality of life of large sections of society. Further to this, international organizations, States and civil society have taken note of the importance of humanitarian action and have a greater awareness of the ecology.

And yet...

A total of 3,000 million people survive in the most extreme poverty; massive or almost universal human rights violations are still occurring in certain areas; countries such as the United States, China or Japan actively oppose the International Court of Law; existing democracies have a deficit in representation; there are economic powers that are still exempt from any sort of control; in many societies there are dangerous cuts being made to social rights and the positive phenomenon of immigration has generated xenophobic tendencies; there are still serious problems in implementing the rights of children, women or the persons with disabilities; it is necessary to

protect human dignity against improper use of new technologies in the areas of information or biomedicine; humanitarian action is being questioned; the tension between liberty and security is increasingly evident; policies to combat climate change are still inadequate; and there are new social demands– such as the right to water, peace or the environment– that require a response in the form of new human rights.

It is evident that, in the twenty first century, the effective satisfaction of rights at a universal level continues to be a utopia.

What is HURI-AGE?

The “Human Rights Age” (**HURI-AGE**) is the first research project on human rights approved by the Spanish Ministry for Science and Innovation within the context of the Consolider program.

It is an integral and innovative project which aims to broaden the frontiers of knowledge on human rights and to contribute to their universal recognition and guarantee.

What is the Consolider project?

The Consolider–Ingenio Program 2010 is the main means used by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation to finance high quality projects. It is a strategic action lasting five years that is directed at consolidated groups which are leaders in Spanish science and technology.

The program aims to progress in original lines of research that pursue excellence and internationalization.

HURI-AGE has 3.5 million euros in order to carry out its objectives.

What does HURI-AGE propose?

HURI-AGE proposes research that analyzes the role of human rights in contemporary societies, that identifies its principal challenges and that considers solutions that lead to the full recognition and effective implementation of rights in a national and international context.

In other words: the research results are not going to remain within a

purely academic environment. What **HURI-AGE** proposes is to make the leap from theory to practice; scientific reflection means that the “Human Rights Age” project will deal with transforming and improving the reality of human rights.

What HURI-AGE will do:

1. Promote high-level research in the area of human rights.
2. Increase the quality of teaching human rights and promote training programs aimed at both post graduate students and different professional groups involved in the area of rights practice.
3. Foster collaboration between members of the group with work groups or international networks.
4. Monitor the national and European regulations concerning human rights and prepare public policy proposals from a rights perspective.
5. Generate a space for exchange, communication channels and also knowledge transfer between academic spaces and social actors.
6. Encourage and strengthen a rights-based social conscience which creates citizens who are aware of their rights and who insist on achieving them.

Some strategic actions:

1. Development of research projects on the contemporary challenges of rights.
2. Creation of special research units, "Age of Human Rights" Laboratories.
3. Creation and support of postgraduate courses in human rights, in both Spain and Latin America.
4. Design of new training techniques in human rights, with special emphasis on clinical methods.
5. Design of training programs oriented towards specific professional groups (teachers, security forces, indigenous leaders).
6. Scientific seminars and meetings.
7. Development of proposals for the design of public policy.
8. Creation of a human rights website.
9. Development of a monthly information bulletin.
10. Creation of a website dedicated to this project.
(www.tiempodelosderechos.es)
11. Information sessions with social and political agents.
12. Participation in the Commission for Monitoring the Spanish Human Rights Plan.

Who participates in HURI-AGE?

There are 12 research groups which are made up of more than 80 researchers and which are coordinated by Gregorio Peces-Barba. All groups have extensive experience and are well known in the fields of teaching and study of human rights.

- + The Human Rights Institute “Bartolomé de las Casas”, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid.
- + The Human Rights Institute, Universitat de València.
- + The Human Rights Institute “Pedro Arrupe”, Universidad de Deusto.
- + The Laboratory of Legal Sociology, Universidad de Zaragoza.
- + The Human Rights Institute of Catalonia.
- + The Chair of Democracy and Human Rights, Universidad de Alcalá.
- + Research group “Informática, Lógica y Derecho” (Information, Logic and Law), Universidad de Sevilla.
- + Human rights research group, Universidad Jaume I de Castellón.
- + Research group “La comparación en Derecho Constitucional: tendencias contemporáneas” (Comparison in Constitutional Law: contemporary trends), Universidad de Cádiz.
- + Research group “Democracia y derechos” (Democracy and rights), Universidad de Jaén.
- + Research group “Valores, Derechos y Estado en los inicios del siglo XXI” (Values, Rights and State at the beginning of the twenty-first century), Universidad de Vigo.
- + Area of Philosophy of Law, Universidad de Cantabria.

Furthermore...

To assist with the challenges faced by those who actually deal with human rights and to create a plan of action in this area:

HURI-AGE features:

- + **Discussion groups:** these are public institutions, NGOs and other associations involved in the fight for human rights, such as public and private businesses with an interest in this area. Their task is to lend a critical perspective to the program.
- + **Support groups:** these are groups and teachers from foreign universities whose aim is to guarantee the quality of program results and its internationalization.

What are the research lines offered by HURI-AGE?

The new challenges faced by societies in the twenty first century have revealed a need for a serious and rigorous study that enables an understanding of the role of human rights and their influence.

HURI-AGE has got down to work and, with feet firmly on the ground, has brought together **12 different directions in research** that are a response to these great challenges. Among the main areas are the national and European political agenda, as well as the concerns expressed by citizens regarding human rights:

1. Rights in a political, ethical and juridical context.

2. Organization of international justice.

3. Democracy, governance and participation.

4. Implementation and effectiveness of human rights.

5. Multiculturalism.

6. Science and technology.

7. Humanitarian action.

8. Emerging human rights.

9. Social, cultural and economic rights.

10. Environment and development.

11. Vulnerable groups.

12. Freedom and security.

Why is HURI-AGE necessary?

1. **BECAUSE** legal research is a priority in guaranteeing stability and a safe society.

HURI-AGE, with its integral and multidisciplinary approach, means a qualitative leap forward in this type of research.

2. **BECAUSE** the theory and reality of rights do not go hand in hand.

Although at a theoretic level, there appears to be a general social and political climate favourable to human rights, a quick glance at reality is enough to show that there is a long way to go in achieving their effective realization.

Quality research provided by **HURI-AGE**, which is concerned with the reality of rights and which responds to social demands in this area, may help to overcome this situation.

...but we have to make a united effort

Institutions, associations and collectives of people involved in the fight for human rights, as well as public and private businesses which have converted rights into one of the basic aspects of their policy of corporate responsibility, have much to say and to contribute.

This is why “Consolider”, as well as researchers, discussion groups and international support groups will work together to develop research activities so that the twenty first century is, at last, the age of rights. A great challenge: an even greater opportunity.

“Let us imagine, for a moment, that the world really is a “global village”—taking seriously the metaphor that is often invoked to depict global interdependence. Say this village has 1,000 individuals, with all the characteristics of today’s human race distributed in exactly the same proportions. What would it look like? What would we see as its main challenges?

Some 150 of the inhabitants live in an affluent area of the village, about 780 in poorer districts. Another 70 or so live in a neighbourhood that is in transition. The average income per person is \$6,000 a year, and there are more middle income families than in the past. **But just 200 people dispose of 86 per cent of all the wealth, while nearly half of the villagers are eking out an existence on less than \$2 per day.**

Men outnumber women by a small margin, but women make up a majority of those who live in poverty. Adult literacy has been increasing. **Still, some 220 villagers—two thirds of them women—are illiterate.**

Of the 390 inhabitants under 20 years of age, three fourths live in the poorer districts, and many are looking desperately for jobs that do not exist. Fewer than 60 people own a computer and only 24 have access to the Internet. More than half have never made or received a telephone call.

Life expectancy in the affluent district is nearly 78 years, in the poorer areas 64 years—and in the very poorest neighbourhoods a mere 52 years. Each marks

an improvement over previous generations, but why do the poorest lag so far behind? Because in their neighbourhoods there is a far higher incidence of infectious diseases and malnutrition, combined with an acute lack of access to safe water, sanitation, health care, adequate housing, education and work.

There is no predictable way to keep the peace in this village. Some districts are relatively safe while others are wracked by organized violence.

The village has suffered a growing number of weather-related natural disasters in recent years, including unexpected and severe storms, as well as sudden swings from floods to droughts, while the average temperature is perceptibly warmer (...)

Who among us would not wonder how long a village in this state can survive without taking steps to ensure that all its inhabitants can live free from hunger and safe from violence, drinking clean water, breathing clean air, and knowing that their children will have real chances in life?

That is the question we have to face in our real world of 6 billion inhabitants”

Kofi Annan

“We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the 21st century”, New York, 2000.



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