

Policy plan 2023

This year we will try to reinstate the summer course on human rights and human security for the Hague University of Applied Sciences. After three years in which the summer course did not take place due to COVID and other causes within the Hague University, we hope to start and resume the tradition of the previous six years of successful summer courses. The project leader is Ilia Barboutev.

The second project this year will be the continuation of the small refugee project. Its aim is to support with advice three families from the Middle East who have difficulty in integrating into German society. Assisting them will give better insight into the German asylum and integration system. Project leader is Joris Voorhoeve.

The third project in 2023 is a study of the social and military conscription schemes of a number of countries, to learn lessons for the Netherlands and Germany. The countries being studied are Finland, Sweden, Lithuania, Israel and Singapore. Project leader is Pablo Mathis.

The fourth project is a new proposal: measures and norms for international solidarity among states. Among groups of states there are constant discussions about how much each state should contribute to common goals. Since the 1960s the United Nations has a norm for development cooperation of highly developed states with developing countries with large poor populations. The norm is 0.7% of national income. This has guided a number of member states of the OECD and the European Union in the 1970s till the early 1990s. On average, less than half of this norm is being achieved by the OECD states.

A second norm for solidarity is in the area of defence. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has set a norm of 2% of national income to be devoted to the common defence. The larger member states spend more, but most smaller member states and Germany spend much less. Due to the Russian war against Ukraine the norm has been reinforced and countries like the Netherlands and Germany now strive to implement this norm as soon as possible.

A third area in which solidarity among states is desired is international environmental finance. The UN conference in Rio de Janeiro in the 1990s adopted a goal of 1% of national income. This norm has lost its relevance, as the actual cost will be much higher. A more important environmental norm is that countries should take measures that lower carbon dioxide emissions to such an extent that the average global temperature rise will be limited to one and a half degree Celsius. This norm is widely supported politically but it is not being achieved.

Another area in which norms could be useful is immigration of refugees into well-ordered, highly developed countries. At present there are more than 100 million refugees in the world and most of them must live in great poverty and insecurity. In North America and Western Europe an ongoing debate takes place between those who want to keep refugees out and those who want to accept and integrate them into their society. The question is: what is the absorptive capacity of well-ordered societies to integrate people from very different cultures and languages? This depends of course on the political will and the resources. Some countries accept many and others almost none. The countries accepting many, relative to the size of their population, are Turkey, Lebanon, Germany and Sweden. The member states of the European Union try to find a system based on greater solidarity. On the one hand, the countries at the Mediterranean receive many refugees but many countries in the east and north of the European Union are reluctant. The preferred destination of many of the refugees is Northern Europe. It might be useful to develop norms in this respect as the degree to which countries can absorb refugees is subjective. It depends on the views of the population, the nature of the refugees, and the political system. One side of the question is how many one can accept

without threatening the cohesion of society and on the other hand, refusing political and survival refugees means that these people cannot enjoy basic human rights and not even the right of survival.

The purpose of this project, that started in August 2023, is to briefly study the previously mentioned norms and their effects on actual performance, and to infer from that the usability of norms about acceptance and integration of refugees. The project leader is Joris Voorhoeve with the assistance of Pablo Mathis.