

NNHRR Report

Netherlands Network for Human Rights Research

1 January 2023 – 31 August 2025

Human Rights, Collaboration, Community



Photo: Stephanie Triefus

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Foreword



In the times of growing inequalities, and threats to observance of human rights, Human Rights Research is more relevant than ever. The Netherlands Network for Human Rights Research (NNHRR) has always been a place which fostered ideas and created space for discussions exploring these crucial topics. With that in mind, we are especially committed to supporting academic exchanges between our participating universities, with a particular emphasis on the Network's Junior Members: PhD Candidates.

The fostering of PhD connections and the support of their growth is possible through the organisation and attendance of PhD Trainings, Working Group events, Research Workshops, Max van der Stoep Human Rights awards, and the Human Rights Here Blog's input.

Since the previous reporting period, the Network has grown not only in the number of its members, but also in the number of its Working Groups. Based on the initiative taken by our PhDs, two new working groups were formed – the Business and Human Rights Working Group and the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Working Group. We are proud of the active participation and ideas set forth by our five Working Groups, as well as the ideas that are put forward for Research Workshops, and the growing visibility of the Human Rights Here Blog. We are also particularly thrilled to showcase our newly formed cooperation with T.M.C. Asser Press/Springer in relation to the Human Rights' Dissertation Series.

In light of that, we would like to present the third NNHRR Report, covering the period of January 2023 to June 2025. The previous report covered the period of 1 September 2019 - 31 December 2022 and served the purpose of renewing the Network's mandate. This report highlights all the steps taken to foster an even closer inter-university collaboration but also stresses the need for such collaboration in times of academic austerity. We believe that throughout the reporting period the Network has built a strong collaborative and communicative spirit among its members and gained recognition in name. We look forward to maintaining this spirit

with a view of further developing the strong foundation that has been established.

The inter-university interdisciplinary collaboration that the Network offers is possible due to the involvement, financial and in kind, of participating faculties: Erasmus University Rotterdam, Leiden University, Maastricht University, Open University, Radboud University Nijmegen, Tilburg University, University of Amsterdam, University of Groningen, Utrecht University, Vrije University Amsterdam, and T.M.C. Asser Instituut. We also are happy to have most recently welcomed Wageningen University to join our initiative as a partial member, with a view of developing an even closer cooperation in the future.

I thank the members of the Steering Committee, representing these institutions, for their commitment and dedication in making the NNHRR work and being a truly active network. I also thank the Academic Coordinator, the Secretariat, and the interns for their efforts in maintaining and sustaining the Network.

Prof. Jasper Krommendijk, Chairperson of the Steering Committee

Summary

The Netherlands Network for Human Rights Research connects researchers, scholars and professors in the field of human rights in The Netherlands. Since its establishment in 2017, it has become an important platform and a community building point for human rights researchers. The Network's collaborative effort is visible through its flagship events, as well as events organised by working groups and research workshops organised by Network members. This report presents the Network and its structural and *ad hoc* activities for the period of 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2025. Part 1 presents the institutional structure and functioning of the Network. Part 2 offers an overview of the activities and events undertaken by the Network during the reporting period. Part 3 outlines the Network's activities outside of flagship events aimed at enhancing research collaboration and supporting the accessibility of research activities to PhD candidates. Part 4 outlines the Network's outreach & communications strategy and its role in supporting member connections and output. Part 5 presents the Network's future initiatives.

Table of Contents

Introduction: Human Rights, Collaboration, Community	5
1. Connecting Institutions	6
1.1 Background.....	6
1.2 Governance.....	6
1.3 Membership.....	10
2. Community: Flagship Events.....	12
2.1 Toogdag: Annual Research Day.....	12
2.2 PhD Trainings for 1 st and 2 nd Year Students.....	14
2.3 PhD Trainings for 3 rd and 4 th Year Students.....	15
2.4 Doctoral Research Forum.....	17
2.6 Recent Events (selected).....	18
3. Collaboration: Consolidating Research.....	22
3.1 Working Groups	23
3.2 Human Rights Research Series with T.M.C. Asser Press/Springer.....	27
3.3 <i>Human Rights Here</i> Blog	27
3.4 Max van der Stoel Award	29
3.5 Grants	30
4. Communicating Human Rights.....	36
4.1 Website.....	36
4.2 Newsletter	38
4.3 LinkedIn	40
4.4 Bluesky.....	42
5. Looking Ahead.....	43
5.1 Supporting visibility of PhD Members	43
5.1 Supporting Working Groups.....	43
5.2 Supporting the <i>Human Rights Here</i> Blog	43
5.4 Supporting PhD Conference Attendance.....	43
5.5 Supporting Training Events and Conferences with Practitioners	44

Introduction: Human Rights, Collaboration, Community

The Netherlands Network for Human Rights Research (hereinafter the Network) was established in 2017 to sustain and further strengthen cooperation in the field of human rights research. In the last 8 years of its functioning, it has become a crucial bridging point between PhD students and researchers in the Dutch Human Rights Research Community. Recognising the need to strengthen collaboration and community now more than ever, we chose the theme of this report, *“Human Rights, Collaboration, Community”*, with a view of highlighting the Network’s efforts in building and connecting academics across the participating universities.

We believe the Network’s quest for community building is best reflected in the ongoing work and active participation of our Universities, Network members, and PhD students. The Network’s commitment to fostering research cooperation and the exchange of ideas is also evident in its support for annual PhD trainings, Working Groups, Research Workshops, and the creation of a Conference Attendance Grant scheme. These initiatives build on the plans set out in the previous Biennial Report (2019–2022) and, most importantly, empower our PhD members to put forward novel and timely ideas that inspire others. In addition to these new initiatives, this report also outlines the Network’s annual flagship activities.

The Network’s support of research through promotion and communication, as well as the crucial role of the Human Rights Here Blog in sharing relevant societal insights, will serve as a further example of this pursuit of collaboration. Additionally, the Network’s commitment to academic excellence and recognition will be reflected in the highlighting of our bi-annual initiative, traditionally hosted by Tilburg University - the Max van der Stoel Human Rights Award.

Looking ahead, the Network will continue to maintain its status as a bottom-up, collaborative initiative, which supports and connects PhD researchers across the Netherlands. It will also open new avenues of research for its community, by expanding the reach and impact of the Network’s events and by supporting the Working Groups, the *Human Rights Here Blog*, as well as the Conference Grant and Research Workshop schemes.

1. Connecting Institutions

1.1 Background

Cooperation has become increasingly essential for the development of cutting-edge academic work. In response to this challenge, the Netherlands Network for Human Rights Research was jointly established in 2016 by Erasmus University Rotterdam, Leiden University, Maastricht University, Tilburg University, the T.M.C. Asser Instituut, the University of Amsterdam, the University of Groningen and Utrecht University. The Network started to function in 2017. It was also agreed that the Network's Coordination and Secretariat would be based in the T.M.C. Asser Instituut because of Asser's longstanding experience as an inter-university research institution.

Upon the renewal of the mandate on 1 January 2020, this collaboration was continued in good spirit and growth. The *Raad van Decanen Rechtsgeleerdheid* decided to renew the mandate of the Network in spring 2023 because of their positive assessment of the Network's performance (based on the previous report covering the 2020-2022 period). They welcomed our proposal to increase the individual annual contributions of the stakeholder universities from €7.500 to €9.000, and to renew the Network's mandate for five years (2023-2028). This report provides a mid-term review of the Network's activities, covering the period from 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2025.

1.2 Governance

The Network's main governing body is a Steering Committee composed of representatives of the participating institutions as well as two representatives of the PhD candidates.

The Network's Secretariat and Academic Coordination are based at the Asser Institute. Their activities are overseen by the Steering Committee and an Advisory Board. The Network has benefited from this governance structure, which enables collective decision-making through relatively quick procedures.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee decides on the Network's agenda, oversees the budget and provides general direction. It is composed of representatives of the stakeholder institutions.

The current members of the Steering Committee are:

- **Prof. Dr. Jasper Krommendijk (Radboud University Nijmegen), Chair of the Steering Committee**
- **Prof. Dr. Antoine Buyse (Utrecht University; Dr. Alexandra Timmer)**
- **Dr. Alberto Quintavalla (Erasmus University Rotterdam)**
- **Dr. Aikaterini Tsampi (University of Groningen; Dr. Antenor Hallo de Wolf)**
- **Prof. Dr. Andrea Broderick (Maastricht University; Dr. Roland Moerland)**
- **Dr. Bahija Aarrass (Vrije University Amsterdam)**
- **Prof. Dr. Machiko Kanetake (T.M.C. Asser Instituut; Dr. Christophe Paulussen)**
- **Prof. Dr. Yvonne Donders (University of Amsterdam)**
- **Prof. Dr. Jan Willem Sap (Open University)**
- **Dr. Mark Klaassen (Leiden University)**
- **Dr. Nadia Bernaz (Wageningen University)**
- **Prof. Dr. Nicola Jägers (Tilburg University)**

In line with the Network's educational purpose, two PhD candidates sit at the Steering Committee representing the interests of their peers. The current PhD Representatives of the Network are Lisa van Roermund (Radboud University Nijmegen) and Noor Swart (University of Groningen).

The Steering Committee met four times in 2023 and 2024. It has met on four occasions in 2025 with the meeting including the Advisory Board at the Toogdag of 2025.

Academic Coordination

An Academic Coordinator executes the programme of work and oversees the Network's day-to-day functioning. The Academic Coordinator is based at the Asser

Institute and works alongside the Secretariat for the Network. The Academic Coordinator for the period of January 2022 to February 2024 was Dr. León Castellanos-Jankiewicz (Asser Institute). From February 2024, Dr. Stephanie Triefus (Asser Institute), took over the role while building on the Network's strengths in coming up with creative and new ideas for enhancing PhD research collaboration. During the reporting period the interns supporting the Network from the side of the Asser Institute were Kaya van der Horst, Melanie Schneider, Ewa Romanowska, Romina Ruszin, and Letizia Bozzi.

Secretariat

The Secretariat is entrusted with the administrative aspects of the Network, including the preparation of meetings for the Steering Committee, assisting the Academic Coordinator in the Network's management and liaising with the Communications and Financial departments of the Asser Institute which also support the Network. The Secretariat has an essential role in the newly established collaboration between T.M.C. Asser Press and the Network. Enora Perrot, who is currently entrusted with Network's secretarial tasks, will continue supporting the Network's activities in this capacity.

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board provides counsel on the Network's research cooperation and new opportunities. It cooperates with the Steering Committee and the Coordinator in developing a forward-thinking vision and networking activities. Given the diversity and profile of its members, the Advisory Board has an important valorization role in linking research outputs to relevant stakeholders and the broader public.

The Advisory Board meets once a year with the Steering Committee.

The current members of the Advisory Board are:

- Prof. Liesbeth Lijnzaad (Judge, International Tribunal for the Law for the Sea, Chair of the Network's Advisory Board)
- Prof. Morten Kjørsum (Director, Raul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law) (until 2025)

- Eduard Nazarski (Former Director, Amnesty International Nederland) (until 2025)
- Alphons Orie (Judge, International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals)
- Michiel Servaes (Director, Oxfam Novib)
- Prof. Nico Schrijver (Chair of the Dutch Human Rights Institute)
- Prof. Martin Kuijer (Supreme Court of the Netherlands) (since 2024)
- Barbara Joziassse (Member of the board of the Netherlands' Court of Audit) (since 2024)
- Prof. Christine van den Wyngaert (Judge, Kosovo Specialist Chambers) (until 2024)

PhD Representatives

The PhD Representatives are part of the Network's Steering Committee. They represent the PhD members of the Network. The current PhD Representatives are:

- Lisa van Roermund (Radboud University)
- Noor Swart (University of Groningen)

Testimonials PhD Representatives



"The NNHRR is a diverse network that brings together scholars from different disciplines, each approaching human rights from a unique perspective. As a family law researcher, the NNHRR encourages me to look at human rights through different lenses. The events organised by the NNHRR provide valuable opportunities to network with researchers from different areas of law."

In my role as PhD Representative, together with Noor Swart, I provide input from the perspective of early-career researchers. This role allows me to help ensure that the network's activities are well aligned with the needs of PhD students, while also allowing me to interact with senior researchers and learn from their experiences."

- Lisa van Roermund

"Following up on Lisa, I would like to add that the NNHRR offers an accessible and supportive environment for researchers to present their own work and engage with the work of others. The network also organises nice activities and provides opportunities to attend inspiring keynote lectures by leading scholars in the field. As PhD representatives, Lisa and I aim to involve and represent PhD researchers. As young scholars in the crucial field of human rights, it is important that we continue to support, and reach out to, each other!"

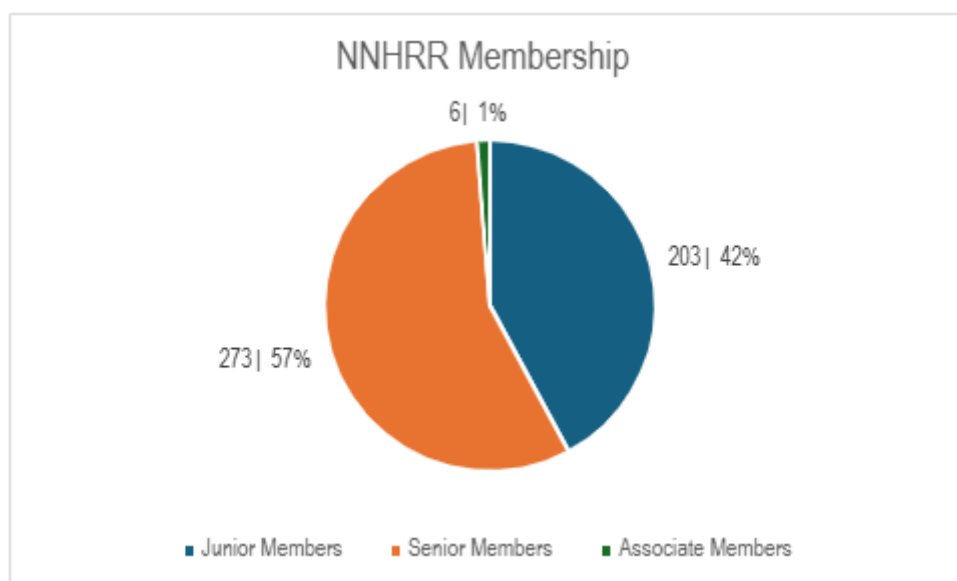
- Noor Swart



1.3 Membership

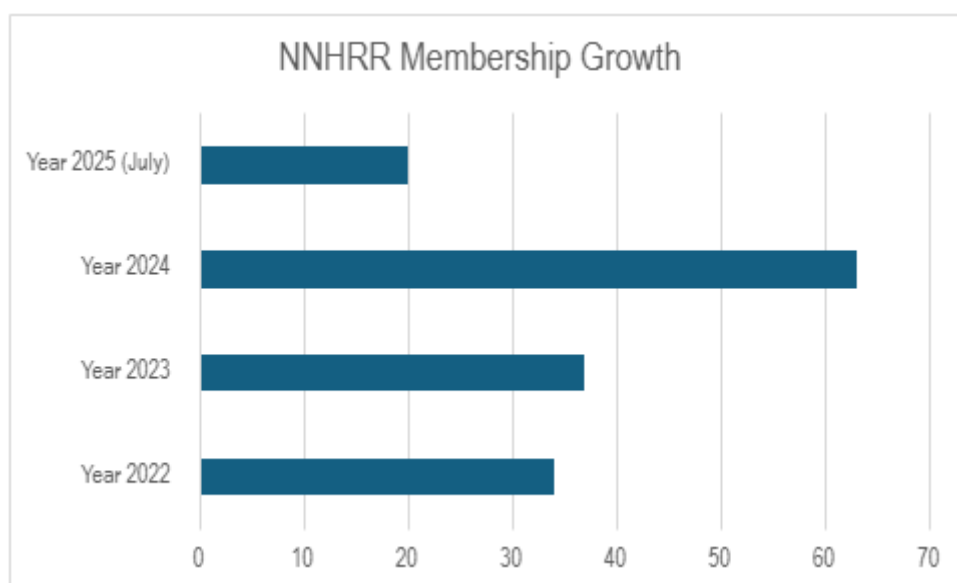
Network Membership has increased steadily over the reporting period. The Network distinguishes between its PhD Members (Junior Members), who are currently enrolled in the participating institutions, and Senior Members, who are individuals with considerable experience in the field of human rights and hold a variety of professorial and research positions, or act as policy advisors.

As of July 2025, the Network has 482 Members. Junior Members (203) make up 42,1% of the Network's membership, while Senior Members (273) represent 56,6%% of the Membership. There are also 6 Associate Members from Wageningen University, representing 1,2% of Membership. The high rate of senior membership constitutes a significant asset that shows the importance and added value of the Network, which is recognised by the Dutch academic community.



NNHRR Membership Overview

Over the reporting period, 154 new Members were admitted to the Network. In particular, 34 new Members were admitted in 2022, 37 in 2023, 63 in 2024, and 20 as of July 2025.



NNHRR Membership Growth 2022-2025

2. Community: Flagship Events

One of the Network's priorities is fostering collaboration through creating opportunities for meetings, workshops and exchanges. To this end, the Network developed four flagship activities: the Toogdag, PhD trainings, the Doctoral Research Forum and the Max van der Stoel Human Rights Award which recognises the best Master's and PhD thesis in the Netherlands. Finally, thematic research workshops and events are organised by each working group. This section presents these activities which showcase the variety of the Network's research themes as well as its cutting-edge approach to addressing emerging human rights issues.

2.1 Toogdag: Annual Research Day

Toogdag 2023: Looking to the Future: New (Human) Rights

The 2023 Toogdag organised jointly by the **University of Groningen** and **Maastricht University** built upon the Workshop organised in 1988 on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights ("UDHR"), leading to the publication of a booklet titled "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Its Significance in 1988". With this in mind a follow-up event, Toogdag 2023, was organised on the 29th and 30th of June 2023, which focused on discussions of challenges that lie ahead before the Declaration reached its 100th anniversary. The Toogdag discussions consisted of mapping out the opportunities for developing new human rights to complement the Declaration and addressing the plight of future generations.

Toogdag 2024: Resilient Rights: Tools for Inclusion and Justice

The 2024 Toogdag organised by **Utrecht University** reflected on the previous Toogdagen which focused on the trope of human rights being under pressure. The idea emerged from the premise that rights protection and thus people's dignity and equality face severe challenges because of democratic backsliding, weakening of the rule of law, shrinking civic space, violations of rights in the context of armed conflict, migration,

and climate change. As previous annual Toogdagen have shown, this may even be called a multi-crisis of rights and especially affects people in vulnerable situations. The 2024 Toogdag, hosted by **Utrecht University** and its **Netherlands Institute of Human Rights (SIM)**, proposed to look at these matters from a different, complementary angle: not the pressures on human rights, but rather their resilience. Question of whether and how can they function as tools of inclusion and justice, and whether they, normatively, philosophically, politically and/or practically have the capacity to play such roles in the different fields of today's human rights protection were critically discussed throughout the conference.

Toogdag 2025: Access to Justice (A2J)

This year's Toogdag hosted by **Radboud University Nijmegen** focused on the theme of Access to justice (A2J) seen as essential for the protection of human rights, ensuring that individuals can effectively seek redress for their grievances and hold power to account. Nonetheless, because A2J is increasingly at risk due to backlash against (inter)national courts, (rising) costs of legal services, legal fees, standing and victim requirements, shrinking civic space or strategic lawsuits against public participation, discussions on these challenges were needed. This year's Toogdag reflected on these systemic inequalities, marginalisation stemming from language barriers or implicit biases, technological advancements which have the potential to improve access to justice but also widen the gap for those without digital literacy or internet access, as well the rise of populist and anti-establishment sentiments, which undermine the legitimacy of (inter)national courts.

2.2 PhD Trainings for 1st and 2nd Year Students

The annual PhD Training for 1st and 2nd Year Students aims at helping PhD researchers to kick start their PhD journey through organising workshops focused on human rights research, topical issues associated with it and research methodologies. The affiliated universities alternately organise the training. Apart from an interesting programme, the trainings provide an ample opportunity for networking and sharing of ideas.

PhD Training for 1st and 2nd Year Students 2023

The 2023 PhD Training hosted by **Vrije University Amsterdam** contained presentations from leading scholars on different research methodologies and included two workshops: one on human rights activism and the second one on mental health in human rights research. The first workshop at two divergent views of two former top judges on the role of the judge in a democracy (Jonathan Sumption and Aharon Barak), while the second one focused on the question of “how to navigate the academic ocean and take care of your mental health?” in discussing the book by Dr. Joeri Tjiddink MD *The Happy Academic: How to Succeed and Stay Healthy in Academia* (2023).

PhD Training for 1st and 2nd Year Students 2024

The 2024 annual PhD training was organised by **Open University** and **Studiecentrum Utrecht** and discussed qualitative research methods and empirical legal studies, comparative research methods, the relations between Social Justice, Human Rights Law and Social Rights, as well as the importance of a solid research proposal. It also included a panel on how to use human rights indicators to measure human rights policies, processes and outcome and a session on writing and communicating human rights research.

PhD Training for 1st and 2nd Year Students 2025

This year's training organised by **Leiden University** focused on the exploration of the intersection between legal scholarship and activism within the field of human rights. Through a series of lectures, seminars, and discussions, participants engaged with

leading academics and practitioners. The training provided insights into how legal research can inform and support human rights activism, addressing both the opportunities and challenges that arise when scholars engage with advocacy. Participants critically examined the role of legal frameworks in advancing human rights, discuss the ethical and methodological implications of activist-oriented research, and explore practical strategies for integrating activism into their academic work.

2.3 PhD Trainings for 3rd and 4th Year Students

The annual 3rd and 4th Year PhD Training (previously named Follow-up PhD Training) aims at helping 3rd and 4th Year PhDs to transition into next steps in their academic or practice careers. Such trainings usually focus on publication strategies, job applications and securing funding for further research projects.

PhD Training for 3rd and 4th Year Students 2023

The 2023 edition of the PhD Training took place at the **University of Amsterdam on Thursday 13 April**. The aim of this training was to provide participants with the tools to translate their expertise to a professional career in academia or elsewhere. The training included modules on pursuing your career in universities, NGOs and governmental institutions. It also featured discussions on publishing for A-list academic journals and prestigious book series. Finally, it concluded with a discussion about formulating grant applications.

PhD Training for 3rd and 4th Year Students 2024

The 2024 edition of the PhD Training hosted by **Erasmus University Rotterdam** took place on **11 April 2024**. The workshops offered participants an opportunity to discuss a broad range of subjects covering future career opportunities, publications strategies and ways to communicate research through online, as well as offline channels.

PhD Training for 3rd and 4th Year Students 2025

The PhD Training for 3rd and 4th Year Students took place at the **University of Groningen** and included an insightful programme focusing on the importance and

practical steps to take care of one's mental wellbeing while pursuing a PhD, human rights jobs opportunities in practice and academia, as well as publication strategies and strategies for successful funding application strategies.

2.4 Doctoral Research Forum

The Annual Doctoral Research Forum brings together PhD members from the Network working on human rights issues. Its goal is to provide a collaborative environment in which participants can present their research, engage in peer-to-peer discussions, and build connections. It also offers an opportunity for mentorship, promoting interaction between Junior and Senior Members of the Network and the academic community more broadly.

Doctoral Research Forum 2024

The Network's third Doctoral Research Forum took place on 8 November 2024 at **Tilburg University**. It kicked off with Panel 1 on "Human Rights and Criminal Law". Subsequently, Panel 2 explored "Human Rights and Migration, Asylum, and Refugees". Speakers in Panel 3 presented on "Human Rights in Regional and Domestic Courts". Then, Panel 4 explored the topic of "Human Rights: Economic, Adaptation, and Freedom of Expression". After a short lunch break, Panel 5 discussed "European Human Rights". Finally, the speakers of Panel 6 presented on "Human Rights in Technology and Environmental Law". To close, Dr. Dalia Palombo (Tilburg University) and Academic Coordinator Dr. Stephanie Triefus (Asser Institute) presented a session on how attendees could transform their PhD thesis into a book. The evening was concluded with drinks and dinner for participants.

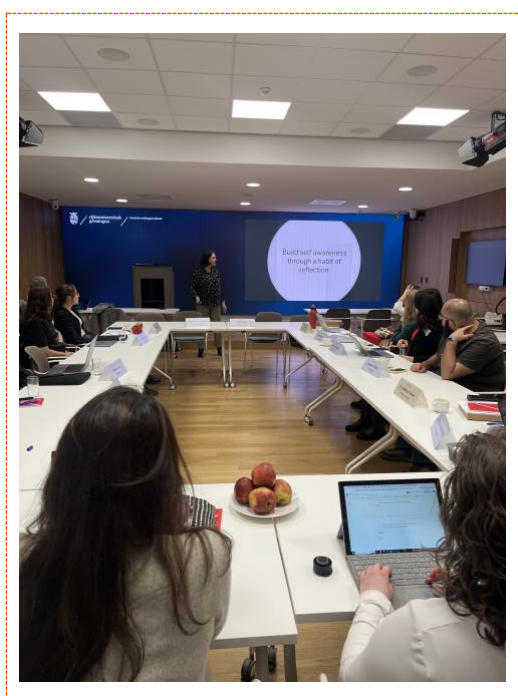
Doctoral Research Forum 2026

The upcoming edition of the Doctoral Research Forum will be hosted by **Maastricht University** and is planned to take place on **30 January 2026**.

2.6 Recent Events (selected)

PhD Training for 3rd and 4th Year PhD Students: 11 April 2025

This year's PhD Training took place at the **University of Groningen** and featured distinguished panellists who spoke on the topics relevant to candidates in their last stage of their PhDs. The day commenced with Dr. Antenor Hallo de Wolf (University of Groningen) who addressed the topic of blogpost publishing and continued with Prof. Lorenzo Squintani (University of Groningen) speaking on the topic of open access publishing. Naomi van der Pol (Netherlands Quarterly for Human Rights) followed with a presentation on publishing journal articles. Following the lunch break full of networking opportunities, our participants had a chance to engage in a conversation on mental well-being in human rights research with Prof. Alette Smeulers (University of Groningen) and Beth Yoder (University of Groningen). Finally, Dr. Ineke Boerefijn (Netherlands Institute for Human Rights), Dr. Hanna Bozdriesz (The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Eleni Chaitidou (Kosovo Specialist Chambers), and Dr. Christian Mommers (Council of Europe, Commissioner for Human Rights) presented their insight into strategies and ways of seeking a job outside of academia after a PhD. The final workshop focused on grant application strategies and offered advice from Prof. Jeanne Mifsud Bonnici (University of Groningen).



Digitalisation of Migration Governance and Globalisation: 14 April 2025:

This workshop organised by the **Migration & Borders Working Group**, in collaboration with the **Human Rights in the Digital Age Working Group** and hosted by **Tilburg University** focused on the emerging and pressing issues arising out of the use of digital technologies in migration governance. The first discussion, guided by Manos Roussos, focused on Digital Transformation and Algorithmic Processes in Migration Management with distinguished speakers: Prof. Valsamis Mitsilegas (University of Liverpool), Ludivine Stewart (European University Institute), Irene Baceiredo Macho (University of Deusto), Dr. Sarah Tas (Maastricht University), and Prof. Deirdre Curtin (European University Institute). The second panel on 'Digitalisation and Externalisation of Immigration Control' was chaired by Sissy Katsoni. The speakers were: Prof. Elspeth Guild (University of Liverpool), Dr. Elif Mendos Kuşkonmaz (University of Essex), Stevi Kitsou (Maastricht University), Dr. Didem Doğar (Tilburg University), Dr. Evelien Brouwer and Jarik ten Cate (Utrecht University). Panel 3 was chaired by Viola Bex-Reimert and explored 'Legal Gaps Arising from the Digitalisation of Migration Management'. Speakers included Joan Lopez-Solano (Tilburg University), Dr. Sissy Katsoni (Tilburg University), Dr. Niovi Vavoula (University of Luxembourg), Dr. Mariana Gkliati and Prof. Eleni Kosta (Tilburg University).

Multistakeholder Collaboration under the CSDDD: 14 May 2025:

This event organised by the **Business & Human Rights Working Group** and the **Amsterdam Center for International Law**, brought together academics, NGO representatives and corporate practitioners to discuss **multi-stakeholder collaboration under the CSDDD**. The keynote speech was given by Prof. Humberto Cantú Rivera (Professor of Law and Director of the Human Rights and Business Institute at the University of Monterrey, Mexico). The first panel, "Drafting Due Diligence Plans: Translating Legal Obligations into Practice" included speakers Mariana Rezende (Consultant Human Rights & Responsible Business at Löning), and Alena Kahle (Senior Policy & Project Coordinator at Fair Trade Advocacy Office).



The second panel, presented by Suhasini Singh (Head of Supply Chain Engagement at Fair Wear Foundation), and Salah Hussein (Director for Human Rights at Business for Social Responsibility) discussed "Stakeholder Engagement in Corporate Due Diligence". The final panel, on the topic of "Designing Effective Enforcement for the CSDDD", welcomed speakers Anneke Loof-Donker (Clusterhoofd Wetgeving, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands) and Nadia Cicek (Global Manager ESG legal & compliance at Arcadis).

Toogdag 2025: 11 and 12 June 2025:

This year's Annual Research Conference of the Netherlands Network for Human Rights Research (the Toogdag) took place at Radboud University Nijmegen on **11 and 12 June 2025**. The conference was organised by a stellar committee from Research Centre for State & Law (SteR) consisting of Prof. dr. Jasper Krommendijk, Prof. mr. Machteld Vonk, Dr. Annick Pijnenburg, Jeske Jansen, Lisa van Roermund, Sandra Arntz, and Emilia Klebanowski.

The thematic focus of this year's Toogdag, Access to Justice (A2J), is particularly significant in a time marked by growing political instability, backlash against international courts, governmental pressures, and threats to academic freedom. Ensuring A2J is thus seen as a crucial step for holding different actors accountable for human rights violations. Yet, this raises important questions on what exactly is A2J, and can it ever be fully achieved?

These questions were guiding the participants throughout the two days of the Toogdag, starting with Prof. Helen Duffy's panel presenting the three dimensions of hurdles to access to justice: legal, procedural, and institutional, as well as the humble nature of A2J as an ongoing process rather than an end in itself. This presented a background for exploring the issues with seeking A2J throughout the subsequent panels. The span of discussions focusing on different fields of human rights, as well as different parts of the world is visible throughout the 8 thematic panels outlined in this report. These discussions and this year's Toogdag also perfectly highlight the Network's effort to connect the interacting themes of human rights research. They also act as a perfect stepping stone for the creation of further bridges between academia and practice as part of the Network's mission.



3. Collaboration: Consolidating Research

Aims of the Network

- Maintaining and strengthening the cooperation among human rights researchers in the Netherlands and abroad;
- Providing an inter-university research network context to researchers, PhDs in particular;
- Enhancing the visibility of Dutch Human Rights Research nationally and internationally and promoting participation in international human rights research projects.

The Network offers its members various platforms to share their scientific output with relevant academics, practitioners, and the general public. These platforms are focused on facilitating research valorization, increasing visibility, and connecting researchers to policy-oriented stakeholders. These platforms include:

- **Five thematic working groups**, providing members the opportunity to network with fellow scholars, engage with their research, and receive feedback;
- Opportunities for **publishing** their research in the **Human Rights Research Series** published in cooperation with T.M.C. Asser Press and/ or the **Human Rights Here blog**;
- The biennial **Max van der Stoep Human Rights Award**, organised in collaboration with Tilburg University, constituting a major platform for early career researchers to showcase their Masters' and Doctoral research and connect with relevant practitioners;
- Funding opportunities for **research workshops on human rights**, encouraging collaboration between institutions as well as junior and senior members;
- **Conference attendance grants** for PhD members to present their human rights research and engage with the broader academic community in the Netherlands and abroad.

3.1 Working Groups

Currently, and with the recent creation of the two new working groups (**Business & Human Rights** and **Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**) the Network has five thematic working groups, each connecting researchers to peers across the field of human rights research beyond bilateral inter-university cooperation.

Working group members range from junior to senior, and collaboration is highly encouraged. Members are free to join any, as well as multiple, working groups. The working groups are self-managed to encourage active participation through a bottom-up approach. The group's research agenda and activities are managed by a select group of working group coordinators. Coordinators are in regular contact with the Network's Academic Coordinator. Working groups regularly contribute to the Network's blog, *Human Rights Here*. They are also expected to organise at least one activity per academic year, such as conferences, lectures, workshops and networking events, which the Network finances either partly or in full. Activities involving both PhD Members and Senior Members are especially encouraged, as are events including members from various institutions within the Network.

Finally, a special time slot is reserved for working groups during the annual *Toogdag*. This gives them the opportunity to showcase their research and activities to the wider Network community.

The Network supports the working groups in the following ways:

- Event organisation through financial and infrastructural assistance;
- Dissemination of working group events through news items, the monthly newsletter and the Network's social media accounts;
- Showcasing output and increasing visibility of research through the monthly newsletter and the Network's social media accounts;
- Encouraging new members to join a working group.

Working groups are established by Network members through a formal proposal and approval by the Steering Committee. The working groups **Human Rights in the Digital Age, Migration and Borders** and **Business and Human Rights** were established in 2018. The working groups **Human Rights and the Climate Crisis** and **Economic, Social &**

Cultural Rights were established in 2024 by members of the NNHRR, showing how the Network fosters bottom-up initiatives.

Human Rights in the Digital Age Working Group

The working group on **Human Rights in the Digital Age** comprises two main tracks. The tracks are not mutually exclusive and thematically overlap. The working group has 34 members.

Track 1: “New frontiers of free expression and public debate in the digital age”

Track 1 one explores the challenges posed by digitalisation to freedom expression and public debate. While the advent of digital technologies and the Internet has brought unprecedented opportunities for individual mass communication, it has also given rise to other threats to public debate that are specific to the online environment. Recent years have been characterised by shrinking civil space and the harassment, intimidation, and prosecution of journalists, activists, and democratic dissenters. In parallel, new private gatekeepers have emerged, which control access to and influence the terms and topics of public debate through entering contractual relationships with their users. These developments prompt probing questions about whether and how existing human rights frameworks can safeguard robust, pluralistic public debate in which a diversity of voices and critical opinions can be articulated without fear. This is compounded by waves of disinformation and fake news, disrupting the public debate. Track 1’s activities thus explore, re-think, and re-purpose the rights, duties and responsibilities of all relevant actors in the digital age.

Track 2: “New private and collective dimensions: protecting (data) privacy and other human rights in the age of Artificial Intelligence”

Track 2 explores the far-reaching regulatory and practical implications of advanced data collection and analysis for human rights protection. It is increasingly challenging to invoke individual protection for human rights effects that are distributed on collective scales. In the meantime, the advent of automated decision-making and personalized communication are changing both the individual and collective

dimensions, spawning research into new concepts like group autonomy and group privacy. Track 2 takes privacy, data protection, and non-discrimination as a starting point to identify connections and crossroads with all impacted human rights.

Migration and Borders Working Group

The **Migration and Borders** working group comprises migration scholars at any stage in their career to collectively discuss thematic or methodological issues related to international migration, border practices, and human rights. The research focus is interdisciplinary, combining insights from law and social sciences. Research topics include the external dimension of EU asylum and migration policy, the EU New Pact on Migration and Asylum, the protection, integration and transition to adulthood of unaccompanied migrant children in the Netherlands, the decolonisation of migration law, and the effects of digitalisation of migration management and globalisation on human rights. The working group currently has 38 members.

Business and Human Rights Working Group

The working group on **Business and Human Rights** connects junior and senior researchers active in the field of business and human rights, as well as human rights and non-State actors more broadly. Past and present research topics include FIFA and human rights, the gender dimension of business and human rights, climate change as a business and human rights issue, artificial intelligence, business and human rights from a colonial lens, supplier codes of conduct, due diligence, and multi-stakeholder collaboration under the CSDDD. Presently, the working group has 35 members.

Human Rights and the Climate Crisis Working Group

The working group on **Human Rights and the Climate Crisis** brings together academics studying the multifaceted ways in which climate change affects human rights. It examines climate change as both an underlying and cross-cutting issue that affects human rights research. The group's research is guided by the following questions:

- How does climate change impact the types of research questions we ask?
- Without considering the impacts of climate change on all areas of human research, can human rights research be sufficiently 'future proof'?
- How to ensure that human rights research is relevant in 2030, 2040 or 2050, in light of the climate crisis?
- What role do and can human rights - as a largely anthropocentric 'human-oriented' construct - play in this 21st era of climate crisis? Is there a need for more radical, green, ecological and eco-centric approaches, for example as represented by the concept of 'rights of nature'?

The working group examines these questions through different interdisciplinary and methodological approaches and theories, ranging from positivist to critical studies. The group currently comprises 39 members.

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Working Group

The Working Group on **Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights** brings together a dynamic group of scholars committed to advancing research and critical dialogue on such rights, focusing on both the Dutch context and global challenges. Whilst essential to the achievement of social justice and human dignity, economic, social, and cultural rights – such as the rights to water, food, health, and housing – are often neglected in legal and policy frameworks. The working group focuses on enforcement, codification, and effectiveness to address gaps in rights protection and

realization in theory and practice. Ultimately, the group wants to ensure that economic, social, and cultural rights “gain the recognition they deserve”. The working group runs a Profile Series on economic, social, and cultural rights on the Network’s blog, *Human Rights Here*. Currently, the working group has 40 members.

3.2 Human Rights Research Series with T.M.C. Asser Press/Springer

The NNHRR has partnered with T.M.C. Asser Press/Springer to facilitate the publication of PhD manuscripts in the Human Rights Research Series. This partnership, commencing on **1 January 2025**, offers PhD authors an excellent opportunity to share their research with an international audience. The Steering Committee together with Frank Bakker, coordinating the cooperation from the side of Asser Press, have agreed on a set of criteria for a thesis to be eligible for publishing.

The editorial board will consist of:

- Prof. Dr. mr. Nicola Jägers (Tilburg University)
- Dr. mr. Antenor Hallo de Wolf (University of Groningen)
- Prof. Dr. Andrea Broderick (Maastricht University)
- Prof. mr. Jasper Krommendijk (Radboud University)
- Dr. Alberto Quintavalla (Erasmus University Rotterdam)
- Noor Swart (PhD Representative, University of Groningen)

3.3 Human Rights Here Blog

The NNHRR blog *Human Rights Here* (HRH) celebrated its fifth birthday during the reporting period. Established in 2019, the blog is overseen by a board of six editors and hosts content with the dual aspiration to showcase the breadth of human rights research conducted in the Netherlands to the world at large (by hosting blogs from NNHRR members) and to showcase societally and scientifically relevant and robust contributions from elsewhere in the world to our readership from among the Network.

The editorial board currently consists of:

- Dr. Elif Durmuş – Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Antwerp
- Dr. Aikaterini Tsampi – Assistant Professor in Public International Law, University of Groningen
- Dr. Antenor Hallo De Wolf – Assistant Professor in International Law and Human Rights, University of Groningen
- Dr. Amy Weatherburn – FWO Senior Postdoctoral Fellow, KU Leuven
- Monique Kalsi – PhD Researcher, University of Groningen
- Kim Schuurman – PhD Researcher, Utrecht University
- Dmytro Cherneha – Research Intern, T.M.C. Asser Instituut

Testimonial from the HRH Editorial Board



Current editorial board member, Dr. Amy Weatherburn reflects on her role by stating that *“The added value of the HRH blog lies in its ability to provide an intellectual space for NNHRR members to spotlight their latest research outputs, as well as to allow human rights researchers and practitioners in The Netherlands and beyond to reflect on current academic, praxis and societal developments and innovation in relation to human rights protection.”*

In the last two academic years, HRH has seen an exponential increase in the number of blog submissions, with a total of 105 blog submissions received, representing approximately half of all publications received since its inception in 2019. Of these submissions, 72 blog submissions have been published, including those related to NNHRR Working Groups, events, workshops, and forums etc. The blog’s activity levels reflect a strong growth in both engagement and output. All of our blog posts are promoted through our network, including the NNHRR newsletter and social media – LinkedIn, Bluesky and X (formerly Twitter). Here again, our visibility and presence on social media platforms has increased, and we have tripled the number of followers on LinkedIn, reaching 1,555 followers, with LinkedIn posts having reached over 42,000

users. The blog's presence on X is restricted to posts on new blog pieces and the Bluesky account, created in December 2024, has 58 followers. The blog's [website](#) also achieves global reach with, in addition to the Netherlands, active users from the Belgium, Germany, Italy, India, the United Kingdom and the United States.

3.4 Max van der Stoel Award

In 1995, Tilburg University established a Human Rights Award to highlight the importance of human rights in academic research and education. Renamed in 2002 to honour Max van der Stoel - Dutch Minister of State, first OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, and former UN Rapporteur on human rights in Iraq - the award recognizes outstanding academic work in the field. Since 2019, the Max van der Stoel Human Rights Award has been organised biennially by Tilburg Law School and the NNHRR.

Nominations are open to all faculties at Dutch and Flemish universities, as well as the Asser Institute, as coordinator of the Network. Each faculty may nominate one candidate to compete in the “Best Doctoral Thesis” category, and one candidate to enter the “Best Master’s Thesis” category. The prize money is €4,000, to be distributed by the jury.

Participating theses may look at human rights in a broad sense, to include civil and political, as well as social and economic rights. Publications may also look at human rights enjoyment by specific groups, for instance through the lens of gender, age, or ethnicity, or human rights in specific situations, such as emergencies and during or after violent conflicts. Theses may also examine human rights procedures, institutions, and other forms of implementation, monitoring, and enforcement. They may be theoretical in nature or based on empirical research.

Testimonials Max van der Stoel Award 2023

The last edition of the Max van der Stoel Award took place on 7 December 2023. Floris Tan (Leiden University) was awarded the title of “Best Doctoral Thesis” for his

dissertation *The Duty to Investigate in Situations of Armed Conflict: An Examination under International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Law, and Their Interplay*. The “Best Master Thesis” title was awarded to Tycho Scholten (VU Amsterdam) for his dissertation titled *Groener bij de Buren. Human rights and Separation of Powers in the Climate Lawsuits of the Netherlands, Ireland and Germany*.



The best Master’s thesis is chosen by the Steering Committee, while the best PhD thesis is chosen by the Jury. For the upcoming edition of the Max van der Stoel Award, the jury will consist of:

- Prof. Koen Lemmens (Chair) KU Leuven
- Dr. Gerhard van der Schyff (Tilburg University)
- Dr. Antenor Hallo de Wolf (Groningen University)
- Dr. Margaretha Wewerinke-Singh (University of Amsterdam)

The upcoming edition of the Max van der Stoel Award will take place on **10 December 2025** at **Tilburg University**.

3.5 Grants

The Netherlands Network for Human Rights Research offers two grant schemes to foster its members’ academic collaboration and professional growth. The first one allows the grant holder to organize a research workshop, while the second one allows the grant holder to attend an academic conference of their choice:

- **Research Workshops on Human Rights:** To enhance academic exchange opportunities for network members across themes, levels of seniority and research fields;

- **Conference Attendance Grants:** To offer PhD members the opportunity to participate in (international) conferences and other academic events relevant to their human rights research.

3.5.1 Research Workshops on Human Rights

Network members can propose workshops involving their faculty, members from other stakeholder universities within the Network, and researchers from third-party institutions. All network members may apply for the grant, so long as they meet the eligibility criteria. The eligibility criteria are as follows:

- Workshops must be co-convened by at least two Network members (one PhD and one Senior, wherever possible);
- Two different member institutions should be involved;
- Workshops must take place in the Netherlands;
- Workshops may take a variety of formats, including (but not limited to) panels, keynote speeches, meet and greets, events with artistic elements, etc.;
- Co-convenors must consider inclusion and diversity when formulating the program.

There are three rounds of applications per academic year, closing on **31 October**, **28 February**, and **30 June**. In each round, up to three grants will be awarded. Proposals are assessed and approved by the Academic Coordinator of the Network and the Chair of the Steering Committee. The allocated budget per workshop is **€2,000**, and covers costs related to holding the workshops, including transportation and accommodation for speakers when applicable, catering, and costs such as student assistants. Successful applicants commit to writing a 1000-word report in blog post form summarizing the activity, discussions, and outcome. This will be published on the Network's website, or on the blog, *Human Rights Here*.

Research Workshop Testimonial:

“Climate on Trial: Lessons from the *Milieudefensie v Shell* case”

On **13 February 2025**, the T.M.C. Asser Instituut, in collaboration with SEVEN - the Climate Institute (University of Amsterdam), organised a panel discussion on the implications of the Court of Appeal's *Milieudefensie v Shell* judgment from different angles and explored its significance for future climate accountability strategies. The Court of Appeal ruled that, whilst Shell was not legally compelled to meet a specific 45% emissions reduction target, states and private actors nonetheless have a shared responsibility under international human rights law to combat climate change that can influence private law obligations. This coincided with the European Union's newly adopted Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive. The discussion explored themes including the shared responsibilities of states and private actors in addressing climate change, the horizontal effect of human rights obligations on corporate conduct, the evolving legal landscape of corporate climate accountability and the use of strategic litigation, and the role of international guidelines and emerging EU directives in shaping corporate climate strategies. The panel was moderated by Stephanie Triefus (Asser Institute), and included speakers Andre Nollkaemper (founder of SEVEN, University of Amsterdam), Sjoukje van Oosterhout (Senior team lead of Milieudefensie in the climate case against Shell), Anneloes Kuiper (Utrecht University) and Chiara Macchi (Wageningen University & Research).

A blog post about the workshop was published on *Human Rights Here* on **31 March 2025** by Stephanie Triefus and Dmytro Cherneha. It can be accessed [here](#).



3.5.2 Conference Attendance Grants

The conference attendance grant scheme was established in 2025 to support PhD members of the Network to attend conferences and other important academic events relating to their human rights research. This facilitates the Network's objectives of supporting the training and development of its PhD members and building their networks within and outside the Netherlands. The applicant should meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Be a member of NNHRR;
- Be currently affiliated with a NNHRR member university as a PhD candidate;
- Have not yet defended their PhD at the time of the proposed conference attendance;
- Demonstrate that the event that they wish to attend has a strong connection to their human rights research;
- The event should take place within six months of the closing of the application round.

Additionally, the following criteria are not required, but will be prioritised in the selection of applicants:

- The applicant is an external PhD without funding from their institution;
- The applicant is presenting their own research at the event.

In the pilot year of 2025, three rounds of applications took place. The respective deadlines were **7 February**, **30 April**, and **30 September**. For each round, four grants of a maximum of **€1,000** are awarded, covering travel and accommodation costs, and the conference fee (if applicable). Applications are assessed by the Academic Coordinator of the Network and the Chair of the Steering Committee. In case of conflict of interests, another member of the Steering Committee will assess that application.

Grant recipients are expected to acknowledge the support of NNHRR in any presentation given at the event attended. Grant recipients commit to submit a substantive blog post to *Human Rights Here* of up to 1,000 words on the subject matter of the event. Blog posts will then be promoted as news items on the NNHRR website.

Conference Attendance Grant Testimonial:

Selman Aksünger (PhD Candidate, Maastricht University)

Like many PhD students, whenever I read a call for papers, I follow a familiar routine: first, I check if the conference theme aligns with my research, then I look at the deadline to see if it's feasible to submit something. But inevitably, my third thought is always about attendance expenses.

Thanks to the NNHRR conference travel scheme, I managed to escape this constant fear of "who's going to bear the burden of participation?" The NNHRR grant made this opportunity available for me, transforming what would have been a financial impossibility into an accessible and enriching academic experience. The funding allowed me to attend without the anxiety of high travel costs. For once, I could read the final section of a call for papers with less worry about whether it would say "no financial support available."

The conference was particularly relevant to my work as the title of my presentation closely resembled the title of my thesis. It served as an excellent testing ground to see whether my arguments make sense within the broader international legal community. Having the opportunity to present my research at Cambridge provided valuable validation and feedback from established scholars in the field.

One of the biggest takeaways was recognizing that climate change-related research is going to be even more relevant in the coming years. The conference highlighted a crucial shift: classical topics of international law—such as use of force, non-intervention, human rights, and others—must be connected to ongoing issues like climate change, AI, and cyberspace to remain relevant and practical. One of the most

memorable aspects was meeting in person some of the scholars who frequently appear in my footnotes, such as Judge Bogdan Aurescu and Prof. Antony Anghie—transforming academic references into real conversations and making the scholarly community feel more tangible and accessible.



4. Communicating Human Rights

The Network's communications strategy aims at establishing and maintaining linkages among members by increasing their visibility and promoting their research outputs and achievements. During the reporting period, these objectives have been achieved through:

- The Network's website (<https://www.asser.nl/nnhrr>);
- The Network's monthly Newsletters;
- The Network's social media accounts, LinkedIn and Bluesky.

4.1 Website

The Network's website is hosted by the T.M.C. Asser Instituut. Its address is <https://www.asser.nl/nnhrr>. The Network's website generated a substantial and constant amount of traffic and page views over the reporting period.

In the period **between 1 January 2024 and 31 December 2024** the website counted 3,700 active users and a total of 16,000 views, with 14,000 users engaging with the website and 3,000 first-time visitors.



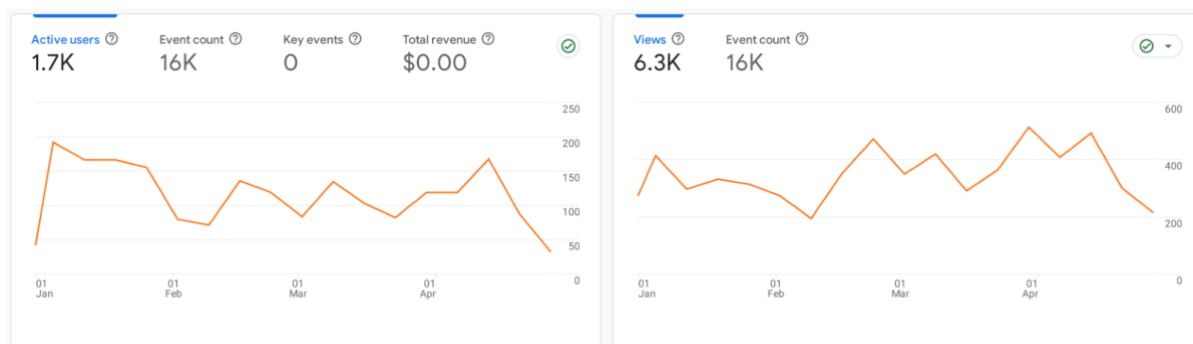
Source: Google Analytics

The website's active users came from numerous countries, with 2,100 from the Netherlands.



Source: Google Analytics

In the period **between 1 January 2025 and 29 April 2025** the website counted 1,700 active users and 6,300 views. User engagement was 5,100 and there were 1,500 first-time visitors.



Source: Google Analytics

The website reached an increasingly international audience, with many active users from the Netherlands and the United States.



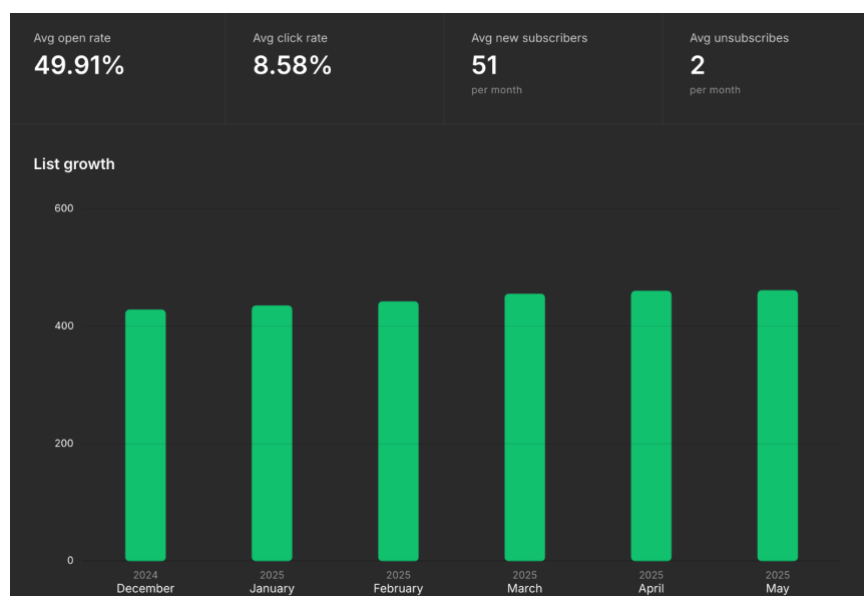
Source: Google Analytics

The total number of views between **1 January 2024 and 29 April 2025** was 22,300 and the number of active users was 5,400.

4.2 Newsletter

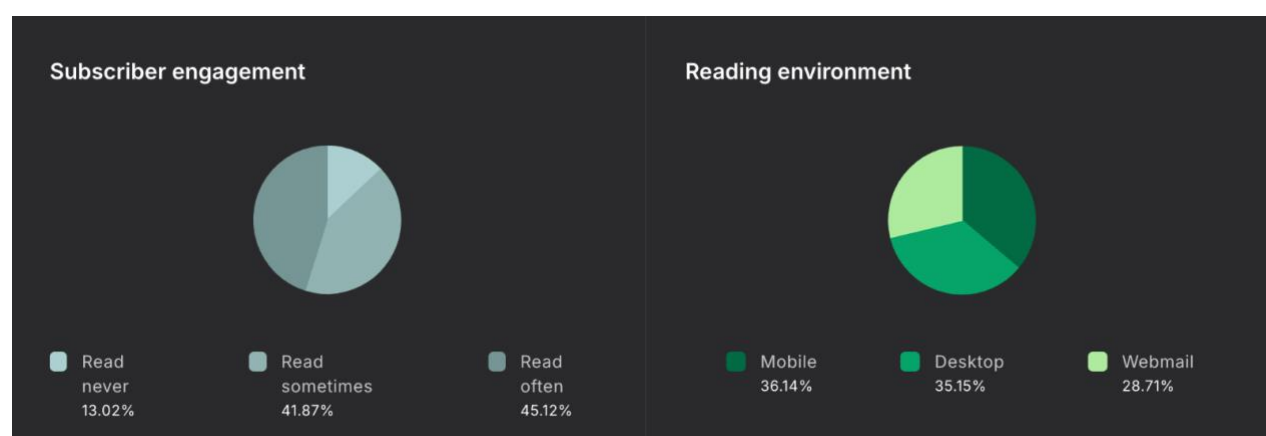
The Network's intern and the Academic Coordinator send a monthly Newsletter to Network members, including information on upcoming events and conferences, calls for papers, member's publications, and more. Additionally, special Newsletters are sent out occasionally to promote the Network's flagship events.

The Newsletter currently has **476 active subscribers**. The number of subscribers has been growing steadily. With an average of 51 new subscribers per month, and an average of 2 people cancelling their subscription per month, the **monthly growth rate** is positive, at **49 subscribers**.



Source: Mailerlite

Subscriber engagement has also been high, with 45,12% of subscribers reading the Newsletter “often”, 41,87% reading the Newsletter “sometimes”, and only 13,02% of subscribers “never” reading the newsletter.



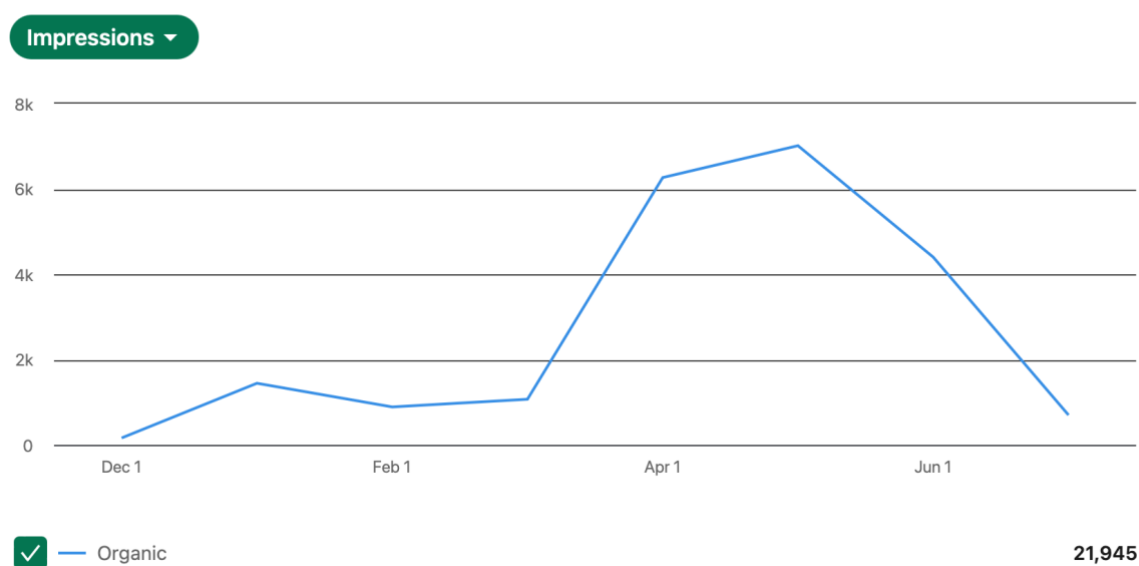
Source: Mailerlite

4.3 LinkedIn

The Network's LinkedIn, profile under the handle **Netherlands Network for Human Rights Research**, has been active since **1 December 2024**. The Network's profile is managed by the Secretariat. Through regular posts, flagship events, working group activities, calls for papers, and calls for applications for workshop and conference attendance grants are publicized. The Network also regularly re-posts *Human Rights Here* blog post advertisements.

Currently, the Network's LinkedIn page has **980 followers**. The page has generated **21,945 impressions since its creation in December 2024** (defined by the platform as "the total number of views when the content is at least 50% on screen for at least 300ms, or the total number of times the content is clicked on, whichever comes first").

Metrics



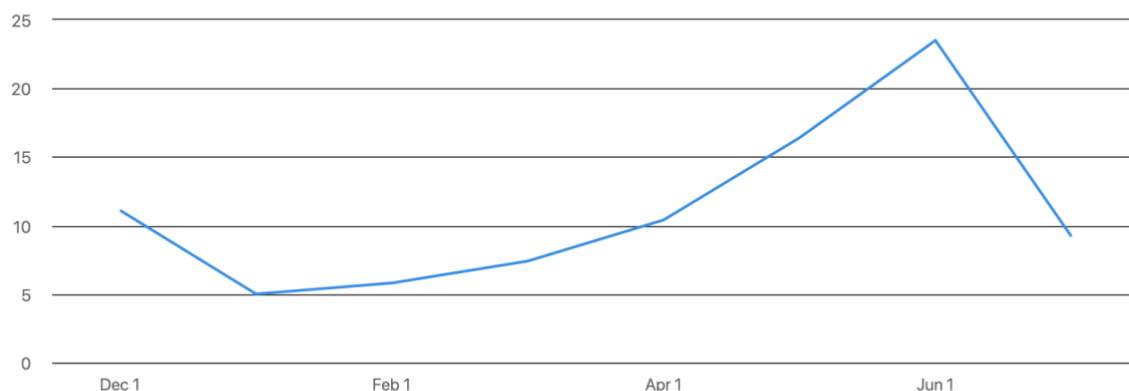
Source: LinkedIn Analytics

The Network's LinkedIn **engagement rate** is currently **14,2**. It is calculated by LinkedIn as:

$$(\text{Clicks} + \text{Reactions} + \text{Comments} + \text{Shares} + \text{Follows}) / \text{Impressions}.$$

Metrics

Engagement rate ▾



✓ Organic

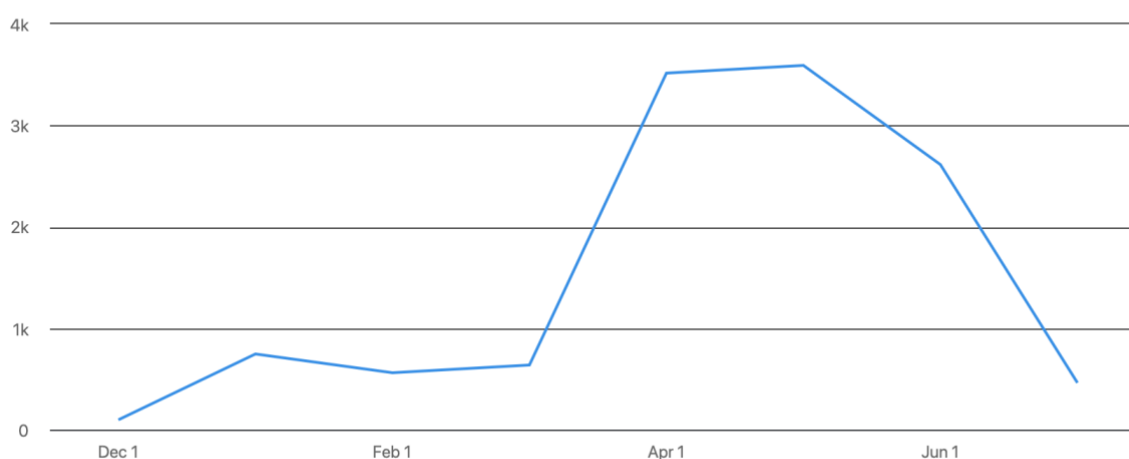
14.2

Source: LinkedIn Analytics

Through its LinkedIn page, the Network **reached 12,225 people**.

Metrics

Members reached ▾



✓ Organic

12,225

Source: LinkedIn Analytics

4.4 Bluesky

To give the Network wider cross-platform visibility, a Bluesky Profile was set up in November 2024. The Network's handle is [@nnhrr.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/nnhrr.social). The Bluesky account is managed by the Secretariat. Similarly to LinkedIn, the Bluesky profile is used to promote flagship events, working group activities, calls for papers, and calls for applications for workshop and conference attendance grants. It is also used to publicize *Human Rights Here* blogposts. Since 21 November 2024, the Network's profile counts **31 posts**. As of July 2025, the profile has **185 followers**.

5. Looking Ahead

The Network is developing new activities and outreach strategies to further enhance interactions among its members. During the 2025–2026 academic year and based on the advice received from the Advisory Board, it plans to continue supporting the work of PhD members and to explore new ways of connecting academia and practice. Building on the continuous success of our flagship events, as well as those organised by our working groups, we look forward to strengthening the capital built over the years. This will be achieved by focusing on the following:

5.1 Supporting visibility of PhD Members

The growing number of PhD members in the Network calls for greater visibility of the research they are conducting. This represents an important step within the pillars of connection and collaboration, which will be further developed in the upcoming reporting period.

5.1 Supporting Working Groups

With the majority of the Network's events organised at the initiative of our Working Groups, we look forward to developing ways to boost collaboration between them on cross-cutting topics such as, but not limited to, climate change, academic freedom, and children's rights.

5.2 Supporting the Human Rights Here Blog

The Network's blog – *Human Rights Here* – has been the cornerstone of the Networks activities in reporting on legal developments in the field. The Network is aiming at strengthening that collaboration by providing inputs from its events to the blog, as well as continuously supporting the editors and the intern.

5.4 Supporting PhD Conference Attendance

The successful completion of two rounds of the Conference Attendance Grant scheme, one in April and one in June, has shown the broad areas of interest of our PhD

candidates and the need for financial support in attending conferences linked to their PhD research. We are looking forward to continuing that initiative in the next reporting period.

5.5 Supporting Training Events and Conferences with Practitioners

The reflections and conversations following this year's Toogdag in Nijmegen highlighted the need to connect the Network's broad base of research with practitioners working on similar issues, such as government officials, judges, and NGO representatives. Therefore, the Network's Academic Coordinator, together with the Intern and the Steering Committee, will explore further ways of strengthening connections and presenting the expertise of our Junior Members both within academic circles and beyond.