

# Human Rights Go Local: What Works

## Academy and Conference on Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels

### *"From Intentions to Commitments: Towards the Effective and Sustainable Implementation of Human Rights"*

1 - 8 February 2022

## Concept Note

(version: 11 August 2021)

### 1. Background

The International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels under the auspices of UNESCO and the UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Human Security in Graz, Austria, together with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN-Habitat, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)<sup>1</sup> organise the second edition of an annual Academy and Conference to contribute to the United Nations vision of protecting and promoting human rights for all by informing local governments on how to deliver on their related obligations, as well as to the goals set by the 2030 Agenda, and its promise to "Leave No One Behind".

The Academy and Conference series demonstrates innovative approaches and proven practices for protecting and promoting human rights at the local level, making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. It ultimately seeks to improve the quality of life of all people living in urban or rural settings around the globe. With this event series, the International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels fulfils its mandate to build bridges between all institutions, organisations, initiatives, engagements, efforts, and ideas that focus on local and regional human rights practices.

Topical human rights issues, the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda, and the current volume of the "Human Rights Go Local" publication series inform the selection of the event's annual thematic focus. The 2021 Academy and Conference brought together human rights experts from local governments, international and regional organisations, and the research community to discuss field-proven methods in order to generate reliable human rights data for evidence-based policy-making at the local level. All practices, findings, and proposals of this event were synthesised in the Outcome Document and Explanatory Remarks on "[Building Bridges between Local Governments and the Scientific Community to Promote Human Rights](#)".

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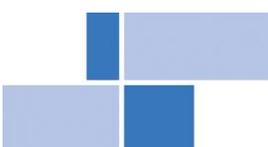
<sup>1</sup> Co-organisation by UCLG still to be confirmed.

The 2022 Academy “Human Rights Go Local: What Works” builds on these results and intends to take them further by focussing on successful strategies and initiatives for strengthening the commitments to human rights at the local level. Various approaches are currently being developed and implemented around the globe with the intention to explicitly turn human rights into an obligatory guideline and reference point for local policies. Cities and local governments have developed common principles and charters (e.g., Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human Rights City; European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City; Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City), frameworks (e.g., FRA framework for human rights cities in the EU currently developed), and individual declarations following the global Human Rights Cities movement. Based on and/or inspired by such guiding documents, local governments take various initiatives to adhere to their human rights obligations.

The 2022 Academy and Conference provide a platform to collect such current approaches and initiatives, to discuss the experiences gained with different regional and local approaches thereof, and to disseminate practices that have been identified as successful by local governments. Some of the key questions that will be discussed are:

- **Current developments, policies, and experiences:** What developments are underway around the world to strengthen the local governments' commitments to human rights? What initiatives and policies have a tangible impact on municipal activities in practice in different regions and why? How can global initiatives be translated into transformative action at the local level? What policies and practices have been most effective in this respect? What do we learn from the experience of organizations such as the OHCHR, UNESCO, UN-Habitat, FRA and UCLG? What institutional and legal frameworks have contributed to create enabling environments to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, and what are the interfaces between the national and local levels? What can we learn from the work of human rights mechanisms?
- **Tools and measures:** What tools and measures (e.g., establishment of institutions or procedures; review mechanisms including self-assessment and peer-assessment; action plans, etc.) have proven to support local governments in achieving a stronger commitment towards advancing human rights locally? How can they be transferred to other settings? What are the gaps and needs in this respect around the globe?
- **Relation to 2030 Agenda and New Urban Agenda:** To what extent are such initiatives related to local governments' human rights obligations, their commitments to the 2030 Agenda and its pledge to leave no one behind and to target those furthest behind? How can local initiatives be more clearly connected to efforts by national governments to meet the SDGs? How can local action benefit from such connection?
- **A look into the future:** How can we contribute towards positive scenarios for the role of local authorities in the realization of human rights? Which steps are necessary to achieve them? How can we empower the next generation to play an active role and act as changemakers? For instance, how can human rights research play a role in this respect?

The theme of the 2022 Academy and Conference was chosen with the conviction that there is a need and potential to provide practical guidance on how to strengthen commitments for applying human rights-based policies at the local level. The Academy will thus provide an opportunity for exchange and dissemination of well proven approaches taken by local governments to strengthen commitments to human rights. Related challenges, solutions, and good practices will be discussed by human rights and governance professionals from the local, regional, national, and international levels in online plenary sessions and workshops. The event also steps up to enhance coherence in following a human rights-based approach when implementing regional and global



agendas at the local level. As in 2021, it is aspired to develop an Outcome Document. Thus, the event pursues capacity-building and policy development.

## **2. Overall goal**

In general, the 2022 Academy and Conference "Human Rights Go Local: What Works" aim at supporting inclusive social development and equitable societies by mobilising knowledge on how to capitalise on the commitment of local governments to human rights. The event will build bridges between different governance levels, academic disciplines, and regions. Further, it aims to moderate exchange among local level authorities, policymakers, and human rights professionals and practitioners of all regions. Special attention will be given to the participation of next generation human rights professionals who will get the opportunity to exchange own experiences and network with experts in the respective fields in order to further develop expertise and aspirations for local governments' commitments to human rights.

The Academy's particular aim is to collect successful initiatives for strengthening the commitment of local governments to human rights, and to formulate guidance for local governments on how they can further strengthen their commitment to human rights. It aims to facilitate implementation by directly providing local level authorities with the findings and proposals gathered during the Academy.

The Conference's specific goal is to provide a broader audience of local level authorities with condensed knowledge on successful approaches for strengthening the commitment to human rights at the local level, to make concrete proposals on how to locally implement the international agenda following a human rights-based approach, and to adopt an Outcome Document expressing possible ways forward.

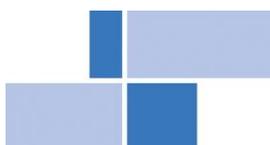
## **3. Target groups**

The International Centre and the UNESCO Chair in Graz aim at bringing together the knowledge and experiences of cities, city networks, international organisations, such as UNESCO, UN OHCHR, UN-Habitat, EU FRA, human rights practitioners, and next generation human rights professionals who seek to strengthen the commitment of local governments to human rights and to discuss related challenges, solutions, and good practices.

The prime target groups are representatives of local governments (policy-making, public administration), city networks and intermediaries, such as human rights professionals and practitioners working in all relevant areas (think tanks, academia, civil society, and international or regional organisations). The event further targets professionals and practitioners interested in gaining expertise on the subject, and explicitly includes next generation people wishing to professionalise in human rights.

## **4. Broader objectives**

1. Exchange experiences on initiatives to strengthen the commitment of local governments to human rights among local authorities, think tanks, human rights institutions, academics, civil society organisations, as well as regional and international organisations.
2. Enhance the visibility of existing local commitments to human rights.



3. Increase the understanding of what approaches and initiatives work in which contexts. Communicate to local and regional authorities how they can contextualise existing initiatives to strengthen their commitments to human rights.
4. Engage local authorities to strengthen their commitment to human rights.
5. Expand the network for exchange of experiences and develop further solid work relations and cooperation for the future.
6. Harness the aspirations, perspectives, and expertise of the next generation in realizing local commitments to human rights.
7. Develop and adopt an Outcome Document.

## 5. Outcomes

1. Knowledge on successful initiatives to strengthen the commitment of local governments to human rights will have been increased among local authorities, think tanks, human rights institutions, academics, or civil society organisations. The visibility of existing local commitments to human rights will have been increased among the target group.
2. Main initiatives and approaches for strengthening the commitment of local governments to human rights will have been collected and shared.
3. Concrete ideas for local initiatives strengthening the commitment to human rights will have been developed by bringing together international, regional, and local perspectives on the topic at hand, and by mobilizing the expertise and perspectives of next generation human rights professionals.
4. Local governments will have been informed about concrete opportunities for strengthening their commitment to human rights.
5. Next generation human rights professionals will have exchanged with professionals and practitioners, contributed their aspirations, and received access to a network of individuals and institutions.
6. The results of the Academy will have been fed into the Conference by way of an Outcome Document on strengthening the commitments to human rights at the local level.

## 6. Cooperation partners

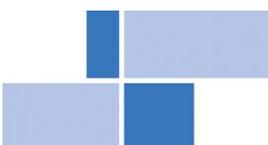
The 2022 edition of the Academy and Conference is organised in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN-Habitat, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)<sup>2</sup>, the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, the Provincial Government Styria, the City of Graz, and the University of Graz.

## 7. Further reading

Building Bridges between Local Governments and the Scientific Community to Promote Human Rights” [Outcome Document and Explanatory Remarks 2021](#) of Human Rights Go Local: What

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<sup>2</sup> Co-organisation by UCLG still to be confirmed.



Works - Academy and Conference on Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels 2021 on Field-proven Research Methods on Human Rights, 1-9 February 2021, Graz, 9 February 2021.

Karina Gomes and Markus Möstl, [Implementing Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the Local Level: Key Issues and Examples](#), in: Gerd Oberleitner and Klaus Starl (series eds.), Human Rights Go Local Publications Series, Volume 1, HRGL Publishing, Graz, 2020.

Isabella Meier, [Research on Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels: Methods, Practices, Approaches](#), in: Gerd Oberleitner and Klaus Starl (series eds.), Human Rights Go Local Publication Series, Volume 2, HRGL Publishing, Graz, 2021.

**To get the latest news about the 2022 Academy and Conference, visit the <https://www.humanrightsgolocal.org/academy22>, where you can also subscribe to regular updates.**

