

Human Rights Go Local: What Works

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

"Governing the city by human rights objectives:

Management concepts and instruments"

February 2023 (precise date to be determined)

Concept Note

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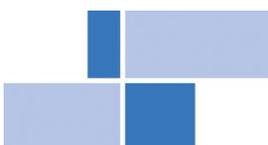
1. Background

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 Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), UN-Habitat, United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Austrian Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs, the Federal Province of Styria, the City of Graz, and the University of Graz¹ organise the third edition of the annual Academy and Conference "Human Rights Go Local – What Works". The event contributes 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. In 2021, the first 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

¹ Co-organisation by partners still to be confirmed.



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”](#).

The second Academy and Conference, held in 2022, built on these results and focused on successful strategies and initiatives for strengthening local authorities’ commitments to human rights. Valuable insights and experiences concerning the drivers and actors of local human rights commitments, the local development of commitments, and the steps that could be taken in the future were collected in the Outcome Document and Explanatory Remarks entitled [“From Intentions to Commitments: Towards the Effective and Sustainable Implementation of Human Rights.”](#)

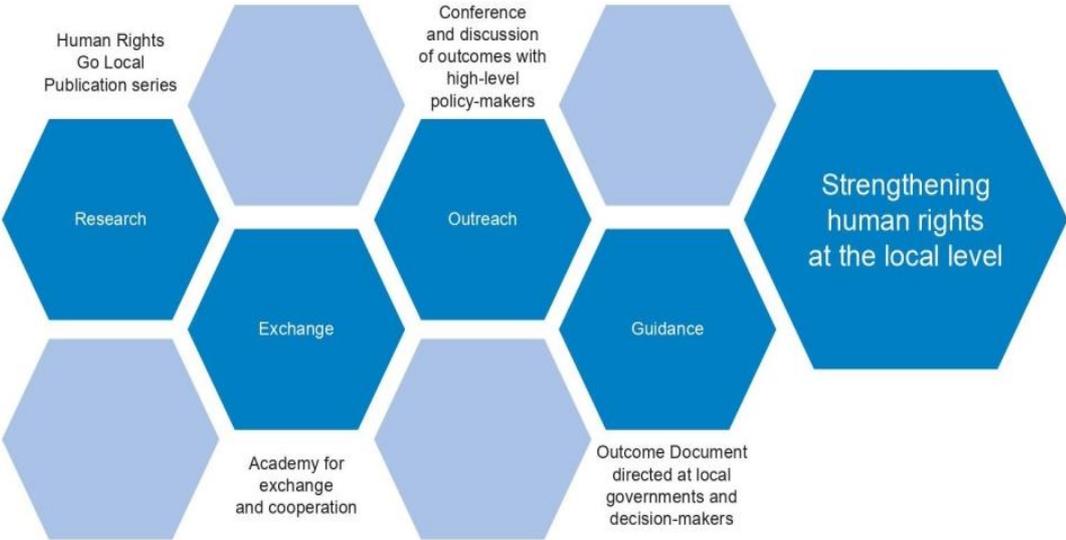
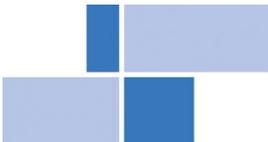


Figure: The cycle of the Human Rights Go Local series including publication, Academy, Conference, and Outcome Document

Discussions at these previous events confirmed the growing consensus that local governments are leading the way in bringing human rights to the people. Governments around the world, however, are currently confronted with significant shocks, including an unprecedented and unpredictable economic environment marked by a lack of ability to plan. At the same time, governments at all levels are only slowly recovering and looking for ways to deal with the ongoing pandemic, raising significant questions about resource allocation and distribution in almost all policy areas. Despite these challenges, many local governments, including those most affected by current global developments, continue to use a governance approach based on human rights in their managerial, administrative, and policy efforts. Such methods and efforts are encouraging, especially in the current context. However, the full potential of management concepts and instruments to anchor human rights in local governance is yet to be fully explored – in theory and in practice.

2. Rationale

The 3rd edition of the “Human Rights Go Local: What Works” Academy is thus dedicated to management concepts and methods used to govern at the local level in order to improve local service provision through human rights objectives. Participants will discuss existing approaches and techniques that help to integrate an approach based on human rights into the planning and review of services and into the managerial, administrative and policy-processes of local governments. The 2023 Academy and Conference provides a platform to share and exchange



on respective practices, to discuss the experiences gained, and to collect and disseminate methods that have been identified as successful by local governments. By discussing the practical aspects of integrating human rights into public management, the Academy aims to support local governments in effectively and efficiently addressing today's pressing challenges. Some of the key questions that will be discussed are:

- **Management concepts and instruments:** What do we mean by “governing the city by human rights objectives”? What management concepts and instruments (e.g., outcome orientation, impact assessment, human rights budgeting, compliance mechanisms, etc.) have proven helpful for local governments to advance human rights on the ground? What is the role of other actors (eg. public sector) in local public governance?
- **Lessons from the field:** What experiences are there in integrating human rights into existing management concepts at the local level? To what extent has the integration of human rights into local governance improved service provision in line with human rights? How can existing practices be transferred to other local contexts? What lessons have been learned and can be shared so far?
- **Needs and potential for change:** What is needed to further embed human rights in local governance systems around the globe? What steps need to be taken to structurally anchor human rights in local management concepts and instruments? How can we empower the next generation to play an active role in this respect?

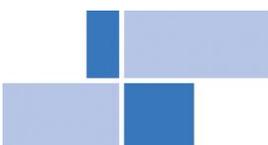
The theme of the 2023 Academy and Conference was chosen with the conviction that public management concepts and instruments can on the one hand help local governments to live up to their human rights obligations and commitments, and on the other hand help them address specific challenges identified by research on human rights at the local level. Local public management concepts and instruments that build on human rights considerations can also help rebuild trust in local governments by requiring duty bearers to justify whether they have met their respective obligations.

The Academy will provide an opportunity for exchange and dissemination of well-proven approaches taken by local governments to integrate human rights objectives in public management. 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 aim is again to produce an Outcome Document, which is discussed with high-level policy-makers at the closing Conference. Thus, the event pursues capacity-building and policy development.

3. Overall goal

In general, the 2023 Academy and Conference “Human Rights Go Local: What Works” aim to support inclusive social development and equitable societies by mobilising knowledge on the potential of a human rights perspective for local public governance. The event will build bridges between different governance levels, academic disciplines, and regions. Further, it aims to moderate exchange among local level authorities, policy-makers, 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.

The 2023 Academy's specific goal is to collect and discuss management concepts and tools that contribute to incorporating human rights into local governance. This exchange aims to provide interested local governments with practical guidance on how anchoring human rights considerations in public management can help them meet their obligations towards rights-holders.



The Academy aims to facilitate the implementation of human rights by making the insights and suggestions gathered during the Academy directly available to local authorities.

The specific objective of the 2023 Conference is to provide a broader audience of local governments with condensed knowledge on the potential of pursuing human rights objectives in public management at the local level, to make concrete proposals on how to integrate human rights into local governance, and to adopt an Outcome Document outlining possible ways forward.

4. Target groups

The aim of the International Centre and UNESCO Chair in Graz is to provide a platform for knowledge, exchange, and cooperation to all those working *with* or *within* local governments at all levels and in all functions, who wish to explore the potential of local public management concepts and tools to improve service provision in line with human rights and discuss related challenges, solutions, and best practices.

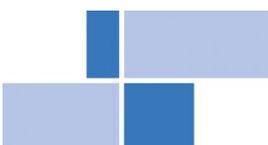
The prime target groups are representatives of local governments (policy-making, public administration), city networks and intermediaries, such as human rights professionals and practitioners working in all relevant areas (think tanks, academia, civil society, and international or regional organisations).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

5. Broader objectives

1. Exchange of experience on management initiatives to anchor human rights objectives in local governance between local authorities, think tanks, human rights institutions, academics, civil society organisations and regional and international organisations.
2. Improve the visibility of emerging and existing management approaches to embedding human rights in the concepts and instruments of local governance.
3. Improve the understanding of which management concepts and tools work in which contexts. Communicate to local and regional authorities how to contextualise existing concepts and instruments to integrate a human rights perspective in local governance efforts.
4. Engage local authorities to adopt an approach based on human rights in public management as part of good governance at the local level.
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 respect to a human rights-based local public management.
7. Develop and adopt an Outcome Document.

6. Outcomes

1. Knowledge on emerging and existing management initiatives to anchor human rights objectives in local governance will have been increased among local authorities, think tanks, human rights institutions, academics, or civil society organisations.
2. The visibility of existing management initiatives to embed human rights in local governance efforts will have been increased among the target group.
3. Main management initiatives and approaches for embedding human rights in local governance efforts will have been collected and shared.



4. Concrete ideas for embedding human rights objectives in public management structures 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.
5. Local governments will have been informed about concrete opportunities for embedding human rights objectives in their public management systems.
6. 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.
7. The results of the Academy will have been fed into the Conference by way of an Outcome Document on management tools that embed human rights objectives in local governance at the local level.

7. Cooperation partners²

The 2023 edition of the Academy and Conference is organised in collaboration with UNESCO, the OHCHR, UN-Habitat, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the FRA, UCLG-Africa, the FRA, the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, the Provincial Government Styria, the City of Graz, and the University of Graz.

8. Further reading

From Intentions to Commitments: Towards the Effective and Sustainable Implementation of Human Rights, Outcome Document and Explanatory Remarks of Human Rights Go Local: What Works - Academy and Conference on Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels 2022, 1-8 February 2022, Graz, 8 February 2022.

Jasmien Deklerck, [From Commitment to Responsibility for Human Rights in Cities and Regions](#), in: Gerd Oberleitner and Klaus Starl (series eds.), [Human Rights Go Local Publication Series](#), Volume 3, HRGL Publishing, Graz, 2022.

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 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.

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.

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.

To get the latest news about the 2023 Academy and Conference, visit the [WEBSITE](#) where you can also subscribe to regular updates.

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