

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

UNIVERSITY OF MILAN

21 MAY 2025

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

The University of Milan is organizing a conference on *Cultural Diversity and Human Rights Law* on 21 May 2025. The conference is part of the Jean Monnet Module *CultHum* (<https://culthum.unimi.it/>) on the same topic, co-funded by the European Union at the University of Milan.

The protection of cultural diversity is one of the cornerstones of international law. Cultural diversity is an inherent basis for the protection of human rights and indigenous peoples and minorities, a key to the achievement of sustainable development, and a prerequisite for ensuring the preservation of cultural heritage. Having said this, and notwithstanding that cultural diversity is the hallmark of a pluralistic and democratic society, some rules recognized in religious or customary law and some practices based on tradition and religion (so-called ‘harmful traditional practices’) may potentially or actually conflict with fundamental human rights, especially those of vulnerable groups or individuals. Therefore, protection of cultural diversity and, where necessary, the balancing of potentially or actually affected human rights are crucial challenges for a multicultural society.

The Conference convened by the University of Milan aims to examine the relevant international and European legal frameworks on cultural diversity and human rights in order to develop legal solutions suitable for strengthening cultural diversity in the context of human rights. To this end, and in order to make the coexistence of different cultural identities effective and the pursuit of a peaceful and just multicultural society realistic, some theoretical grounds and analytical issues deserve to be explored, including the framing of cultural diversity within the legal discourse on universalism and relativism of human rights, the examination of the status and content of cultural rights and the right to cultural identity within European and international law, the proposition of cultural diversity as a basis for defensive relativism, its invocation as a ground for general exceptions to the rules of international law.

The organizers invite the submission of abstracts on the main theme of the Conference from the perspective of public and private international law and European law, including the following topics

- Protection of cultural diversity
- Freedom of religion and cultural diversity
- Potential and actual conflicts between cultural diversity and human rights law
- Harmful practices based on culture, tradition and religion
- Pluri-legal systems

- Cultural heritage, cultural diversity and human rights
- Cultural diversity and cultural defence
- Cultural diversity as an exception to international legal regimes (e.g. trade, investment)
- Cultural diversity and sustainable development

To apply, please send an abstract (no more than 650 words) to culthum@unimi.it by 10 March 2025. Please include the following information: your name, affiliation, email address, position, short biography.

Successful applicants will be notified by 15 March.

Thanks to the funding received from the EU in the framework of the Jean Monnet Module, the University of Milan will provide accommodation for the selected speakers. Speakers will be expected to cover their own travel costs.