

## Case study

# Strengthening the EU's capacity for human rights protection

The Human Rights Council, created in 2006 to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe, is undergoing its five-year review in 2011. LSE Enterprise, working with Dr Karen Smith of LSE's International Relations Department, successfully tendered to undertake a study analysing the European Union's role in the Human Rights Council, for the European Parliament's Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union.

Dr Smith is the Director of the European Foreign Policy Unit at LSE, which acts as a focus for research and teaching on issues relating to the steadily more serious attempts to create a collective European foreign policy since 1970. She is particularly interested in the EU's role in international affairs, especially the extent to which the EU incorporates considerations of human rights into its foreign relations.

'I've been studying the European Union's role in the United Nations for several years,' Dr Smith says, 'and I have wanted to explore whether the EU is able to act as a bloc within the UN, to pursue successfully its interests there, and to make the UN more effective. The UN's human rights bodies are a natural focus for human rights diplomacy and this project enabled me to find out how influential the EU is within those bodies. Working with LSE Enterprise has been very smooth - it's nice to have all the little details of tenders and contracts taken care of so professionally.'



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She found that while the EU has been active in presenting proposals to the review, its influence in the Human Rights Council has been mixed. The Council's agenda and outcomes have been dominated by other blocs, and the EU has not been actively pushing the Council to consider situations in which human rights are being violated.

Dr Smith considers that increasing its influence at the Human Rights Council should be a prominent EU objective. The EU could insist that the Council consider worrying country situations, and could be more active in addressing human rights violations around the world. The study concludes by offering the EU recommendations for doing this, ranging from playing a more prominent role in meetings to improving its outreach role.

'I would hope that my study prompts more discussion and debate among the various EU actors about how to strengthen the EU's role at the Human Rights Council, and about how the EU could enable the Human Rights Council to promote and protect human rights around the world more effectively,' says Dr Smith.

## Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

...every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance...

