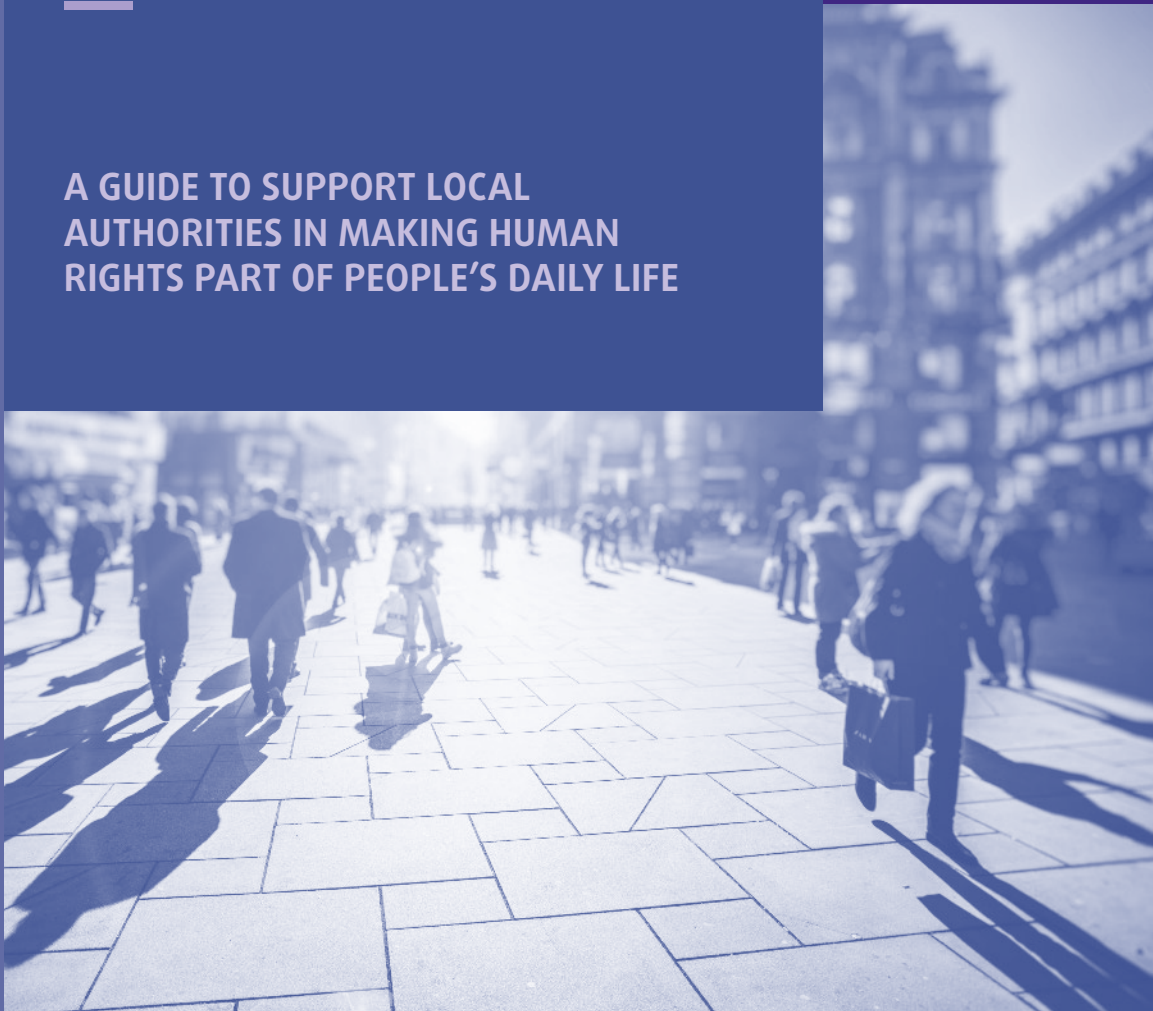


HUMAN RIGHTS CITIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

A GUIDE TO SUPPORT LOCAL
AUTHORITIES IN MAKING HUMAN
RIGHTS PART OF PEOPLE'S DAILY LIFE



Key abbreviations

CoE	Council of Europe	NHRI	national human rights institution
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights	OHCHR	United Nations Human Rights Office
HRBA	human rights-based approach	SDG	sustainable development goal
LGBTIQ	lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer	UN	United Nations
NGO	non-governmental organisation	UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme

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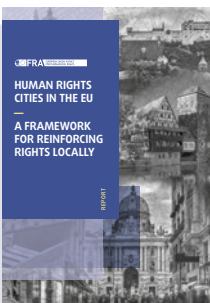
How can this guide help cities?

This guide can help cities wishing to improve their efforts to respect human rights. It aims to encourage local authorities to adopt higher human rights standards. The idea is to encourage and foster mutual learning on human and fundamental rights.

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), a group of human rights cities and various practitioners in the EU worked together to produce this guide.

The guide draws on the promising practices and experiences of cities, regions, experts, international organisations and networks that can be found in the FRA report *Human rights cities in the EU: A framework for reinforcing rights locally*.

Read more at:



Human rights cities in the EU: a framework for reinforcing rights locally (europa.eu)



▶ Watch the video at:



Human Rights cities | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (europa.eu)

One size does not fit all

The duty to respect human and fundamental rights applies to all local authorities. However, cities, towns, municipalities and regions differ across the EU in structure, composition, powers and size.
→ This guide is generic. It should be read while bearing in mind the national and local context, including constitutional traditions and powers.

There is no accreditation process to become a human rights city. It is based on a self-declaration.
→ Local authorities can use the guide to design and implement their own step-by-step policies and strategies.

What is a ‘human rights city’?

This label is applied where the local government, local grassroots organisations and city residents commit through a declaration and work together to uphold international human rights standards and norms. The city takes measures to deliver on these standards and develop rights-based policies on a wide variety of issues, thus contributing to the respect and promotion of human rights.

The human rights city initiative started in Rosario (Argentina) in 1997. It has since been adopted by many more local authorities worldwide, such as Porto Alegre (Brazil), Jakarta (Indonesia), Gwangju and Seoul (South Korea), York (United Kingdom) or Washington DC (United States). In the EU, it has been adopted in cities such as Graz, Salzburg, and Vienna (Austria), Turin (Italy), Middelburg and Utrecht (Netherlands), Barcelona and Valencia (Spain), and Lund (Sweden). Additional cities such as Turku (Finland) are currently working towards a human rights city status.

Beyond cities

The generic term ‘city’ can apply to different administrative areas, such as towns, municipalities, districts, counties, provinces and regions.

Human rights or fundamental rights?

The term ‘human rights’ refers to all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights as laid down in international legal instruments. The term ‘fundamental rights’ refers to the rights that are included in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and reflected in the general principles of EU law.

→ This guide addresses the implementation of both human and fundamental rights at the local level. For the ease of reading, it generally refers to human rights, meaning both sets of rights. Read more at: <https://keydifferences.com/difference-between-fundamental-rights-and-human-rights.html>

Going local: making human rights part of people's daily life

Most people in the EU live in cities and other urban areas. They are an ideal starting point to make human rights, democracy and the rule of law a reality. These are universal values on which the EU is founded. Much of a city's daily work is directly linked to human rights for instance when providing access to housing or healthcare, managing public spaces, supporting social inclusion, engaging in public debate or fostering local democracy.

Cities are already delivering on human rights. They do so through local sectoral policies such as helping to improve service delivery for children and youth and supporting the elderly or the homeless. Such policies also support the inclusion of Roma people and migrant integration. However, these activities do not always refer to human rights.

“Becoming a human rights city means explicitly linking such activities to human and fundamental rights obligations. Doing so can have a reinvigorating effect, boosting confidence in local government and fostering public debates that ultimately help make fairer societies for all.”

Michael O’Flaherty,
Director of the EU Agency for
Fundamental Rights

“Human rights are universal rights. They can help bring people closer together and build bridges within society. It is incumbent on governments and public institutions to protect human rights and to ensure a life in dignity and freedom for each and every individual.”

Michael Ludwig, Mayor and
Governor of Vienna, Austria



Nine out of 10 people in the EU believe that human rights are important for creating a fairer society.

The FRA **Fundamental Rights Survey** gathered information about the experiences, perceptions and opinions on a range of issues in human rights from 35,000 people across the 27 EU Member States, North Macedonia and the United Kingdom. Its findings show that people widely believe that human rights can play a useful and meaningful role in their lives, but that inequalities can strongly affect their perception about human rights. The more people struggle in their daily life, the more they feel that human rights do not apply to them. The survey also shows the need for public services including at the local level to be transparent and reliable and provided without any discrimination.

"I believe that from the cities we have to build a common front for human rights, against racism, against discrimination. (...) There are no first or second class people, everyone must have the same basic rights."

Ada Colau, Mayor of
Barcelona, Spain



Human rights: delivering on a legal obligation

National, regional and local governments, including cities, are 'duty-bearers': they have a duty to respect, promote and fulfil human rights, and to act when these rights are violated. They have a duty to protect the 'rights-holders' – those entitled to rights and freedoms under international and European conventions, charters and treaties that the states have ratified.



“Respecting and promoting human rights is never finished. This became clearer than ever in times of corona. Think of the right to work, the right to health, to education or the right to access public services for people with disabilities. For people, human rights are not something abstract, far away, something in other countries. Human rights get their meaning close at home, in our cities.”

Linda Voortman, Co-Mayor of Utrecht, Netherlands

These obligations bind all forms of local governments in urban or rural areas, irrespective of their size or constitutional powers.

“Being a human rights city has been a way of creating equal opportunities for all our citizens and making a clear statement to work together with other cities around Europe. Most of our citizens live in cities today, around 70%; however, we must not forget rural areas, as we are obliged to create equal rights for everyone. In Lund, we aim to include the whole municipal area, both the city and the countryside, in our work with human rights, as it is essential to promote cohesion.”

Philip Sandberg, Mayor of Lund, Sweden



↑ Sweden, 2020.
Local community meeting
between Lund and ‘Södra
Sandby’ village.

“Since 2001, the City of Graz has been the first European Human Rights City. A high demand is linked to this, which is tested and wants to be realised on a daily basis. We are required to ensure that fundamental rights are guaranteed, discriminations are prevented, as well as all humans are treated equally, and the protection of minorities is secured. This is important to me and a matter dear to my heart, because it is the basis for coexisting in peace and solidarity.”

Elke Kahr, Mayor of Graz, Austria.

Being a human rights city: does it add value?

In a human rights city, elected officials ensure good governance through high standards of accountability, transparency and public participation in policymaking and implementation. This helps their administrations to be more conscious of the universal values and human rights they must always respect in their actions. This also enhances public trust and civil society support - two key elements for fostering creativity and innovation.



Foundations, structures and tools

The framework for human rights cities looks at the foundations, structures and tools that can help cities integrate human rights in a holistic and sustainable way in their work.

It compiles the necessary elements which can be applied in a flexible way, adapted to the local context and the city's resources.

The tools support the structures, which in turn integrate the foundations - the rights and principles - into the city's work.

↓ Nuremberg residents gathering against right-wing extremism in the 'Way of Human Rights'



THE FRAMEWORK IN A NUTSHELL



FOUNDATIONS

City commitments to human rights

- 1 Commit to respect, protect and fulfil the rights and freedoms in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the EU law
- 2 Commit to protect, respect and fulfil international human rights standards
- 3 Commit to the UN's SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- 4 Commit to contribute to international monitoring mechanisms



- 12 Mainstream human rights across city work and activities
- 13 Apply a human rights-based approach across city activities
- 14 Develop knowledge through training and human rights education
- 15 Take human rights into account in the budgeting and procurement processes
- 16 Establish and implement a local human rights action plan
- 17 Check the compatibility of local decisions with human rights
- 18 Raise people's awareness about human rights
- 19 Monitor and evaluate the city's work in a participatory way
- 20 Cooperate transnationally and contribute to the peer-to-peer exchange and mutual learning between cities on human rights

- 5 Adopt a declaration to affirm the city's commitment to human rights
- 6 Nominate an elected representative on human rights
- 7 Establish a human rights office or department
- 8 Establish a consultative participatory council on human rights
- 9 Establish an anti-discrimination office or local ombudsperson
- 10 Report annually on human rights in the city
- 11 Cooperate and develop partnerships with national, EU and international human rights bodies



STRUCTURES

Mechanisms and procedures to help integrate human rights into day-to-day work

TOOLS

Methods and resources to support human rights work







Foundations —

City commitments
to human rights

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↑ Austria, 2021.
Vienna Children and
youth parliament.



1

Commit to respect, protect and fulfil the rights and freedoms in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the EU law

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are the founding values of the EU. The **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights** and the **EU law** enshrine these values. They underpin EU policies and programmes. The charter is the EU’s bill of rights and comprises 50 rights and freedoms for everybody living in the EU Member States, including local authorities, are legally obliged to respect the charter when they act in areas of EU law, implement EU programmes or use EU funds.

HOW?

Refer to the charter when raising awareness of fundamental rights in order to show that the EU is primarily a political union of values and rights.

Use **EU funds** to develop initiatives promoting rights and values.

Ensure that the administration and all service providers comply with EU law.

- 1
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PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Vienna’s commitments to human rights include references to international and EU instruments, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

KEY RESOURCES

- **EU citizens, equality, rights and values programme and funding**
- **EU charter resources, FRA**



2

Commit to protect, respect and fulfil international human rights standards

HOW?

Commit to all the international human rights instruments ratified by their state.

Make specific reference to such international instruments (e.g. the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** or the **European Convention on Human Rights**) when issuing decisions.

Cooperate with experts and national human rights actors (e.g. national human rights institutions (NHRIs), **equality bodies**, **ombudsperson**) to stay tuned to human rights developments.

KEY RESOURCES

- **List of universal human rights instruments**, United Nations
- **Council of Europe (CoE) treaties**

Human rights are universal legal standards for public authorities at all levels of government. By making a public commitment to the international human rights instruments that have been ratified by their state, cities affirm that they will protect and respect these rights, putting them at the heart of their decision making.

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Nuremberg's '**City of peace and human rights**' declaration refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Barcelona's commitments cover the full range of human and fundamental rights instruments as well as references to the **European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City**.



Commit to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

3

In 2015, the world community (193 UN member states) endorsed the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and its **17 SDGs**, thus committing ensure inclusive economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. The signatories also agreed to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies through this new global partnership. The agenda is a concrete call to action for national and local governments to end poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change. The 17 goals and over **210 indicators** cover poverty, hunger, health and well-being, good-quality education, sustainable cities and much more. They are closely connected to human rights: the agenda and the SDGs can help cities to take a more holistic and sustainable approach to human rights and create opportunities for new international partnerships.

HOW?

Identify the departments working on SDGs and ensure that their policies and measures include reference to human rights.
.....

Raise awareness of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs and how they are linked to human rights.
.....

Link your local SDG work to national SDG efforts.
.....

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Utrecht, is a ‘**Global Goals City**’ that cooperates with local businesses to raise people’s awareness of their rights and monitors progress on the SDGs dashboard.

Several cities and regions such as **Bonn**, **Espoo**, the **Basque Regional Government** have conducted **voluntary local reviews** (VLRs) to assess the progress of SDG implementation.

KEY RESOURCES

- **Human rights cities and the SDGs**, the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law
- **The 2030 Agenda through the eyes of the local and regional government associations**, PLATFORMA and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions



4

Commit to contribute to international monitoring mechanisms

HOW?

Check whether human rights actions in your city follow recommendations from international bodies.
.....

Draw on recommendations to reach out to your national authorities, directly or with other cities, to discuss contributions of the local and regional levels and cooperation opportunities.
.....

Reach out to national bodies (e.g. NHRI, equality body and/or ombuds institution) and bring forward successful local initiatives. Highlight also issues that hamper implementing human rights locally in areas identified by the recommendations (e.g. funds, national legislations, lack of capacities).
.....

International instruments have established monitoring mechanisms to ensure that states protect and respect human rights. These mechanisms review states' compliance with their obligations. National authorities are directly responsible for reporting to the monitoring mechanisms. In the 2020 **Resolution 45/7**, the UN Human Rights Council encourages states to engage **local governments** in the work of these mechanisms, in particular when preparing their submissions for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The states are also encouraged to promote the implementation of relevant human rights recommendations by local governments.

As part of the **special procedures**, the Human Rights Council has appointed independent experts to monitor thematic issues. These experts engage with local governments during country missions for preparing thematic reports, for example.



4

“[R]elevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, regional human rights mechanisms, national human rights institutions, civil society representatives and other stakeholders [all are invited] to cooperate with local governments to support them in discharging their human rights responsibilities.”

UN Human Rights Council, **Resolution 45/7**, local governments and human rights.

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

In 2018, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights made a call to send inputs to states and other actors on the role of local government in the promotion and protection of human rights. A wide range of bodies sent **contributions**. These included an NHRI, civil society organisations, city networks and several cities such as **Barcelona, Budapest, Grigny, Nuremberg, Utrecht, and Vienna**. A new **call for input** was launched on 23 February 2022.

KEY RESOURCES

- **The Universal Human Rights Index**, United Nations
- **Monitoring mechanisms and monitoring of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities**, CoE
- **Geneva Cities Hub**, to support cities' interactions with Geneva-based international actors, City and Canton of Geneva



Structures —

Mechanisms and procedures
to help integrate human rights
into day-to-day work

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↑ Austria, 2019.
Press event of the Graz
Human Rights Report.



Adopt a declaration to affirm the city's commitment to human rights

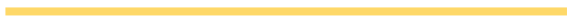
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Adopting a declaration, decision or resolution at the highest political level, e.g. the city council or other governing body, formalises the city's commitments to human rights. The declaration can include references to key human rights instruments and to mechanisms and tools to support human rights work. It can also include references to commitments to respect the rule of law, democracy and good administration.



PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Barcelona, Graz, Nuremberg and **Vienna**, and have adopted declarations committing to human rights. **Bilbao's** city council adopted a '**Charter of values**'. It compiles 17 individual and collective values, identified in consultation with individuals and associations, that should be part of life in the city (e.g. human rights, solidarity, trust, environmental sustainability, participation).



HOW?

Involve local actors, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), grassroots organisations and communities in the drafting process.

Engage early with elected representatives and political groups to develop consensus.

Communicate the declaration internally and externally so that the city and local bodies can refer to it and use it to help develop a culture of rights.

KEY RESOURCES

- **Human Rights City – Vienna. A highly liveable city committed to values**, Municipality of Vienna
- **City of human rights: the Barcelona model** (methodological guide), Municipality of Barcelona

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6

Nominate an elected representative on human rights

HOW?

Ensure that human rights are specifically added to the remit of one elected representative in the city council.

Produce targeted information materials for elected representatives about human rights and how they can affect people's lives.

Make use of win win scenarios to show the benefits of human rights for everyone in society when referring to or communicating about human rights.

Human rights are linked to many activities in the city, involving various departments, services and external service providers. There is a risk that the city's work on human rights issues is developed in silos, disconnected from each other. The nomination of a local elected representative (or committee) in the city council or other governing body can help to:

- steer and coordinate otherwise isolated activities;
- communicate externally on human rights action and issues of concern;
- monitor progress and report to the council on the human rights situation.

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

The **Paris** municipality has nominated a Deputy Mayor in charge of **human rights, integration, and the fight against discrimination**.

The **Turin** city council has established a commission on "**rights and equal opportunities**". It examines proposals and monitors activities related to gender equality, protection, and promotion of rights on the dignity and freedom of persons.



Establish a human rights office or department

7

Having a dedicated human rights office or department within the administration is an important way to support human rights work. It can:

- support programming of human rights activities;
- liaise with elected representatives, the administration, civil society and communities, including vulnerable groups;
- raise awareness of human rights.

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Nuremberg, Turin, Vienna, and the **Västra Götaland** region have all established human rights offices or departments. These help their local governments to coordinate human rights initiatives or action plans, provide the city and its leadership with advice and guidance on human rights activities, and raise awareness of people's rights.

Bologna established a comprehensive policy on equality and non-discrimination as part of the city's **2021-2023 programming document**. A dedicated office and three units ensure the implementation of the city policies on: (a) LGBTIQ rights, diversity and gender policies; (b) human rights, new citizens and international cooperation; and (c) intercultural services.

HOW?

Create spaces for open dialogue between civil servants and people facing human rights challenges (e.g. children and youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, homeless people, LGBTIQ persons).

Include in the office mandate that it supports a cross-cutting approach of human rights within municipal services and departments.

Raise awareness of people's rights, universal values and the rule of law, including to professional groups, such as teachers, healthcare providers, public housing organisations and social workers.

KEY RESOURCES

- **Transparency and open government** (practical guide), Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, CoE
- **Child participation in local governance** (guidance), UNICEF



8

Establish a consultative participatory council on human rights

HOW?

Engage in structured consultation procedures with a range of actors: civil society, business and trade unions, sport and cultural associations, youth, neighbourhoods, religious groups and city residents.

Encourage and facilitate active participation (e.g. by having meetings after core working hours, and in venues accessible for persons with disabilities).

Ensure that participants receive regular feedback on how the administration takes their ideas and suggestions on board.

KEY RESOURCES

- **OGP participation and co-creation standards, Open Government Partnership**
- **Innovative citizen participation and new democratic institutions-catching the deliberative wave, OECD**
- **Organising intercultural and interreligious activities – a toolkit for local authorities, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, CoE**

Human rights touch upon many complex issues that affect a variety of local actors. People should be actively involved, as participation is a key element of a human rights-based approach (HRBA). A consultative council that brings together citizens, elected representatives, local administration and civil society can contribute to building up support for human rights-compliant local policies and actions.

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

The **Graz Human Rights Council** is comprised of local stakeholders and city representatives who monitors the human rights situation. It reports annually to the city council on problems, good practices and recommendations.

In **Malmö**, the **Council for the National Roma Minority** is composed of elected councillors and representatives of Roma NGOs. It supports Roma participation, helps to fight discrimination and promotes Roma culture and language.

Other examples include the '**Pact of cooperation**' signed between **Bologna** and local LGBTIQ associations and the '**Round table on human rights**' in **Salzburg**.



Establish an anti-discrimination office or local ombudsperson



Public authorities have a duty to ensure not only that human rights are respected and fulfilled, but also that citizens have access to support, guidance and remedies when their rights are violated. Cities can set-up an anti-discrimination office to address human rights violations and/or establish a local ombudsperson body or other forms of remedies for city residents.

HOW?

Raise awareness of rights and what to do when they are violated.

Use statistics from such an office, and from any other local victim support services, to improve the way the local administration fulfils human rights.

Consider employing community mediators to improve social inclusion and help resolve conflicts between communities.

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Graz, Nuremberg, Salzburg, Utrecht and Vienna, have established anti-discrimination offices.

In **Valencia**, the **Office of Non-discrimination and Hate Crimes** contributes to the city framework for immigration and interculturality (2019–2022). It supports this work by training city staff on human rights, discrimination and hatred.

In **Barcelona**, the work of the **Office for Non-discrimination** is supported by the **Barcelona Discrimination Observatory**. The observatory monitors human rights and provides an annual report.

KEY RESOURCE

- **ECCAR 10 Points Action Plan and toolkit for Equality**, European Coalition for Cities against Racism



10

Report annually on human rights in the city

HOW?

Early on, identify robust, measurable indicators that can show impact on city policies.

Do not focus only on problems but also include good practices and success stories.

Use the annual report to engage in public debate on human rights issues of broad interest to the general public.

KEY RESOURCE

- **Manual on human rights monitoring (Chapter 13) – human rights reporting, United Nations**

Human rights need to be an integral part of city work, for example in delivering public services or managing public space, social care or education, or in relation to participation in public affairs, social and economic life. There are also human rights aspects of public transport, water supply and sewage, power supply, environment, digitalisation, culture, arts and sports.

A mechanism for reporting annually on a city’s human rights performance allows its administration to monitor progress, identify lessons learned and propose new activities.

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Graz and **York** have reported annually for several years on the situation of human rights, drawing on contributions from the municipalities and civil society.

The **Barcelona Discrimination Observatory** has published since 2018 an **annual report** with detailed data about discrimination, the actions and initiatives taken to address it, and suggestions for future actions. The report draws on information and expertise from the **Office for Non-discrimination**, the city’s human rights resource centre and several victim support organisations.



11

Cooperate and develop partnerships with national, EU and international human rights bodies

Human rights are a shared responsibility of all levels of government. Hence, partnerships and cooperation are key for the successful implementation of human rights. There are a variety of national, EU and international organisations that can support and cooperate with cities on human rights.

HOW?

Cooperate on human rights with your national government, NHRI, equality body, or ombudsperson body, civil society and academia.

.....
Share your experiences and lessons learned with the EU and international organisations (e.g. the UN, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the CoE, and EU institutions and bodies).

.....
Cooperate with other cities and regions, for example through networks in which your city participates.

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Turin coordinates the **Italian Network of Regions, Autonomous Provinces and Local Authorities (RE.A.DY)**. The network helps to prevent, combat and overcome discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

In 2021, **the Netherlands** launched a **platform for municipalities in human rights** as part of the **national action plan**. It is a joint initiative of the association of municipalities, academia and the government to facilitate practice exchange. In **Sweden**, a large network of local and regional human rights experts meets regularly to discuss human rights issues and share promising practices. The network is supported by a **platform for cooperation for policy and operational development**, which was established by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions in cooperation with the Raoul Wallenberg Institute.





11

In **Zagreb**, the municipality cooperated with various associations of people with disabilities, the University of Zagreb, and the private IT sector to create a **mobile app** that facilitates access to buildings, streets and public transport for people with disabilities.

In **Cologne**, the **Human Rights City Initiative** is an independent grassroots organisation that aims to help realise human rights actions and mobilise the city to become a human rights city.

In **Norway**, the **NHRI** set up a project to raise awareness in cities and regions of their international human rights obligations, how to fulfil them and the human rights city approach.

The cities of **Aghia Varvara** in Greece, **Mátraverebély** in Hungary, and **Rakytník** and **Hrabušice** in Slovakia aimed to improve relations between Roma and the wider population. These cities contributed to the FRA project on **Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion** (LERI) by designing in each of these cities a participatory-action research project focusing on community development. The FRA project included overall **22 localities** in 11 member states.

KEY RESOURCE

- **Ten points to advance a common agenda on local governments and human rights**, UN Human Rights Office - OHCHR and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG-CSIPDHR)



↑ **FRA Local Engagement of Roma Inclusion project.**
Roma youth discuss inter-ethnic relations with the mayor of Aghia Varvara, Greece.



Tools —

Methods and resources to
support human rights work



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Mainstream human rights across city work and activities

Mainstreaming human rights means that they are considered in a cross-cutting manner within the administration and the city’s work. As a key element of the HRBA, mainstreaming needs to be considered for strategies, policies, decisions and day-to-day activities. It can also link to specific themes, for example gender equality, which is also known as ‘gender mainstreaming’.

HOW?

Human rights mainstreaming is best implemented when formalised and supported by the city’s leaders.

Discuss internally within city departments how to best integrate human rights into their work and build on successful examples to expand further.

Develop a network of human rights contacts for information exchange.

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

The **Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions** supports its members on ways to integrate a **human rights perspective** in governance, management and service delivery, through human rights education and a **web platform**.

In Spain, **Fuenlabrada** is mainstreaming **community policing principles and fundamental rights** in the work of its local police by setting up a specialised unit, diversity and inclusion policies, and measures to fight hate crimes. The city is also building capacities on the rights of various groups (e.g. LGBTIQ, migrants) and contributes to tools on rights-based community policing.

KEY RESOURCES

- **Children’s rights mainstreaming**, CoE
- **Gender mainstreaming in local authorities - best practices**, UN-Habitat

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13

Apply a human rights-based approach (HRBA) across city activities

HOW?

Share with other cities your experience of integrating an HRBA into your work.

.....

Involve experts when integrating an HRBA in city work.

.....

Ensure that city work draws on HRBA principles for decisions and policies: mainstreaming, equality and non-discrimination, participation, legality, accountability and transparency.

.....

KEY RESOURCES

- **Methodology guide: City of human rights – the Barcelona model**, Barcelona
- **Frequently asked questions on a human rights-based approach to development cooperation**, UN Human Rights Office - OHCHR
- **Guiding principles for a human rights-based approach on public services**, Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU

HRBA is a conceptual framework that helps to operationalise respect for and protection of human rights in practical steps and activities. It is anchored in a system of rights deriving from international standards and norms. It addresses the results and the process to achieve them, through a human rights lens.

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

The Swedish **Västra Götaland** region drew on HRBA principles for its **human rights action plan** and projects, including a project on psychiatric care involving patients and medical staff.

In artificial intelligence, **Amsterdam** and **Helsinki** took HRBA principles into consideration, for example when establishing **registries** on the way they use algorithms and artificial intelligence systems.

In 2021, **Barcelona** organised its first **participatory budget programme**, which involved around 40,000 registered local residents aged 14 years and over.



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Develop knowledge through training and human rights education

Training and human rights education can help to develop capacities and equip city administrations and other local actors with the knowledge and skills they need to protect and implement human rights. Training can involve elected representatives, management, staff and local professional groups (e.g. police, teachers, healthcare staff, social housing organisations).

HOW?

Avoid traditional 'instructional' human rights training that does not have a connection to the specific context, as it runs the risks of being ineffective.

Integrate human rights into induction and general training for elected representatives, administration management and staff members.

Illustrate the benefits of human rights for service delivery.

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Bordeaux has created a 'diversity label' to promote good practices in recruitment, professional development, contracting and communication. The city has also introduced staff training and diversity provisions for procurement processes.

Copenhagen, in cooperation with **local professional organisations**, has set up training courses for bouncers, security guards and other staff at nightclubs, bars and restaurants to address discrimination, ways to avoid it and de-escalating any potential conflicts.

Nuremberg organises **trainings** in schools and **human rights education work** for young people and other groups, such as those working with children or the elderly, the police, the armed forces and the administration.

KEY RESOURCE

- **Developing human rights narratives to counter hate speech**, course for training trainers, CoE

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Take human rights into account in budgeting and procurement

HOW?

Include robust data in budget information to identify areas requiring public action.

Include provisions on respect for and fulfilment of human rights standards in public procurement rules.

There is no need to create a new budgeting process; instead integrate human rights into existing budget procedures.

Human rights budgeting means considering human rights principles at all the stages of budgeting work. This ensures that the budget allocation contributes to the city’s human rights priorities. It also helps to increase people’s participation, thus improving accountability and transparency. In procurement processes, human rights provisions ensure that external providers deliver services that fulfil and respect human rights.

KEY RESOURCES

- **Realizing human rights through government budgets**, UN Human Rights Office - OHCHR
- **What is human rights budget work?**, the Scottish Human Rights Commission
- **Public procurement and human rights and Driving change through public procurement: A toolkit on human rights for procurement policy makers and practitioners**, the Danish Institute for Human Rights

PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Vienna has included gender budgeting since 2006 as part of its **gender mainstreaming policy**. The process looks at who benefits from budget allocations, and hence helps ensure that financial planning is gender-balanced.



Establish and implement a local human rights action plan

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Protecting and implementing human rights require long- and short-term action. A local action plan helps design and carry out a set of actions, policies and initiatives based on local needs and concerns. The set should include short- and long-term specific goals, activities to achieve them and indicators to help measure their impact.

HOW?

Establish a current baseline assessing the situation on the ground, which identifies current human rights gaps and allows for the measurement of progress over time.

.....

Involve local stakeholders within and outside the administration, including front-line staff, in order to gain a better understand of what works best, and to develop co-ownership and co-responsibility.

.....

Link your local action plan to relevant national, EU and international policies and strategies.

KEY RESOURCES

- **Handbook on national human rights plans of action**, UN Human Rights Office - OHCHR
- **National human rights action plans in the EU**, FRA

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Madrid established a **local human rights strategic plan for 2017–2019**. It covered 22 goals and rights in five thematic areas, drawing on consultations with citizens, the administration and civil society.

Bordeaux has an **action plan to fight discrimination** using evidence gathered through roundtables and dialogues with individuals and NGOs, and a survey by the Observatory for Equality and Fight against Discrimination.

In **Utrecht**, a **2011 study** was the first to look at the intersection between municipal work and human rights. The study helped to map the city's work and human rights and also acted as a baseline.



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Check the compatibility of local decisions with human rights

HOW?

Seek expert advice to assess in advance the potential human rights impact of decisions.

Reach out to independent experts or specialists in technical fields, as independent advice is key for credibility.

Ensure that the process and its results are transparent.

Cities and other local governments are duty-bearers. This means that they must ensure that all of their decisions, policies and activities comply with human rights. They can check this by:

- ensuring that their work respects and implements the obligations that are laid down in national, EU and international law;
- self-assessing the negative and positive human rights impacts that local measures could generate (*ex ante*);
- setting up mechanisms to evaluate any positive and negative impacts on human rights and act accordingly (*ex post*).

KEY RESOURCES

- Recommendation on **democratic accountability of elected representatives and elected bodies at local and regional level**, CoE
- Various **Guides and booklets** such as local voting rights, preventing corruption, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, CoE

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

In **Graz**, the **Human Rights Council** monitors and reports annually on human rights, including **election campaigns**, by assessing the human rights compliance of all political parties' election material, speeches and interviews.

In **Swansea**, a **scrutiny process**, led by 'scrutiny councillors', helps to hold cabinet members to account, give people a voice, and improve the delivery of public services.



Monitor and evaluate the city's work in a participatory way

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Local administrations should routinely assess how their policies and actions affect human rights. Through monitoring and evaluation, cities can identify what works best, detect issues requiring further action, help generate fresh ideas, and increase the accountability and transparency of public service. This enhances public trust.

HOW?

Consider how best to monitor and evaluate policies in your own local context.

Make use of existing indicator frameworks (e.g. SDGs) or review mechanisms on thematic issues (e.g. interculturality, equality and non-discrimination, rights of the child, Roma inclusion).

Involve beneficiaries and civil society in the process.

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

The **Lund anti-discrimination action plan 2020–2021** was based on an evaluation of the 2019–2020 plan. Feedback from students, teachers and other staff through surveys contributed to designing the new plan.

Bonn made use of the framework of **indicators for German cities, districts and municipalities** to help the city **monitor progress**, in a transparent way, of its SDGs work.

KEY RESOURCES

- **Human rights indicators – a guide to measurement and implementation**, UN Human Rights Office - OHCHR
- **Monitoring and evaluating national urban policy: A guide**, UN-Habitat
- The **Intercultural cities index**, Intercultural Cities Programme, CoE



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Raise people’s awareness about human rights

HOW?

Tell the human story behind the statistics.
.....

Identify ‘champions’ who can give an authentic voice to your message. They may be community leaders, social media influencers or people whose rights are affected.
.....

Celebrate successful grassroots initiatives (e.g. through awards, prizes, human rights labels, sport or cultural events).
.....

KEY RESOURCES

- **Toolkit for human rights speech**, CoE
- **Alternative narratives and inclusive communication**, Intercultural Cities Programme, CoE
- **Positive Input: your practical guide to dealing with disinformation**, FRA

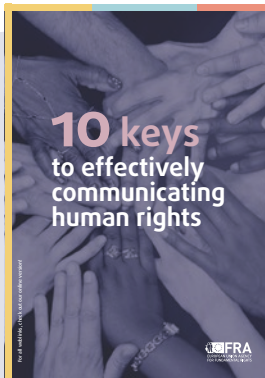
Fulfilling human rights requires public trust and support. Cities can gain these by effectively communicating and promoting human rights through general campaigns to raise awareness, as well as targeted initiatives, e.g. for teachers, police or healthcare providers.

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Barcelona’s anti-rumour strategy is an integral part of the city’s comprehensive approach to promote equality and fight against discrimination and hatred. The strategy helps to raise awareness of and debunk rumours, prejudices and stereotypes, provides anti-rumour tools and resources, and fosters dialogue on intercultural relations.

Gdańsk organises an annual **Democracy Week** of debates, workshops, meetings and screenings to celebrate participation, democracy and human rights. In cooperation with the European Committee of the Regions, the city also launched in 2021 the **Mayor Paweł Adamowicz Award** for courage and excellence in promoting freedom, solidarity and equality.

Speaking up for human rights has never been more important!



International human rights organisations across Europe have joined forces with FRA, united behind the '10 Keys to effectively communicating human rights'.

These are the keys to work with, for example, on how to voice shared values, create coalitions, harness hope and lead through language.

See more in the **playlist** of videos (2021) and the **booklet** (2018).

For example, in a campaign to **stop child labour**, the Glasnost ad agency, Hivos People Unlimited and the Municipality of The Hague drew on fresh voices from Instagram influencers to spread their message. By 'giving their message an authentic voice', the initiative helped to reach out over 100,000 followers, caught the attention of a young audience and the mainstream media.



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Cooperate transnationally and contribute to peer exchanges and mutual learning between cities on human rights

HOW?

City networks on various themes could identify and include human rights aspects.

.....

The EU's 'citizens, equality, rights and values' programme provides funding for cities to build capacity, promote values, support civic participation etc.

.....

Cities could consider working together to develop a label or accreditation process for cities that comply with the human rights city framework in the EU.

.....

KEY RESOURCE

- Key transnational networks are listed at the end of this guide.

Cities and other local governments are innovation laboratories for human rights work. Peer-to-peer exchanges, town twinning and city exchanges in networks can help to share common challenges and solutions, support mutual learning and build capacities to 'localise' human rights.

PRACTICE EXAMPLES

The **Pact of Free Cities** brings together **Bratislava, Budapest, Prague** and **Warsaw**, to promote democracy, pluralism, openness and cultural diversity. In 2021, **20 cities** joined the initiative including **Amsterdam, Barcelona, Florence, Frankfurt, Gdańsk, Ljubljana, Mannheim, Paris, Rijeka, Stuttgart, Vienna** or **Zagreb**. The pact helps to reach out to the EU on common areas of interest, pool resources and offer opportunities for cooperation on various topics (e.g. sustainability, social inclusion, the digital agenda).

The **Eurocities Social Affairs Forum** has initiated a digital platform to help its network members support information exchange about human rights and the human rights city initiative.

Further useful resources

- **A human rights-based approach to data**, UN Human Rights Office - OHCHR
- **Annual human rights indicator report**, York Human Rights City Coalition
- **Bringing human rights home: How state and local governments can use human rights to advance local policy**, Columbia Law School, Human Rights Institute
- **Communicating human rights**, European Network of NHRIs
- **European capitals of inclusion and diversity award**, EU
- **Five steps in the right direction - a human rights-based approach**, Västra Götaland Region
- **Gender budgeting: Step-by-step toolkit**, European Institute for Gender Equality
- **Gwangju guiding principles for a human rights city**, 2014 World Human Rights Cities Forum (Gwangju, South Korea)
- **Handbooks on human rights** (e.g. data protection, rights of the child), FRA
- **Human rights and local government – lessons from human rights cities in Europe**, Human Rights Centre, University of Essex
- **Human rights-based approach to programming**, UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization -UNESCO
- **Human rights cities**, People’s Movement for Human Rights Education
- **Human rights cities and regions – Swedish and international perspectives**, Raoul Wallenberg Institute and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
- **Human rights cities indicators**, Raoul Wallenberg Institute
- Human rights handbook **Volume 1: Fighting against discrimination** and **Volume 2: Social rights**, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, CoE

- **Human rights go local**, International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at Local and Regional Levels under the auspices of UNESCO
- **Indicators and data for human rights and sustainable development**, the Danish Institute for Human Rights
- **Making rights real - a guide for local and regional authorities**, FRA

A selection of transnational networks in human rights

- **European Coalition of Cities against Racism** (ECCAR)
- **International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities** (ICCAR)
- **United Cities and Local Governments Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights** (UCLG-CSIPDHR)
- **Eurocities**
- **Council of European Municipalities and Regions** (CEMR)
- **Assembly of European Regions** (AER)
- **European Association for Local Democracy** (ALDA)
- **EU strategy for the Danube region**
- **European Forum for Urban Security** (EFUS)
- **Intercultural Cities Programme** (CoE)
- **Child Friendly Cities Initiative**
- **Rainbow Cities Network**
- **Human Rights Cities Network**
- **Cities for Digital Rights**



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