

Results and Potential for Future Research

Working Package 3

Deliverable 3.3

WP3 pursued the objective of comparing the realisation and activation of citizens' rights in the EU's neighbourhood, using Northern Ireland and Ukraine as examples. The influence of the EU on neighbouring countries was scrutinized through two distinct case studies: movement rights and equality rights. Both seminars have highlighted normative disparities and differences in the degree of acceptance of EU norms which stem from the specific relationships of the neighbouring countries with the EU, as well as their political and legal context.

The relationship between the EU and Ukraine has been largely based on the 2017 association agreement which holds the potential to implement fundamental rights in the region (Petrov, 2018). The agreement includes a chapter on worker mobility and affirms the equal treatment of workers in the EU and EU citizens in Ukraine. In addition, Ukraine has enacted a number of legal instruments related to equality law, mirroring concepts of EU anti-discrimination law, as a result of various obligations in the association agreement and obligations from international conventions. Despite these efforts, some challenges remain, particularly in relation to enforcement and the implementation of certain norms has been hindered by Russia's invasion (Yasenovska, 2024).

The relationship between the EU and the United Kingdom (UK), now formalised in a set of instruments negotiated after the latter's withdrawal, has primarily centred on trade rather than people, leading to practical challenges on the island of Ireland. This is particularly evident in the context of movement rights, as the Trade and Cooperation Agreement and the Withdrawal Agreement offer limited protection of these rights, focusing instead on protecting the movement rights of those who actively used them prior to Brexit (Schiek, 2024). Regarding equality law, Article 2 of the Northern Ireland Protocol of the Withdrawal Agreement sets forth 'keep pace' and 'stack up' obligations (related to the safeguards of the Good Friday Agreement) but these only apply to Northern Ireland, thereby creating a disparity in the application of equality law in the UK. The absence of established case law and the general mistrust of the UK government does not bode well for the resolution of these challenges (Craig, et al., 2023; O'Connell, 2022; Schiek & Fanning, 2022).

Furthermore, the UK departure from the EU has also contributed to and coincided with some alteration of the electoral landscape in Northern Ireland which is increasingly moving away from a focus on nationalist versus unionist, offering both opportunities and challenges for the future of the region (Murphy, 2023).

In conclusion, the two academic seminars have highlighted the potential for EU standards to reach the neighbouring region. However, we can note tensions between the people dimension and the economic dimension of the EU integration project in its neighbourhood. Both the freedom of movement beyond economic services and equality law are crucial for fostering effective socio-economic collaboration.

The two academic seminars have facilitated the emergence of crucial questions and highlighted a wide potential for future research revolving around the EU's role in safeguarding people's rights in its neighbourhood. The seminars have brought to light not only conflicting regimes but also conflicting practices which an interdisciplinary collaboration, for example between political scientists and legal scholars, could provide some insights.

Two papers have emerged from the academic seminars. Dagmar Schiek's paper discusses the extent to which the EU and the UK have focused on economic collaboration in the Brexit process, but have neglected natural persons, and thus failed to adequately protect their free movement rights. She uses the situation of Ireland to highlight the problems incurred by such a process. (Schiek, 2024), open access [here](#). Furthermore, Marya Yasenovska, human rights officer at the European Disability Forum has published a working paper within the JMCE framework entitled "*anti-discrimination in Ukraine – Rapprochement with Europe*" on the JMCE EUIR website. She highlights the influence of EU and international norms in Ukraine's equality law as well as persisting challenges relating to implementation and the current socio-political landscape. Mariya Yasenovska's paper is accessible [here](#).

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