



## Event Report

**Title: Human rights in the context of contemporary international law and transdisciplinarity: A book discussion**

- **Date:** 12 December 2024
- **Type of Event:** Webinar
- **Organizers:** Organized by the Institute of International Relations in Prague
- **Number of participants:** 25
- **Number of speakers:** 1 - Prof. Cristina Elena Popa Tache
- **Link to the Intersect Observatory:** <https://hrjust-intersect-observatory.eu/events/human-rights-in-the-context-of-contemporary-international-law-and-transdisciplinarity-a-book-discussion/> +
- **Institute of International Relations in Prague website:** <https://www.iir.cz/en/human-rights-in-the-context-of-contemporary-international-law-and-transdisciplinarity-a-book-discussion-1>

### Detailed Report from the Webinar:

During the webinar prof. Popa Tache discussed the critical role of transdisciplinarity in contemporary international law and human rights. Professor Popa Tache, an esteemed expert in international law and transdisciplinary studies, presented her recent publications exploring how human rights intersect with emerging social, technological, and cultural frameworks through transdisciplinary methodologies. She emphasized the distinctions between multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinarity, highlighting the latter's unique approach to transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries to create unified knowledge frameworks better suited to complex global challenges.



The discussion traced the evolution of human rights scholarship and international law through a transdisciplinary lens, responding to contemporary issues such as climate change, technological innovation, and global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Transdisciplinarity integrates insights from law, political science, sociology, philosophy, technology, and economics, offering novel methods for addressing multifaceted problems beyond rigid disciplinary confines.

Professor argued that international law is undergoing profound transformation, moving away from conservative frameworks towards more flexible, dynamic systems capable of balancing state sovereignty with global solidarity. She also outlined the educational implications, proposing that transdisciplinary attitudes and knowledge be incorporated at all levels of university education to equip future legal professionals and scholars with the skills to navigate and influence this evolving landscape effectively.

The webinar concluded with a Q&A session, addressing how transdisciplinarity enhances human rights protection by enabling better understanding and more innovative solutions, and clarifying common misconceptions regarding its difference from multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approaches. The event stressed the importance of transdisciplinary education to foster mental openness, tolerance, and comprehensive understanding essential for peace, sustainable development, and human rights advancement in the 21st century.

Professor emphasizes that international law is currently experiencing a "metamorphosis," moving away from rigid, conservative paradigms towards more adaptive legal frameworks. This evolution is propelled by global complexities—technological advances, geopolitical shifts, climate emergencies—which demand legal systems capable of balancing traditional sovereignty with the need for cooperative, solidaristic approaches at the global level. The study and protection of human rights have increasingly required insights from diverse domains—law, sociology, political science, anthropology, economics, and technology—reflecting the multifaceted nature of rights in practice. For example, analyzing new challenges like facial recognition technology necessitates combining legal, ethical, technological, economic, and psychological perspectives to effectively safeguard fundamental freedoms.

Sustaining human rights over time requires addressing multidimensional threats including climate change, environmental degradation, conflict, and economic instability. Transdisciplinarity enables the creation of integrated policies that consider these interconnected factors, advocating for holistic measures involving governments, civil society, and private actors working collaboratively to maintain human rights protections long-term.

The integration of transdisciplinary education in universities is crucial for future legal scholars and practitioners. It encourages flexibility, openness, and mental adaptability, essential to navigate and influence a complex global legal environment.

## Summary of Major Takeaways:

**Transdisciplinarity as a Key Approach:** Unlike multi- or interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries, integrating insights from law, political science, sociology,





philosophy, economics, technology, and anthropology to address complex, interconnected global challenges.

**Evolving International Law and Human Rights:** International law is undergoing a “metamorphosis,” shifting from rigid, conservative frameworks to more flexible systems capable of balancing state sovereignty with global solidarity. This evolution is driven by technological advances, geopolitical shifts, climate crises, and other multifaceted threats.

**Holistic Solutions for Complex Problems:** Protecting human rights in contemporary contexts—such as climate change, pandemics, or emerging technologies—requires integrated approaches that combine legal, ethical, social, and technological perspectives. Transdisciplinarity supports collaborative policymaking involving governments, civil society, and private actors to sustain long-term protection.

**Educational Implications:** Embedding transdisciplinary approaches in university education equips future legal scholars and practitioners with flexibility, openness, and adaptability, enabling them to navigate and influence complex global legal environments effectively.

**Broader Societal Impact:** Beyond academia and law, transdisciplinary thinking fosters mental openness, tolerance, and comprehensive understanding, which are crucial for peace, sustainable development, and the advancement of human rights in the 21st century.

## Grant Agreement Questions

### 1) How do States defend and legitimise its actions through human rights?

#### Compare the general and the particular.

Generally, states defend and legitimise their actions through human rights discourse by presenting themselves as guarantors of universal values such as dignity, equality, and freedom. Drawing on the transdisciplinary perspective highlighted by Professor Popa Tache, this universalising approach now operates in an international legal environment that is itself undergoing a “metamorphosis”: law, sociology, technology, and economics increasingly interact to confront complex crises such as climate change and AI. States therefore frame policies—whether in climate action, migration control, or technological regulation—as aligned with these evolving, multifaceted human-rights obligations, signalling that they can meet both traditional legal standards and new, transdisciplinary expectations of global solidarity. In particular contexts, states selectively mobilise rights to justify specific policies—invoking, for example, the right to security to defend surveillance or the right to health to legitimise restrictive environmental measures.

### 2) What role does geopolitics play in strategy, resources and reach.

Geopolitics shapes how states deploy human-rights rhetoric, but the webinar underscores that these strategies increasingly unfold in a legal order transformed by transdisciplinary pressures. States use human rights as soft power to project influence, yet they do so in a world where technological innovation, climate emergencies, and economic instability require solutions that transcend traditional disciplinary and jurisdictional boundaries. Access to technological and institutional resources enables some states





to claim leadership in “transdisciplinary” human-rights responses—whether regulating facial-recognition technology or coordinating climate policy—illustrating how geopolitical competition now intersects with the need for cooperative, cross-sectoral approaches. In this sense, geopolitical reach is no longer defined only by territory or material power but also by the capacity to integrate law, science, and policy in a genuinely transdisciplinary way.

### **3) What role has EU in comparison between internal to EU and external to EU?**

Internally, the EU presents human rights as foundational to its legal and political order. The transdisciplinary framework described in the webinar helps explain why: complex challenges—migration, pandemics, climate change—require legal mechanisms that integrate insights from sociology, technology, economics, and environmental science. The EU’s internal discourse of solidarity and harmonisation reflects the “metamorphosis” of international law that Professor Popa Tache identifies, balancing member-state sovereignty with a collective, adaptive legal culture. Externally, the EU seeks to act as a global normative power, using human rights in trade, development, and diplomacy. Here too the webinar’s argument is relevant: to remain credible, the EU must project not only legal standards but also the transdisciplinary capacity to address global problems—linking legal norms with technological governance, climate science, and economic policy. The comparison shows that while internally human rights legitimise integration, externally they operate as instruments of geopolitical strategy shaped by the very transdisciplinary evolution the webinar describes.

