

<Annual Human
Rights Campaign>

elsa

The European Law Students' Association

ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN 2024/2025

SUPPORTING MATERIALS
(January - April)

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

FOREWORD

Dear Network,

As ELSA day and the whole of year 2024 is behind us, and as we move into the next phase of the Annual Human Rights Campaign, spanning January through April of the new year, we deepen our collective commitment to addressing pivotal human rights challenges. This second set of Supporting Materials has been thoughtfully prepared to inspire and guide all Officers in our mission. Together, we continue to drive meaningful global change, united by our dedication to justice and human dignity.

This installment highlights several critical focus areas, including the right to education, zero tolerance for female genital mutilation, women's rights, and the protection of intellectual property. These topics are to reflect our collective commitment to fostering equity, safety, and innovation worldwide.

The materials provided are designed to be both practical and adaptable, offering a strong foundation for your Campaign activities. However, they are not intended to constrain your creativity or passion. We encourage you to use these resources as inspiration, tailoring your efforts to the unique needs of your Groups, projects, and communities. Our diversity remains our greatest strength, and your innovative approaches will only amplify our shared impact. Let these materials serve as a springboard for action, empowering us to champion human rights for all.

The fight is ours, the moment is now, and together, we will continue to create meaningful change.

We wish you an insightful and impactful journey as you continue to #ActToImpact.

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I. January: International Day of Education

International Day of Education, 24th of January

1. A short Introduction

The United Nations General Assembly, by resolution adopted in late 2018, designated January 24 as International Education Day, recognizing the essential role of quality and accessible education in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This designation reaffirms education as a universal human right and a critical enabler for the achievement of all SDGs.

The resolution states that: *“Education plays a key role in building sustainable and resilient societies and contributes to achieving all other Sustainable Development Goals; it increases individual productivity and strengthens the potential for economic growth; it develops the skills needed for decent work; it develops professional skills needed for sustainable development, including in the areas of water management and sanitation, green energy and natural resource conservation; it helps eradicate poverty and hunger; it contributes to improving health, improving gender equality and can contribute to reducing inequality, promoting peace, the rule of law and respect for human rights”*.

Accordingly, the resolution highlights the importance of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels – pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education, including vocational education, so that all people can actively contribute to sustainable development.¹

This global observance spotlights the challenges faced in ensuring access to quality education, such as inequality, poverty, and conflict, while celebrating advancements and innovations in the field. It serves as a reminder that education is essential not only for individual empowerment but also for whole society.

Education is deeply connected to criminal justice in multiple ways, with connections spanning the individual, systemic, and societal levels. Education serves as a powerful tool for personal development and social mobility, often acting as a preventative measure against criminal behavior. By exploring this topic, we can uncover strategies for addressing social inequalities and fostering long-term social change.

2. The Law

2.1. International Conventions

Education is recognized as a fundamental human right, essential for personal development, empowerment, and social reintegration. This principle extends to individuals in detention, for whom access to education serves as a critical component of rehabilitation and a pathway toward reintegration into society. Over the years, numerous international conventions and agreements have emphasized the importance of safeguarding prisoners right to education, viewing it not only

¹ [UN | Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 3 December 2018](#)

as a matter of human dignity but also as a practical tool for reducing recidivism and fostering societal harmony.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates in Article 26 that *“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.”* Article 26 guarantees the right to education for everyone, including prisoners. Although it does not specifically mention prisoners, this right applies to all individuals without discrimination.²

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights further elaborates on the civil and political rights and freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 10, paragraph 3, states that *“the essential aim of the treatment of prisoners shall be their reformation and social rehabilitation.”*³ Education is recognized as a key tool in this process.

The Nelson Mandela Rules, formally known as **The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners**, are a set of guidelines that outline the minimum standards for humane treatment of prisoners. Adopted in 2015, they emphasize dignity, rehabilitation, and the importance of access to education, healthcare, and social reintegration programs. Rule 104 emphasizes the importance of education for prisoners *“Provision shall be made for the further education of all prisoners capable of profiting thereby, including religious instruction in the countries where this is possible. The education of illiterate prisoners and of young prisoners shall be compulsory and special attention shall be paid to it by the prison administration. So far as practicable, the education of prisoners shall be integrated with the educational system of the country so that after their release they may continue their education without difficulty.”*⁴

Finally, **The European Prison Rules** are a set of guidelines adopted by the Council of Europe that set standards on the management of prisons and the treatment of people in prison. Rules 28 and 106 state *“People should have access to comprehensive educational programmes, with particular attention paid to young people, those with special needs and those who lack basic education. Educational programmes for those who have been sentenced must be tailored to their projected length of stay in prison.”*⁵

In many countries, national laws are based on these international documents and enable the implementation of educational programs in prisons.

2.2. National Laws

In this subsection, we elaborate on the provisions of the right to education in Norway. Prisoners have the same rights to education and training as other Norwegian citizens because this provides a better basis for returning to society without committing new crimes. The county authorities are

² [UN | Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

³ [UN | The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

⁴ [The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners](#)

⁵ [Council of Europe | The European Prison Rules](#)

academically and administratively responsible for providing education in prisons. Practical responsibility for teaching lies with the local upper secondary schools.

The Education Act gives young people and adults, according to detailed rules, the right and duty to primary education, the right to secondary education and the right to re-education in primary education and special education. For this reason, there is close cooperation between the education sector and the correctional service.⁶

Training can take place, among other things, through regular classroom teaching where teachers come to the prison, or in a work operation in the prison which in some prisons may offer the possibility of obtaining professional certificates.

Prisons do not have their own staff providing medical, educational or library services. They are imported from the community. The advantages are: better continuity in service provision – the offender will have already established contact during his/her stay in prison and community involvement in the protection system – more and better cross.⁷

3. Current Trends and Challenges

3.1. Education as a Path to Successful Reintegration into Society

In most democratic countries, the death penalty has been abolished.⁸ Most prisoners will eventually serve their sentences and be released, which is why rehabilitation and reintegration are crucial. Given that most prisoners will re-enter society at some point, it is important that they receive an education while in prison. Through education, prisoners acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for successful reintegration, reducing the risk of recidivism and increasing their chances of making a positive contribution to society.

3.2. Stigma and Motivation in Prison Education

Stigma and motivation are two interconnected challenges that affect prisoners' participation in educational programs. Both can significantly hinder the success of prison education systems, reducing their effectiveness in rehabilitating inmates and preparing them for reintegration into society.

3.3. Limited Resources

One of the most significant challenges faced by prison education systems globally is the issue of limited resources. Many prisons operate with limited budgets, where education often takes a backseat to other operational priorities like security and healthcare. Also, many prisons struggle with overcrowding, leaving little space to establish dedicated learning areas. As a result of limited

⁶ [The Education Act](#)

⁷ [The Norwegian Correctional Service](#)

⁸ [Council of Europe | European Convention on Human Rights](#)

resources, many prison systems cannot employ enough teachers and depend on external collaborators.

3.4. Language Barriers

Many prisons house inmates from a variety of ethnic and national backgrounds, some of whom may not speak the dominant language of the country where they are incarcerated. This is especially true in countries with high immigration rates or regions with refugee populations. Non-native speakers often face difficulties understanding instructions, completing assignments, or fully participating in activities, which can hinder their educational progress.⁹

4. Potential Topics for Events and Advocacy

- Education as a Preventive Tool against Crime
- Education and Reintegration after Imprisonment
- Educational Programs in Correctional Institutions
- Social Inequalities and their Impact on Crime
- Juvenile Justice and Education

5. Further Reading

- [UNESCO | Right to education handbook](#)
- [UNESCO | Education in prison: a literature review](#)

⁹ [UNESCO | Education in prison: a literature review](#)

II. February: Female Genital Mutilation and Criminal Justice

International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation, 6th of February

1. A short Introduction

The International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is observed annually on February 6. It was established by the United Nations to raise awareness and promote actions to eliminate FGM, a harmful practice with serious health, psychological, and social consequences.

Female genital mutilation involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It is recognized internationally as a violation of human rights, health rights, and child rights.

FGM is driven by deeply rooted cultural, social, and sometimes religious reasons. FGM has no health benefits, and it often leads to significant physical and psychological harm. Immediate complications of FGM can include: severe pain, excessive bleeding, fever, infections, shock or death and also long-term complications.

The victims of Female Genital Mutilation are primarily women and girls, with the practice most commonly performed on individuals between infancy and adolescence. It predominantly affects those in regions where FGM is considered a cultural or traditional norm, including parts of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, as well as within migrant communities globally. Additionally, due to migration, FGM occurs within diaspora communities in countries across Europe.

More than 230 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation in countries where FGM is practiced.¹⁰

The practice of FGM is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights. Efforts to eradicate FGM focus on education, legal frameworks, and empowering communities to abandon the practice in favor of healthier and more equitable traditions.

2. The Law

2.1. International Conventions

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. The Convention takes an important place in bringing women into the focus of human rights concerns. In Article 5, Convention calls for the elimination of cultural and traditional practices that perpetuate the stereotyping and subordination of women and in Article 12 obligates states to ensure access to healthcare,

¹⁰ [WHO | Female Genital Mutilation](#)

including protecting women from harmful practices that threaten their physical and mental well-being.¹¹

Convention on the Rights of the Child is a foundational instrument for protecting the rights of children and is almost universally ratified. It identifies FGM as a form of violence and abuse against children, particularly girls. Article 19 mandates protection of children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, or abuse. Article 24(3) calls on states to eliminate traditional practices harmful to children's health. By framing FGM as a violation of children's rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has prompted global and regional initiatives to protect girls from this practice.¹²

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993, contains several articles that relate indirectly to Female Genital Mutilation as a form of violence against women. This declaration marked a turning point in international recognition of gender-based violence, explicitly identifying FGM as a form of violence against women and a violation of their human rights. Declaration calls for comprehensive measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women, including harmful traditional practices.¹³

Resolution on Femal Genital Mutilation in 2012 was the first by the UN General Assembly to specifically target FGM as a global issue, urging member states to take decisive action. Calls for education and awareness campaigns to shift cultural norms. Encourages the implementation of comprehensive laws banning FGM and providing support for survivors.¹⁴ After the 2012 resolution, the United Nations General Assembly adopted additional resolutions aimed at eliminating female genital mutilation. These resolutions emphasize the need for continued global efforts to combat FGM. The last Resolution was adopted in 2022 and focused on the issue of cross-border female genital mutilation and transnational protection.¹⁵

2.2. National Laws

Under Croatian national legislation, an increasing emphasis is placed on the humane treatment of offenders by mitigating sentences for various criminal offenses. However, this principle does not extend to the offense of female genital mutilation (FGM), which is met with a policy of zero tolerance. In this regard, Croatia has enacted stringent penalties under its Criminal Code to combat FGM effectively. Pursuant to Article 116 of the Criminal Code, any individual who wholly or partially removes or permanently alters the external genitalia of a female shall be subject to imprisonment for a term ranging from one to eight years. Furthermore, the provision extends criminal liability to instigators and accomplices in the commission of FGM. The offense is deemed aggravated if it is motivated by hatred, perpetrated against a minor, or involves a person in a close relationship with the victim. In such cases, the prescribed penalty is

¹¹ [UN | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#)

¹² [UN | Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

¹³ [UN | Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women](#)

¹⁴ [UN | Resolution on Female Genital Mutilation in 2012](#)

¹⁵ [UN | Resolution on Female Genital Mutilation in 2022](#)

imprisonment for a term of three to ten years.¹⁶ A comprehensive and strict penal framework contributes to the complete eradication of FGM.

3. Current Trends and Challenges

3.1. Increased Funding and Resources

Increased funding for the fight against Female Genital Mutilation has been a positive trend, but challenges remain. Despite growing financial support, funds are often insufficient and concentrated in a few high-profile regions, leaving other areas underfunded. Many programs rely on short-term donations, limiting long-term impact. To effectively combat FGM, more equitable funding, long-term investment, and sustainable models are essential to ensure lasting change. Additionally, treatment of the health complications of FGM is estimated to cost health systems US\$ 1.4 billion per year.¹⁷

3.2. Cross-border Femal Genital Mutilation

Cross-border Female Genital Mutilation presents a significant challenge in the fight to eliminate the practice. In many countries where FGM is illegal, some families take their daughters across borders to countries where the practice is still common. This circumvention of laws undermines efforts to protect girls from FGM and makes it harder to track and prevent the procedure. Crucially, anti-FGM laws must incorporate specific provisions that allow the possibility to prosecute for facilitating cross-border female genital mutilation, including the act of taking a woman or girl to another country in order to have FGM performed on her. To combat this challenge, stronger international cooperation is needed.

3.3. Cultural and Religious Resistance

In most regions, FGM is linked to cultural identity, religious beliefs and social expectations, making it difficult to challenge and eliminate. Changing attitudes requires ongoing community engagement, education and support from local leaders, including religious and cultural figures. The role that men and boys play in perpetuating FGM is increasingly recognized, as they are often decision-makers in communities where FGM is practiced. While efforts are being made to engage men and boys in the fight against FGM, gendered power dynamics and patriarchal structures can make it difficult for them to meaningfully engage in prevention efforts.

4. Potential Topics for Events and Advocacy

- Female Genital Mutilation and Health
- Female Genital Mutilation in Migration Communities
- The Role of Men and Boys in Ending Femal Genital Mutilation
- Education as a Tool for Prevention Female Genita Mutilation

¹⁶ [Criminal Code](#)

¹⁷ [WHO | Female Genital Mutilation](#)

5. Increased Funding and Resources

- [WHO | Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation: An Interagency Statement](#)
- [Estimation of girls at risk of female genital mutilation in the European Union: Step-by-step guide](#)

III. March: International Women’s Day

International Women’s Day, 8th of March

1. A short Introduction

According to the National Archives' EEO Special Emphasis Observances: “National Women's History Month was established by a presidential proclamation to draw attention to and improve the focus on women in historical studies. It began in New York City on March 8, 1857, when female textile workers marched in protest of unfair working conditions and unequal rights for women. It was one of the first organized strikes by working women, during which they called for a shorter work day and decent wages. Also on March 8, 1908, women workers in the needle trades marched through New York City's Lower East Side to protest child labor and sweatshop working conditions, and demand women's suffrage. Beginning in 1910, March 8 became annually observed as International Women's Day. Women's History Week was instituted in 1978 to begin adding women's history into educational curricula. In 1987, the National Women's History Project successfully petitioned Congress to include all of March as a celebration of the economic, political, and social contributions of women.”^{18 19}.

International Women’s Day (IWD) honors the **social, economic, cultural, and political contributions of women worldwide**. It is a day to celebrate progress, advocate for equality, and reflect on the ongoing fight for women’s rights.²⁰

The **United Nations** began recognizing International Women’s Day in **1975**, during the International Women’s Year. By **1977**, the **UN General Assembly** invited member states to officially proclaim **March 8** as a day to promote **women’s rights** and advance **global peace**.²¹

Today, International Women’s Day is a **global platform** for celebrating women’s achievements, advocating for gender equality, and addressing critical issues such as **gender parity, reproductive rights, ending violence against women and many others**.

Events worldwide include **campaigns, rallies, cultural performances**, and discussions, all aimed at driving progress toward **women’s empowerment and inclusion**.

Each year, IWD adopts a theme to focus global attention. In **2024**, the theme was **“Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress”**, highlighting the need for women’s empowerment to tackle global challenges like **poverty, climate change, and geopolitical conflicts**.

For this year, the theme is **“Accelerate Action”**, underscoring the pressing need to advance gender equality with greater speed and impact. It calls for moving beyond symbolic gestures and gradual progress, advocating for bold, transformative actions to dismantle systemic barriers,

¹⁸ [National Archives EEO Special Emphasis Observances](#)

¹⁹ [International Women’s Day: March 8, 2024](#)

²⁰ [IWD: About International Women's Day](#)

²¹ [International Women's Day \(IWD\), March 8th | EHNE](#)

combat gender-based violence, and address persistent inequalities. The focus is on inspiring activism, driving institutional and policy reforms, and building momentum to create meaningful and lasting change.²²

International Women's Day is a powerful reminder of the strides made in the fight for **gender equality** and the work still ahead. It underscores the **indispensable role** women play in shaping a just and inclusive society, urging individuals and communities worldwide to join the movement for equality and justice.

2. The Law

2.1. International Conventions

International Women's Day (IWD) is supported and recognized by several international conventions and agreements that align with its mission to promote gender equality and women's rights. Here is a chronological list of key international frameworks and conventions aligned with the principles of International Women's Day:

1945: United Nations Charter - The UN Charter became the first international agreement to affirm gender equality as a fundamental principle, setting the foundation for global efforts to promote women's rights.²³

1948: Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Articles 1 and 2 of the UDHR enshrine the principles of equality and non-discrimination, affirming that women's rights are an integral part of universal human rights..²⁴

1953: Convention on the Political Rights of Women - This treaty marked the first international legal instrument to recognize and secure women's rights to vote, hold public office, and participate in political governance.²⁵

1958: ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (Nº. 111) - This convention called for the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation, including on the basis of gender.²⁶

1975: International Women's Year and United Nations Recognition of IWD - The UN began celebrating International Women's Day on March 8, bringing global attention to gender equality.²⁷

1995: Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action - Adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, this comprehensive legal and policy framework outlined measures to

²² [International women's day](#)

²³ [United Nations Charter \(full text\)](#)

²⁴ [Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948](#)

²⁵ [Convention on the Political Rights of Women](#)

²⁶ [C111 - Discrimination \(Employment and Occupation\) Convention, 1958 \(No. 111\)](#)

²⁷ [WomenWatch: International Women's Day](#)

achieve gender equality across critical areas, including education, health, combating violence, and economic empowerment.²⁸

2015: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - Goal 5 focused on achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls, directly supporting IWD's objectives.²⁹

These legal instruments collectively form a robust international framework that supports the principles of International Women's Day, serving as a legal and moral guide for governments, organizations, and individuals to pursue substantive and effective measures toward the achievement of gender equality.

2.2. National Laws

While Belgium does not have specific national laws dedicated to International Women's Day (IWD), it has implemented a range of legal measures that reflect the core values of gender equality celebrated on IWD:

Constitutional Protection

In 2002, Belgium amended Article 10 of its Constitution to explicitly affirm the principle of gender equality between men and women. This amendment serves as the cornerstone of Belgium's legal framework for gender equality.³⁰

Gender Act 2007

The key legislation for gender equality in Belgium is the Gender Act of 2007, which was revised in 2014. This law prohibits gender-based discrimination; covers various sectors, including employment, healthcare, education, and access to goods and services and offers protection against discrimination related to pregnancy, motherhood, and gender identity.³¹

Gender Mainstreaming Law 2007

This federal law, also passed in 2007, establishes a framework for incorporating gender perspectives into all public policies. It mandates that gender considerations be integrated into all government policies as well as a "gender test" be applied to all new laws and regulations.³²

Gender Pay Gap Law 2012

²⁸ [Resolution 1 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* The Fourth World Conference on Women, Having met in Beijing from 4 to](#)

²⁹ [THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development](#)

³⁰ [The policy on gender equality in Belgium Update 2015](#)

³¹ [Belgium expands protection from gender discrimination](#)

³² [Gender Mainstreaming Approach - Belgium](#)

To address wage disparities between men and women, the Gender Pay Gap Law requires both the analysis of job classifications for gender neutrality and the attention to the gender pay gap during social dialogue at various levels of government and within organizations.³³

Anti-Discrimination Legislation

Belgium's legal framework for combating discrimination comprises three principal statutes: the General Anti-Discrimination Act (2007), the Gender Act (2007), and the Racism Act (1981).³⁴ These legislative instruments collectively prohibit discrimination on various grounds, including gender, and establish mechanisms for legal redress and compensation. While these laws do not explicitly reference International Women's Day, they reflect and uphold its core principles of gender equality and women's rights, providing a robust legal foundation for advancing the status of women within Belgium.

3. Current Trends and Challenges

Despite the progress made in addressing the issues highlighted by International Women's Day (IWD), several longstanding challenges continue to require attention:

3.1. Economic Disparities

The global gender pay gap persists at an estimated 20%, reflecting systemic inequities in remuneration for similar work performed by men and women. Women are disproportionately represented in informal employment sectors, where they are remunerated at rates significantly lower than their male counterparts for work of equivalent value.³⁵ Furthermore, only 4% of Official Development Assistance is allocated to programs specifically designed to advance women's empowerment, underscoring a critical need for targeted policy interventions to address these economic disparities.³⁶

3.2. Health and Reproductive Rights³⁷

Each day, approximately 800 women lose their lives due to complications arising from pregnancy and childbirth, highlighting significant gaps in maternal healthcare. Additionally, 40% of women reside in countries where access to abortion is severely restricted by law, limiting their reproductive autonomy. Compounding these challenges, an estimated 270 million women lack access to modern contraceptive methods, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive policies and resources to address reproductive health and rights globally.

³³ [Equal treatment in the workplace | Settling in Belgium](#)

³⁴ [Anti-discrimination laws & legislation in Belgium | L&E Global](#)

³⁵ [International Women's Day 2024: Economic inclusion of women - House of Lords Library](#)

³⁶ [Gender inequality around the world in 2024: special report](#)

³⁷ [Gender inequality around the world in 2024: special report](#)

3.3. Educational Disadvantages³⁸

Gender biases within education systems continue to pose significant barriers, discouraging women from pursuing certain fields of study or advancing to higher education levels, thereby perpetuating inequality in access to opportunities. This challenge is further compounded in low-income neighborhoods, where less than 30% of students enroll in four-year colleges, disproportionately affecting women and limiting their access to the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute effectively to fields such as criminal justice and human rights. Addressing these disparities is essential to fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

4. Potential Topics for Events and Advocacy

- Legal barriers that hinder gender equality
- The challenges faced by women of color, LGBTQ+ women, and women with disabilities
- The existent multiple forms of discrimination and their impact on women's lives
- Economic disparities and poverty among women
- Women's representation in decision-making roles
- Combating gender-based violence and domestic abuse
- Raising awareness about human trafficking and exploitation
- Women's roles in climate change mitigation and adaptation

5. Further Reading

- [International Women's Day 2025 – For ALL women and girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment | UN Women;](#)
- [How To Advocate for Gender Equity | Lehigh University ADVANCE;](#)
- [History of International Women's Day;](#)

³⁸ [Top 5 Social Issues for Women in 2024 | Dignity Grows](#)

IV. April: World Intellectual Property Day

World Intellectual Property Day, 26th of April

1. A short Introduction

World Intellectual Property Day was established by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in the year 2000.³⁹ This date was selected to commemorate the anniversary of the WIPO Convention, which entered into force on April 26, 1970. The purpose behind the inception of World Intellectual Property Day is to enhance awareness and comprehension of the role that intellectual property (IP) rights play in fostering innovation and creativity. By emphasizing the significance of IP, WIPO sought to cultivate respect for the creative works and inventions of individuals and entities globally.

We observe World Intellectual Property Day to acknowledge and honor the substantial contributions that inventors, artists, and creators render to our societies. IP rights, encompassing patents, trademarks, and copyrights, afford creators the legal framework to protect and derive benefits from their inventions and works. These rights are closely connected to criminal law in that the unauthorized use, reproduction, or distribution of protected works can lead to criminal penalties. Laws against counterfeiting and piracy are enforced to protect the intellectual property of creators and to maintain the integrity of markets. This protection acts as an incentive for further innovation and investment in new technologies, artistic expressions, and scientific advancements. By commemorating this day, we recognize the imperative of safeguarding these rights to ensure ongoing progress and cultural enrichment.

The theme for World Intellectual Property Day 2025 is “Feel the Beat of IP”.⁴⁰ World Intellectual Property Day 2025 underscores how creativity and innovation, underpinned by IP rights, sustain a vibrant, diverse, and flourishing music scene that benefits all individuals globally.

2. The Law

2.1. International Conventions

2.1.1. Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works

The Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works is a cornerstone of international copyright law, providing protection for the rights of authors and creators.⁴¹ It enshrines three fundamental principles: National Treatment, which ensures that authors from contracting states receive the same rights and protection in other contracting states as nationals of those states; Automatic Protection, meaning copyright is conferred automatically upon the creation of a work, without the need for formal registration or compliance with other formalities; and Independence of Protection, whereby protection exists independently of the work’s country

³⁹ [WIPO | World Intellectual Property Day](#)

⁴⁰ [WIPO | World Intellectual Property Day: April 26, 2025](#)

⁴¹ [WIPO | World Intellectual Property Day](#)

of origin. The Convention sets minimum standards for the types of works that may be protected, the rights granted to authors, and the duration of protection. It also allows for specific limitations and exceptions to authors' economic rights, enabling the use of protected works in certain cases, such as for educational or public interest purposes, without the author's consent. Furthermore, it permits developing countries to implement non-voluntary licensing for the translation and reproduction of works, particularly for educational purposes, under defined conditions.

2.1.2. WIPO Copyright Treaty

The WIPO Copyright Treaty (WCT) is an international agreement focused on the protection of authors' rights in the digital environment, complementing the Berne Convention.⁴² It specifically addresses the protection of works such as computer programs and databases in the context of digital technologies. The Treaty confers three additional rights upon authors: the right of distribution, the right of rental, and an expanded right of communication to the public, which includes interactive and on-demand communication via the Internet. While the Treaty allows for certain limitations and exceptions, these must satisfy specific criteria. The minimum term of protection under the WCT is 50 years. The Treaty also prohibits the circumvention of technological protection measures used by authors to safeguard their rights, as well as the removal or alteration of rights management information. Moreover, it mandates that Contracting Parties establish legal remedies for copyright infringement and implement effective enforcement procedures to address violations.

2.1.3. Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property

The Paris Convention outlines international protection for industrial property rights, encompassing patents, trademarks, industrial designs, and other forms of innovation.⁴³ It establishes three core principles: national treatment (guaranteeing equal protection for nationals of all member states), right of priority (allowing applicants to claim priority based on their first filed application in one member state), and common rules (ensuring basic standards of protection across member states). These common rules encompass various aspects, including independence of patents granted in different countries, inventor naming rights, and restrictions on compulsory licensing. Similarly, the Convention dictates regulations for marks, industrial designs, trade names, and indications of source, aiming to prevent unfair competition and protect the rights of creators and businesses. Governed by an Assembly and Executive Committee, the Paris Convention plays a crucial role in promoting global innovation and ensuring fair treatment for intellectual property holders across different countries.

2.1.4. Trademark Law Treaty

The Trademark Law Treaty (TLT) aims to simplify and harmonise trademark registration procedures across different countries.⁴⁴ By outlining clear requirements for each stage of the

⁴² [WIPO | WIPO Copyright Treaty \(WCT\)](#)

⁴³ [WIPO | Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property](#)

⁴⁴ [WIPO | Trademark Law Treaty](#)

application process, including registration, changes, and renewal, the TLT reduces complexity and ensures transparency for businesses seeking trademark protection. The Treaty's focus on clearly defined requirements, standardised duration periods, and simplified forms facilitates efficient trademark administration and promotes international consistency. Additionally, the TLT eliminates unnecessary formalities such as signature verification, further streamlining the process. Notably, the Treaty is open to all WIPO member states and certain intergovernmental organisations, making it a valuable tool for businesses seeking global trademark protection.

2.1.5. Patent Law Treaty

The Patent Law Treaty (PLT) seeks to streamline and simplify patent application procedures for both applicants and patent offices. It establishes standardized requirements for filing dates, national and regional applications, as well as for the use of Model International Forms. The PLT further simplifies procedural aspects by permitting consolidated communications for multiple filings, thereby reducing administrative costs. In addition, the Treaty provides safeguards to protect applicants from the unintentional loss of rights resulting from procedural or formality errors. It also promotes the use of electronic filing systems while ensuring compatibility with traditional paper-based filing methods.

2.1.6. European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR)

Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 of the ECHR stipulates that: "Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided for by law and by the general principles of international law." This Article applies to all forms of intellectual property, including trademarks even before registration, patents, and copyright. This means that intellectual property rights are protected under the Protocol and any interference with these rights must be justified. Examples of protected intellectual property include the right to publish a translation of a novel, the right to musical works, and the economic interests derived from licensing agreements.

2.2. National Laws

In addition to incorporating international conventions into domestic law, numerous states have enacted comprehensive national legislation to protect intellectual property rights. These measures not only reflect the adoption of international standards but also include the establishment of specific safeguards and supplementary mechanisms designed to address the unique challenges faced by creators and entrepreneurs within their respective jurisdictions. Through these national provisions, states seek to enhance the efficacy of intellectual property protection and foster an environment conducive to innovation and economic development.

3. Current Trends & Challenges

3.1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Intellectual Property

Artificial Intelligence is transforming the intellectual property landscape by generating new types of intellectual property and challenging existing legal frameworks.⁴⁵ AI-generated inventions and creative works raise complex questions about authorship and ownership, as traditional IP laws generally require a human creator to grant rights.⁴⁶ This trend is prompting discussions and potential legal reforms to address the unique issues posed by AI in IP law. One of the key challenges is determining who owns the IP rights to works created by AI. For example, if an AI system generates a novel or a piece of music, who should be considered the author or inventor? Current IP laws are not equipped to handle such scenarios, leading to debates about whether new legal frameworks are needed to accommodate AI-generated content. As AI continues to evolve, it is essential for policymakers, legal experts, and industry stakeholders to collaborate on developing clear guidelines and regulations that balance innovation incentives with public interest considerations

3.2. Access to Medicines and Public Health

The intersection of IP rights and access to medicines is a critical issue in the realm of human rights. Patents on pharmaceutical products often lead to higher prices, making essential medicines unaffordable for many people, particularly in developing countries.⁴⁷ This has led to global debates and policy discussions on balancing IP protection with public health needs. Initiatives such as compulsory licensing, which allows governments to authorize the production of generic versions of patented drugs during public health emergencies, highlight the need for flexible IP regimes that prioritize human rights. This trend reflects an ongoing effort to ensure that IP laws do not hinder access to life-saving treatments and that public health considerations are integrated into IP policy-making.

4. Potential Topics for Events and Advocacy

- The Intersection of IP and Criminal Law
- IP Enforcement and Cross-Border Crime
- Technological Innovations in IP Crime Prevention
- Access to Medicines and Vaccines: Implications of IP Protection

5. Further Reading

- [What is the impact of intellectual property rules on access to medicines? A systematic review](#)
- [The interaction between intellectual property laws and AI: Opportunities and challenges](#)

⁴⁵ [Ellipse IP | The Future of IP](#)

⁴⁶ [Harvard Business Review | Generative AI Has an Intellectual Property Problem](#)

⁴⁷ [WHO | Access to Medicines and Vaccines: Implications of Intellectual Property Protection and Trade Agreements](#)

Contact us

Do you have comments, suggestions, or ideas?

We'd love to hear from you! We hope you find these resources useful in helping to plan rewarding, meaningful, and enjoyable sessions for your group. If you have any suggestions for how we can improve these background materials, or if there are particular topics/international days you would like to see included in a future edition, let us know!

Please send any feedback, ideas, or suggestions to director.humanrights@elsa.org