

The core idea of human rights expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is that human rights are universally applicable to all people. Although equal rights are granted to all human beings, the enjoyment of these rights in practice depends on many factors that shape position of an entity within the society. As a result, specific persons or groups are more exposed to human rights violations than other. Thus, one of main challenges faced by states and international community concerns the question of how to secure human rights for all, including the most vulnerable ones?

“Vulnerability” of certain group’s members may be caused by their fragile physical or mental condition (e.g. children, persons with disabilities, older people, pregnant women), discrimination or disadvantage they experience (e.g. Roma people, indigenous people, religious minorities) or critical situation they face (e.g. refugees, migrants, internally displaced persons).

The aim of the research project is to analyze how these groups are protected under international human rights law by answering the following questions: Is “vulnerability” a coherent and well-established concept in the practice of international systems of human rights protection? What are the key-elements of this concept? What is the role of this concept in the protection of specific groups? Is it just an academic construct or an efficient tool of human rights protection? The conclusions drawn from the analysis will allow to formulate the recommendations regarding the realization of the principle of equality and non-discrimination and the process of strengthening the system of human rights protection.

Research will focus on the UN and European system of human rights protection, both being of core relevance for the EU countries, including Poland. Additionally, if relevant, other regimes of international law will be explored, such as humanitarian law or refugee law. The research will be based on the analysis of international human rights treaties, case-law of the European Court of Human Rights and decisions of UN human rights treaty bodies.

The project results will be published in peer reviewed academic journals and presented in conference papers.