

International Conference *Intersectionality, Human Rights Justification and Civil Society Engagement*

23 May 2025, 09:00-13:30

University of Valencia

"Salón de Grados", Department of International Law, Valencia Faculty of Law

Co-Organized by the University of Valencia, the World Trade Institute of the University of Bern,
and the Institute of International Relations Prague¹

Background

This international conference falls under the objectives of the Horizon Europe project HRJust (*States' Practice of Human Rights Justification: a study in civil society engagement and human rights through the lens of gender and intersectionality*), which aims to address significant gaps in human rights regulations and to develop a theory of human rights justifications. HRJust aims to develop a theory of HRJ and a process for Systematic Ongoing Civil Society Engagement as a tool for gender and intersectional inclusive civil society engagement. Key resources developed within this framework include the Intersect Observatory, the first digital platform focused on monitoring human rights justifications through gender and intersectionality lenses across climate, COVID, and migration fields, and the HRJust Climate Claims Open-Access Case Law Database, the first digital platform that systematically compiles and analyzes state practices and human rights justifications in climate litigation. These platforms serve as foundational tools for informed dialogue and engagement.

An increasing number of climate cases have been brought in the last years before national courts requesting to find national governments accountable for climate inaction. Climate litigation has also reached European Courts, and on 9 April 2024, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) decided its first three climate cases that sought to compel governments to limit greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement. The research teams of the World Trade Institute of the University of Bern and of the Institute of International Relations Prague involved in the HRJust project have been engaged in an in-depth analysis of climate cases at the national, European and international levels. In particular, the case review has explored how states use human rights justifications before domestic courts within the context of climate litigation, and how state accountability is ensured in these instances. This legal analysis has been supported by extensive fieldwork - including interviews and survey design - conducted through the newly developed methodology of the Systematic Ongoing Direct Civil Society Engagement (ODCSE). This bottom-up model has been designed to enhance transnational democratic participation and identify gaps in the protection of individual human rights through informed civil society involvement. Reflecting this

¹ In the framework and with the support of the Horizon Europe project HRJust (*States' Practice of Human Rights Justification: a study in civil society engagement and human rights through the lens of gender and intersectionality*), GA no. 101094346 and SERI (Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation - SERI) Grant Agreement No. 23.00131). Views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

approach, the HRJust Climate Claims Open-Access Case Law Database (<https://www.hrjust-climate-claims.eu>) not only tracks how states justify their actions in climate litigation but also captures the role and contributions of civil society actors in the relevant legal proceedings, making it a key resource for analyzing participatory democratic dynamics in climate governance.

The research findings have been further examined through interdisciplinary lenses - including sociology, law, and anthropology - with a strong emphasis on gender, intersectionality, and inclusive democratic governance. These insights have been made accessible through the Intersect Observatory, the first digital platform dedicated to tracking human rights justifications across the fields of climate, COVID-19, and migration, viewed through gender and intersectional perspectives. The Observatory's content addresses the following key questions at the heart of the HRJust project: how do states justify and legitimize their actions through human rights narratives? Are there identifiable patterns or distinctions at the international, regional, or national levels? What role does geopolitics play in shaping these strategies, and how are resources and influence deployed? Finally, how does the European Union position itself - as both actor and advocate - in the global human rights landscape, particularly in light of its internal and external policies?

The Conference also falls under the activities of the Know the GAP! Team in place at the WTI and actively involved in promoting gender awareness at the WTI since 2019.

International Conference Participants

This International Conference will bring together representatives from academia, policy officers, international organisations and civil society with a focus on intersectionality and human rights.

Expected Outcomes

This International Conference will lead to a better understanding of the role of civil society, as well as on a reflection on the use of human rights justifications by states in climate proceedings and the relevance of a gender and intersectionality approach when dealing with climate litigation.

Sharing with the participants the preliminary research results and tools developed by the UNIBE and IIR teams within the framework of the HRJust projects, the discussion will help to identify (new) roles for civil society (including policy makers, NGOs and public), strategies and methodologies that would enable direct democratic participation when talking about climate change when States use human rights justifications and ultimately shape and support the EU's role as a promoter and/or defender of human rights.

PROGRAMME

I SESSION

REFLECTING ON HUMAN RIGHTS JUSTIFICATIONS AND CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH A GENDER AND INTERSECTIONALITY LENS

- 09:00 – 09:15 Welcoming Remarks - **Prof. Rosario Espinosa Calabuig** (University of Valencia)
- 09:15 – 09:30 **Prof. Elisa Fornalé** (World Trade Institute of the University of Bern) - Presentation of the HRJust Project - An Innovative Study on Human Rights Justification through a Gender and Intersectionality Lens: the Case of Climate Change
- 09:30 – 09:45 **Prof. Elisa Fornalé** (World Trade Institute of the University of Bern) and **Dr Federica Cristani** (Institute of International Relations Prague) – Developing Digital Tools on Intersectionality, Gender and Climate Change with a Human Rights Justification Focus: Presentation of the Climate Claims Database and the Intersect Observatory
- 09:45- 11:00 **Prof. Rosario Espinosa Calabuig** (University of Valencia) - Gender Stereotypes, Intersectionality and Violence Against Women: The Role of the Digital Judicial Cooperation
- Prof. Alberto Alonso Rimo** (University of Valencia) - Restorative Justice and Gender-Based Violence
- Prof. Victoria Dzura** (University of Valencia/ICAV Valencia) - Gender Stereotypes in Criminal Proceedings for Gender Violence
- Prof. Elena Martínez García** (University of Valencia) - Climate Change under Gender Perspective
- 11:00 – 11:15 COFFEE BREAK
- Know the GAP! Team** (World Trade Institute of the University of Bern) - Presentations of the HRJust Intersect Observatory's Website and the HRJust Climate Visual Tool

II SESSION

CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT, GENDER, AND INTERSECTIONALITY IN CONTEMPORARY HUMAN RIGHTS CHALLENGES

- 11:15 – 11:30 **Dr Federica Cristani** (Institute of International Relations Prague) - Introducing the Systematic Ongoing Civil Society Engagement Methodology: Relevance for Intersectionality and Gender Studies and its Empirical Application in Climate Litigation
- 11:30 – 13:00 **Prof. Fernando Fita Ortega** (University of Valencia) - Human Rights in the Labour Context under Climate and Gender Perspectives
- Prof. Patricia Orejudo Prieto de los Mozos** (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) - Gender and Trade in EU policies
- Prof. Angeles Jareño** (University of Valencia) - Gender and Sexual Deep Fakes
- Prof. Margarita Tarabini-Castellani Aznar** (Ombudsman- Spain/Defensor del Pueblo-España, Madrid) - Protection of Migrant Women
- Prof. Carmen Azcárraga** (University of Valencia) - From Ukraine to Spain: Female Migration beyond Temporary Protection
- 13:00 – 13:20 DISCUSSION
- 13:20 – 13:30 Concluding Remarks and Next Steps - **Prof. Elisa Fornalé** (World Trade Institute of the University of Bern)