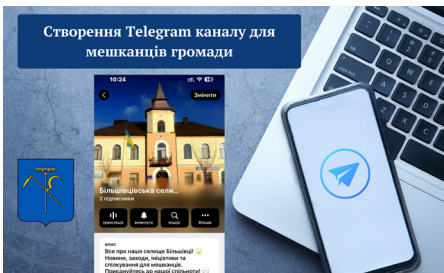




# INNOVATIVE APPROACHES FOR ADVANCING OPEN GOVERNMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS AT LOCAL LEVEL IN UKRAINE



## Practical recommendations

## PREFACE

The Council of Europe is currently implementing the project “Strengthening multilevel governance, democracy and human rights at local level in Ukraine” within the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine “Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction” for 2023-2026.

The project aims to strengthen the dialogue and partnership across various levels of government, enhancing collaborative governance and encouraging citizen participation in line with the principles of local democracy and open government.

A core focus of the project is to uphold and ensure the right to equality and non-discrimination at the local level, contributing to Ukraine’s recovery and reconstruction efforts. To support this mission, the project features a grant scheme which empowers local authorities to create and implement initiatives centered on open government and human rights.



In total, 10 municipalities, spanning from small towns to large cities and representing diverse regions of Ukraine, were selected to receive funding and expert support from February to October 2024. These initiatives prioritise the inclusion of vulnerable groups, such as veterans and internally displaced persons, and aim to strengthen social cohesion within their communities.

**To ensure a lasting impact of the local initiatives’ achievements, the Congress has developed a set of practical recommendations on how to design and implement innovative projects on open government and human rights at local level in Ukraine. Building upon the experiences and lessons learnt from the 10 municipalities, these recommendations offer practical guidance on:**

1. Mapping out and communicating impact
2. Improving open government policies
3. Mainstreaming a human rights-based approach
4. Strengthening public integrity and trust
5. Introducing a theory of change

## MAPPING OUT AND COMMUNICATING IMPACT

**How to begin: A step-by-step guide to making a project recognisable and known for its results.**

### 1. Understand the project’s mission and values

Familiarise yourself with the project’s core mission and values to ensure that all communications align with its foundational principles.

### 2. Define goals and objectives

Clearly outline your communication campaign’s goals, objectives, timeline, and desired outcomes. Determine what success looks like for this project.

### 3. Analyse resources

Conduct a thorough analysis of the informational, human, and financial resources available and needed for the campaign. Identify any additional resources that can be leveraged.

### 4. Identify target audiences

Analyse and define the target audiences which the project aims to reach. Understand their needs, preferences, and how best to engage them.

### 5. Develop a campaign plan

Prepare a preliminary campaign plan which includes key messages (a message box), identifies potential speakers, and outlines the strategy for disseminating these messages.

### 6. Study partner and beneficiary communication strategies

Research the communication styles and channels which your partners and beneficiaries use in order to effectively co-ordinate and promote the project within their networks.



## What to do next: Ensure consistent communication throughout the project's implementation

### 1. Understand the project's mission and values

Establish strong information and communication links with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that they are informed and engaged throughout the project.

### 2. Define goals and objectives

Clearly explain the project's purpose and content to target audiences using the identified channels and speakers. Focus on using simple, accessible language highlighting the positive changes which the project brings

### 3. Reach out to media and influencers

Develop partnerships with media outlets and opinion leaders, involving them in events to increase the project's visibility and credibility.

### 4. Maintain and enhance social media presence

Analyse and define the target audiences which the project aims to reach. Understand their needs, preferences, and how best to engage them.

### 5. Leverage social media tags and hashtags

Tag partner and beneficiary accounts in social media posts, and use relevant hashtags to increase visibility. If appropriate hashtags do not exist, create them.

### 6. Study partner and beneficiary communication strategies

Ensure that the project's website is a comprehensive and user-friendly source of information, providing updates on the project's progress, implementation process, and results.



## IMPROVING OPEN GOVERNMENT POLICIES

### How to promote inclusive, transparent and accountable government:

#### 1. Building physical and discursive spaces for public engagement

Focus on creating both physical spaces (such as hubs) and discursive spaces (e.g., councils and platforms) for public engagement. These are essential for fostering resilience and social cohesion at the local level.

#### 2. Promote inclusivity in engagement efforts

Ensure inclusivity by providing appropriate infrastructures for offline activities, and facilitating online access. Develop tools to maximise the involvement of people with disabilities, particularly those with hearing and/or vision impairment.

#### 3. Expand stakeholder engagement

Get out of your comfort zone and actively seek new tools and methods to engage stakeholders who are unrepresented or under-represented.

#### 4. Maintain records and foster effective communication

Get out of your comfort zone and actively seek new tools and methods to engage stakeholders who are unrepresented or under-represented.

#### 5. Implement competitive and transparent procedures

Use competitive procedures grounded in openness and transparency, leveraging web platforms, and other online tools to submit documents, carry out votes, and allow expert evaluation. Ensure that there are mechanisms to monitor the project's implementation process.

#### 6. Make the project cross-sectoral

Design the project to be cross-sectoral, ensuring it integrates and interacts with all other relevant projects and initiatives.

**Each municipality must develop its own approach when creating such a project. Not all tools will be applicable or equally effective in every community.**

**Additionally, the project will not succeed in any community if it is implemented without clearly identifying the responsible parties, and allocating the necessary funds for its execution.**



# MAINSTREAMING A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

## How to mainstream human rights principles in local policies:

### 1. Building physical and discursive spaces for public engagement

Focus on creating both physical spaces (such as hubs) and discursive spaces (e.g., councils and platforms) for public engagement. These are essential for fostering resilience and social cohesion at the local level.

### 2. Facilitate exchanges and co-operation

Establish municipal human rights forums to foster regular dialogue between local authorities, civil society organisations, and community representatives.

### 3. Leverage international networks

Actively participate in international networks to exchange good practices with other cities or regions facing similar challenges. Engage in existing projects and networks of solidarity cities to gain support, as well as enhance policy development.

### 4. Conduct public awareness campaigns

Launch public awareness campaigns to inform the community about human rights and the rule of law. Use diverse communication channels to disseminate information, foster a culture of respect for human rights, and build public trust in local governance.

### 5. Develop inclusive policies for vulnerable groups

Formulate inclusive policies which cater to the specific needs and rights of vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities, internally displaced persons, people with disabilities, and war victims.

### 6. Enhance integration into the labour market and economy

Implement systems to quickly assess refugees' professional skills, experiences, and language qualifications. Grant them the right to work in order to facilitate integration and strengthen the local economy. Collaborate with local businesses to create trainings and internship opportunities aligning with local employers' needs.

### 7. Improve access to education

Work with universities to encourage refugees' access to higher education by simplifying the enrolment criteria. Ensure that integration extends beyond school by using educational facilities for workshops, art classes or sports events, as well as promoting community engagement during evenings, weekends, and holidays.

### 8. Establish human rights and complaints mechanisms

Create an accessible and effective complaints mechanism at the local level to enable individuals to report human rights violations or barriers to accessing their rights (e.g., war victims' relatives). Ensure that these mechanisms are transparent.



# STRENGTHENING PUBLIC INTEGRITY AND TRUST

## How to increase integrity and apply anti-corruption practices:

### 1. Develop tailored local codes of conduct

Local communities should create their own codes of conduct addressing specific risks which are unique to their region, particularly in areas such as gift acceptance, conflicts of interest, and procurement. These codes should be aligned with national laws, and go beyond by including more detailed, actionable guidelines.

### 2. Implement transparent reporting systems

Local governments should introduce public reporting mechanisms, such as online gift registries and conflict of interest declarations. These tools can be modelled on successful systems in countries such as the United Kingdom and Estonia, where public access to officials' declarations enhances accountability.

### 3. Establish independent oversight

Local communities should create independent oversight bodies, such as municipal ethics commissions. These bodies would be responsible for investigating violations, enforcing sanctions, and auditing procurement processes to ensure transparency.

### 4. Develop inclusive policies for vulnerable groups

It is essential to strengthen the role of anti-corruption officers by following the next steps: guarantee independence, provide resources, raise public awareness, implement clear procedures, and strengthen internal control.

### 5. Enhance the legislation to better protect whistle-blowers

To enhance whistle-blowers' protection, it is necessary to strengthen legislation, launch awareness campaigns about their rights, ensure legal support and anonymity in reporting violations, as well as establish feedback mechanisms to improve the system, and collaborate with NGOs for additional support.

### 6. Develop a corruption risk management framework

Developing a corruption risk management framework is essential for local governments to proactively identify and address corruption vulnerabilities.

The National Agency on Corruption Prevention (NACP) has introduced corruption risk assessments at the national level, and their methodology can be adapted in order to be used at the municipal level, notably to assess risks in areas such as public procurement and service delivery (NACP Anti-Corruption Strategy). A key recommendation is to adapt NACP's integrity plans for local authorities, ensuring that they address specific corruption risks in each community.

### 7. Digital tools

Digital tools are a crucial component of most initiatives to increase transparency, as well as accountability, and in turn, prevent corruption.

From one of the most successful national-level reforms, ProZorro, to the case of electronic declarations for public officials, and the widespread implementation of e-participation tools for citizens at both national and local levels, digital tools are enablers of integrity and trust.

### 8. Adapt to wartime conditions

Given the ongoing war, local governments must be particularly vigilant in managing humanitarian aid and reconstruction funds. Adopting real-time monitoring and audit systems for wartime resources is crucial to prevent exploitation during times of crisis.

Local governments can look at Poland's post-war corruption monitoring systems to find models on how to safeguard against wartime corruption risks.



# INTRODUCING A THEORY OF CHANGE

## How to apply the theory of change for sustainable and effective project management?

The theory of change is a comprehensive methodology used to plan, implement, and evaluate initiatives promoting social change.

It outlines how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a specific context.

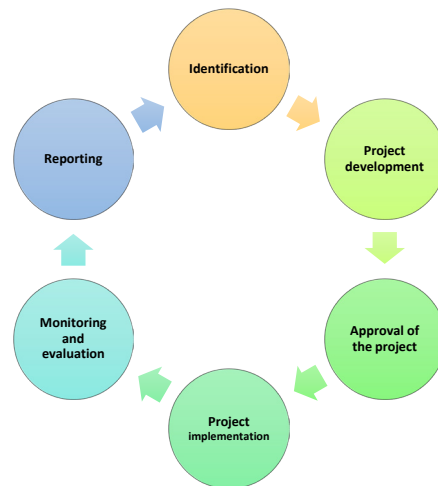
### 1. Identification

This stage involves defining the project's concepts, identifying the target group (beneficiaries), and recognising potential stakeholders, as well as participants. It requires a detailed analysis of the target group's issues and needs to outline potential solutions addressing those challenges.

### 2. Project development

At this stage, the specific elements of the project are clearly defined, and a comprehensive implementation plan is created. The plan takes into account the target group and stakeholders' interests, clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved, sets a timeline for implementation and monitoring, identifies the necessary resources, and establishes reporting procedures.

## PROJECT CYCLE



### 3. Approval of the project

After applicant organisation submits the project, the funding institution conducts a review to decide on its approval. Once a decision is made, the necessary documents are prepared to formalise the approval process and secure funding.

### 4. Project implementation

This stage focuses on the effective execution of project tasks in co-operation with partners. It is crucial to build mutual trust between partners, and actively involve beneficiaries throughout all stages of project implementation. This will ensure the project's overall efficiency and effectiveness.



### 6. Reporting

The reporting stage involves providing regular updates to the organisation's management, the funding institution, and the project's beneficiaries regarding the achievement of both expected and unexpected outcomes, as well as the allocation and use of resources.



### 5. Monitoring and evaluation

This stage involves collecting and analysing data so as to verify that the project is meeting its expected outcomes, and to enhance the implementation process. It should also ensure transparency and accountability, as well as sharing insights from both successes and challenges.

**Theory of change is a framework which helps individuals and organisations to transition smoothly from traditional methods to new approaches. It aims to reduce stress and build confidence in achieving successful outcomes.**

**Think of it as switching from riding a bicycle to driving a car. Theory of change involves learning how to drive, understanding the road's rules, and adapting to new conditions to effectively and safely reach your goals.**

The brochure “Innovative approaches for advancing open government and human rights at local level in Ukraine. Practical recommendations” was developed as part of the project “Strengthening multilevel governance, democracy and human rights at local level in Ukraine”.

The project addresses the needs voiced by local and regional authorities, and their national associations, and supports them in building resilience to multiple challenges provoked by the Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine. It promotes multilevel governance, open government and a human-rights based approach at local level, upholding local self-government principles and contributing to Ukraine’s recovery and reconstruction.

The project is implemented by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine “Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction” for 2023-2026.

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The Council of Europe is the continent’s leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is the institution of the Council of Europe, responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy in its member states. Composed of two chambers – the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions – and the three committees it brings together 612 elected officials, representing more than 130,000 local and regional authorities.

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