

STEERING COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
COMITÉ DIRECTEUR POUR LES DROITS HUMAINS
(CDDH)

Compilation of updates received on measures and practices in place in the Council of Europe member States in respect of protection and promotion of the civil society space¹

Compilation des mises à jour reçues sur les mesures et pratiques en place dans les États membres du Conseil de l'Europe en matière de protection et de promotion de l'espace dévolu à la société civile²

¹ Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Latvia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Slovak Republic, United Kingdom, Conference of International NGOs (CINGO) of the Council of Europe, ENNHRI

² Autriche, Belgique, Croatie, Chypre, Tchéquie, Danemark, Finlande, France, Grèce, Lettonie, Monténégro, Macédoine du Nord, Pologne, République Slovaque, Royaume-Uni, Conférence des ONG internationales du Conseil de l'Europe, ENNHRI

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AUSTRIA / AUTRICHE
The Austrian Ombudsman Board and Civil Society

The Austrian Ombudsman Board (AOB) does not only monitor and control public administration, but has also been a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) under the UN OPCAT Optional Protocol and an Independent Monitoring Mechanism under Art. 16 para. 3 of the UN CRPD since 2012. As an NHRI with A-status, the AOB is also a member of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) and an accredited member of the international umbrella organization of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) - the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI). The International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), with over 200 member institutions in over 100 countries worldwide, has been based at the AOB in Vienna since 2009.

Organizations tasked with monitoring the human rights situation in their country and reporting on it at national and international level can only fully fulfil their mandate through institutionalized cooperation with civil society.

1) Cooperation with civil society in the context of the UPR

The Austrian League for Human Rights coordinates the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the status report of Austrian civil society. There is currently no government initiative to introduce effective human rights monitoring in a sufficient way. As part of a contractually agreed cooperation and partial funding from the AOB and the Future Fund, it became possible to develop an online monitoring tool that shows all interested parties with just a few clicks where Austria has made progress in terms of human rights since the last UPR review, or where it is still lagging behind (see <https://liga.or.at/upr/>). Austria's interim report to the Human Rights Council in Geneva was due in 2023. The Austrian League for Human Rights once again prepared this report together with large parts of Austrian civil society and presented it at a press conference at the AOB on November 7, 2023.

2) Regular cooperation and coordination in the NGO sounding board

As part of a quarterly exchange with the largest Austrian NGOs, current human rights issues and related media campaigns that are being developed are discussed at the AOB at the invitation of one of the three Ombudspersons. This helps both the AOB and civil society organizations to better coordinate activities and possibly also to develop joint initiatives and strategies.

3) Annual NGO meetings for exchange between civil society, authorities and politics ("NGO Forum")

As an NHRI, the AOB takes its task of building bridges very seriously and strives to bring together civil society and those potentially affected by human rights violations with representatives of the authorities and political representatives at a two-day event once a year. The AOB summarizes the jointly achieved results and demands in a report of each forum, which is published on the AOB's website. This enables all interested parties to contribute the content to the political discussion themselves.

In 2023, more than 80 people accepted the AOB's invitation on the topic of "Poverty prevention / combating poverty". In working groups, unemployed people discussed their problems with the labor market administration, pension and health insurance providers, the education system, disability assistance providers, and those responsible for immigration and residence law and the amendment to provisions on social assistance. People affected by poverty, representatives of

NGOs, people from academia and the AOB were able to talk directly to representatives of the respective authorities and formulate their suggestions for improving legislation and enforcement.

In 2024, children and young people as well as NGOs working in the field of children's rights were invited. Under the motto "Finally implementing children's rights in full", participants discussed topics such as the protection against violence, child poverty, education/inclusion, children's health and the environment/participation in working groups. It was important to everyone that children and young people also had their say as experts in their own lives. On the second day, Ombudsman Achitz invited representatives of all parliamentary parties to a panel discussion.

4) Human Rights Advisory Council as an advisory body to the AOB on OPCAT and UN CRPD agendas

With the OPCAT Implementation Act, the tasks of the NPM under OPCAT were largely transferred to the AOB by constitutional law. In order to carry out these comprehensive tasks, the AOB must set up commissions and establish a Human Rights Advisory Council to advise it. This Human Rights Advisory Council consists of members and substitute members from federal ministries and federal provinces, as well as members and substitute members delegated on an equal basis by civil society. The Chairperson of the Human Rights Advisory Council and her deputy are appointed by the AOB; all representatives of the Human Rights Advisory Council act independently and are not bound by instructions. The Human Rights Advisory Council meets at least quarterly and supports the AOB in determining the focal points of its monitoring work, when making findings of maladministration and recommendations, as well as ensuring uniform procedures and auditing standards. Statements by the Human Rights Advisory Council are regularly published on the AOB website; also in easy to read version (see <https://volksanwaltschaft.gv.at/praeventive-menschenrechtskontrolle/der-menschenrechtsbeirat>).

5) Annual kick-off event as part of the International Days against Violence against Women -

"One in Five", the multidisciplinary lecture series on institutional and domestic violence against women, has been held for 15 years in cooperation with the Department of Forensic Medicine at the Medical University Vienna, the Association of Autonomous Women's Shelters in Austria and the AOB. The AOB streams a discussion with victims of violence and experts as an introduction to various topics in order to provide students of all disciplines with guidance on the correct documentation of incidents of violence, various contact points and legal protection options.



BELGIUM / BELGIQUE

Public awareness and recognition of civil society's work / Sensibilisation du public et reconnaissance du travail de la société civile (3.2.2)

Dialogues, rencontres et partenariat avec la société civile

- **Nature, niveau:**

Echange d'expertise / tous les niveaux de pouvoir

- **Explication:**

Tous les niveaux de pouvoir belges organisent régulièrement des rencontres avec la société civile et travaillent avec celle-ci. De fréquentes réunions *ad hoc* ont lieu afin de recevoir les expériences

de la société civile et mieux orienter les politiques. Dans le cas particulier du rapportage belge auprès des différents comités onusiens ou de l'examen périodique universel, la société civile est consultée tant au moment de la rédaction des rapports, que lors du suivi des recommandations effectuées à l'égard de la Belgique.

- **Mise en œuvre :**

Voici quelques exemples de coopération thématique :

- En matière de traite des êtres humains, il existe une plateforme de coordination nationale en vue de lutter contre le phénomène. Elle implique des ONG, plus particulièrement les centres d'accueil qui hébergent et soutiennent des victimes de traite. En 2016, une brochure a été élaborée pour informer les demandeurs d'asile sur les risques d'exploitation économique. Elle a été rédigée en impliquant les administrations concernées, les syndicats et certaines ONGS travaillant avec les personnes sans documents ou dans le secteur de l'asile.
- En matière de la politique d'asile, des représentants des autorités publiques sont présents aux réunions mensuelles de contact organisées par Myria, le Centre fédéral Migration (autorité publique indépendante) et auxquelles de nombreux représentants de la société civile participent.
- En outre, le Ministre des affaires étrangères a rencontré en 2013 la société civile pour un Forum de dialogue consacré à la place des droits de l'homme dans la politique étrangère de la Belgique. Depuis, le Département des Droits de l'Homme des Affaires étrangères organise régulièrement des consultations avec la société civile et plus particulièrement les ONG actives dans le domaine des droits de l'homme (rédaction des rapports aux comités de l'ONU, examen périodique universel et suivi des recommandations effectuées).
- Le Gouvernement bruxellois a adopté différents plans d'actions sur des thématiques relatives à la protection et au renforcement des droits humains, entre autres :
 - Plan bruxellois de lutte contre le racisme (2023-2026) ;
 - Plan bruxellois de lutte contre les violences faites aux femmes (2020-2024) ;
 - Plan bruxellois d'inclusion des personnes LGBTQIA+ (2022-2025) ;
 - Plan bruxellois de gender mainstreaming et d'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes (2022 – 2025).

La société civile a été consultée et impliquée dans les réflexions et discussions en amont de ces différents plans (notamment à travers les conseils consultatifs), et les organisations et associations issues de la société civile font figure de partenaires clés pour la mise en œuvre de nombreuses actions. De plus, ces plans intègrent généralement une action spécifique visant à soutenir financièrement les associations actives sur ces différentes thématiques.

Dans le cadre du Plan Politique de la Jeunesse et des Droits de l'Enfant (Jeugd- en Kinderrechtenbeleidsplan) du gouvernement flamand, les organisations de la société civile sont systématiquement impliquées dans la préparation, l'élaboration et l'évaluation du plan au sein de la « consultation horizontale de la politique de la jeunesse et des droits de l'enfant ». La consultation horizontale examine les lignes stratégiques de la politique flamande de la jeunesse et des droits de l'enfant et développe une vision.

Cet organe formel est chargé de :

- suivre l'évolution de la mise en œuvre du plan de politique flamande de la jeunesse et des droits de l'enfant et de la Convention relative aux droits de l'enfant, et formuler des propositions d'adaptation du plan.
-

- estimer les effets de la politique flamande sur les enfants, les jeunes et leurs droits. suivre les résultats de la consultation verticale sur la politique des droits de l'enfant et de la jeunesse.

Effective participation in decision-making / Participation effective aux prises de décisions (3.4)

Consultation de la société civile par le Parlement

- **Nature, niveau:**

Règlement / fédéral / Chambre (2003), Sénat (2013)

- **Explication:**

La Chambre des représentants et le Sénat (assemblées parlementaires belges) prévoient dans leur Règlement des possibilités de concertations avec la société civile.

L'article 28 du Règlement de la Chambre des représentants stipule que « pour la préparation du travail législatif, la commission peut prendre l'avis de personnes ou d'organismes extra-parlementaires, prendre des renseignements documentaires auprès d'eux, accepter ou demander leur collaboration ». L'article 20 du Règlement du Sénat prévoit que « les commissions peuvent également organiser des auditions et des journées d'étude ».

- **Participation de la société civile :**

A de multiples occasions, la société civile a été associée au travail législatif.

Concertation sociale au sein du « Groupe des 10 »

- **Nature, niveau:**

Fédéral / 2015

- **Explication:**

La Belgique a une longue histoire de concertation sociale. Dans l'accord du Gouvernement de 2014, la Belgique a rappelé la nécessité de garantir la concertation sociale : « il est essentiel de garantir la concertation interprofessionnelle ainsi que le rôle des partenaires sociaux dans l'exécution et la gestion de la sécurité sociale ». Depuis 2015, celle-ci s'effectue au sein du « Groupe des 10 », qui réunit les principaux représentants des organisations syndicales et des organisations d'employeurs. Ce groupe des 10 est un des hauts lieux de la concertation sociale au niveau fédéral, entre les interlocuteurs sociaux et le gouvernement fédéral.

- **Mise en œuvre :**

Tous les deux ans est négocié un accord interprofessionnel portant sur les conditions de travail (nombre de jours de congés, durée du travail, etc.) et l'évolution des salaires de salaire. La négociation se base sur un rapport technique comparatif (perspectives d'évolution des salaires dans les pays limitrophes). Le groupe discute également d'autres dossiers interprofessionnels.

Droit de pétition en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale

- **Nature, level :** Policy participation / Regional

- **Explication :** En Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, il existe actuellement deux façons pour le citoyen de faire entendre sa voix au Parlement. Le droit de pétition existe déjà depuis un certain temps. Les commissions délibératives « mixtes » datent de décembre 2019.

- **Mise en œuvre :**

- Le droit de pétition: tout citoyen a le droit d'être entendu au Parlement s'il rassemble les signatures de 1.000 Bruxellois.
- Les commissions délibératives mixtes : À l'initiative de citoyens rassemblant 1.000 signatures ou du Parlement lui-même, le Parlement peut créer une commission délibérative. Cette dernière est composée de 15 députés membres de la commission permanente qui traite la question et de 45 Bruxellois âgés de 16 ans au moins et tirés au sort. Ils débattent de la question, qui doit être une question ouverte et déboucher sur une ou plusieurs propositions.

Hearings in the Flemish parliament

- **Nature, level:**

Policy participation / regional

- **Explanation:**

The rules of procedure of the Flemish parliament³ provide the possibility to organise hearings, for example when the parliament discusses a proposal for a decree. The commissions of the parliament can invite persons or institutions and hear them or can request them to provide documentation, advice or cooperation.

- **Implementation:**

The Flemish parliament regularly makes use of this possibility.

National Commission for the Rights of the Child

- **Nature, level, date:**

Consultation platform / national / since 2006

- **Explanation:**

The National Commission for the Rights of the Child was established in 2005 on the basis of a cooperation agreement between the federal state and the federated entities. The Commission started its activities in 2007. The Commission contributes to Belgium's periodic country report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Commission also issues general policy recommendations. Civil society organisations are represented in the plenary assembly and the daily office of the Commission. They are also part of the advisory body which provides independent advice to the authorities.

- **Implementation:**

In 2017, civil society organisations, through the National Commission for the Rights of the Child, have been closely involved in the elaboration of Belgium's 5th and 6th report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The governments agreed with the priorities identified by the civil society organisations. The draft report was submitted to the advisory body for advice and was adapted in line with its comments. Preparations for the next reporting cycle have started and civil society organisations will again be given the possibility to contribute to the report.

³ <https://www.vlaamsparlement.be/over-het-vlaams-parlement/hoe-werkt-het-vlaams-parlement/reglement-van-het-vlaams-parlement>

Reflection group for youth policy and children's rights

- **Nature, level :**

Consultation platform / regional

- **Explanation:**

The reflection group for youth policy and children's rights is the platform for dialogue between the children's rights contact points in the government of Flanders, representatives of the academic world and non-governmental youth and children's rights organisations.

- **Implementation:**

The reflection group reflects upon, evaluates and inspires the Flemish youth and children's rights policy. The group meets 3 to 4 times a year. In addition, specific themes are addressed in depth by working groups. The reflection group is not a formal advisory body, but acts as a sounding board for the Flemish administration.

Resources and long-term support / Ressources et soutien dans la durée (3.5)

Accreditation of partner organisations for equal opportunities for 5 years working on gender, sexual identity, disability issues: Structural subsidization
Accreditation of partner organisations for digital inclusion

Policy participation

- **Nature, level :**

Regional

Between 1995 and 2024: yearly subsidization of 11 organisations working on gender (4), sexual identity (4) and disability (3)

Accreditation from 2025 on.

- **Explanation:**

For a total of € 3,3 mio (on a total working budget of € 4,7 mio) 11 organisations are structurally financed or their general working expenditures. In 2024 the Flemish framework decree was amended to provide for an accreditation of partner organisations for 5 years from Januari 2025 on. These organisations play a role in the implementation and realisation of the equality policy. They also have an informing, awareness-raising and supporting role towards the policy makers. The framework decree also provides for the accreditation of partnerorganisations working on digital inclusion (€750k).

Implementation:

Organisations can apply for accreditation at the beginning of the governing period and are accredited by the Flemish government for a period of 5 years. They have to submit an annual action plan and annual budget

- **Participation of civil society:**

Civil society plays an important role in the process of policy making. They can indicate opportunities and bottlenecks, as well as policy gaps or problems. The dialogue is almost organic. In 2022 a policy advisory council on disability issues was established. The Flemish advisory council advises the Flemish Government on topics that have an impact on persons with disabilities. the advisory council makes recommendations on legislation and policy measures.

Structuration de processus participatifs

- Nature, level:
Régional
Plateformes de participation citoyenne en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale
- Explanation:

Suite à la dernière Déclaration de Politique générale (2019-2024), le Gouvernement bruxellois a mis en place en 2022 un Service de la Participation en Région bruxelloise, chargé d'accompagner et d'impulser la mise en place de processus participatifs de qualité. Pour ce faire, le service de perspective.brussels développe divers outils facilitant le travail quotidien des porteurs de projets. L'inclusion de toutes les parties prenantes et des publics généralement éloignés de ces espaces de participation est un enjeu central dans chaque projet. Des outils et références pertinents pour faciliter cette inclusion sont mis en avant par le service, notamment sur sa plateforme participation.brussels, lancée en 2024.

La plateforme Soliris.brussels est une plateforme multi-acteurs qui fédère et mutualise les contributions des communes, de la Région bruxelloise, d'associations, d'organisations de la diaspora, des acteurs de la coopération non gouvernementale, et autres représentant.e.s de la société civile.



CROATIA / CROATIE

Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities

STEERING COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS - Protection and promotion of the civil-society space:

Compilation of measures and practices in place in the Council of Europe member States

Supportive legal regulatory framework at domestic level

Directive on the Government Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities (OHRRNM)

- Nature, level and date of the “good practice”:

Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities is a professional service of the Croatian Government, established by the Croatian Government ("Official Gazette", number 150/11) and the Law on Amendments to the Law on the Croatian Government ("Official Gazette" No. 119/14). When adopted by the Croatian Government in 2012, the Directive on the OHRRNM from the very beginning recognized the importance of CSOs involvement in the area of human rights. Further development is visible through the spread of tasks of the Office (Official Gazette 6/2019)⁴. The

⁴ The office is the central body in charge of coordinating the work of ministries, non-governmental organizations and other bodies that participate in the process of inclusion in society of asylum seekers and foreigners under subsidiary protection; the central body or the national contact point for the integration of persons who have been granted international protection; the body of the national coordinator for combating human trafficking; the central body for collecting and publishing data on hate crimes; the body of the national liaison officer of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the central body or national contact point for the integration of members of the Roma.

Office is responsible for implementation of national programs and policies regarding protection of human and minority rights, including public awareness and prevention of hate crimes.

- **Implementation:**

To foster cooperation with CSOs, the Directive has established the Office as monitoring body of the implementation of the National Program of Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Ombudspersons recommendations.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

The Directive predicts financial support to CSOs through regular open calls for CSOs projects related to specific human rights priorities.

Within its remit, the OHRRNM allocates funding to national minority associations for improving their working conditions and for the implementation of their programmes and projects aimed at further advancement of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and the protection and promotion of their cultural, national, linguistic and religious identities, in accordance with the Operational Programmes for National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The funding is allocated with a view to securing the stability of operation of national minority associations and enabling further enhancement of their work, and for the implementation of programmes and projects aimed at developing their national and religious identities, fostering and improving their languages and literary activity, developing cultural and artistic activities, preserving and fostering national, cultural and other traditions and customs of persons belonging to national minorities. The OHRRNM also allocates funding to national minority associations aimed at the implementation of capital projects, that is, projects the aim of which is increasing and preserving the value of assets, investing in real estate and other fixed assets, for example, through purchasing or construction, upgrading, reconstruction or adaptation, energy-efficiency renovation, decorating and furnishing, and maintenance of community centres, sports clubs, cultural centres, heritage houses and similar facilities in which organized activities of persons belonging to national minorities take place.

To improve implementation of the National Plan for the Suppression of Human Trafficking, the OHRRNM finances the Croatian Red Cross for the licensing of mobile team members and for their interventions. Also, the Office finances the operation of the national SOS telephone line run by non-governmental organizations.

Representatives of CSOs:

The CSOs⁵ actively participate in several working groups and in developing, evaluations and implementations of national and actions plans:

- Working Group for Monitoring of Hate Crime
- Working Group for Drafting of the National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination and its action plans
- Working Group for Drafting National Plan for Roma Inclusion for the 2021-2027
- Working Group for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination for the period to 2027.
- Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy
- **Advisory Group of Third-Country Nationals and Persons of Migrant Origin**
- National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

⁵ The establishment and operation of associations are governed by the Non-governmental Organizations Act (Official Gazette 74/14, 70/17, 98/19, 151/22) and the Ordinance on the Content and Method of Maintenance of the Register of Associations of the Republic of Croatia and the Register of Foreign Associations in the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette 4/15 and 14/20).

- The Operational team of the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
- Working group for the preparation of the National Plan for the Suppression of Human Trafficking for the period until 2030.
- Human Rights Council

Serving as FRA National Focal Point

Since 2017, the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities (GOHRRNM) serves as the national focal point for reporting to FRA, based on framework agreement with FRA the GOHRRNM produces comprehensive legal studies regarding the situation of fundamental rights in Croatia.

COUNCIL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS – INTER-SECTORAL BODY

At the end of 2021 the Government established the Human Rights Council, an inter-setoral advisory body.

The tasks of the Council include:

- participation in continuous monitoring and analysis of public policies related to and/or affecting the development of human rights in the Republic of Croatia,
- participation in giving opinions to the Government of the Republic of Croatia on draft regulations that relate to and/or affect the state of human rights in the Republic of Croatia and proposing to the Government measures to solve certain problems, as well as measures to improve the state of human rights,
- participation in programming and determining priorities for the use of European Union funds that are open to the Republic of Croatia in the area of human rights protection, as well as other European Union funds that may include human rights or have an impact on their realization,
- monitoring the implementation of the National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination,
- consideration of reports and periodic reports of international organizations on the state of human rights in the Republic of Croatia,
- monitoring the application of international instruments related to the protection and promotion of human rights and studying the experiences of other countries in the realization of human rights,
- proposing to the Government of the Republic of Croatia the establishment of temporary auxiliary bodies, ad hoc working groups for the purpose of processing certain topics of national importance or solving certain issues in the field of human rights,
- cooperation with national committees and commissions for individual areas of human rights, human rights bodies of the Croatian Parliament, the Ombudsperson and other representatives of the Croatian Parliament for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental 30 freedoms, and associations for the protection and promotion of human rights registered in the Republic of Croatia and
- cooperation with the county coordination for human rights and the coordination for human rights of the City of Zagreb.

The Council's members are: Vice Prime Minister of the Government of the Republic of Croatia responsible for human rights, who presides over the Council President, 14 representatives of public authorities - competent bodies of state administration and offices of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and 3 representatives of civil society organizations dedicated to the protection and promotion of human rights in the Republic of Croatia

National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination for the period to 2027⁶

- **Nature, level and date of the “good practice”:**

The National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination for the period to 2027 is a strategic-planning act adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia, which defines and sets specific objectives regarding the exercise of human rights and combatting discrimination in the Republic of Croatia., adopted by the Government in March 2023. With the National Plan two action plans were adopted: the Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights for 2023 and the Action Plan of Combating Discrimination for 2023.

- **Implementation:**

It has a section " Civil society in the protection and promotion of human rights". In the period to 2027, the plan is to strengthen the capacity of organizations and individuals providing direct assistance for victims of discrimination and to allocate financial support for the implementation of direct assistance and support for persons belonging to groups more frequently discriminated against. Taking into account the efforts made in previous years, and the presence of objectives relating to the suppression of corruption and the protection of victims' rights in planned or existing strategic-planning acts, action will be taken in the framework of the National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination for the period to 2027 to further improve access to justice by informing the citizens about their rights and raising their awareness of free legal aid, with particular emphasis on groups of citizens who are more frequently beneficiaries of these services. In fact, it is expected that from 2025 onward there will be more funds, including ESIF funds, for local activities and particularly for civil society organizations.

- **Substantive explanation:**

The National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination for the period to 2027 is a result of participatory cooperation of relevant stakeholders from the state administration, civil society, independent human-rights institutions and academia, taking part in the Working Group. An inclusive approach and a partnership dialogue will also be ensured during the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this strategic-planning act. OHRNM is tasked with coordinating the implementation of the National Plan by the public authority bodies as agencies responsible for specific measures. For this purpose, the agencies had to draft reports on the implementation of the specific measures and submit them to the OHRNM which had to draft annual reports on the implementation of the National Plan and submit it to the Government for approval.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact / Cooperation:**

The overall implementation of the National Plan and its impacts on the state of human rights shall be evaluated by the OHRNM on the base of an expert analytical report, which shall be drafted by an expert workgroup for the evaluation of the implementation of the National Plan, consisting

⁶ English translation available on: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/nacionalni-plan-zastite-i-promicanja-ljudskih-prava-i-suzbijanja-diskriminacije-za-razdoblje-do-2027-godine/989>

of experts, academics and members of CSOs. It will serve as a ground for the creation of a new National Plan. Furthermore, evaluation findings and recommendations resulting from the monitoring and evaluation process, in addition to being publicly available, will also be discussed with interested stakeholders within the Working Group for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination for the period to 2027 and at the sessions of the Council for Human Rights.

Cooperation with CSO on Croatia's National Plan for for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combatting Discrimination for the period to 2027

Croatian's National Plan enables collaboration of more than 30 civil society organisations and other public authorities and duty bearers to promote action on human rights and combating discrimination.



CYPRUS / CHYPRE

A. Contribution from the Commissioner for the Citizen

1. The good practice entitled "The Institutions and other related issues Law" found on page 39 of the CDDH(2018)13 document and the information concerning it remain the same.
2. The good practice entitled "The Private Utilities (Certification) Bill" found on page 39 of the CDDH(2018)13 document must be deleted since the said Bill was after all withdrawn in 2024.
3. The good practice entitled "Charter of Citizens' Rights and Obligations" found on page 47 of the CDDH(2018)13 document and the information concerning it remains the same. However, an additional note should be added after its title so that the good practice reads as follows:

"Charter of Citizens' Rights and Obligations

Note: The charter was created by the Office of the Commissioner for Volunteering and Non-Governmental Organizations, which has been modified into "Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen". The portfolio of the Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen concerns issues such as active citizenship, democratic participation and elimination of democratic deficit.

- **Nature, level, date, explanation of the "good practice":**

It is a Council of Ministers Decision which draws its inspiration from the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, in particular from Article 11 on freedom of expression and information, Article 12 on freedom of assembly and association, Article 21 on the prohibition of discrimination and Article 41 on the right to good administration as well as the real experience of citizens and organizations directly or indirectly involved in European and national public policies. It contains 16 articles and is divided into the following sections: General principles, Active citizenship, Liabilities of the active citizen.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

It is a tool in shaping and upgrading policies related to active citizenship and planning that define the roles, rights and obligations of active citizenship. It is expected that the

publication of the Charter and its recognition by the Republic of Cyprus will contribute to its construction and development through the collective exercise of the already recognized as guaranteed fundamental rights of the citizens.”

4. The good practice entitled “*Policy paper in cooperation with the Council of Europe entitled “Organized Civil Society in Cyprus: Building the Future”*” found on page 48 of the CDDH(2018)13 document and the information concerning it remain the same. However, an additional note should be added after its title so that the good practice reads as follows: **“Policy paper in cooperation with the Council of Europe entitled “Organized Civil Society in Cyprus: Building the Future”**

Note: The *Policy paper* was created by the Office of the Commissioner for Volunteering and Non-Governmental Organizations, which has been modified into “Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen”. The portfolio of the Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen concerns issues such as active citizenship, democratic participation and elimination of democratic deficit.

- **Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:**

It is a Council of Ministers Decision. The role and importance of non-governmental organizations is recognized by the European Union, where through dialogue they contribute to the promotion of participatory democracy and the implementation of European policies. This policy paper is an effort to strengthen and enhance the cooperation and dialogue with the NGOs of the country, as well as to strengthen the Civil Society in Cyprus.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

The purpose of the Civil Society Policy Paper is to enhance the ways in which the potential of CSOs in Cyprus can be highlighted and exploited.

- **Information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles):**

- Yes.”

5. The good practice entitled ““*Volunteering culture and active citizen in school” handbook*” found on page 60 of the CDDH(2018)13 document and the information concerning it remain the same. However, an additional note should be added after its title so that the good practice reads as follows:

““**Volunteering culture and active citizen in school” handbook**

Note: The handbook was created by the Office of the Commissioner for Volunteering and Non-Governmental Organizations, which has been modified into “Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen”. The portfolio of the Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen concerns issues such as active citizenship, democratic participation and elimination of democratic deficit.

- **Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:**

It is a step in an effort to promote volunteering, active citizenship and cultivation of voluntary consciousness from the early stages of youth development and education. It targets primary and secondary school teachers and students alike and includes experiential actions and good practices.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**
Prompts children to engage in actions that make them active citizens given the fact that volunteering is considered a good practice to tackle offending. It is also a healthy way of involving pupils in social supply, enhancing participation and coexistence
- **Information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles):**
Yes.”

6. The good practice entitled “The Volunteer’s House” found on page 48 of the CDDH(2018)13 document is modified and it reads as follows:

“The Volunteer’s House”

-Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:

The creation of the Volunteer’s House has been promoted on the instructions of the President of the Republic of Cyprus as part of his policy to support and upgrade the volunteer movement. The then Commissioner for Volunteerism and Non-Governmental Organisations (now “The Commissioner for the Citizen”) was/is responsible for coordinating the process of creating, configuring and operating the Volunteer’s House.

An important tool for operating an organization is, among other things, the proper infrastructure and the provision of basic equipment. Having this as a principle, the Volunteer’s House covers the free allocation of basic housing and office needs (offices, computers, telephones, etc.) of several voluntary and non-governmental organizations. The Volunteer’s House is also provided for use by all organizations and has been configured accordingly for their meetings and events. The Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen coordinates and supports the smooth operation of the Volunteer’s House and serves as the liaison between the hosted voluntary and non-governmental organizations and the Government.

Moreover, since 2021, by a Council of Ministers Decision, the Volunteer’s House hosts the International Organization for Migration (IOM) which is part of the United Nations.

-Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

The aim is to facilitate the role and initiatives of NGOs.

7. The good practice entitled “Citizen’s Day” found on page 63 of the CDDH(2018)13 document and the good practice entitled “Public Consultation Day” found on page 72 of the CDDH(2018)13 document must both be deleted from the CDDH(2018)13 document and be replaced with the new good practice entitled “Democracy Day” which is the reformation of the abovementioned two old good practices. It reads as follows:

“Democracy Day

- Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:

This event which was introduced in 2024 by the Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen, which is to be held annually on September 15th, establishes regular communication with citizens and safeguards their rights to transparency, freedom of expression, and access to information, broadening their choices and enabling participation in decision-making at all levels. It also promotes active involvement in society at the local,

national, and European levels. The initiative stems from the need to encourage greater civic engagement. The inaugural official event of “Democracy Day” took place at the Presidential Palace on September 15th, 2024, in the presence and the participation of His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Nikos Christodoulides.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

The primary aim is to optimize the services provided to society and every citizen, with a particular focus on youth. The first conference, held on September 15th, 2024, was organized in collaboration with the Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen and youth NGOs. It addressed the issue of corruption and its detrimental impact on the political disengagement of youth. Similar conferences are planned to take place throughout the year.

- **Information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles):**

The objective is to involve as many NGOs as possible. A specific collaborative plan has already been established with NGOs that promote actions and practices related to human rights, democratic participation and active citizenship.”

8. The new additional good practice entitled “E-Consultation Platform” has the following information:

“E-Consultation Platform

- **Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:**

As of January 2024, by decision of the Council of Ministers, the online public consultation platform has been operational. All draft bills, draft regulations etc from Ministries and other public bodies are mandatorily posted, and any citizen or organization can submit their comments and opinions. Through e-consultation, transparency is achieved, as well as the participation of all citizens in the legislative process.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

The implementation of e-consultation has significantly enhanced the information and access of all citizens to *inter alia* draft bills and draft regulations. Since its inception, there has been considerable activity and strong interest from both ordinary citizens and organized groups.

- **Information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles):**

In May 2024, the Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen organized an open discussion with NGOs regarding the promotion of a Bill to institutionalize the mandatory participation of all Ministries and public bodies in the e-consultation platform, during which all opinions were recorded. The Bill was not advanced, as an earlier Law Proposal on the same issue, submitted by a Member of Parliament, was reintroduced. All the minutes of the abovementioned open discussion were provided to the relevant parliamentary committee and the Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen supports the said Law Proposal”.

9. The new additional good practice entitled "Civil participation platforms" has the following information:

"Civil participation platforms

- Nature, level, date, explanation of the "good practice":

The Presidency of the Republic of Cyprus, through the Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen, created two platforms for direct communication and citizen participation with the executive branch. The first, "The Citizen's Voice" (March 2024), is a platform for consultative voting on governmental policies and decisions. The second, "EKFRACY" (July 2024), is a youth platform for direct communication between young people and government officials, allowing them to share their views on issues that concern them.

- Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

Through these two platforms, the gap between citizens and the Government is significantly reduced, allowing citizens, especially young people, to express their views and be heard. Both "The Citizen's Voice" and "EKFRACY" have generated considerable interest, particularly among the youth, and trust in the executive branch is growing.

- Information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles):

In the process of promoting and disseminating the platforms, the Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen reached out to and is collaborating with NGOs that focus on issues of active citizenship, democracy, and participation."

10. The new additional good practice entitled "National Strategy for the LGBTIQ+ Community" has the following information:

"National Strategy for the LGBTIQ+ Community

- Nature, level, date, explanation of the "good practice":

The Council of Ministers, during its session on 9/10/2024, appointed an inter-ministerial Committee for the preparation of the first national strategy for the protection and promotion of the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons, under the coordination of the Commissioner for the Citizen and the participation of a representative of the non-governmental Organization Accept-LGBTI Cyprus. The Committee will consult with all the agencies involved and submit the national strategy to the Council of Ministers for approval.

- Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

The National Strategy will aim to safeguard and protect the human rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals in their work and social environments.

- Information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles):

The Committee will include representation from the non-governmental organization Accept-LGBTI Cyprus, the only registered NGO of its kind in the country. There will also be support from an academic, who will be appointed following a proposal by the Commissioner for the Citizen and approval by the Minister of Justice. The National Strategy will focus on aligning the laws of the Republic of Cyprus with those of the European Union, and will address issues such as combating discrimination, ensuring

equality, safeguarding security, and building an inclusive society for LGBTQI+ individuals and the broader community.”

11. The new additional good practice entitled “Action Plan in Times of Crisis” has the following information:

“Action Plan in Times of Crisis

- **Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:**

In collaboration with the Advisor of the President of the Republic, Mr. Boustras, and the NGO Support CY, a proposal for an action plan for Volunteer Organizations during times of crisis (such as wildfires, floods, etc.) was submitted to the President of the Republic of Cyprus (September 2024), with the participation of the Ministry of Agriculture and its departments.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

The proposal aims to enable better crisis management through the cooperation of Government forces and volunteer organizations specializing in citizen protection and safety.

- **Information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles):**

The NGO Support CY has collaborated numerous times with the Government in various crises, such as wildfires, relief missions in conflict zones or areas affected by extreme natural events, the pandemic, and more. Support CY has also created and coordinates a network of volunteer groups, which works alongside the Government in responding to emergencies and crises.”

12. The new additional good practice entitled “Information Campaign on the Functioning of the Institutions of the Republic of Cyprus” has the following information:

“Information Campaign on the Functioning of the Institutions of the Republic of Cyprus

- **Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:**

The Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen, in collaboration with the organization CSI (an NGO), is preparing an information campaign for citizens regarding the functioning of the institutions of the Republic of Cyprus. The campaign will target all citizens through social media and mass communication channels (Autumn 2024).

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

The aim is to familiarize citizens with the three institutions—Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches—and to help them understand how they function and interact. This will greatly benefit civil society in shaping its stance on various state issues and in more effectively engaging in advocacy and expressing concerns.

- **Information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles):**

The collaboration between the Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen and the NGO CSI has taken place in the past, demonstrating the close working relationship between the Presidency and organized groups.”

13. The new additional good practice entitled “Annual Volunteering Competition” has the following information:

“Annual Volunteering Competition

- Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:

The Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen, in collaboration with the Foundation for Management of European Programs (ΙΔΕΠ) Lifelong Learning, non-governmental organizations and the Pancyprian Coordinating Council for Volunteerism (ΠΣΣΕ), organize a nationwide volunteering competition at the beginning of each year (starting in 2025) for individuals and groups.

- Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

The establishment of the Volunteering Award provides an important incentive for raising awareness, encouraging, and rewarding voluntary actions within civil society. This initiative will result in greater engagement in the spirit of volunteering, enhance state interest in volunteerism issues, and foster closer collaboration with non-governmental organizations that address similar matters.

- Information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles):

Yes.”

B. Contribution from Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council (PVCC)

The Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council law 61(I)/2006 provides a context for the establishment of a coordinating body for volunteering and organizations. The law grants a status to the Council as a supreme coordinative body of volunteering and defines its role, scope, governance, administrative affairs, regulatory framework and membership structure. Prior to this legislation the Council functioned under the Pancyprian Welfare Council Law’ (152/89) and its establishment dates to 1973.

The member organisations of PVCC represent a wide range of civil society interests. They implement programs, provide services and contribute to various issues that concern society. They are active in various fields: welfare, health, social cohesion, culture, sports, justice, environment, defence of rights, education, etc. They form a rich landscape of organized structures consisting of coordinating councils, associations, organizations, foundations / unions, networks, federations, confederations, Community Councils / Volunteering Committees, etc., which serve different purposes and are active in various policy areas.

Good Practices:

1. The good practice entitled “Volunteerism Week” found on page 60 of the CDDH(2018)13 document and the information concerning it remain the same.

2. The good practice entitled “Civil Society Session” found on page 72 of the CDDH(2018)13 document continues to exist; however, its information is replaced with new content and it appears as follows:

“Civil Society Session

- Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:

The Session is an initiative of the Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council (PVCC), which gives a voice to NGOs at the House of Representatives. Since 2010, representatives of 56 NGOs and voluntary organisations participate for one day in the discussion and work of the Session at the House of Representatives as “Members of Parliament”. The session is chaired by the President of the House of Representatives. Members of the Parliament, governmental and other officials and other organised groups are also invited to participate at the sessions. Topics discussed during the session are of interest for the NGO society. At the end of the session a report is drawn with conclusions and recommendations. This report is forwarded to the Government and the House of Representatives.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**
This is an innovative project which gives voice to NGOs at the House of Representatives.
 - **Information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles):**
Yes.”
3. The good practice entitled “Institutionalised Dialogue with the Ministry of Welfare, Social Insurance and Labour” found on pages 72-73 of the CDDH(2018)13 document has been extended and, therefore, its title and information must be replaced with new content. The new title and information are as follows:

“Institutionalised Dialogues with Ministries/Deputy Ministries and NGOs

The Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council in cooperation with various Ministries/Deputy Ministries, carries out annual dialogues with the aim of putting forward issues that relate to NGOs/voluntary organisations. Volunteer organisations and NGOs at local and pancyprian level participate at the dialogues.”

4. The new addition of good practice entitled “The Elders’ Parliament” has the following information:

“The Elders’ Parliament

- Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:

Since 2001, the institution of the Elders’ Parliament actively contributes to social reflection and to the promotion of the various problems faced by the elderly in Cyprus.

Composition/Function

- It consists of 56 ‘MPs’, representing pancyprian organized groups (civil society organisations).
- It is coordinated by a Coordinating Body.
- The issues discussed by the Elders’ Parliament are handled by the Health and Social Welfare Committees.
- It meets once a year in the House of Representatives, under the chairmanship of the President of the House of Representatives.

- Members of the Legislature, Executive and other observers participate.
- The findings of the Sessions are promoted to the Executive and the Legislative powers.

- Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

Purposes:

- Active contribution to social reflection and promotion of the problems of older people in decision-making centres.
- Joining the forces of organised groups from the broad spectrum of civil society.
- Strengthening the active participation of the elderly and participatory democracy.
- Recognition and utilization of the contribution of the elderly.
- Collective promotion of the issues of the elderly through the podium of the House of Representatives.

C. Contribution from: A. Commissioner for Gender Equality and National Machinery for Woman’s Rights and B. the Department of Human Rights, Anti-Crime and Correctional Policy – Gender Violence and the Gender Equality Unit of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order

A. Contribution from the Commissioner for Gender Equality and from the National Machinery for Woman’s Rights

The Commissioner for Gender Equality was appointed for the first time by the President of the Republic in 2014 to promote gender equality issues and women’s rights in Cyprus. The Commissioner is responsible, among others, for the promotion of equality between women and men and the elimination of discrimination against women, the monitoring and coordination of the work of the National Machinery for Woman’s Rights, the submission of proposals for legislative safeguarding of gender equality and the elimination of discrimination in the legislation. In order to enhance our efforts towards gender equality, the role of the Commissioner has been upgraded in coordinating and monitoring gender mainstreaming in public policies.

The Commissioner for Gender Equality is an institutional mechanism promoting equality between women and men, girls and boys. The Commissioner is also presiding the National Machinery for Woman’s Rights, which is an advisory body to the Government composed by women’s rights organisations, women’s wings of political parties and trade unions.

The Commissioner for Gender Equality chairs an Interministerial Committee composed of gender focal points of each Ministry, to coordinate and cooperate to mainstream gender horizontally in public policies. Since July 2024, a law was enacted establishing the mandate, the role and the obligations of the Commissioner, including the National Machinery for Woman’s Rights and the role of the gender focal points.

Good Practices:

1. The existing good practice in the second paragraph under the title “Commissioner for Administration and Protection of Human Rights” on page 130 of CDDH(2018)13 document should fall under a heading entitled the “*Commissioner for Gender Equality and National Machinery for Woman’s Rights*” instead. The practice should be corrected and the existing paragraph should be substituted in order to contain information as follows:

“Aiming at ensuring the continued alignment of the Republic of Cyprus with the Security Council Resolutions 2263 (2016) and 2300 (2016), the Commissioner for Gender Equality has undertaken, in close cooperation with civil society, the drafting/preparation of the first National

Action Plan on the implementation of the Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), covering the period 2021-2025, which will ensure full implementation of Women, Peace and Security agenda.”

2. The new additional good practice entitled “National Strategy for Gender Equality 2024-2026” has the following information:

“National Strategy for Gender Equality 2024-2026

- **Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”**

The 2024-2026 Strategy on Gender Equality was approved by the Council of Ministers in January 2024 and is now in effect. An extensive consultation process took place, while drafting the strategy, with the participation of governmental services, the National Machinery for Woman’s Rights, social partners, civil society organisations, media representatives and research and academic bodies. The National Strategy is providing different stages of evaluation, including an interim evaluation by a newly established Platform called “Civil Society Platform”.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

The Strategy operates as a guideline to mainstream gender in policies and actions of all Ministries/Deputy Ministries on a horizontal basis, by creating collaborations and partnerships with social partners, wider civil society, local administration, academic institutions and the business world. The implementation of the actions included in the National Strategy aimed to cultivate a gender equality culture, through the deconstruction of gender stereotypes and promoting equal participation in different sectors of life.

The establishment of the Civil Society Platform is expected to enhance civil society’ contribution for the implementation of the national strategy, establish a close cooperation with civil society organisations and leverage their expertise on further promoting gender equality.”

3. The new additional good practice entitled “Funding schemes for the National Machinery for Woman’s Rights” has the following information:

4.

“Funding Schemes for the National Machinery for Woman’s Rights

- **Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”**

The government is financially supporting women’s organisations and other civil society organisations for the implementation of actions promoting gender equality and women’s rights. The financial support is divided to (a) annual sponsorships to those organizations fulfilling the requirements of funding schemes and (b) grants for the implementation of activities and projects linked to the national strategic goals on gender equality. The funding schemes are always drafted following consultation with the members of the National Machinery for Woman’s Rights.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

Funding schemes aim to support organization members of the National Machinery for Woman’s Rights and to enhance their work promoting women’s rights and gender equality. The National Machinery for Woman’s Rights is expected to contribute and align its work with the national strategic goals outlined in the National Strategy for Gender Equality and to enhance efforts for equal participation of women and men. The aim is to work targeted in conjunction in partnerships with civil society. Impact in the long term and cannot at the moment be quantified.

5. The new additional good practice entitled “*Funding scheme for the implementation of the National Action Plan 2021-2025 for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security"*” has the following information:

“Funding scheme for the implementation of the National Action Plan 2021-2025 for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security”

- **Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”**

The Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality is responsible for the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) 2021-25 for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" and is financially supporting civil society organisations for the implementation of actions included in the NAP.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

Civil society organisations have an impact and a critical role on the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Their expertise can only further contribute on building peace and equality.”

B. Contribution from the Department of Human Rights, Anti-Crime and Correctional Policy – Gender Violence, and the Gender Equality Unit of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order

1. New additional good practices concerning **Violence against women**:

Since 2018, significant progress has been made in the field of preventing and combating violence against women at the national level. A key milestone was the establishment of the National Coordinating Body for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women, following a Ministerial Decision in March 2022. This body is tasked with coordinating, planning, implementing, monitoring, and assessing policies and measures aimed at preventing and addressing all forms of violence, as outlined in the Istanbul Convention, which has been ratified by the Republic of Cyprus.

It is worth noting that, in addition to relevant Ministries and Services, two Civil Society Organizations with active involvement in social policy issues, including gender-based violence, are key participants in the Coordinating Body.

The contribution of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) advocating for gender equality and human rights was also crucial in drafting national legislation that criminalizes gender-based violence⁷, harassment, and stalking⁸. These laws are in line with the Istanbul Convention.

Furthermore, as part of an extensive nationwide public consultation, Civil Society Organizations played a crucial role in the formulation of the first National Strategy and the first National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women (2023-2028). The Strategy and Action Plan, approved by the Council of Ministers in February 2023, are closely aligned with the objectives of the Istanbul Convention, specifically a) protecting women from all forms of violence, and preventing, prosecuting, and eliminating gender-based and domestic violence; b) contributing to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and promoting substantive equality between the sexes; c) developing a comprehensive framework of policies

⁷ The Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and for Related Matters Law of 2021 (L. 115(I)/2021).

⁸ The Protection from Harassment and Stalking Law of 2021 (L.114(I)/2021).

and measures to protect and support victims of gender-based and domestic violence; d) promoting international cooperation to eradicate gender-based and domestic violence; and e) providing support and assistance to organizations and law enforcement agencies to foster effective collaboration and adopt a holistic approach to eliminating gender-based and domestic violence.

2. New additional good practice entitled: “**National strategy for the protection and promotion of human rights.**”

The Ministry of Justice and Public Order, in collaboration with the Law School of the University of Cyprus, after consultations with all the involved services and agencies (NGOs advocating for human rights), had prepared the first National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, which was approved by the Council of Ministers in June 2021.

The National Strategy focuses on the three following core pillars:

- 1) The protection and respect of human rights;
- 2) The promotion of human rights and compliance with the international and European obligations of the Republic of Cyprus;
- 3) The prevention, information, raising awareness for the formation of a culture sensitive to respecting human rights.

C. Contribution from Commissioner for Children’s Rights:

1. The existing information concerning the good practice entitled “Commissioner’s for Children’s Rights Young Advisors Team” found on pages 129-130 of the CDDH(2018)13 document remains the same.
2. The following new additional good practice entitled “**Educational Material: Children Human Rights Defenders**” is also added:
 “The Commissioner for Children’s Rights in Autumn 2024 initiated a new project aimed at promoting the concept of children human rights defenders. The end result of the project is to develop a document with stories of children human rights defenders from Cyprus and beyond, that will be accompanied by lesson plans for use in the classroom. The general aim is to empower children in Cyprus to advocate and support their rights and the rights of other children. It is also an effort to amplify children’s voices and acknowledge their contribution within the Cypriot society. The aforementioned project aims to provide knowledge of what children can do, develop skills and cultivate the necessary attitudes for supporting human rights and act against violations.”

D. Contribution from Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human rights (Ombudsman):

1. The information provided on page 130 of the CDDH(2018)13 document in the first paragraph under the title “*Commissioner for Administration and Protection of Human Rights*” remains the same.
2. Moreover, information regarding the following additional new good practices contributed by the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman) who *inter alia* also functions as the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) is provided below and it is

categorised according to the Ombudsman's functions. These examples of the Ombudsman's work, in effect, promote the participation of civil society in the public sphere.

a. "Complaints handling and litigation"

- In July 2021, the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman) issued a public statement on the measures taken by the government in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic and their compatibility with human rights, in response to the submission of numerous complaints to the Ombudsman. Shortly afterwards, the Ombudsman returned to the matter in a more specific context concerning a protocol adopted by the Cyprus University of Technology for the purpose of conducting its courses during the pandemic, pursuant to which students who did not have a vaccination or disease certificate were excluded from participating physically in the classes.
- The Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman) issued a report in 2023 after examining a complaint which was submitted regarding the rejection of a citizenship application solely because of the applicant's disability.⁹ The citizenship application had been rejected for not fulfilling all the criteria provided in the Civil Registry Law, namely that the application for citizenship must be submitted by a person having "full capacity",¹⁰ which the applicant was deemed to lack due to his disability. The Ombudsman concluded that the legislative provision constituted direct discrimination based on the complainant's disability. To this effect, the Ombudsman recommended the amendment of the relevant provision of the Civil Registry Law to remove the discrimination against people with disabilities, as well as to ensure the harmonisation of the national legislation with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

b. Advisory functions

- *The Cypriot NHRI has been entrusted with a new mandate and has become key actor in monitoring and ensuring compliance of EU funded programmes with fundamental rights. In Cyprus, the NHRI is actively involved in an advisory capacity in the drafting of these programmes since it provides written guidance/advice to the managing authority/intermediate body, and in case a possible violation of the programmes in relation to any provision is found, the NHRI can give suggestions in order to align the programmes with the provisions of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.*

c. Human Rights Monitoring and reporting

Examples:

- i. The Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman), in its capacity as the Forced Returns Monitoring Mechanism, intervened following two cases of forced returns¹¹ during which coercive measures were used during the return process – namely, metal handcuffs – even though the returnees had not attempted to escape, had no history of violence, nor did they pose a threat to the safety of the return flight. The Ombudsman's intervention made an impactful contribution to changing the police's use of coercive measures during forced returns.

⁹ The report is available here: [https://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/855C1B9353BAA1FCC2258A4A003CE4C2/\\$file/CE%95%CC%81%CE%BA%CE%B8%CE%B5%CF%83%CE%B7_%CE%91%CE%A01990-2021.pdf?OpenElement](https://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/855C1B9353BAA1FCC2258A4A003CE4C2/$file/CE%95%CC%81%CE%BA%CE%B8%CE%B5%CF%83%CE%B7_%CE%91%CE%A01990-2021.pdf?OpenElement)

¹⁰ Law 141(I)/2022, Article 111.

¹¹ OM 26/2019 and OM 32/2019

- ii. The Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman) took the initiative to draft an opinion in light of the Parliamentary Elections that would be taking place in May 2021 under the unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, so as to stress the obligations of the State to ensure the civil rights of people with disabilities to participate in the elections on an equal basis, without any deprivation of these rights due to the pandemic and, in particular, because of their disability.
- iii. The Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman) in its capacity as a NHRI intervened following demonstrations that took place in two areas of the island (Limassol and Chloraka), during which shops owned by migrants were targeted and destroyed.¹² In her intervention, the Ombudsman referred to the right to peaceful assembly, including the circumstances in which the State authorities may legitimately intervene to restrict the exercise of the right. The Ombudsman concluded that, under the circumstances, the State authorities had an obligation to intervene to prevent or suppress the hate crimes which were occurring, in accordance with the provisions of the law and the principle of proportionality.

d. Human rights education and Awareness raising

Examples:

- In December 2021, the ‘Awareness campaign for Human Rights’ was launched.¹³ The campaign involved a number of awareness raising activities, such as the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human rights (Ombudsman) appearing to the media; organising a press conference with the Ombudsman and the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Cyprus; attending and welcoming a conference organised by the Human Rights Committee and the International and European Law Committee of the Cyprus Bar Association, in collaboration with the Council of Europe; issuing press releases; participating as a keynote speaker at a conference organised at a high school; the issuing of a commemorative postage stamp; and publishing an ex officio intervention on the occasion of World Human Rights Day.¹⁴ The highlight of the campaign was the publication of a short video showing the 30-year course that the institution of the Commissioner has had to date.
- In 2021, the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman) ran the ‘Break the Silence’ awareness campaign, which focused on reporting sexual harassment.¹⁵ The campaign included a short video encouraging the reporting of sexual harassment by victims; interventions in the media; a press conference organised specifically for this campaign; the publication of a ‘Code of Practice for the Prevention and Treatment of Harassment and Sexual Harassment at Work, in Public

¹² The position is available here: [https://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/0545B04AF7C9887FC2258A22002FCB39/\\$file/%CE%91%CE%A5%CE%A4.%2012-2023.pdf?OpenElement](https://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/0545B04AF7C9887FC2258A22002FCB39/$file/%CE%91%CE%A5%CE%A4.%2012-2023.pdf?OpenElement)

¹³ For more information about the activities included in this campaign, see: <http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/CBCFB4D94A976934C22587E2002AB831?OpenDocument>

¹⁴ [https://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/33176ED8E49EC5D1C22587A70038E0D3/\\$file/%CE%A4%CE%BF%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%B8%CE%AD%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%B7%20ENG%20pdf.pdf?OpenElement](https://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/33176ED8E49EC5D1C22587A70038E0D3/$file/%CE%A4%CE%BF%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%B8%CE%AD%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%B7%20ENG%20pdf.pdf?OpenElement)

¹⁵ For more information about the activities included in this campaign, see: <http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/EBC35AD91F3381E9C22586B7003780D9?OpenDocument>

Service’;¹⁶ meetings with relevant actors to encourage the reporting of sexual harassment in sports and the theatre; and an ex officio intervention on this topic.¹⁷ Posters related to the ‘Break the Silence’ awareness campaign were also printed by the NHRI; these were then circulated to, and exhibited in, all public service offices.

- An awareness campaign on ‘Covid-19 and Human Rights’ was launched in 2020.¹⁸ This was an extensive campaign involving several ex officio interventions; a visit to the asylum seeker reception centre at Pournara; the publication of a long report on the issue;¹⁹ a publication of a booklet/manual and multiple media appearances.
- The Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman) contributes to education and awareness raising about human rights through participating in human rights events organised for the general public by civil society organisations. (i.e. On 23 September 2021, the Ombudsman participated to an event called ‘To meet and celebrate LGBTQ+ community and allies in Cyprus’.)
- The Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman) staff have been regularly offering trainings to the Police Academy of the Republic of Cyprus on human rights related issues. These trainings usually concern either human rights education in general, or are specifically focused on themes relating to anti-discrimination.
- The Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman) has taken an active role in debates that have to do with law and policy making. (i.e. In 2020, the Ombudsman participated in parliamentary debates relating to the criminalisation of sexism, and in 2020 and 2021 in parliamentary debates about the development of a penal legal framework that is friendly to children.)

e. Reporting to international organisations

The Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights actively contributes to questionnaires and/or surveys of the Fundamental Rights Agency, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), the European Network of Equality Bodies (EQUINET) etc”.

¹⁶ The Code of Practice is available here: <http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/C0F6F29332ACFE2AC22586B7003821EC?OpenDocument>

¹⁷ The Ombudsman’s intervention is available here: [http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/42DB5EDB5215264BC2258692003ECC3C/\\$file/2_2021.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/42DB5EDB5215264BC2258692003ECC3C/$file/2_2021.pdf?OpenElement)

¹⁸ More information about the campaign is available here: <http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/3C95B6EC728A9A27C22586B700331FE4?OpenDocument>

¹⁹ The long report is available here: [https://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/3272298602DAD186C225855900445997/\\$file/Report%20on%20NPM%20Visit.pdf?OpenElement](https://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/3272298602DAD186C225855900445997/$file/Report%20on%20NPM%20Visit.pdf?OpenElement)



Adoption of the “State Policy with Respect to Non-Governmental Organizations for the Years 2015 - 2020” by the Government of the Czech Republic

- **Nature, level, date of the “good practice”:**

In 2021, the government of the Czech Republic adopted the Strategy for Cooperation Between Public Administration and Non-governmental Non-profit Organisations 2021-2030 (the Strategy)²⁰. The Strategy seeks to ensure appropriate conditions for the existence and activity of non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) and to enhance cooperation between public administration and NGOs. The Strategy represents a mid-term national strategic document that formulates the objectives of cooperation between public administration and NGOs and defines the strategic direction regarding the non-profit sector up to 2030. All of the proposed measures are based on long observed areas that are key for the existence and activity of NGOs and in which potential has been identified for the development of cooperation between public administration and the non-profit sector, based on available data and analyses. The Strategy follows on from the State Policy Regarding Non-governmental Non-profit Organisations 2015-2020²¹.

The Strategy comes up with a vision of NGOs as stable and strong partners of public administration in meeting the needs of the Czech society through three defined strategic objectives focused on improving A) the social climate for the existence and activity of NGOs, or the non-profit sector, B) promoting effective partnership and cooperation with public administration and C) ensuring and maintaining appropriate conditions in terms of legislation and financing.

The above progress will be achieved through three implementation documents or action plans. The Action Plan for the period 2021-2024 was adopted by the Czech government along with the Strategy. The other action plans will be drawn up for the periods 2025-2027 and 2028-2030, and each will be submitted to the CZ Government together with a report on implementation of the action plan for the previous implementation period. The purpose of this approach is to ensure flexibility for the Strategy implementation, to effectively respond to current issues, identified challenges and achieved results.

- **Substantive explanation:**

The aim of the Strategy is to continue supporting the non-profit sector, seek to ensure appropriate conditions for the existence and activity of NGOs and to enhance cooperation between public administration and NGOs. The Strategy was adopted at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic that underlined the importance and benefits of NGOs for the Czech society. The vision of the Strategy are non-governmental non-profit organisations as a stable and strong partner of public administration in meeting the needs of the Czech society. The vision stems from the basic premise that the state and its bodies recognise the positive contribution of NGOs' activity to the society, that through NGOs citizens influence public affairs from their own initiative and contribute to public good, and that the state is prepared to support the non-profit sector, bearing in mind that many public benefit activities can be effectively performed through that sector.

The Strategy addresses a wide range of issues, such as developing a methodology for the participation of civil society representatives in participatory processes, promoting corporate and

²⁰ Available at [Strategy_NGO_ENG_fin.pdf \(vlada.cz\)](#).

²¹ Available at [pro_tisk_statni_politika_EN \(gov.cz\)](#).

individual philanthropy, indirect support of NGOs through system of suitable tax deductions, promote volunteering, monitor and remove obstacles for applicants from NGOs to access and utilize funds from EU sources, etc.

- **How it is concretely implemented:**

The Strategy involves three consecutive action plans containing tasks to ministries and other public institutions. The implementation of the action plan by ministries and other bodies is overseen by the *Government Council for the Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations* (established in 1992).²² At present, the Council has the maximum of 35 members. These members represent, in principle, two groups, namely NGO experts (at least one-half of the members according to the Statute of the Council) and high-ranking public administration representatives.²³ The experts focus on specific areas of work of the Council, and, at the same time, represent the non-profit sector and its opinions and attitudes. At present, the Prime minister heads the Council.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

The goal of the Strategy is to support the development of the non-profit sector, particularly NGOs, which play a crucial role in promoting balanced development in the Czech Republic across social, economic, cultural, and environmental spheres. NGOs, as stable and strong partners to public administration, significantly contribute to addressing the needs of Czech society and enhancing the quality of life for its citizens.

The Strategy's measures approach the non-profit sector from two perspectives, aligning with the principles outlined in the key strategic document, the Strategic Framework for the Czech Republic 2030²⁴. The first perspective views the non-profit sector and NGOs as valuable entities in their own right, based on the premise that civil society is shaped by citizens who voluntarily participate in the governance of public affairs. The state is responsible for creating conditions that facilitate this participation, allowing citizens to exercise fundamental rights, including the right to freely associate and engage in public decision-making. The Czech Republic is committed to enhancing inclusive governance, ensuring that citizens can actively participate in decision-making processes and the formulation of public policies.

The second perspective focuses on the role and involvement of NGOs in addressing society's current needs: "Public services are key to improving the quality of life, and they must be accessible to all citizens at a sufficient and consistently improving standard. Given the specific challenges faced by communities and the fast pace of societal change, it is essential for the state to cooperate with other types of institutions in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. This cooperation

²² For example, in line with the Action plan for 2021-2024, the Government Council for NGOs approved in 2022 a methodology to enhance NGO participation in advisory and working bodies and in the development of government documents. This methodology is now being pilot tested across various ministries, with the Council's Secretariat overseeing the process. The aim is to improve civil society engagement in policymaking, ensuring greater access to official information and more meaningful public consultations. Also, in line with the Strategy, the Expert Group on Systemic Change in the Financing of Public Benefit Services and Activities from the State Budget was established by a resolution of the Government Council for NGOs on June 28, 2022. This group's mandate is to assess the current financing system and recommend reforms to streamline and simplify the funding process for NGO-provided services. Composed of 28 members from both the public sector and NGOs, the group seeks to propose financial mechanisms that ensure long-term stability and reduce administrative burdens.

²³ Specifically, they are Government Commissioner for Human Rights, State Secretary at Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Chief Directors at Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of the Interior, Head of Department of Ministry of Justice, Deputy Ministers of Defence, Health, Foreign Affairs, Finance, , Head of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Chairman of National Sports Agency, and representative of the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic.

²⁴ Available at [Strategic_Framework_CZ2030_graphic2.compressed.pdf](https://www.czechrepublic.cz/strategic-framework-cz2030-graphic2-compressed.pdf) (cr2030.cz)

spans all levels—from supranational organizations and neighboring countries to local authorities, and includes partnerships with NGOs, businesses, labor unions, churches, and, importantly, local communities."

Furthermore, the non-profit sector and NGOs are vital partners in applied research and innovation, particularly in the realm of social innovation, making them important contributors to the socio-economic development of society. It is in the state's interest to create favorable conditions for the growth of such institutions and mechanisms that enable public administration to fully harness the potential of civil society, both through formal and informal structures.

- **Information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles):**

The Strategy and its action plan have been developed in close cooperation with representatives of public administration, civil society organizations and the academic sector. The measures of the action plan are implemented, where appropriate, with the involvement of the relevant civil society organisations. The structural basis for such co-operation between the government and the civil society actors is provided, in particular, by the *Government Council for the Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations*, its committees and working groups or other, specific advisory bodies of the government (e.g. Government Council for Equality between Men and Women, Government Board for Persons with Disabilities, etc.).

Small grant scheme "Support for national interdisciplinary networks of non-governmental organizations"

- **Nature, level, date of the "good practice":**

The small grant scheme, originally established under the "State Policy with Respect to Non-Governmental Organizations for the Years 2015–2020," continues to operate under the updated focus of the Support for Nation-wide, Cross-sectoral Networks of Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs). This scheme aims to support the capacity building of nation-wide cross-sectoral **networks of NGOs** (NNGOs), enhancing their competence, qualification, and legitimacy to effectively represent the interests of their members and contribute to raising public awareness of NGO activities and their importance.

The support is specifically focused on strengthening the following aspects for grant recipients:

- The nation-wide and cross-sectoral functioning of NNGOs,
- Activities targeted towards member NGOs and other NGOs,
- Representation of member NGOs' interests,
- Cooperation with state administration to benefit both member and other NGOs,
- Awareness-raising activities aimed at increasing public understanding of NGO work and significance,
- Media coverage of topics related to the non-profit sector, including efforts to support member organizations in publicizing their issues,
- Activities that foster networking.

This support is intended for NNGOs whose purpose is to create conditions for the overall development of the non-profit sector, including raising public awareness of its role. Networks that focus only on a specific segment of the sector, such as umbrella organizations for NGOs targeting specific population groups or particular areas of activity, can not be supported because typically they can be supported from specific grant schemes.

- **Substantive explanation:**

The small grant scheme *Support for national interdisciplinary networks of non-governmental organizations (Podpora celostátních mezioborových sítí nestátních neziskových organizací)* was established in 2016 as the manifestation of the support by the State for the establishment and activities of self-governing NGO entities. While most nation-wide field-specific umbrella organisations are eligible for grants provided from the State budget by ministries or other central bodies,²⁵ the universal networks lacked such financial support from national resources as there was no “corresponding” ministry. The small grant scheme intended to close this gap.

- **How it is concretely implemented:**

Ministry of Finance allocates annually 3 million CZK (approximately € 120 000) for the grant scheme annually. Since 2016, the new grant scheme has been administered by the Office of the Government, the Secretariat of the Council for Non-profit, Non-governmental organisations (the Secretariat is a part of the Department for Human Rights and the Protection of Minorities.)

In 2024, four general umbrella networks received grants, namely The Association of Public Benefit Organizations of the Czech Republic, (*Asociace veřejně prospěšných organizací ČR, z.s.*), The Donors' Forum (*Fórum dárců, z. s.*), National Voluntary Association z. s. (*Národní asociace dobrovolnictví, z.s.*), Association of Citizens Advice (*Asociace občanských poraden, z. s.*).

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

The current action plan for the strategy includes a measure to revise the focus of the grant program or the definition of eligible applicants in order to reflect the current needs of the sector.

- **Information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles)**

The Secretariat of the Government Council for Non-Governmental Organizations, as part of the preparation of a new action plan for the strategy, collected suggestions for modifying the grant program from representatives of networks NG.



DENMARK / DANEMARK

Conducive political and public environment / Environnement politique et public favorable (3.2)

Training and support of civil society on legal briefs

- **Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:**

Most of the Danish Institute for Human Rights' efforts on human rights education targets duty bearers. However, we provide free of charge training for civil society organisations with different human right themes such as introduction to human rights, the rights of the child in asylum cases, equal treatment, homeless people's rights, etc.

²⁵ The areas of support of the NGOs from the state budget are established annually in a document *Main Areas of the State Grant Policy with Respect to NGOs*. The document is prepared by the Secretariat of the Government Council for Non-profit, Non-Governmental Organisations and approved by the Government of the Czech Republic.

The Institute has an on line demand e-courses and materials that are available to all. Further more we facilitate targeted training for teachers and social work educations on human rights and human rights education.

The Institute, as national human rights institution, prepares legal briefs to proposed legislation. To strengthen the process, and ensure civil society participation, we arrange workshops for civil society organisations to introduce them to our work with legal briefs and share best practices. The aim of these workshops is to raise awareness of the human rights aspects and to encourage organisations to, for instance, produce legal briefs or apply their influence in relation to the decision making process and relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, we engage in more informal dialogue with civil society organisations on relevant hearings.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

Results can be identified when we register how many organisations have sent legal briefs and whether the proposed legislation is amended before adoption, in accordance with recommendations made by either ourselves or the civil society organisations.

Conducive political and public environment / Environnement politique et public favorable (4.2)

Annual human rights award by and for civil society

- **Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:**

The Human Rights annual award to an exceptional person or organisation that has promoted and protected human rights is awarded by DIHR’s Human Rights Council. The Council is composed solely of civil society organisations and sets up a jury panel of four members chosen among Council members and two external members, appointed by the Council. The award cannot be given to a person or organisation who is a member of the Council. Candidates are nominated through public consultation and the media. DIHR functions as a secretariat for the jury and does not have a say in who is to be nominated or selected. The award has existed since 2014, and until date, no state authority has been member of the jury.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

The purpose of the Human Rights Award is to acknowledge the endeavours of a single person or an organisation who has promoted human rights. For instance, in 2023 the award was given to Naja Lyberth and the working group on the spiral case, who had raised awareness on the many women forced to undergo painful contraceptive procedures in Greenland in the 60s and 70s: [Menneskerettighedsprisen går til Naja Lyberth og spiralsagens arbejdsgruppe | Institut for Menneskerettigheder](#). In 2022, the award was given to Manila Ghafari, for her many years of work against discrimination of ethnic minorities in Denmark: [Manila Ghafari vinder Menneskerettighedsprisen 2022 | Institut for Menneskerettigheder](#)

Right to access and communicate with international bodies / Droit d’accéder aux instances internationales et de communiquer avec elles (4.3.2)

Supporting CSO to contribute to the UPR cycles

- **Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:**

The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) has participated actively in the UPR first, second and third cycle. Based on our evaluation of the first UPR cycle we initiated a new concept for the first phase regarding national hearings during the UPR second cycle, to enhance participation of civil society to the process. In dialogue and cooperation with the Danish Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, we initiated a number of meetings between the state authorities and the civil society organisations which compose the UPR-sub-committee of the DIHR Human Rights Council. The meetings were facilitated by DIHR.

Apart from the dialogue meetings, in cooperation with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we held four public hearings in four different cities in Denmark. In cooperation with the Foreign Affairs authority in Greenland's government and Greenland's Human Rights Council, a meeting was also organised in Nuuk Greenland and we participated in a meeting in Thorshavn, Faro Islands. These meetings were open to the public and announced in local media and social media to ensure civil society inclusion in the UPR second cycle process. To ensure a wider participation of civil society, the Institute had a mail "My Opinion" where over 100 unique mails were received on human rights issues raised by the civil society.

Furthermore, to encourage civil society organisations to submit parallel reports, DIHR held a workshop for the UPR-sub-committee of DIHR Human Rights Council and other interested organisations, where they learned about how to draw up reports and to write recommendations including specific actions (so called 'category 5' recommendations).

This work was chosen as best practice by UPR-info²⁶. These initiatives were widely continued during the UPR third cycle, including providing secretarial support to the UPR-sub-committee of the DIHR Human Rights Council.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

This example is taken up by civil society organisation "UPR.INFO" as an innovative good practice on how NHRIs can be instrumental in ensuring access of CSOs to international mechanisms in their guide "The butterfly effect: spreading good practices of UPR Implementation". DIHR's efforts led to a common parallel report from the civil society organisations included in DIHR's Human Rights Council UPR-sub-committee, and a number of parallel reports from other organisations such as Womens council and LGBT-Denmark. A number of civil society organisations also participated at the UN working groups pre-session in Geneva as well as the meeting with UN Human Rights Council. The recommendations given to Denmark mirror the recommendations given by for instance LGBT-Denmark and the disability organisations.



FINLAND / FINLANDE

Challenges including the shrinking democratic space (1.3)

Disability inclusion and development cooperation with CSOs

1) nature of the "good practice" (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Too often, structural discrimination excludes persons with disabilities from the society. They have no opportunities to influence matters concerning themselves. In development policy, Finland focuses on its strengths where it has good opportunities to support sustainable development. Finnish CSOs have vast expertise in disability inclusion. Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) is strongly committed in supporting the work of CSOs and disability inclusion.

²⁶ https://www.uprinfo.org/sites/default/files/generaldocument/pdf/2016_the_butterfly_effect.pdf

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

Civil society organisations play an important role in helping Finland achieve its development cooperation objectives. The focus of Finland's development cooperation is shifting to development cooperation engaged in by Finnish civil society organisations. The work of the Finnish CSOs and their partners in developing countries is strongly geared towards the margins of the societies.

A core principle to disability inclusion is "nothing about us without us". Finnish CSOs have strong focus on supporting the capacity of the organizations **of** persons with disabilities versus organizations **for** persons with disabilities, as well as the focus on relatively low-capacity grassroots actors in developing countries. A significant part of the Finnish support to disability inclusion is fully designed and implemented by persons with disabilities themselves.

3) how it is concretely implemented;

MFA aims to maintain the multiyear grant approach for Finnish development CSOs, in which organizations receive funding mainly in four-year periods. The calls are announced in a regular annual cycle in order to increase predictability of the Finnish funding. The funding is encouraged to be used for strengthening the expertise and advocacy work of CSOs and enhancing the civic space.

For MFA funded projects whose main objective is to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, the government grant recipient's financial own contribution is lower than in other projects.

MFA supported disability organizations also guide other Finnish CSOs on how to take people with disabilities into account in development cooperation projects and programmes.

Two Finnish organizations are among the most important national partners for the MFA in advancing disability rights globally:

- The Abilis Foundation allocates grants to projects fully planned and implemented by DPOs in developing countries. Abilis has developed an innovative grant making mechanism that includes multiple project management tools, country programmes, and strong cooperation with local and international actors. The cooperation has allowed MFA to channel its funds to local grassroots DPOs.
- Disability Partnership Finland (DPF) is a CSO and an umbrella organization formed by Finnish disability organizations. DPF offers expert services in disability and development issues and cooperates with other CSOs, companies, education facilities etc. Disability Partnership implements development cooperation work together with its member organizations in developing countries.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

The objective is that the rights of persons with disabilities, including their right to enjoy life free of violence, stigma and discrimination are protected and that the role of DPOs and persons with disabilities is strengthened specifically in the development co-operation but also in societies generally and their concrete efforts to support the comprehensive implementation of the UNCRPD

in partner countries. Aggregated results data is monitored and compiled annually from all of Finland's development interventions, and presented to the parliament every four years.

Supportive legal regulatory framework at domestic level (3.1)

Local Government Act and Wellbeing Services County Act

1) nature of the "good practice" (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Legislation, local and regional.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

Local Government Act (410/2015), Finland
<https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2015/en20150410.pdf>

Section 22 – Opportunities to participate and exert influence

(1) A municipality's residents and service users have the right to participate in and influence the activities of the municipality. Local councils must ensure that there are diverse and effective opportunities for participation.

(2) Participation and exerting influence can be furthered especially by:

- 1) arranging opportunities for discussion and for views to be presented, and setting up local resident panels;
- 2) finding out residents' opinions before taking decisions;
- 3) electing representatives of service users to municipal decision-making bodies;
- 4) arranging opportunities to participate in the planning of the municipality's finances;
- 5) planning and developing services together with service users;
- 6) supporting independent planning and preparation of matters by residents, organisations and other corporate entities.

The Wellbeing services county Act (for regional bodies with responsibility of majority of Social and Health services and Fire and Rescue services) has section 29 of the similar content.

3) how it is concretely implemented;

"Organisations" cover here also CSOs. The idea of these laws is giving municipality and wellbeing services county freedom and flexibility to arrange its practical relations and co-operation with the civil society.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

Enhanced co-operation with the civil society.

5) information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles).

Civil society organisations gave their input as part of the normal consultation process in the law drafting.

Conducive political and public environment (3.2)

National Dialogues, Finland

1) nature of the “good practice” (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Finnish National Dialogues model, national-regional-local (all sectors and all levels), Dialogues since the year 2020, the official model since 2022, the official model first implemented in the 2023

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

National Dialogues help to build an understanding of different societal phenomena, challenges and opportunities in cooperation between citizens, communities and authorities. National Dialogues are a series of discussions to which different people and communities are invited to organise dialogues as extensively as possible. The purpose of the dialogues is to obtain information on the participants’ experiences and thus help gain an understanding and up-to-date information on various social phenomena, challenges and opportunities. A summary will be drawn up of all the discussions that have taken place. The summary will be published after the round of discussions. The collected information will be compiled for everyone’s use, and it will be made available to central and local government.

Originally, the Finnish National Dialogues were set up as a rapid and creative response to the Covid-19 crisis. From the very beginning, it has been a unique co-operational effort of national government and various agents of civil society. The dialogues provided the opportunity for citizens to come together to share their experiences, learn from one another, and build trust in the nation’s ability to steer through the crisis. Based on this experience and the recommendations in the OECD Trust review and Civic Space Scans, a permanent National Dialogues model was created.

3) how it is concretely implemented;

Participants – anybody who wants can participate in a dialogue. In the Finnish National Dialogues the aim has been to get on board such organisers who can reach participants, who are people whose voice is normally not heard in the society. Also there has been an aim to get participants from all age groups. Particular attention was paid to inviting the participation of people from different demographic groups, especially individuals in vulnerable circumstances.

Organisers – the National Dialogues are open to any organisation or person to organise a dialogue. Organisers have included civil society organisations, state and municipal organisations, universities, individual people, and businesses. Dialogues can be organised face-to-face or online. They can be open to anybody to participate or they can be targeted to a particular group of people. The motivation to organise a dialogue comes from the impact to policymaking but also from the fact that the dialogue and its results can be used by the organiser in their own development work.

A support group - To facilitate the use of the model an operating support group was formed jointly by the government and civil society. Currently the group consists of Ministry of Finance,

Dialogue Academy, Prime Minister's Office, Tuusula municipality, Central Union for Child Welfare and the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra. The role of the group is to encourage and provide support for organisers and to co-ordinate the dialogues.

The topic of the National Dialogues must be one on which Finland needs a versatile understanding. The topic must involve a large group of citizens, it must not exclude any particular group of people, and a broader understanding of the topic must benefit the entire public administration.

For example, the topic of National Dialogues in autumn 2024 is *What brings us together? What kind of things, places, actors, and ways of doing things can bring us together now and in the future? What makes you, your community, organisation or decision-makers come together?* The aim of the National Dialogues this autumn is to better understand the diverse experiences of people living in Finland on what brings us together. A well-functioning society needs people-to-people bonds so that everyone has a place in the society, and we can solve our common problems.

Previous National Dialogues have repeatedly highlighted people's observations of deeper divisions in society. It seems that it is difficult for different groups of people to find common factors and ways of encountering each other. Different generations, different cultures, differences in occupations and livelihoods, differences between cities and rural areas, conflicts between minorities and majorities, and divergent political ideologies are at risk of differentiating us from each other.

Dialogue reports 2020 – 2024:

- Lock down dialogues (3/2020-12/2021 – 13 rounds of dialogues)
- Democracy defense dialogues (spring 2022)
- Immigration dialogues (autumn 2022)
- What can we learn from the crisis – dialogues between citizens and politicians (2023)
- Living in uncertain times (spring 2023)
- Together and alone – about communities and encounters in Finnish society (autumn 2023)
- Security and Trust (spring 2024)

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

The dialogue model is not a political process, and it does not aim for unanimity or decision-making. The aim is to gain an extensive understanding of people's experiences and the economic, societal, and ecological challenges at hand. At the same time, the discussions themselves strengthen social inclusion, cohesion, and the ability of society to evolve through social dialogue.

Dialogue is a discussion aiming at a better understanding of the matter under discussion, of other people and of one's own thinking. The aim of the dialogue is not to find out who is right, or to seek solutions or to reach consensus. The aim of the dialogue is to maximise the equality of the participants and their freedom to participate in the manner they consider best. In order to achieve a better understanding, participants are encouraged to talk about their personal experiences and to examine matters from different people's perspectives.

Immediate objectives of National Dialogues

- Provide all people living in Finland and Finns living abroad with opportunities to gather and discuss important issues in a constructive and open manner.
- Through the participants' experiences, build an understanding that benefits the public administration and other actors as well as an up-to-date situational picture of various social phenomena, challenges and opportunities.

Wider impacts to be pursued to strengthen democracy

- To increase mutual trust between citizens, trust between public administration and citizens, and trust between different actors in society.
- Empower citizens by offering them low-threshold opportunities to participate in social debate and involving those groups whose voice is not normally heard.
- To develop the ability of different actors in society to handle matters through dialogue.

5) information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles).

From the very beginning, it has been a unique co-operational effort of national government and various agents of civil society. Currently the group consists of Ministry of Finance, Dialogue Academy, Prime Minister's Office, Tuusula municipality, Central Union for Child Welfare and the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra.

Contact the core group: kansallisetdialogit@gov.fi

Webpage: <https://www.kansallisetdialogit.fi/en/>

CSO Strategy

1) nature of the "good practice" (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

CSO strategy. Level: state. The Government resolution on the CSO strategy was adopted in June 2024.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

The development and monitoring of the civic space must be strategic. The strategy outlines the development of the preconditions for fundraising, the reform of discretionary government grant practices and dismantling burdensome bureaucracy.

<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/165689>

<https://oikeusministerio.fi/hanke?tunnus=OM140:00/2023>

3) how it is concretely implemented;

See explanation above. The implementation of the strategy will continue until spring 2027.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

The strategy contributes to creating an enabling regulation and operating environment for civil society. The aim is, for example, to reduce the additional regulation of voluntary and non-governmental activities.

5) information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles).

The strategy was drafted in close consultation with civil society organisations. The Advisory Board on Civil Society Policy and Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations were represented as expert members in the working group. The implementation of the strategy will be done in cooperation with the civil society. Special emphasis is on dialogue with the civil society.

National programme to promote democracy and participation

1) nature of the “good practice” (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Government resolution. Level: state.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

A government resolution on a national programme to promote democracy and participation is being prepared under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice.

<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/hanke?tunnus=OM125:00/2023>

3) how it is concretely implemented;

The resolution is to be adopted in 2024.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

The specific objective is to promote voting turnout and to strengthen the inclusion of children and young people. In accordance with the Government Programme, the programme also promotes the development of good practices in democracy and human rights education and strengthens the culture of good discussion and exchange of views in society from the start, while safeguarding the constitutional freedom of expression and opinion.

5) information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles).

The draft of the Government Resolution will be on public consultation from mid-October to the end of November. The implementation of the programme will be done in close co-operation with the civil society and human rights defenders.

Government statement to Parliament on promoting equality, gender equality and non-discrimination in Finnish society

1) nature of the “good practice” (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Government statement.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

The Government has pledged to promote equality and non-discrimination and to reduce racism. The statement also stresses the importance of strengthening the dialogue between the public administration and CSOs.

<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/165112>

3) how it is concretely implemented;

The ministries have begun to implement the measures related to the statement.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

The objective of the statement is to promote the implementation of democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental and human rights.

National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights

1) nature of the “good practice” (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Action plan. Level: state.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

The aim is to prepare the fourth national Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights.

<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/hanke?tunnus=OM123:00/2023>

3) how it is concretely implemented;

The responsibility for implementing and monitoring individual projects will be divided between the ministries.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

The Government will promote informed decision-making by continuing the official reporting and monitoring of fundamental and human rights. Fundamental and human rights indicators related to the previous Action Plan have been published.

Website: <https://perusoikeusseuranta.fi/>

Handbook of Democratic Encounters

1) nature of the “good practice” (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Dialogue and democracy skills in society, National, regional, local + international, Published in 2023 (draws on the material originated in the Democracy Defence Dialogues held in spring 2022, see also section “National Dialogues, Finland”).

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

The handbook is for people who wish to strengthen democracy through their actions or work. It focuses on democratic encounters – the moments and situations when democratic values are made concrete in the various spheres of daily life and society. Democracy must be continuously defended, strengthened, and renewed.

The first part of the handbook introduces the reader to the two ‘cornerstones’ of democracy: equality and freedom. These core values of democracy are linked to everyday encounters, citing both the classic works as well as the participants in the Democracy Defence Dialogues.

The second part discusses the four ‘lifelines’ identified in the Democracy Defence Dialogues: inclusion, trust, knowledge, and justice. The handbook describes why these lifelines are crucial for the vitality of democracy, how they link people’s lives with state institutions, and the role that public services can play in strengthening them.

The third part presents six ‘steps’ for democratic encounters. These are practical approaches that can be applied to strengthen the lifelines of democracy in various contexts where members of the public and professionals come together. They also address how we can sustain democratic encounters as services become increasingly digitalised. The Handbook presents refined practices to apply them to encounters in public services - and consider the future of democracy, as well.

3) how it is concretely implemented;

Free for all actors in the society to use (in Finland or internationally).

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

The handbook is primarily aimed at professionals working in public services. The democratic nature of the encounters that arise in their work, supports the achievement of the intended impact of services. The perception of one’s own work as something that enhances people’s democratic experience of society can also give meaning to the professionals.

5) information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles).

The handbook draws on the material originated in the Democracy Defence Dialogues held in spring 2022.

Website: https://kansallisetdialogit.fi/wp-content/uploads/Demokraattisten-kohtaamisten-kasikirja_EN.pdf

The Finnish Transparency Register

1) Nature of the "good practise" / level / date: Good practice / national level

Transparency Register

2) A substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

The Advisory Board for the Finnish Transparency Register represents a wide variety of register users and consists of representatives of those subject to the reporting obligation, researchers, and authorities. The Advisory Board monitors the activities of the Transparency Register, takes initiatives to develop it, acts as an official cooperation body for stakeholders, and draws up and maintains recommendations for good lobbying practice.

The Advisory Board is appointed by the National Audit Office for a term of three years.

Website: <https://avoimuusrekisteri.fi/>

3) How it is concretely implemented;

The Finnish Transparency Register is governed by the Transparency Register Act, which was adopted in Finland in spring 2023.

4) The intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact;

The aim of the Finnish Transparency Register is to make the decision-making in Parliament and the ministries more transparent. The Transparency Register increases the transparency of such unofficial activities to influence decision-making that are carried out outside official working groups and hearings, such as consultation rounds and committee hearings. The Register also aims to combat inappropriate lobbying of central-government-level actors.

Public awareness and recognition of civil society's work (3.2.2)

Civil society – what administration should know about it? -training course in eOppiva

1) nature of the "good practice" (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Course in a shared learning environment for the government sector (this specific course is open to all so it's for anyone interested). National regional local. Published in 2023.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space; 3) how it is concretely implemented;

eOppiva is a shared learning environment for the government sector (for government employees), with the primary goal of fostering accessible education for all. eOppiva's content focuses on changes and development in public administration, working life, and society. Hundreds of people study on eOppiva daily, and up to 100,000 annually. The most popular courses have been taken tens of thousands of times. In addition to the government sector, eOppiva is used by many municipalities, welfare regions, educational institutions, organizations, and businesses. Studying on eOppiva is free for everyone.

From the training, one will receive information concerning civil society in a nutshell. One will understand how diverse civil society is and why it is valuable for all of us. One will also learn about cooperation with civil society actors. Course provides good sources of information, with which to deepen ones' knowledge and apply what you have learned in practice.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

The training is aimed at people who work in public administration in ministries or agencies in different areas of administration, municipalities or wellbeing services county. Civil society organizations and other interested parties will benefit from the training.

5) information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles).

There were partners from civil society organisations drafting the content of the course.

Webpage: <https://www.eoppiva.fi/koulutukset/kansalaisyhteiskunta-mita-julkisen-hallinnon-tulisi-siita-tietaa/>

<https://www.eoppiva.fi/en/>

Civil Society Academy

1) nature of the "good practice" (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Civil Society Academy events, since the year 2020 (the national events) and since 2022 (the regional events).

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

The aim of the Civil Society Academy is to strengthen civil servants' knowledge of non-governmental activities and to increase mutual understanding, dialogue and networking between the administration and CSOs. The Civil Society Academy helps organisations to understand the roles and significance of civil society and civil society organisations in terms of both democracy and the wellbeing insociety as a whole.

3) how it is concretely implemented;

The Civil Society Academy events have been organized since the year 2020. The Civil Society Academy model also serves as a local or regional event.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

To increase civil servants' knowledge of non-governmental activities and mutual understanding, dialogue and networking between the administration and CSOs.

5) information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles).

The Ministry of Finance organises the national Civil Society Academy every spring together with seven CSOs (Citizen Forum, Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired, Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi, Finnish Union for Senior Services VALLI, Finnish Olympic Committee, Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations STEA, Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, Martha Association) and the Ministry of Justice and the City of Helsinki.

Webpage: <https://opengov.fi/civil-society-academy/>

Democracy Prize of the Ministry of Justice

1) nature of the “good practice” (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Recognition (a democracy prize).

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

The Democracy Prize of the Ministry of Justice is a recognition awarded every two years and its theme varies. The 2024 democracy Prize was awarded for promoting the inclusion of older people in society.

<https://oikeusministerio.fi/demokratiapalkinto>

3) how it is concretely implemented;

See above.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

The aim of the prize is to thank civil society actors and share good practices.

Free access to official data, reports, initiatives, decisions (3.3.2)

Public procurement data

1) nature of the “good practice” (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

- **Nature:** This initiative involves the public release of comprehensive purchasing invoice data from state agencies and institutions, and later, the whole public sector.
- **Level:** National (Finland).
- **Date:** The service has been operational since 2017, with a new legislative initiative expected to start in fall 2024.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

The service, *tutkihankintoja.fi* (explore public spending), enables public access to central government purchasing data, fostering transparency in public spending. With the new government program, legislation will mandate the entire public sector to publish purchasing data and related information, leading to the establishment of a national public procurement database and new generation open-to-all transparency services.

3) how it is concretely implemented;

The implementation of this initiative began with the existing *tutkihankintoja.fi* service. The upcoming project will extend this framework by requiring all public sector entities to share their purchasing data, enhancing the existing transparency efforts.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

The primary aim is to strengthen data-driven management in public finance and improve transparency regarding the use of public funds, amounting to approximately 37 billion euros annually. The initiative seeks also to provide citizens and civil society organizations with visibility into how tax revenues are utilized.

The existing *tutkihankintoja.fi* service has received awards and recognition for enabling quality investigative journalism, demonstrating the effectiveness of transparency in fostering accountability. International evidence indicates that transparency in public spending, e. g., reduces corruption and supports high-quality academic research.

5) information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles).

The initiative aims to empower citizens, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders by granting them access to relevant data regarding public spending, thereby enhancing civic participation and understanding of resource allocation.

Website: <https://www.tutkihankintoja.fi/?lang=en>

Updating the Act on the Openness of Government Activities

1) nature of the "good practice" (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Legislation.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

A working group appointed by the Ministry of Justice has proposed that a new Act on the Openness of Government activities be enacted to clarify and amend the Act.

<https://oikeusministerio.fi/julkisuuslain-ajantasaistaminen>

3) how it is concretely implemented;

The working group's report was circulated for comments in spring 2024, and after evaluating the comments, it will be decided how to proceed with the updating of the Act on the Openness of Government activities.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

The objective is to promote the openness of society and respond to the demands of today's society.

Effective participation in decision-making (3.4)

Civil Society Participation in Environmental Decision-Making

1) nature of the "good practice" (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Finnish authorities support civil society participation in environmental decision-making in various ways.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

The Constitution of Finland (Section 20) guarantees everyone the right to a healthy environment and the opportunity to influence decisions affecting their living environment. This right also extends to environmental organizations registered under the Associations Act (503/1989).

Authorities support the activities of CSOs in various ways, for example, the Ministry of the Environment and the Regional State Administrative Agencies grant discretionary state subsidies for projects related to environmental and nature conservation.

Registered environmental organizations have a special status in certain environmental decision-making procedures, in particular the right to appeal. This has been a practice in Finland even before joining the Aarhus Convention.

Representatives of civil society organizations and other non-governmental actors have, where possible, been included in Finnish delegations to international environmental negotiations as experts, and their travel expenses have been partially or fully reimbursed. In recent years, due to budget cuts, less support has been available. CSOs may also participate in national preparatory meetings ahead of international negotiations.

In recent years, particular attention has been paid to the participation of youth. In 2022, the Ministry of the Environment drafted an internal guideline concerning the participation of youth delegates in international environmental meetings, including financial support.

CSOs are also represented in many preparatory sub-committees operating under the Committee for EU Affairs, such as the sub-committees on the environment, regional policy and forests. The

extended composition of the environmental sub-committee includes, among others, environmental organizations, other civil society representatives, and several business interest groups. In addition, CSOs are represented in many groups relating to international environmental issues, such as the national biodiversity working group and its subgroup, the international biodiversity working group.

3) how it is concretely implemented;

See examples above.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

These practices aim to implement the constitutional right to a healthy environment and the opportunity to influence decisions affecting one's living environment. The Government also benefits from the expertise of CSO representatives. In their comments to the national implementation report of the Aarhus Convention, CSOs have generally expressed appreciation for these ways of involving CSOs in decision-making related to the environment and found them useful.

5) information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles).

CSOs have actively been involved in developing the practices in regards to including their representatives in national delegations to environmental conferences.

Preparation of the Climate Act and other climate-related instruments

1) nature of the "good practice" (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Hearing of rightsholders and stakeholders in multiple ways.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

During the preparation of the new Climate Act, representatives of stakeholders were heard, and due to the nature of climate issues, citizens were heard on a particularly broad scale. Children and youth as well as the Sámi people, were chosen as special target groups for consultations and participation. Children and youth were chosen as a target group because climate change will have a particularly long-term impact on them. Sámi culture, in turn, is particularly vulnerable to climate change. In consultations and participation, attention was paid to the realization of language rights, accessibility, and inclusiveness. The planning and execution of the consultations was done in cooperation with researchers.

At the beginning of the process, the Ministry of the Environment organized an *online survey* to collect citizens' views on the reform of the Climate Act. The survey was published in six languages: Finnish, Swedish, English, Northern Sámi, Inari Sámi, and Skolt Sámi. To ensure that as many people as possible could respond to the survey, its clarity was tested with a pilot group of young people and modified based on the group's experiences. A total of 2,458 people responded to the

survey. In January 2020, a library tour related to the reform of the Climate Act was carried out, with the aim of collecting citizens' views in public and accessible libraries.

In the autumn of 2020, the Ministry of the Environment, together with the Erätauko Foundation and the Ministry of Justice, organized discussions on the reform of the Climate Act based on the *Erätauko method*. Erätauko is a discussion method designed for 6-25 people and aims to promote constructive social dialogue.

At the end of 2020, the Ministry of the Environment organized an *online consultation* on the preparation of the Climate Act related to fundamental and human rights, which received 218 responses. The questions were answered anonymously, i.e., respondents were not required to provide background information. The online survey asked citizens for their views on citizen participation, social justice, access to information, and the rights of the indigenous Sámi people in the Climate Act.

The Ministry of the Environment carried out *targeted consultations* with children and youth during the preparation. A representative of youth organizations was invited to each of the four *stakeholder breakfast meetings*. The Ministry of the Environment also organized a separate consultation for Sámi youth in cooperation with the Sámi Parliament's youth organization.

Civil society, including children and youth, is widely consulted also in the case of other climate related instruments, such as climate policy plans. The Ministry of the Environment organized *remote studios* for representatives of youth councils in the autumn of 2022 in connection with the publication of the annual climate report prepared under the Climate Act. They enabled participation from several cities. In addition, close cooperation with youth climate and nature delegates has continued, as well as cooperation in the activities of the *climate policy roundtable*. Several *consultations*, *seminars*, and *workshops* have been organized for stakeholders, including civil society, in the preparation of medium-term climate policy plans.

3) how it is concretely implemented;

Please see above.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

These practices aim to implement the right to a healthy environment and the opportunity to influence decisions affecting one's living environment. In this case a more specific objective was to increase the public acceptability of the new climate legislation as well as the policies developed based on it.

Democracy and inclusion webservice

1) nature of the "good practice" (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Online democracy services.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

New online democracy and inclusion services have been introduced in Finland.

Digiraati is an online service of the Ministry of Justice that aims to provide all children and young people under the age of 29 with an equal opportunity to make their voices heard in social issues.

Webpage: <https://digiraati.fi/>

In addition to citizens' initiative services and municipal initiative services, a *wellbeing service county initiative service* was just introduced in Finland. The service provides an initiative for the wellbeing service county or for an advisory referendum in the wellbeing service county.

<https://hyvinvointialuealoite.fi/>

3) how it is concretely implemented;

Communication campaign directed to schools and the youth about the Digiraati.fi service will be implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and National Board of Education in autumn 2024.

The well-being county service initiative will be found on the webpages of the Wellbeing counties, who will inform the residents of the counties about the service.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

The services complement the existing online democracy services. The prototype of the Digiraati.fi service was originally created by a research project of the University of Tampere.

Consultations with the civil society by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs

1) nature of the “good practice” (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has a regular dialogue with civil society on issues related to human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space

The Government's Human Rights Report (2021) outlines in detail Finland's cooperation, policy on and support to civil society and human rights defenders. Civil society's role is also emphasized in the Government report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy (2024), according to which “Finland supports the ability of civil society and defenders of human rights to act. Finland also cooperates with NGOs as a means of promoting its foreign and security policy objectives.”

3) how it is concretely implemented;

As a member in the UN Human Rights Council in 2022–2024, Finland supports the participation of civil society actors and human rights defenders in the Council's work and cooperates with them. During Finland's membership, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, under the lead of Minister for Foreign Affairs, has consulted Finnish civil society actors before each regular session of the Council. In addition, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has organized working level meetings to consult civil society on a number of Finnish priority topics relevant for the work of the Council.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs also briefs the Advisory Board for International Human Rights Affairs prior to and after each regular session of the Council. A representative nominated by the Advisory Board is also included as an independent expert (since summer session of 2022) in the delegation of Finland to the regular session of the Council.

Furthermore, a youth delegate representing youth organizations in Finland, has been included in the Finnish delegation to the Human Rights Council as an independent expert in once per year, in 2023 and 2024 respectively. A youth delegate is regularly included in the Finnish delegation to the meetings of the UN General Assembly each autumn.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs, under the lead of its Ministers, consults every autumn civil society organizations as regards the work of the UN General Assembly and the Finnish priorities in the UN more broadly. The Ministry has also organized consultations with civil society organizations in the context of the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

Civil society plays a crucial role also in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which is conducted under the auspices of the Human Rights Council. In preparing recommendations to other States. Finland takes input by civil society into account. In preparing for Finland's fourth periodic review in November 2022, the Government cooperated closely with the Finnish civil society at large. The Human Rights Delegation that is a part of the National Human Rights Institution and the Advisory Board on the International Human Rights Affairs had their representatives in the Government's UPR delegation. Both representatives were from civil society.

Advisory Board for International Human Rights Affairs

1) nature of the "good practice" (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

The Advisory Board for International Human Rights Affairs is an independent expert body appointed by the Government and has been operating under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in different formats since the 1980s.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space

Appointed in 2023, the current Advisory Board consists of representatives of all parliamentary groups, other representative bodies (the Sámi Parliament), several Finnish human rights organisations, and other CSOs. The Advisory Board plays an important role particularly in monitoring the implementation of Finland's international human rights policy and issuing related recommendations. The Board offers an important platform of exchange between the civil society, other representative bodies and the civil society.

3) how it is concretely implemented;

The Advisory Board meets several times a year to discuss timely human rights affairs and to monitor Finland's international human rights policy.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

In the process of updating Finland's national guidelines on human rights defenders, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs engaged closely with the Advisory Board for International Human Rights Affairs and its working group on human rights defenders. In the past, the Board has also made policy recommendations.

Advisory Board on Civil Society Policy (KANE)

The Advisory Board on Civil Society Policy works under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice. The Advisory Board's tasks include promoting the interaction between administration and civil society and enhancing the operating conditions for civil society. It consists of representatives of civil society, research, business sector, ministries and other public agencies.

The State Youth Council

The State Youth Council is an expert body on youth work and youth policy appointed by the Government. The Council consists of 18 invited members for a 4-year parliamentary term, representing broad experience in the living conditions of young people and youth work. Half of the members represent parties elected to the Parliament. A Research, foresight and evaluation division has 7 members selected through an open call. The State Youth Council gives opinions and prepares action plans with the aim to raise issues concerning young people on the agenda in public discussion. Key tools for the State Youth Council include the Youth indicators for young people's wellbeing and other data.

Youth work centres of expertise

The Ministry of Education and Culture develops youth sector services and expertise by supporting the activities of Youth work centres of expertise and National youth centres.

Youth work centres of expertise form a network supporting the implementation of the objectives set out in National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme. The centres of expertise develop and promote competence, expertise and communications in the youth sector in accordance with the Youth Act. An annual appropriation may be included in the Budget to be allocated for the activities of the national youth work centres of expertise. The Ministry of Education and Culture approves the eligibility of the centres of expertise for state aid.

Lausuntopalvelu.fi (Statement service)

Lausuntopalvelu.fi (Statement service) offers the opportunity to request and give opinions electronically. All public authorities can publish requests for an opinion in the service. All organisations and citizens can give an opinion.

Resources and long-term support (3.5)

Funding of non-profit organisations and discretionary government grant services

1) nature of the "good practice" (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

The parliamentary Advisory Board for the development of the funding and activities of non-profit organizations. Discretionary government grants services.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

The Ministry of Finance is leading the parliamentary Advisory Board (2023-2027) for the development of the funding and activities of non-profit organizations. The purpose of the Advisory Board is to support the development, use and allocation of discretionary government grants to nonprofit organizations in central government from the perspective of Parliament's legislative and financial power. The objective of the Advisory Board is to support the effectiveness, transparency and uniformity of government grant activities concerning non-profit organizations.

The Ministry of Finance is leading the Co-operation Group (2024-2025) for the joint development of government grant activities and the strategic steering of joint government grant services. A task for the co-operation group is, for instance, to make initiatives and recommendations on the introduction of uniform good practices in administration of government grants. The Co-operation Group has decided to appoint a sub-committee to reform the practices concerning general grants of non-profit organizations. Already earlier, discretionary government grant practices and their development needs have been examined in co-operation with non-profit organizations (report in 2021).

Discretionary government grants are core funding and project support necessary for civil society actors.

<https://www.valtiokonttori.fi/en/service/government-grant-services/#general>

3) how it is concretely implemented;

In Finland, joint government grant services will be introduced in stages. The call for applications for discretionary government grants is published in one place, in the digital *Applyforgrants.fi* – service, which is provided by State Treasury. Anyone can study discretionary government grants in the *Exploregrants.fi* -service.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

Discretionary government grant services facilitate services, help improve the productivity of discretionary government grant activities and strengthen informed decision-making.

5) information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles).

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Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA)

The Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA) is an independent government

grant authority operating in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Non-profit organisations can apply for grants from the STEA for their work that promotes health and social welfare.

www.stea.fi/en

Evaluation and Assistance Committee

The Evaluation and assistance Committee submits to the Ministry of Education and Culture an annual proposal of national youth sector organisations on the allocation of discretionary government grants to youth work centres of expertise. In addition, the Committee issues the Ministry an annual statement on the eligibility of national youth sector organisations and national youth sector centres of expertise for discretionary government transfers and, at the Ministry's request, make evaluations of the activities of the organisations to be supported.

Human Rights Defenders (4)

Guidelines of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders

1) nature of the “good practice” (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs updated national guidelines on supporting human rights defenders in 2022. The guidelines are based on the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders.

The Guidelines: <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/164904>

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space

The guidelines on supporting human rights defenders are intended especially for Foreign Service employees in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and in Finland's missions abroad. Additionally, the guidelines can be of use to other authorities and to representatives of the private sector and civil society. The guidelines describe the activities and status of human rights defenders around the world. They give a number of practical examples from projects supported by Finland and encourage active efforts to support human rights defenders by providing many examples. The guidelines illustrate the challenging, and in many cases dangerous, environment where an increasing number of human rights defenders daily operate.

3) how it is concretely implemented;

The Ministry actively promotes the use of the Guidelines and monitors their implementation based on indicators included in the guidelines. Employees of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs have also attended trainings on supporting human rights defenders, organized by international non-governmental organizations.

During its membership in the UN Human Rights Council (2022-2024), Finland has cooperated with civil society on various events. Finland has organized several side-events on supporting human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, where they have been included as speakers and panelists and their work has been highlighted. Finland has also

organized closed events where human rights defenders have had an opportunity to tell about their work to a more selected group of guests.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

The most important objective of these guidelines is to encourage all staff members of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland around the world to support human rights defenders and engage in active dialogue with them. These guidelines are intended to be used as a practical tool that supports these efforts.

5) information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles).

The Guidelines were drafted in close consultation with civil society organisations.

Supportive regulatory framework (4.1)

Sámi Climate Council

1) nature of the “good practice” (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Independent expert body.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

According to the revised Climate Act (423/2022), the aim of the Climate Act and its climate policy planning system is to safeguard, to the extent possible, the Sámi people's conditions for maintaining and developing their own language and culture. The Climate Act provides for a Sámi Climate Council, which is an independent expert body.

3) how it is concretely implemented;

The Sámi Climate Council is appointed for a period of four years. The first Sámi Climate Council was appointed in 2023. The Sámi Climate Council includes holders of Sámi traditional knowledge and representatives from key scientific disciplines.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

The task of the Sámi Climate Council is to issue statements on climate policy plans from the point of view of the promotion of Sámi culture. The Sámi Climate Council may also perform other tasks related to the production of knowledge on climate change and the Sámi culture and rights.

5) information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles).

The Sámi Parliament and the Skolt Saami Siida Administration were involved in the development of the Sámi Climate Council.

Methods of operation, models, roles and activities (5.1.3)

The Government proposes replacing the practice “*Co-operation and coordination in the promotion of Human Rights Education in Finland*” (CDDH(2018)13, p. 129) in the previous summary with the fully updated practice “*Democracy and Human Rights Education in Finland*”. It is also proposed that new practices be added to the summary.

Democracy and Human Rights Education in Finland (updated practice)

1) nature of the “good practice” (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

National core curricula for Basic and General Upper Secondary Education with a strong emphasis on human rights values and democracy education.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space; 3) how it is concretely implemented; 4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

In Finland, education legislation, policies and practices are human rights-based. Every pupil in school is seen as unique and has the right to high-quality education. Pupils are heard, valued and encouraged. Decisive steps are made to offer equal opportunities also for people with immigrant background to pursue study paths all the way to tertiary education, should they wish to do so. The Finnish schools function as a learning community with emphasis on safety and wellbeing, cooperation and interaction, participation and democracy as well as equity and equality. The national core curricula are central for implementing human rights education and democracy education, due to their normative character.

Finland has holistic and inclusive national core curricula for Basic and General Upper Secondary Education with a strong emphasis on human rights values and democracy education.

Examples in the core curriculum for basic education:

Underlying values of basic education

Basic education is built on respect for life and human rights. It directs the pupils to defend these values and to appreciate the inviolability of human dignity. Basic education promotes well-being, democracy and active agency in civil society.

Cultural diversity as a richness

Basic education lays the foundation for global citizenship that respects human rights and encourages the pupils to act for positive change.

Mission of basic education

Basic education educates the pupils to know, respect and defend human rights.

Transversal competence (needs to be taken into account in all subjects)

Cultural competence, interaction and self-expression:

The pupils are supported to recognise how cultures, religions and philosophies exert influence in society and daily life and how the media shapes the culture, and also to consider what is unacceptable as a violation of human rights.

The Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary General Education was composed in 2019, which further underpins the said values, now also through a set of transversal competences where especially the one dedicated to societal competence and global and cultural competence are aimed teaching and learning about civic rights and human rights oriented democracy and societal activity locally and globally.

Human rights values and democracy education are also part of key contents and objectives in different subjects for example history, social studies, and worldview education in both basic education and in upper secondary school.

5) information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles).

Based on the continuous collaboration of the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) with different Ministries, human rights organisations, universities/researchers, civil society actors etc., EDUFI has published or collected numerous materials related to education for democracy and human rights education. A large selection of materials and resources can be found on the EDUFI web pages (in Finnish) www.oph.fi/fi/opettajat-jakasvattajat/ihmisoikeus-ja-demokratiakasvatus

Teachers also take actively part in in-service training, which is provided by a range of actors, funded by the Finnish National Agency for Education EDUFI. These in-service trainings also take into account human rights education in many ways.

UNESCO ASPnet is an active global network, nationally coordinated by EDUFI. The aim of the network is to enhance active citizenship, sustainability, and peace education in schools.

Finnish Local Heritage Federation and Preserving the Community Halls for Local Civil Society Activities

1) nature of the “good practice” (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

The Finnish Local Heritage Federation and the model Preserving the Community Halls for Local Civil Society Activities. Nation-wide, developed in 2004.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

The Finnish Local Heritage Federation is the central organising body for local heritage work in Finland. The federation allocates government grants and provides consultancy in the sustainable repair and conservation of community halls on behalf of the Ministry for Education and Culture. Preserving the Community Halls for Local Civil Society Activities is a model where state subsidies for sustainable repairs and renovations of community halls are allocated to local associations via an NGO. The model is innovative because of the strong role of citizens' engagement at many levels in preserving the community halls, an essential part of Finnish heritage. The federation works in close cooperation with the National Advisory Board of the Community Halls, which is the steering committee of the state subsidies. The committee consists of representatives of NGOs whose member associations own these buildings, such as youth associations, voluntary fire

brigades, local heritage associations, and associations for farmers, women, workers and other groups.

Community halls are a culturally, socially, architecturally and historically invaluable group of buildings in Finland. There are around 2,500 halls in the country. These buildings serve as central points in their communities and are open to everyone for use at a low or no cost. Half of the halls are located in remote villages in areas where there are no other places suitable for civic activities.

They are also used for public functions, including as polling stations, and leased for family events. The halls are open to all and serve as the cornerstones of communities, offering premises for hobbies, meetings and festivities and are looked after with love and care by volunteers.

3) how it is concretely implemented;

The associations can apply for Government grants every year.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

In 2024, The Finnish Local Heritage Federation and their model Preserving the Community Halls for Local Civil Society Activities was awarded the European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award by The European Commission and Europa Nostra, cofounded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union. The Awards' Jury said: "The successful collaboration between civil society and the public sector in the project Preserving the Community Halls for Local Civil Society Activities is commendable and is noteworthy for its transferability to other places in Europe. This robust interaction and ongoing commitment, by both local communities and the authorities, as well as the scale of the project, in terms of its wide reach and long duration, is truly impressive". "The government grant scheme demonstrates the great importance of local heritage sites to local communities. Its focus on local heritage contributes to the creation of a strong sense of place and, therefore, the collective well-being of the people for whom these places are centres for community life", the Jury commented.

Website: <https://kotiseutuliitto.fi/in-english/>

The Wiki-inventory

1) nature of the "good practice" (legislation, action plan, etc.) / level (i.e. state, regional, local) / date (adopted/passed into law, etc.);

Wiki-inventory, nation-wide, opened in 2016.

2) a substantive explanation of any "good practice" adopted at national level with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil-society space;

The Finnish Heritage Agency is responsible for a Wiki-inventory for Living Heritage maintenance related to the UNESCO 2003 Convention. The purpose of the inventory is to compile information and present intangible living heritage extensively in Finland, together with ICH communities, associations, museums, other institutions or informal groups. The inventory is an essential tool in making living heritage more visible. In Finland, the inventory is collected in an open and involving manner, using Wikimedia. The Wiki-inventory is a platform that is constantly being supplemented and updated. Good practices, projects, or methods for the safeguarding of living heritage can also be presented in the inventory.

Through Wiki-inventory it is possible to present rich and diverse cultural heritage. In keeping with the spirit of the UNESCO Convention, it is hoped that examples of living heritage will be listed as widely as possible.

3) how it is concretely implemented;

Groups and communities are encouraged to share their living heritage in Wiki-inventory as well as other information sources related to it. The platform can be used in three languages (FIN, SWE, ENG) and articles in even other languages are encouraged.

4) the intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, and/or where already measured, proof of its impact;

The Wiki-inventory now contains over 240 submissions from over 400 communities in five different languages. Elements within the wiki-inventory can be suggested for the National inventory of intangible cultural heritage, conducted by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Website: www.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/en/sopimus-suomessa/wikiluettelo

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FRANCE

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) / Organisations de la société civile (OSC) (3.)

France consults civil society organisations (CSOs) in the drawing up of government plans and involves them in their implementation and monitoring. The Interministerial Plan for Equality between women and men 2023-2027 and the Plan to Combat Violence against Children 2023-2027 are two examples of such practice.

The Interministerial Plan for Equality between women and men 2023-2027

The Plan, presented on the 8th of March 2023, structures France's public policies on gender equality, focusing on 4 priority areas : 1/ Combating violence against women ; 2/ Promoting women's health ; 3/ Fostering professional and economic equality ; 4/ Promoting a culture of equality.

The 160 measures of the Plan have been informed by discussions with civil society organisations, among other stakeholders.

Moreover, CSOs financially supported by the State are involved in implementing the Plan's measures at national or local level, such as outreach activities ("aller vers") that support women and girls in accessing their rights.

The Plan to combat violence against children 2023-2027

The Plan, presented on the 20th of November 2023, structures France's public policy on combating violence against children.

The 22 measures of the Plan have been informed by discussions with civil society organisations, among other stakeholders.

Moreover, CSOs are included in two follow-up mechanisms: 1/ A steering committee, which reunites all the stakeholders involved in implementing the Plan, mainly government administrations and institutions, but also CSOs responsible for implementing some of its measures.

2/ A monitoring committee, which reunites the government administration responsible for the overall coordination of the Plan and relevant CSOs, to foster dialogue and exchanges around actions to combat violence against children and emerging challenges.

Le plan national de lutte contre le racisme, l'antisémitisme et les discriminations liées à l'origine (2023-2026)

Dans la continuité du plan contre le racisme et l'antisémitisme, présenté par Édouard PHILIPPE en mars 2018, ce Plan interministériel a été élaboré par la DILCRAH en concertation avec les associations, lieux de mémoire, ministères et autorités indépendantes.

Il contient 80 actions et poursuit cinq grandes ambitions :

- Mesurer la réalité du racisme, de l'antisémitisme et des discriminations ;
- Oser nommer la réalité de la haine ;
- Mieux éduquer et former ;
- Sanctionner les auteurs ;
- Accompagner les victimes.

Parmi les mesures concrètes du plan :

La garantie pour chaque élève de bénéficier d'une visite historique ou mémorielle liée au racisme, l'antisémitisme ou l'antitsiganisme durant sa scolarité ;

La formation de l'ensemble des agents de la fonction publique d'État à ces enjeux ;

La mise en place d'une vraie politique de testing renforcé sur les discriminations à l'embauche et sur l'accès au logement ;

La facilitation du dépôt de plainte par les victimes, notamment en développant le dépôt directement au siège de certaines associations et l'anonymisation partielle des plaintes ;

L'aggravation des peines en cas d'expression raciste ou antisémite, commise par des personnes dépositaires de l'autorité publique dans l'exercice de leur fonction.

La DILCRAH s'assurera de la mise en œuvre et du suivi des actions du plan. Un comité de suivi semestriel contrôlera le déploiement des mesures et leur impact sur le quotidien des citoyens. Le plan sera également évalué chaque année par la Commission nationale consultative des droits de l'homme (CNCDH).

Mechanisms at domestic level offering protection and redress / Mécanismes de protection et de recours au niveau national (3.1.2)

La possibilité pour les associations et autres organismes de se constituer partie civile

- **Nature, niveau, date des « bonnes pratiques » :**

Le droit français reconnaît aux syndicats, aux ordres professionnels et aux associations sous certaines conditions, la capacité d'agir en justice et de se constituer partie civile devant le juge pénal pour assurer la défense des intérêts collectifs qu'ils ont pour mission de protéger et solliciter la réparation de leurs atteintes.

Cette capacité d'action, qui déroge au principe posé par l'article 2 du code de procédure pénale selon lequel « *l'action civile en réparation du dommage causé par un crime, un délit ou une contravention appartient à tous ceux qui ont personnellement souffert du dommage directement causé par l'infraction* », résulte d'autorisations expresses du législateur.

- **Explication de la « bonne pratique » :**

Le code du travail (article L. 2132-3) pour les syndicats et les législations propres aux différents ordres professionnels (exemple article L. 4161-4 du code de la santé publique pour l'ordre des médecins) reconnaissent à ces organismes la capacité d'agir en justice pour défendre les intérêts collectifs des salariés ou des professions dont ils ont la charge.

Par ailleurs, le code de procédure pénale (articles 2-1 à 2-24) et certains textes sectoriels (ex : article L. 621-1 du code de la consommation) habilite expressément certaines associations, en fonction de leur objet social et pour certaines infractions, à intervenir dans les procédures pénales. Il s'agit notamment de la lutte contre le racisme ou les discriminations fondées sur l'origine nationale, ethnique, raciale ou religieuse, le sexe, les mœurs, l'orientation sexuelle ou l'identité de genre, les violences sexuelles et le harcèlement sexuel, de la défense des enfants victimes, de l'environnement et des animaux, de l'assistance des victimes d'actes de terrorisme et de la protection du patrimoine mobilier, immobilier et immatériel.

La participation de ces organismes dans le procès pénal leur confère les mêmes droits que ceux reconnus à la partie civile sans empêcher la victime, dont l'accord est parfois nécessaire, de se constituer également partie civile.

- **Mise en œuvre :**

Les modalités de participation des associations dans le procès pénal varient en fonction des domaines. Certaines associations peuvent agir par voie d'action et saisir une juridiction, d'autres ne peuvent agir que par voie d'intervention au cours du procès pénal.

Dans les domaines où une association peut intervenir par voie d'action, elle peut mettre en mouvement l'action publique soit en portant plainte avec constitution de partie civile devant le juge d'instruction et pourra alors, le cas échéant, faire appel de la décision du juge d'instruction de ne pas renvoyer l'affaire devant un tribunal, soit en assignant directement devant le juge pénal l'auteur présumé par la voie de la citation directe.

Dans les domaines où une association peut intervenir par voie d'intervention, l'action publique a déjà été mise en œuvre par le ministère public et l'association ne fait que s'y joindre. Dans tous les cas, la recevabilité de la constitution de partie civile du syndicat, de l'ordre professionnel ou de l'association lui confère le statut de partie au procès pénal et lui permet notamment d'intervenir dans le procès à l'oral et par écrit, de bénéficier de l'assistance d'un avocat et de l'aide juridictionnelle ainsi que de présenter des demandes de réparation aux atteintes portées à l'intérêt collectif qu'il défend.

- **Résultats attendus et / ou impact envisagé, preuve de son impact :**

La participation des syndicats, ordres professionnels et associations au procès pénal en qualité de partie permet à ces organismes d'assurer une protection efficace des intérêts collectifs qu'ils défendent (exemple: travailleurs ou consommateurs).

Elle a également vocation dans certaines situations à pallier l'absence de victimes (exemple : environnement et animaux) ou à leur difficulté à assurer seules leur défense (exemple :

discrimination, esclavage, proxénétisme). C'est notamment le sens de la loi n° 2024-420 du 10 mai 2024, visant à renforcer la lutte contre les dérives sectaires et à améliorer l'accompagnement des victimes, qui est venue supprimer l'exigence d'autorisation de la victime afin de permettre à une association de se constituer partie civile en matière de thérapie de conversion lorsque la victime est dans une situation de sujétion psychologique ou physique.

Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) / Défenseurs des droits de l'homme (DDH) (4.)

La protection des lanceurs d'alerte

- Nature, niveau, date de la « bonne pratique » :

La directive UE 2019/1937 du Parlement européen et du Conseil du 23 octobre 2019 sur la protection des personnes qui signalent des violations du droit de l'Union a été publiée au journal officiel de l'Union européenne le 26 novembre 2019.

La France était déjà dotée d'un dispositif de protection des lanceurs d'alerte prévu par la loi dite « Sapin II » du 9 décembre 2016 relative à la transparence, à la lutte contre la corruption et à la modernisation de la vie économique. Elle a toutefois dû faire évoluer ce dispositif sur différents points pour le mettre en conformité avec la directive.

Celle-ci a été transposée en droit français, d'une part, par la loi organique n° 2022-400 renforçant le rôle du Défenseur des droits en matière de signalement et, d'autre part, par la loi ordinaire n° 2022-401 visant à améliorer la protection des lanceurs d'alerte, dite loi Wasserman. Publiées toutes deux le 22 mars 2022, elles sont entrées en vigueur le 1er septembre 2022. Le décret n° 2022 1284 du 03 octobre 2022 complète le dispositif.

- Explications de la « bonne pratique » :

La définition du lanceur d'alerte est étendue par un élargissement des conditions relatives aux informations signalées permettant de bénéficier de la protection :

Le lanceur d'alerte est désormais une personne physique qui « signale » ou « divulgue » des faits, et non plus les « révèle ». Cette modification permet notamment de recouvrir, de façon plus large qu'antérieurement, toutes les démarches que peut emprunter le lanceur d'alerte pour partager les informations dont il dispose, y compris de façon publique.

Le lanceur d'alerte peut signaler des faits qui ne sont plus nécessairement un délit ou un crime, et peut même signaler des informations qui portent sur les tentatives de dissimulation des violations - qui n'ont plus à être graves - de la loi ou d'un engagement international. Enfin le « désintéressement », a été remplacé par une condition d'absence de contrepartie financière directe, condition plus précise.

Si la condition de la connaissance personnelle des informations est abandonnée pour les alertes concernant le cadre professionnel, elle est maintenue dans tous les autres cas.

Les conditions de protection sont simplifiées et les sanctions des représailles étendues :

La loi Sapin II imposait des alertes par pallier, avec l'obligation de respecter des délais déterminés entre chacune d'elle : un signalement interne, puis externe, à l'autorité administrative ou judiciaire ou à un ordre professionnel, et en dernier recours une divulgation publique.

Cette hiérarchisation présentait un frein aux alertes, en raison de sa complexité et, pour les signalements internes, des risques de pressions et de représailles.

La loi prévoit que désormais le lanceur d'alerte pourra choisir entre le signalement interne et le signalement externe à l'autorité compétente, au Défenseur des droits, à la justice ou à un organe européen.

La divulgation publique est désormais possible ab initio, sous certaines conditions :

- en l'absence de traitement à la suite d'un signalement externe dans un certain délai ;
- en cas de risque de représailles en saisissant l'autorité externe ou si l'autorité ne permet pas de remédier efficacement à l'objet de l'alerte ;
- en cas de danger grave et imminent pour une alerte non liée au cadre professionnel ;
- pour les informations obtenues dans un cadre professionnel en cas de danger imminent ou manifeste pour l'intérêt général.

Pour faciliter les alertes, les garanties de confidentialité qui entourent un signalement sont renforcées et, dans les cas de signalement ou de divulgation publique anonyme, le signalant dont l'identité est révélée postérieurement pourra obtenir le statut de lanceur d'alerte.

Les représailles demeurent interdites et sont complétées par une liste extensive, bien qu'indicative, d'exemples de mesures prohibées.

L'irresponsabilité des lanceurs d'alerte du fait de leur signalement est étendue. Le lanceur d'alerte ne pourra être inquiété ni civilement pour les préjudices que son signalement de bonne foi aura causés, ni pénalement pour avoir intercepté et emmené des documents confidentiels liés à son alerte, contenant des informations dont il aura eu accès de façon licite. Enfin, l'amende civile encourue en cas de procédure "bâillon" contre un lanceur d'alerte est portée 60 000 euros.

L'accompagnement du lanceur d'alerte est renforcé :

Afin de limiter l'isolement du lanceur d'alerte, la loi a également étendu certaines protections aux facilitateurs, personne physique ou personne morale de droit privé à but non lucratif, en lien avec le lanceur d'alerte et lui apportant une assistance dans le signalement ou la divulgation.

Le dispositif légal prévoit également un « bénéfice du régime le plus protecteur ». Pour les lanceurs d'alerte qui relèveraient d'un dispositif spécifique de signalement, lorsque la protection de la loi Sapin II est plus favorable que celui-ci, elle s'applique. La loi maintient toutefois une exception pour le dispositif spécifique de signalement en matière de renseignements.

Le rôle du Défenseur des droits, auparavant limité au recueil et à l'orientation des lanceurs d'alerte, est consolidé par la création d'un adjoint ad hoc, chargé de l'accompagnement des lanceurs d'alerte. L'institution aura non seulement la charge d'orienter les lanceurs d'alerte, mais également de réorienter les alertes lorsqu'une autorité externe ne s'estimera pas compétente. L'adjoint au Défenseur des droits peut également, à la demande de l'intéressé, rendre un avis sur la question de savoir si rendre un avis s'il peut bénéficier du statut de lanceur d'alerte.

La loi entend également réduire les obstacles liés au coût financier des procédures que doivent engager ou subir les lanceurs d'alerte. Le juge pourra accorder à bref délai une provision pour frais de justice au lanceur d'alerte qui conteste une mesure de représailles ou se trouve dans l'obligation de se défendre dans une procédure engagée à son encontre. Cette provision peut être rendue définitive à tout moment.

Enfin, le texte prévoit que les autorités compétentes, désignées par le [Décret n° 2022-1284 du 3 octobre 2022](#), peuvent mettre en place un soutien psychologique ainsi qu'une aide financière

temporaire au profit du lanceur d'alerte lorsque sa situation financière s'est gravement dégradée. La directive imposait la désignation d'autorités dans un certain nombre de secteurs d'activités, la loi de transposition ayant en outre étendu à dix autres secteurs d'activité. 41 autorités, incluant le Défenseur des droits, sont soumises au régime du traitement des signalements.

- **Résultats attendus et / ou impact envisagé, preuve de son impact :**

Le Défenseur des droits a rendu, le 25 septembre 2024, un rapport sur la protection des lanceurs d'alerte qui formule un certain nombre de recommandations, tout en mettant en avant les progrès accomplis en faveur de la liberté d'expression et de la consolidation de la figure juridique du lanceur d'alerte, grâce à la prise en compte croissante des textes par les juridictions.

Le rapport souligne que la désignation des autorités externes s'est traduite par une augmentation sensible du nombre des alertes, bien que concentrée sur quelques autorités.



GREECE / GRÈCE

Protection of refugee women

- **Nature/level/date:**

Policy-initiative under the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2021-2025 / Guidelines published on 2023 involving collaboration with NGOs

- **Substantive explanation:**

"Handbook of guidelines on women and girls with disabilities for all services involved in the reception of asylum seekers"

The Handbook was developed in the framework of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality (NAPGE) 2021-2025 and is also part of the National Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It was prepared by the General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights in collaboration with the National Confederation of People with Disabilities, with the support of UNHCR.

The Handbook aims to assist field professionals working in Reception and Identification Centres, Closed Controlled Access Centres of Islands and (open) shelters for asylum seekers and refugees, specifically supporting women and girls with disabilities. It focuses on understanding disability and promoting the inclusion and empowerment of individuals with disabilities, particularly survivors of gender-based violence. The Handbook is divided into three parts: the institutional framework for disability rights (Part A), gender-based violence and disability in the refugee context (Part B), and guidelines for field workers assisting survivors of disability (Part C).

- **Implementation-Outcomes/envisaged impact:**

The Handbook has been posted online (<https://isotita.gr/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Egxeiridiotia-gyn.-kai-koritsia-me-anapiria-asylo.pdf>). Regarding the implementation and its impact, there are no available data.

- **Nature/level/date:**

Policy-initiative -Cooperation with international organisations and a wide range of Civil Society Organisations-Training seminars on gender-based violence (2023)

- **Substantive explanation**

The General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights, in cooperation with the Research Centre for Equality Issues and UNHCR, organised training seminars titled "Education on Gender-Based Violence and Abusive/violent Behaviors" for professionals supporting asylum seekers and refugees. The co-organisers collaborated with the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the Hellenic Police, the National Public Health Organization, and the National Reference Mechanism for the protection of victims of trafficking. The seminars focused on preventing and addressing institutional gender-based violence, with a particular emphasis on the refugee population. Held as two-day seminars with both in-person and online participation, five seminars were organized in 2023-2024 to enhance staff skills in combating stereotypes and raising awareness on cultural diversity and interculturalism.

- **Implementation-Outcomes/envisaged impact**

No data available

- **Nature/level/date:**

Policy-initiative -Cooperation with international organisations and a wide range of Civil Society Organisations in the field of gender-based violence in the refugee and migrant population (since 2021).

- **Substantive explanation**

The General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights and UNHCR renewed their cooperation in January 2021 to prevent and address gender-based violence among refugees and migrants through intersectoral collaboration. The General Secretariat co-chairs the Working Group on Gender-Based Violence, which includes NGOs, international organizations, and government bodies. The group focuses on coordinating actions, sharing field information on refugee women, and addressing trafficking in human beings. Meetings have been held mostly online, on a monthly basis, with new sessions planned for early 2025.

- **Implementation-Outcomes/envisaged impact**

No data available

- **Nature/level/date:**

Policy-initiative -Cooperation with international organisations and a wide range of Civil Society Organisations in the field of sexual violence (2024)

- **Substantive explanation**

The Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family, supporting the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Greece, collaborated with the Council of Europe to provide assistance to support victims of sexual violence, including refugee women. The study aims to help the Greek government choose a support model, assess service providers and regions covered, examine collaboration between state authorities and women's NGOs and identify any existing referral pathways and multi-agency cooperation between existing services and state agencies. The

Council of Europe team's fact-finding mission, completed in June 2024, involved extensive consultations with NGOs and stakeholders, forming the basis for the study.

- **Implementation-Outcomes/envisaged impact:**

The study was completed, offering a mapping and overview of the support services currently available in Greece for victims of sexual violence, along with recommendations for potential models or practices suited to the Greek context. Specific outcomes are not available yet.

Fight against trafficking in human beings

- **Nature of the good practice/level/date:**

Law and implementing acts (Law 4198/2013, as amended by Law 4781/2021 (art.76-79), and Ministerial Decision 3003/2016, published in the Official Gazette on 20.09.2016).

- **Substantive explanation of the good practice with regard to the protection and promotion of the civil society:**

The Office of the National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking has formed a strategic partnership with NGOs specializing in trafficking of human beings (THB). It offers a platform for consultation, information exchange, and joint projects, leveraging grassroots expertise in victim identification and support. The Hellenic National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking (NRM), now in its fifth year since its 2019 rollout, is administered by the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) and coordinated by the Office of the National Rapporteur. It serves as a hub for coordinated action among state authorities, civil society, and international organizations to combat human trafficking.

- **Implementation:**

Overall, NGOs are an intrinsic part of our National Referral Mechanism and national action plan and provide assistance to the Office of the National Rapporteur in the advocacy for legislative reforms, awareness-raising campaigns, training, research, psychosocial and legal assistance to the victims of trafficking. To date, 57 Civil Society organisations have joined the NRM, along numerous state agencies that might detect, identify and/or provide protection services to a (presumed) human trafficking victim in their everyday practice. A list of all NRM participating actors is available in English here: <https://ekka.org.gr/index.php/en/ethnikos-mixanismos-anaforas-en>

Civil society organizations have played a key role in developing the NRM's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and have designated focal points for collaboration. Specialised NGOs annually provide anonymised data on human trafficking victims and potential victims they have assisted, which helps the Office of the National Rapporteur assess prevention, prosecution, and victim support services. This data, along with input from state authorities, informs the National Action Plan against human trafficking. NGOs are often the first to contact victims, offering care and guidance to help them engage with authorities in order to follow legal procedures for official recognition, making their role crucial in managing trafficking cases.

Furthermore, the Office of the National Rapporteur is forming a working group with state and non-state actors to update the 2019-2023 National Action Plan, renewing strategies to address the evolving nature of human trafficking. In collaboration with the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the Office organized a seminar on strengthening Greece's National Action Plan. Held on June 25-26, 2024, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the first day focused on public administration and independent authorities, while the second day was dedicated to NGOs and international organizations.

Awareness-raising about human trafficking

-Substantive explanation of the “good practice”

The Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and the National Referral Mechanism, in collaboration with the OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, co-organized a workshop on “Unconditional access to services for victims of trafficking in human beings” (Social Path Workshop) in Athens, (14-15/2/2024). The workshop brought together state agencies, NGOs, and international organizations to explore the "social path" approach to victim identification and assistance, which is independent of victims' cooperation with the criminal justice system. This expert platform aimed to enhance understanding of this approach and its benefits for trafficking victims.

- Outcomes/envisaged impact:

A significant portion of the discussion focused on the necessary steps and measures for more effective implementation of the "social path" alternative in the national context. Following the workshop, ongoing collaboration with the OSCE is underway to enhance its application nationwide, including coordinating a working group at the central or regional level to develop operational protocols and tools

Memorandum of Cooperation to combat trafficking in human beings

- Nature of the good practice/level/date:

The Hellenic Labour Inspectorate, as an Independent Authority, is strengthening its collaboration with the Office of the National Rapporteur and the National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking through a series of national action plans and institutional interventions. These efforts aim to enhance cooperation with law enforcement (Hellenic Police) and civil society (NGOs). As part of this, the Labour Inspectorate signed a memorandum of cooperation with the civil non-profit organization A21 INGO, that operates exclusively in the fight against human trafficking.

- Substantive explanation of the “good practice”:

At the institutional level, such cooperation aims to improve communication with citizens, who often find NGOs more approachable for reporting labor exploitation and providing first aid. The MoU outlines joint actions to raise public awareness and enhance labor inspectors' ability to identify trafficking victims, focusing on educational workshops and campaigns.

As part of the MoU with A21 INGO, four training workshops were held in Athens (May, June), Thessaloniki (October), and Heraklion (May). These workshops covered the legal framework on trafficking, labor exploitation indicators, and real trafficking cases, with trainers from A21, the Labour Inspectorate, Hellenic Police, and Public Prosecutor's Office.

Cooperation of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights with the Council of Europe

Nature of the good practice/level/date:

Actions under the relevant legislative framework.

Substantive explanation of the “good practice”:

The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) actively engages with both national as well as international, regional and European actors involved in the promotion and the protection of human rights.

Implementation:

In particular, the GNCHR closely cooperates with the Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms (GREVIO, GRETA, ECRI), including in the context of their visits to Greece, with a marked increase in its interaction with the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in recent years. Indeed, the GNCHR translates into Greek the ECtHR factsheets on the Court's case-law and pending cases (available on the Court's website) and collects all ECtHR judgments against Greece in a single excel file (available in the GNCHR website). The GNCHR has recently submitted a third party written intervention before the Court, following an invitation by the Section's President. The GNCHR also cooperates with the (revised) European Social Charter monitoring mechanisms, including through the submission of Observations on National Reports on the implementation of the Revised European Social Charter and other ad hoc reports (such as the ad hoc National Report on the cost-of-living crisis). The GNCHR maintains a close cooperation with the Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to which it provides information on request.

The GNCHR is particularly active in its regional network. The GNCHR President was elected twice as Board Member of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), in 2015-2018 and 2019-2022). Currently, the GNCHR holds the position of Chair of ENNHRI's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Working Group. In the past, the GNCHR has chaired the Working Group on Education and Human Rights (2009-2011) and Asylum and Migration (2021-2023). The GNCHR supports ENNHRI actions for the follow-up and implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec (2021)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the development and strengthening of effective, pluralist and independent national human rights institutions.

- Outcome/Impact:

GNCHR reports have been referenced in a number of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights concerning Greece. The activities and recommendations of the GNCHR are very often referred to in the reports of the Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe expert bodies (e.g. GRETA) and UN or regional (EU, OSCE) bodies, such as UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, European Commission, EU Fundamental Rights Agency a.o.

*Law on the National Council against Racism and Intolerance***- Nature, level, date:**

Legislation and practice / Law 4356/2015 (art. 15 - 19) as amended by Law 5107/2024, published in the Government Gazette on 1st of May 2024 / State / published in the Government Gazette on the 24th December 2015

- Substantive explanation:

By virtue of the abovementioned Law, the "National Council against Racism and Intolerance" was established, a consultative - advisory body which is chaired by the Secretary General for Equality and Human Rights of the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family. The Council consists of representatives of the competent Ministries, as well as the Migrants Integration Council, the National Council for Radio and Television, the National Commission for Human Rights, the Racist Violence Recording Network (where 55 NGOs participate), the UNHCR, the National Confederation of Persons with Disabilities, the Union of Athens Daily Press Editors, the Research Center for Gender Equality (K.E.TH.I.), the General Confederation of Greek Workers and the Civil Servants Union Federation (A.D.E.D.Y.). The Greek Ombudsman, a constitutionally protected independent authority, participates, at its own request, without the right to vote. However, according to Art. 16 par. 4 of Law 4356/2016, the Ombudsman has the right to notify at any time the President of the Council of its wish to become a full member of the Council with a right to vote.

- **Implementation:**

For the accomplishment of its tasks, the Council may (a) elaborate studies, issue guidelines and recommendations and propose relevant measures, (b) develop and propose policies which could have a horizontal application and take initiatives for the promotion of corporate social responsibility, (c) develop actions for the promotion of human rights through education, (d) take initiatives for the training of judges and public prosecutors, law enforcement officials and civil servants, (e) collect statistical data on racism and intolerance; (f) promote the prevention of and the fight against racist violence, as well as the reinforcement of recording mechanisms, (g) take initiatives to raise public awareness through the media and to record and combat hate speech in public life, (h) elaborate a National Action Plan against Racism, monitor its application in a systematic way and provide for its regular update.

The Council has identified the need for awareness-raising activities, public information and proactive measures against racism and intolerance. To this end, the Council has issued a brochure to inform civil servants about racist crimes and elaborated a Guide on the rights of victims of racist crimes.

The first Action Plan, covering the period 2020–2023, was adopted in December 2020. In May 2024, the Council was reactivated, following the transfer of responsibilities in this field to the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family (Law 5107/2024). Work will shortly commence on the elaboration of the second National Action Plan.

Intended outcomes:

The Council is tasked with the development of policies on preventing and combating racism and intolerance (to be reflected in its National Action Plans) in order to protect persons and groups of persons targeted on the grounds of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, descent, social origin, religious or other beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender characteristics, the supervision of the enforcement of relevant legislation and of its conformity with international and European law, the promotion and coordination of the action of stakeholders, and the strengthening of cooperation with civil society.

- **Cooperation:**

The role of civil society in the Council is enhanced: the Racist Violence Recording Network (where 55 NGOs participate) has now two representatives (up from one). NGOs participating in the Racist Violence Recording Network elect their own representatives to the Council, offering civil society open access and participation. Moreover, the National Commission for Human Rights and the UNHCR are very active members of the Council. The abovementioned actors, as members of the National Council, will play a major role in monitoring the implementation of the anti-racism Action Plans. Furthermore, the Council may cooperate with experts, NGOs and other bodies and civil society stakeholders in all matters of concern.

Anti-discrimination Law

- **Nature, level, date:**

Legislation / Law 4443/2016 (art. 8, 13 and 14) / State / published in the Government Gazette on the 9th December 2016, Law 5089/2024 (art. 9)

- **Substantive explanation:**

The anti-discrimination law, as amended in 2024, has a quite extensive scope, covering (a) the grounds of race, color, national or ethnic origin, and descent, (b) religious or other beliefs, disability or chronic illness, age, family or social status, sexual orientation, gender identity, characteristics, or expression in the field of employment and work, c) on the grounds of race, color, national or ethnic origin, descent, disability or chronic illness, religious or other beliefs,

sexual orientation, gender identity, characteristics, or expression in the fields of social protection, including social security and healthcare, social benefits, and tax reliefs or advantages, education, and access to the provision of goods and services available to the public (in commercial transactions), including housing.

The abovementioned anti-discrimination Law, incorporating the relevant EU directives, provides, *inter alia*, for the promotion of social dialogue and institutional cooperation with civil society on issues related to equal treatment. It creates a single, clear and legally robust application of the principle of equal treatment. Most importantly, the Law assigns overall powers to the Greek Ombudsperson (an independent authority according to the Greek Constitution) to receive and examine complaints about discrimination in the public and the private sector.

- **Implementation:**

According to the law, the State encourages dialogue between social partners, as well as with non-governmental organizations whose statutory purpose is to combat discrimination based on race, color, national or ethnic origin, descent, religious or other beliefs, disability or chronic illness, age, family or social status, sexual orientation, gender identity or characteristics, with the aim of promoting the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment. Furthermore, legal entities, associations, or other organisations may engage, either on behalf or in support of the complainant, with his or her approval, in any judicial and /or administrative procedure.

- **Intended outcomes:**

The purpose of the Law is to safeguard the implementation of the principle of equal treatment.

- **Cooperation:**

Legal entities, associations or organizations, including social partners and trade unions, can also help the Greek Ombudsperson to ensure the implementation of equal treatment between persons, irrespectively of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

National Strategy for LGBTIQ+ equality

Substantive explanation:

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On March 17th 2021, the Prime Minister formed a committee with the mandate to prepare the first National Strategy for LGBTIQ+ equality. The former President of the ECtHR, Professor Linos-Alexandros Sicilianos was appointed head of the committee which also included academics (experts on family and constitutional law), members of the civil society (transgender association, Rainbow Families & Thessaloniki Pride) and government officials (Secretary General of Justice and Human Rights & Chief Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister). The Committee held numerous meetings and consulted several institutions, from the Council of Europe to the Greek Ombudsperson. Also many LGBTIQ+ organizations and individuals sent out their proposals. On June 29th 2021, the committee presented the National Strategy to the Prime Minister. The Strategy is available [here](#).

The National Strategy takes stock of the progress that has been made over the past years, identifies remaining problems and submits concrete proposals. In this process, the committee took note of best practices implemented in other countries.

- **Implementation:**

Marriage Equality was enacted into law on 16 February 2024 (law 5089/2024). The law, *inter alia*, allows marriage without discrimination based on gender and extends to same-sex married couples the exact same legal framework applicable to heterosexual couples. The same law extends the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender

characteristics and gender expression to new areas that were not covered by the previous legislation.

Protection of journalists

- **Nature/level/date:**

Initiatives to ensure the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals (Memorandum of Understanding signed on 23 May 2022, establishment of training center, conduct of campaigns)

- **Substantive explanation**

The protection of free and independent media offline and online, including by promoting the safety of journalists and supporting an enabling environment for them to carry out their duties, constitutes principal priority for Greece. In particular, Greece actively participates and supports the task and mission of the CoE's Platform for the safety of journalists. It strongly supports improving the protection of journalists to better address threats and violence against media professionals, while also fostering early warning mechanisms and response capacity within the Council of Europe.

The *Memorandum of Understanding on the Protection, Safety and Empowerment of Journalists and Other Media Professionals* was signed by the Secretariat General for Communication and Media and, as co-signatories, by Secretariats-General of the Ministries of Justice, Citizen Protection, Labour and Social Affairs - Secretariat General for Demographic And Family Policy And Gender Equality, and Digital Governance.

This MoU outlines a framework for cooperation focused on legislative and non-legislative proposals to protect, empower, and ensure the safety of journalists and media professionals. It includes efforts to document and specialise policies on online safety, digital literacy, and journalist empowerment, along with planning training programs for the development of skills and competencies in all related professions. The MoU emphasizes raising public awareness about the threat attacks on journalists pose to democracy, and places a special focus on empowering female journalists and those reporting on equality.

The MoU provided for the establishment of a Task Force on Ensuring the Protection, Safety, and Status of Journalists and Media Professionals (Official Gazette B' 3991/2022) to further its goals. The Secretariat General for Communication and Media created the Task Force, with representatives from all MoU signatories and experts from bodies like the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT), universities, media associations.

- **Implementation**

The Task Force held its first meeting on 24 August 2022. It is under the process of a renewal of its mandate for the third consecutive year and meets monthly since its inception. During the meetings, the stakeholders provide updates from their respective fields and organizations, while cooperating in subgroups under a mandate that cover the following topics:

- 1) Data collection, analysis and reporting on attacks against Journalists
- 2) Secure the journalists' working conditions
- 3) Security of journalists in conflict situations
- 4) Areas of intersectional competence of public bodies
- 5) Digital safety, digital transformation, online media
- 6) Legal Harassment – SLAPPs
- 7) Fight against impunity - educational programmes for the Hellenic Police
- 8) Women Journalists
- 9) Regional press

The work of the Task Force was highlighted and received positive mentions as good practice, including at the Council of Europe level.

Other activities related to the protection of journalists:

The *International Educations Center for the Safety of Journalists and Media Professionals* ([ICSJ](#)) was established in Thessaloniki in January 2023.

The ICSJ focuses on leveraging academic and professional expertise to provide specialized training for journalists and media professionals, studies on related issues, both in war zones and crisis areas, as well as issues where threats to journalists and freedom of information arise. Recent activities include:

- a joint training session with UNESCO (18-21 June 2024) aimed at improving cooperation between law enforcement and media professionals, incorporating new modules on freedom of expression and journalist safety into police academy curricula;
- the 3rd "Safety for Journalists" Training School (16-20 September 2024), with the participation of practitioners and experts from around the world, offering practical training on operational planning, legal protection, self-care, digital safety, even hostage survival;
- an international conference, "Safeguarding Journalists: Mapping the Field" (20-22 September 2024), which explored global challenges to journalist safety and strategies to protect press freedom;
- a new academic course on journalist safety was introduced in the Spring 2023-2024 semester, now part of the curriculum in three Greek universities.

Campaign for the Safety of Journalists (Council of Europe)

The "Journalists Matter" campaign by the Council of Europe aims to promote press freedom and protect journalists from violence, threats, and harassment. This 5-year initiative covers all Council of Europe member states. In Greece, the Secretariat General for Communication and Media serves as the National Focal Point, with the Task Force acting as the National Campaign Committee, coordinated by the Panhellenic Federation of Journalists' Unions (POESY).

It should be noted that Greece, with due respect to article 10 ECHR as well to the Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors, responsibly engages in posting responses to the CoE's Platform for the safety of journalists, when is directly referred to in information posts on the Platform.

Furthermore, the recent National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1325/2000 provides for, *inter alia*, raising awareness of journalists and employees in the media on issues of gender, sexual and domestic violence, substantial gender equality and human rights.

Finally, several legislative initiatives aimed at improving protection for journalists. More specifically, Article 15 of Law 5085/2024 punishes anyone who issues public statements, announcements, or publications, incites, urges, encourages or facilitates acts that may lead to violent offenses or threats of violence against journalists, who in the context of their capacity cover or comment on professional events sports, as well as related issues. Furthermore, Article 362 concerning simple defamation was removed from the Greek Penal Code, which now punishes only the act of libel concerning the dissemination of knowingly false information that may harm the honor or reputation of another.

Greek National Commission for Human Rights

The role of the National Human Rights Institution in Greece has been assigned to the Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR), the independent advisory body to the State, established in 1998 with a legislative mandate to protect and promote human rights. The GNCHR was established by Law 2667/1998, in accordance with the Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions (The Paris Principles) and was convened in plenary session for the first time on 10 January 2000. The founding law of the Commission was substantially amended by Law 4780/2021. The new law provides, inter alia, that the GNCHR acquires legal personality and enjoys functional independence and administrative and financial autonomy, which allow the Commission to elaborate, submit and execute its own budget. The composition of the Commission has been amended so as to become even more pluralistic and to encompass all human rights fields, including environmental rights. The GNCHR has a broad mandate (Article 1(1) of its founding law), covering the whole range of human rights, as they are enshrined in the Constitution, in international and European treaties and directives, as well as in soft law instruments such as declarations and guidelines, including on social, economic and cultural rights. The text of the founding law of the GNCHR is available online in the English language (https://nchr.gr/images/pdf/FINAL_REVIEW__1__GNCHR_Law__4780_2021_ENGLISH.pdf).

Racist Violence Recording Network

The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) jointly, with the UNHCR Office in Greece established in 2011 the Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN), with a mandate to systematically record the acts of violence with a racist motive and to verify the relevant quantitative and qualitative trends of this phenomenon. The RVRN has currently 55 members, namely NGOs and CSOs, active in the fields of recording incidents of racist violence against individuals or properties and offering medical, social, legal services or/and coming in direct contact with victims of racist violence or victims of other hate- or bias-motivated violent attacks. The RVRN has published so far 12 annual reports, offering both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis of incidents involving racist violence and other related manifestations of harassing behaviours and violence. It is recognized as a best practice by different UN, EU and regional bodies, such as OSCE/ODIHR.

Advisory role

The GNCHR, in the context of its advisory function, encourages ratification or accession to human rights instruments and advises the Government on the precise nature of the obligations the State would assume upon ratification. In order to support this work, the GNCHR systematically reviews existing as well as draft legislation to ensure compatibility with human rights norms and has drawn up for this purpose a comprehensive table (regularly updated) of all international, regional and European human rights instruments the Greek State has signed and ratified or should sign and ratify.

Independence and pluralism of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights

- Nature of the good practice/level/date:

Law 4790/2021

Substantive explanation of the “good practice”:

The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) is an independent authority under Greek administrative law and a status A (full compliance with Paris Principles) National Human Rights Institution. Its independence is guaranteed in its founding law but also reflected in its

overall administration, governance and functioning through several elements which play a crucial role, such as *inter alia*: its legal autonomy, its financial autonomy, the guarantees concerning the appointment and dismissal procedures, the election of its Board by the Plenary, as well as the full personal and functional independence of its members, who serve in their own individual capacity rather than on behalf of the organisation they represent. Furthermore the GNCHR ensures pluralism both through its large and diverse membership, as well as through its cooperation with a broad range of social forces involved in the promotion and protection of human rights.

- **Implementation:**

The GNHCR has a pluralistic and gender-balanced composition. In fact, its members are persons appointed by twenty institutions (independent Authorities, third level trade unions, NGOs, universities and research institutions). In 2023, 47% of its members and 67% of the Bureau members were women. Moreover, the GNCHR has over the years developed several mechanisms of cooperation with the abovementioned actors in order to enhance its effectiveness and credibility. This also extends to public authorities (Parliament, Ministries, but also political parties represented in the Parliament), through the appointment of liaison officers, with full respect to the Commission's independence.



LATVIA / LETTONIE

In line with the selection criteria of good practices provided in the Compilation of measures and practices in place in the Council of Europe member States (CDDH(2018)13) and the questionnaire sent to the member States (CDDH-INST(2017)06), in the following paragraphs Latvia provides some examples of good practices for the protection and promotion of the civil-society space in Latvia that have an overall positive character and are innovative in their nature.

3.4. Effective participation in decision-making processes

Platform for public participation in the drafting of legal acts

Nature, level, state, explanation of the “good practice”: In 2021, the Unified Portal for the Development and Coordination of Draft Legal Acts (‘the TAP Portal’) was introduced in Latvia to enhance public awareness of proposed legislative initiatives and to facilitate broader public involvement in the drafting of legal acts. It represents a significant step towards modernising the interaction between the society, including civil society organisations, and the authorities, allowing individuals and organisations to express their opinions on drafts of legal acts and to contribute actively to the shaping of national policies.

Substantive explanation: The TAP Portal is an official information system that serves a dual function. First, it manages the internal operational processes of the Cabinet of Ministers, such as the circulation of documents, ensuring a streamlined and standardised procedure for drafting and coordinating legal acts. Second, it acts as a platform for public engagement by informing the society of ongoing legislative initiatives and providing an avenue for participation and exchange of views. Through the TAP Portal the public can access and review draft laws and monitor the progress of legislative initiatives from their initial proposal to the final enactment by the Cabinet of Ministers, and, where applicable, the documents and proposals to be submitted to the Saeima.

Implementation: The TAP Portal operates in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers' Regulations no.606 *Rules of Procedures of the Cabinet of Ministers*,²⁷ according to which since 2021 the Cabinet of Ministers' documents are developed, coordinated, and submitted through this portal. This promotes greater transparency and accessibility of the legislative process for the public. Everyone, including civil-society organisations, can actively engage in the development of legislation by submitting comments and suggestions at various stages, starting from the initial concept paper to the final draft of the legal act. The portal also provides users with real-time updates on the status of each document, making the legislative process more inclusive and user-friendly.

Outcomes: The TAP Portal is a step towards broadening opportunities for public participation in the Cabinet of Ministers' decision-making process. By involving members of the society at the early stages of legislative drafting, the TAP Portal contributes to the development of a more informed and community-aligned policies. Furthermore, the TAP Portal enhances the transparency and accessibility of the legislative process. In June 2024, for the establishment of the TAP Portal the State Chancellery of Latvia received the United Nations Public Service Award for accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals in the "Innovation" category.

Memorandum of Cooperation between the Cabinet of Ministers and Non-Governmental Organisations

Nature, level, date, explanation of the "good practice": The *Memorandum of Cooperation between the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia and Non-Governmental Organisations* ('NGOs') was first signed in 2005 and subsequently updated in 2014. This *Memorandum* establishes a formal framework for cooperation between the Cabinet of Ministers and NGOs aiming to ensure effective public participation in the decision-making processes. It reflects Latvia's commitment to fostering a strong, active, and cohesive civil society as a cornerstone of democratic governance. The *Memorandum* provides a platform for dialogue and collaboration on policy developments and implementation, promoting transparency, inclusiveness, and mutual trust between the authorities and NGOs.²⁸

Substantive explanation: Pursuant to Article I of the *Memorandum*, its purpose is to promote efficient public administration by facilitating involvement of the civil society in the decision-making processes at all levels and stages of public administration. The *Memorandum* acknowledges the value of the input by the civil society in developing public policies that are aligned with societal needs and expectations. In 2005, the *Memorandum* was signed by 57 NGOs. As of today, the number of signatories has grown significantly, with 548 NGOs participating, thereby highlighting the broad-based support and increased engagement of civil society organisations in governmental affairs.

Implementation: The implementation of the *Memorandum* involves active participation from both the authorities and the non-governmental sector. The cooperation is managed through the Council for the Implementation of the Memorandum, a consultative body established to oversee the fulfilment of the Memorandum's objectives. The Council consists of representatives from the State Chancellery, the ministries, and the signatory NGOs. Meetings are held regularly –

²⁷ *Rules of Procedures of the Cabinet of Ministers*, entered into force on 9 September 2021, available in English: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/325944>.

²⁸ More information available in Latvian: <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/nevalstisko-organizaciju-un-ministru-kabineta-sadarbibas-memoranda-istenosanas-padome>.

approximately once a month – to discuss and review ongoing initiatives, set priorities, and develop annual action plans. These meetings are recorded, and the minutes are published online.²⁹

Intended outcomes: The primary objective of the *Memorandum* is to enhance civil society's involvement in the policy-making process by establishing a structured and ongoing dialogue between the authorities and NGOs. This cooperation aims to ensure that public policies reflect the needs and perspectives of the society. By fostering greater engagement, the *Memorandum* seeks to contribute to better-quality decision-making, increased transparency, and improved trust between the authorities and civil society actors.

Advisory councils and working groups

Nature, level, state, explanation of the “good practice”: Public participation in the decision-making processes in Latvia is also ensured through the establishment of advisory councils and working groups within various State institutions, in which representatives of NGOs participate alongside the representatives of domestic authorities. These advisory councils and working groups provide a platform for dialogue and consultation, allowing diverse viewpoints to be considered in developing different policies.

Substantive explanation: Numerous advisory councils and working groups have been established across various domestic institutions to address a wide range of policy areas. To name a few examples, since 2006, the Advisory Council of Representatives from Minority NGOs has been operating as a consultative body aimed at promoting the participation of NGOs in the formation of civil society and the development and promotion of minority rights and culture.³⁰ Similarly, the Environmental Consultative Council, established in 2007, aims to foster public involvement in the development and implementation of environmental policies.³¹ On 19 February 2020, the Ministry of Culture established the Media Policy Advisory Council, which serves as a consultative body with an aim to coordinate efforts related to media policy and to facilitate collaboration between domestic institutions and industry professionals on strategic issues concerning the development and sustainability of the media environment in Latvia.³²

Implementation: On 30 August 2017, the Council for Implementation of the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia and NGOs approved guidelines for the operation of advisory councils. In these guidelines, the Council for Implementation of the Memorandum emphasises the following principles: openness through timely and accurate information sharing, accessibility for all members (e.g., remote participation options), and constructive discussions that respect diverse viewpoints. The guidelines also highlight the importance of time efficiency, ensuring members' preparedness, and utilising remote or written decision-making procedures when appropriate. The guidelines also encourage regular review of advisory councils' composition and balance between the representatives of public and NGO sectors. Likewise, the guidelines call for active involvement of the public in decision-making, feedback from State institutions, and proper documentation of meetings. The State Chancellery has encouraged ministries and other public institutions to take into account the principles set out in these guidelines.³³

²⁹ Meeting agendas and records available: <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/nevalstisko-organizaciju-un-ministru-kabineta-sadarbibas-memoranda-istenosanas-padomes-sedes>.

³⁰ More information available in Latvian: <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/konsultativa-padome>.

³¹ More information available in Latvian: <https://www.varam.gov.lv/lv/vides-konsultativa-padome>.

³² More information available in Latvian: <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/padomes-un-darba-grupas>.

³³ More information available in Latvian: <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/konsultativas-padomes>.

Outcomes: Advisory councils and working groups contribute to informed and balanced decision-making by incorporating various viewpoints into policy development. They also strengthen public trust by fostering transparency. As a result, policies and regulations are better aligned with societal needs and expectations, leading to improved governance outcomes and enhanced public participation in the decision-making process.

4. Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)

4.1.2. Legislation to protect whistle-blowers

Effective legislation that protects whistle-blowers

Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”: On 4 February 2022, a new *Whistleblowing Law*³⁴ entered into force in Latvia ensuring protection for whistle-blowers and providing a safe environment for reporting breaches that may harm societal interests. The *Law* encourages whistleblowing by safeguarding individuals from retaliation and ensuring that their reports are properly addressed, thus fostering a culture of integrity and transparency in the workplace.

Substantive explanation: Although the *Whistleblowing Law* primarily implements *Directive (EU) 2019/1937 of 23 October 2019 on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law* (‘the *Whistleblowing Directive*’), its material scope is broader. The *Whistleblowing Law* covers a wide range of legal areas, including infringements of human rights, which are explicitly mentioned in Article 3 of this *Law*. This expanded scope ensures that whistle-blowers can report on various types of potential misconduct and breaches, including violations that go beyond the minimum requirements of the *Whistleblowing Directive*.

Implementation: The first legislation on whistleblowing came into force in 2019. It was subsequently replaced by the current *Whistleblowing Law* in 2022, which transposed the *Whistleblowing Directive* into the domestic legal framework and further strengthened the protection mechanisms for whistle-blowers in Latvia. Pursuant to Article 8 of the *Whistleblowing Law*, the State Chancellery serves as a contact point for whistle-blowers, and its responsibilities as such, among others, include providing information on the procedures for whistleblowing on the website www.trauksmescelejs.lv, offering consultations related to whistleblowing, promoting public awareness, and providing guidance on establishing whistleblowing systems, as well as collecting data for annual reporting. When receiving applications from whistle-blowers, the State Chancellery identifies the competent institution and forwards the application for further action.

Outcomes: The *Whistleblowing Law* envisages three types of channels: reporting through the institution’s internal system of reporting (private law or public-law) where the whistle-blower works, reporting to the authority that is competent to address the issue, and reporting through the contact point for whistle-blowers (the State Chancellery, including through a website specifically designed for whistleblowing) or association or foundation. Where the report is submitted to an authority that is not competent to address the issue it must send the report to the proper authority.

³⁴ The *Whistleblowing Law*, entered into force on 4 February 2022, available in English: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/329680-whistleblowing-law>.

5. National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)

Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”: Since 2007 the Office of the Ombudsman has been the national institution for the protection and promotion of human rights in the Republic of Latvia.

Substantive explanation: The Office of the Ombudsman as the Latvian national human rights institution operates pursuant to the *UN Paris Principles*. In 2020, the Office of the Ombudsman has received “A” accreditation status in the Sub-Committee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of the National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI). The Ombudsman also serves as the National Preventive Mechanism under the *Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture or Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*. The Ombudsman operates independently.

Implementation: The Ombudsman’s legal status, functions and tasks are governed by the *Ombudsman Law*. The main functions of the Ombudsman are to promote the protection of human rights, to promote equal treatment and prevention of discrimination, to assess and promote the observance of the principle of good governance in public administration, and to promote public awareness and understanding of human rights.

Outcomes: The Ombudsman, in carrying out his functions, has the right to lodge an application for the initiation of proceedings in the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Latvia, a possibility that is frequently used by the Ombudsman. Since 2018, the Constitutional Court has issued rulings in 13 cases brought by the Ombudsman, addressing issues such as the working hours of medical personnel, real-estate taxes, disclosure of personal data, personal income tax, remuneration of healthcare workers, state fees for property and pledge rights registration, the amount of State social security and funeral benefits, and regulations on recognising individuals or families as “persons in need.”³⁵ Additionally, the Ombudsman is often invited to provide opinions in cases before the Constitutional Court. In 2023 alone the Ombudsman submitted 10 such opinions.

The Office of the Ombudsman conducts researches on civil and political rights, social, economic and cultural rights, rights of children, rights of persons with disabilities, and on the practical implementation of the prohibition of discrimination. The Ombudsman’s Office examines applications on alleged violations of those rights and provides in-depth research on topics of relevance to society. Moreover, the Ombudsman’s Office prepares annual reports. These reports present statistics and concrete measures taken in the framework of its operation. For example, according to its annual report, in 2023 the Ombudsman received 1718 submissions.³⁶ Furthermore, the Ombudsman prepared 47 opinions for domestic institutions on draft legal acts in 2023,³⁷ thus, within the scope of its competence, the Office of the Ombudsman regularly draws the attention of the domestic authorities to topical human rights issues and provides suggestions to improve the legal framework or its practical application to ensure respect for human rights.

³⁵ The case-law of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Latvia, available in English: <https://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/en/cases/>.

³⁶ Ombudsman’s Annual Report of 2023, page 6. Available in English: https://www.tiesibsargs.lv/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ombudsman_2023_annual_report.pdf.

³⁷ Ombudsman’s Annual Report of 2023, page 11. Available in English: https://www.tiesibsargs.lv/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ombudsman_2023_annual_report.pdf.

**MONTENEGRO / MONTÉNÉGRO****Judicial reform****- Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:**

NGOs have a strong impact on judicial reform. For example, one of them CEMI (the Centre for Monitoring and Research) was implementing a project “Approach to justice and human rights in Montenegro - project of trial monitoring from 2021 to 2023” that included monitoring of trials with a special focus on criminal cases. Judicial bodies contributed to the implementation of this project and through the signing of a memorandum of cooperation.

Furthermore, the NGO CEMI is currently implementing the project “EU Support to Montenegro's Integration - for an Independent and Professional Judiciary as a Key Precondition” which project will last for 24 months, namely from 3 January 2024 to 2 January 2026 and the monitoring of the trials will be taking place for 12 months continuously.

In addition, the monitoring team of the NGO Civic Alliance, based on the Memorandum of cooperation between the Supreme Court of Montenegro and the aforementioned NGO, conducted monitoring of hearings in the basic courts in several Montenegrin municipalities, within the period from January 2023 to January 2024, as a part of the project "Without impunity for the violation and breach of human rights in Montenegro".

- Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

The project “Approach to justice and human rights in Montenegro - project of trial monitoring from 2021 to 2023” implemented by the NGO CEMI lasted for 3 years and represented a continuation of a similar type of projects that were carried out in the period from 2007 to 2014. The general aim of the said project included the contribution to further strengthening of democracy and the awareness-raising through the implementation of the rule of law and the respect for human rights and freedoms in Montenegro. At the same time, through that project the NGO CEMI continued to provide the expert support to system institutions and their work, especially in the field of fulfilling obligations and standards in the process of EU integration. The CEMI's observers during that project monitored over 200 hearings in criminal proceedings and had an insight into the cases files of over 400 finally terminated criminal cases.

With reference to the second project “EU Support to Montenegro's Integration - for an Independent and Professional Judiciary as a Key Precondition”, the NGO CEMI will observe court trials with a particular focus on respecting the procedural rights of suspects/accused persons and victims in Montenegro.

As regards the NGO Civic Alliance's project, their observers during that project monitored over 100 hearings in criminal proceedings, with a particular focus on cases related to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment and serious violations of fundamental human rights. As a result of that project the publication „Monitoring of trials for criminal offences of torture and other serious violations of human rights“ was published in August 2024. In that report the main conclusions were drawn as well as a comparison with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights and emphasized that during the monitoring of main hearings in criminal cases the monitoring team *inter alia* did not notice any procedural irregularities as regards the right to a fair trial and concluded that the rights and dignity of the injured parties were respected.

Law on Prevention of Corruption

- Nature, level, date, explanation of the „good practice“:

On 12 June 2024 the new Law on Prevention of Corruption („Law“) entered into force in Montenegro, replacing the Law on Prevention of Corruption („Official Gazette of Montenegro“, No. 53/2014)

- Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

The aim of the new Law is to comprehensively regulate potential conflicts of interest and impose restrictions on the exercise of public duties, as well as a better regulated protection of whistleblowers.

The new Law *inter alia* expanded the definition of a public official with the aim of including public notaries, public bailiffs and bankruptcy administrators, enabling the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption to conduct checks, administrative and misdemeanour actions in respect to reports on income and assets of those persons.

As regards the whistleblowers, the protection of their data is defined in more detail by the new Law. Namely, it is now explicitly regulated that the identity of whistleblowers and other data can be revealed only in case of necessity and proportionality with obligations stipulated by the special law, within investigations of the state authorities or within the court proceedings. In addition, the court protection system of whistleblowers is empowered by the new Law, in a manner that the whistleblower who suffered damage or is threatened by the possibility of damage, has a right to lodge the claim for his/her protection to the competent court within the general time-limit stipulated by the law which regulates obligations (10 years), which proceedings upon that claim are urgent. In these proceedings the burden of proof that the harmful action is not causally linked to the submission of the report, falls under the obligation of the employer as the defendant. Likewise, in these proceedings the new Law envisages the possibility for the acting judge to issue an interim measure.

Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms

- Nature, level, date, explanation of the good practice:

The Institution of the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro (Ombudsman) was established by way of a Law which was passed by the Assembly of Montenegro on 10th July 2003.

- Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

Under the Law on the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro (entered into force on 23rd August 2011) the Ombudsman has two new competences and it became the institutional mechanism for protection against all forms of discrimination and the National Preventive Mechanism for the protection and prevention of persons deprived of liberty against torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Competencies of the Protector of human rights and freedoms of Montenegro are based on Article 27 of the Law on the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro („Official Gazette of Montenegro“ No. 42/2011, 32/2014), by Article 21 of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, („Official Gazette of Montenegro“ No. 46/2010, 18/2014 and 42/2017) and by Article 1 of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination of Persons with Disabilities („Official Gazette of Montenegro“ No. 35/2015 and 44/2015). Also, the latest amendments of the Law on Gender Equality („Official Gazette of

Montenegro“, No. 46/2007 and 35/2015) have established a full competence of the Protector in acting on the bases of complaints against violation of the principle of gender equality.

About Litigation powers they formally decide on complaints (e.g. decision or recommendation addressed to the parties) but that decision are not legally binding and their role is to initiate or interfere in court proceedings initiated in civil litigation with the consent of the discriminated person.



NORTH MACEDONIA / MACÉDOINE DU NORD

Single Electronic Register of Regulations ENER

- **Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:**

With the changes of the Rules of procedure of the Government and in line with the Government “Guidelines for the manner of acting in the work of the ministries for the involvement of stakeholders in the process of preparation of laws”³⁸ the policy development process is opened to other state and non-state stakeholders. The public consultation process is facilitated through the Single Electronic Register of Regulations ENER (<https://ener.gov.mk/>), an electronic system where all current (laws and bylaws) as well as draft legislation are presented to the public and their feedback gathered in 10 (ten) days from the publication.

ENER is a functional public consultation process tool which allows interested parties (civil society organizations CSOs, interest groups, businesses, academia and etc.) to submit electronically their comments and suggestions directly to competent institutions. ENER also serves as main source for the media of relevant information about the ongoing legislation projects of the government, without having to visit every single web site of the Ministries or use alternative routes to obtain information. Ministry of Information Society and Administration on behalf of the Government manages the ENER and all ministries regularly update and publish draft laws, bylaws, consolidated texts of laws and documents arising from the Regulatory Impact Assessment process. Enhanced transparency is achieved by making it legally binding to publish all law drafts and law change proposals of the government, in each phase of their preparation, with detailed explanations and justifications about the proposal, including a cost-benefit analysis and an analysis of different options, with an argumentation about the reasons why that specific approach was considered to most adequate, in line with the RIA principles. The Ministry, responsible for a particular legislative document published in ENER, should produce a report on the public consultation process and its results.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

ENER provides simple, free of charge and direct active involvement for any stakeholder or interested party in the complete legislative process from the initial proposal to make law changes, to the final stage in the government procedure. Each portal visitor has full access to all relevant documents which explain why the law is being issued or amended, which impacts are expected on the society and what outcomes can be envisaged from the new legislation. Based on these data, the visitor can send proposals and comments for improvement of each draft-document/legislation. Each comment is registered, published and answered with specific deadlines so if the

³⁸ http://www.vicepremier-ekonomija.gov.mk/files/pdf/angl/Upatstvo_za_postapuvanje_na_ministerstvata_eng.pdf

government rejects a proposal, they have to explain why in writing, which brings the burden on them. ENER guarantees that based on the obligatory administration procedures, all comments shall be published without delay and replied within a specified deadline. Each reply contains an explanation whether the comment is accepted or declined, stating the reasons for that decision, in public.

ENER is directly connected with the “E - Government session” system, meaning that no law changes can reach a session without having been properly processed in the ENER with RIA Report (excluding those that are by law not subject to RIA). Only one government official can by - pass this system and approve a law to come to the session incomplete, but a trace in the system stays, with monitoring data about the number of such events. Ministries don't have this privilege. A civil society project “Mirror of the government” implemented since 2012 by the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC) and funded by the European Union and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is regularly monitoring and publishing the quantity and quality of use of ENER by the government. Within the project, the Single National Electronic Registry of Regulations (ENER) is regularly and continuously monitored, evaluating the involvement of the public at an early stage in drafting laws. The results of the monitoring of ENER are published in weekly and monthly reviews and quarterly and annual reports. The purpose of these publications is to increase citizens' awareness and to encourage civil society organizations and other stakeholders to participate in the early stages of law drafting. All results of the "Government Mirror" project are available on the website www.ogledalonavladata.mk and <http://sorabotka.ener.gov.mk/Ogledalonavlada.aspx>.

Cooperation with civil society

- **Nature, level, date, explanation of the “good practice”:**

The fourth Strategy of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for cooperation with and development of civil society 2022-2024 was adopted on 28.12.2021, to improve the mechanism for cooperation with civil society and build a continuous, transparent and fully inclusive dialogue in the process of creating and implementing policies. The measures in this strategic document are systematized in three areas: Normative, institutional and financial framework for the development of civil society; Democratization, active participation of civil society in social processes, in the creation and monitoring of policies, with a special focus on the process of integration in the European Union; and Civil society as an actor in social-economic development. The General Secretariat of the Government - Unit for cooperation with NGOs, in cooperation with the Network of civil servants for cooperation with civil society, coordinates the implementation of the Strategy and submits Annual reports to the Government and quarterly reports to the Council for cooperation between the Government and civil society. The website www.nvosotabotka.gov.mk contains a web platform for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy.

The General Secretariat of the Government – Unit for Cooperation with NGOs publishes a Call for civil society contribution in the preparation of the Annual Work Program of the Government, prepares Annual Report on the consultation process during the preparation of proposals for laws, use of ENER and other mechanisms for cooperation with civil society organizations and Annual Report on financing of program activities of associations and foundations from the budget of state administration bodies and local self-government units.

In 2018, a Council for cooperation between the Government and civil society has been established, as an advisory body to the Government for the promotion of cooperation, dialogue and encouraging the development of civil society, composed of 16 representatives of civil society organizations and 15 representatives of state administration bodies.

The priority of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, in the period 2024-2028, is support of an inclusive, independent and professional civil society, as partner of the institutions in the creation and realization of the strategic goals of the state. On September 4, 2024, in the premises of the Civil Society Resource Centre in Skopje, a debate was held on "Strengthening the cooperation between the Government and civil society". The discussion was focused on the enabling environment for the development of civil society, the implementation of the Government's Strategy for cooperation with and development of civil society 2022-2024, the functioning of the Council for cooperation between the Government and civil society and future steps to strengthen cooperation between the Government and CSOs. Based on the conclusions of the debate, a wide consultative process with CSOs has been initiated for amending the Decision on the establishment of a Council for cooperation between the Government and civil society.

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs in particular, in cooperation with other state institutions regularly cooperates with the relevant civil society organizations and other independent bodies in the area of human rights in the process of preparation of reports on ratified international conventions of the UN or the Council of Europe, such as for example within the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) reporting mechanism. Civil society organizations are also actively and regularly involved in policy preparation and implementation by other Ministries and state bodies through direct participation in the working groups working on the creation of specific legislation, regulations, strategies and action plans, participating in public debates, round tables, workshops, coordinating bodies, submitting comments, opinions and suggestions, as well as realization of projects in the field of social protection.

Inter-Sectoral Human Rights Body (ISHRB)

- **Nature, level, date, explanation of the "good practice":**

Under a Decision of the Government adopted on 10 April 2012, amended on 19 November 2012 and in 2015 the Inter-Sectoral Human Rights Body in the current format was established. The Decision establishing the Inter-Sectoral Human Rights Body defines its competences relating to: Advancing the coordination of human rights activities of all in-line Ministries and governmental bodies; Information exchange and implementation of recommendations contained in reports of relevant Committees and other bodies of the UN, Council of Europe, the EU, and other international organizations; -Presenting proposals for the improvement of human rights legislation and presenting proposals to the Government for pursuance of activities of importance for human rights promotion etc.

The Body is chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Members of the Body are the State Secretaries at the MFA, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Information Society and the Administration, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, the Secretariat for European Affairs, and the Secretariat for the Implementation of the Framework Agreement, the President of the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Religious Groups, the Directors of the State Statistical Office,

the Personal Data Protection Directorate, and of the Agency for Rights of the Communities. External members of the Body are: the Deputy Ombudsman, the President of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, the President of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, and the President of the Commission for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information. The Body does not have a specific administrative. The Human Rights Division of the Directorate for Multilateral Relations at the MFA acts as the Secretariat of the Inter-Sectoral Body

Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

Membership of the ISBHR on political level, allows for greater degree of coordination and instructions from top to bottom, but at the same time lacks the necessary expertise and continuity in meetings. Motivated by the need to address this issue the Expert Working Group was established in 2015 under the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The expert working group is comprised of civil servants from the in-line institutions mandated to meet more frequently and support the work of the Inter-Sectoral Body. The expert working group meets on an ad-hoc basis, when a need arises: Review/coordination of reporting obligations of the Republic of North Macedonia under international human rights instruments; Consideration of recommendations by treaty bodies/monitoring mechanisms of the United Nations/Council of Europe and ensuring their implementation by the relevant state authorities; Initiating procedures for signature of a number of international human rights instruments etc.

Addressing Ombudsman's complaints and recommendations

- **Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:**

All the public institutions have the obligation to regularly report to the Government on a quarterly basis on the state of play of the process of handling the complaints and recommendations of the Ombudsman addressed to the Government, state administration bodies, other bodies and organizations with public powers. Consequently the Government on its sessions adopts on a quarterly basis "Information on the process of handling the complaints and recommendations of the Ombudsman addressed to the Government, state administration bodies, other bodies and organizations with public powers, containing conclusions and recommendations".



POLAND / POLOGNE

Apart from general information about good practices and new developments at the domestic level the field protection and promotion of the civil-society space I would like to inform you that the particular information contained on page 26 is outdated: Mr. Adam Bodnar is no longer the Polish Commissioner for Human Rights, but the Minister of Justice, while Ms. Zuzanna Rudzińska Bluszcz serves as the Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Justice.

1. Parts of the document CDDH(2018)13 that should be updated

In the document CDDH(2018)13, the following should be updated:

- records in chapter 3.2 Conducive political and public environment (p. 52)
- we suggest deleting the entire information regarding the "Appointment of the Government Plenipotentiary for Civil Society" and replacing it with the following content:

Strengthening the area of civil society by appointing the Minister for Civil Society in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister

Nature, level, date of the “good practice”:

Within the structure of the Government appointed on December 13th 2023, by the President of the Republic of Poland, a new position of the Minister for Civil Society has been established within the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland, responsible to coordinate the civil society matters.

Substantive explanation:

The practice consists on appointing the Minister competent for civil society matters, placed within the structure of the Prime Minister’s Office, and fulfilling, in parallel, the role of the Chair of the Committee for Public Benefit.

The scope of the minister's activities includes: (1) conducting analyses and assessing the effectiveness of legal solutions in the field of civil society; (2) developing directions of action for the sustainable development of civil society; (3) supporting civic initiatives; (4) monitoring and disseminating good practices in the field of civil society; (5) developing and reviewing draft legal acts and other government documents concerning civil society.

The Committee for Public Benefit being a government administrative body competent in matters of public benefit and volunteering, organising cooperation between public administration bodies and entities operating in the public benefit sphere, the role of the Chair of the Committee for Public Benefit consists of programming, monitoring and coordinating works between public administration bodies with the non-governmental organizations sector and other organized forms of civil society. The overseeing activity of the National Freedom Institute – Centre for Civil Society Development is also fulfilled by the Chair of the Committee for Public Benefit.

How it is concretely implemented:

The Minister’s office is placed within the structure of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, overseeing the Department of Civil Society and, as parallel role – chairing the Committee for Public Benefit.

Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

By establishing the Minister for Civil Society within the Council of Ministers, the coordination of ministries' activities related to the development of civil society organisations and initiatives are improved, better coordinated and their prioritisation underlined.

Information as to whether any good practice has been developed and/or implemented with the cooperation of civil society organisations, human rights defenders or NHRIs (in compliance with the Paris Principles):

Expert Working Groups were appointed as consultative bodies of the Chair of the Committee for Public Benefit, so that to ensure constant and direct dialogue with the civil society organisations. Participation the works of the WG is voluntary and unpaid, however, the appointment required for the candidates to the expert role to present minimum 20 recommendations from NGOs. Currently there are 3 WG appointed in transparent recruitment process from among representatives of non-governmental organizations, research institutions and municipal representatives. The WG are formed based on the principles of civic participation, working within the following areas

- 1) WG for civil dialogue and participation,
- 2) WG for activism and voluntary work,
- 3) WG for legal simplifications for the NGO's activity

- we also propose updating the next record in this subsection:

Development of an entity dedicated for civil society matters within direction of the Committee for Public Benefit at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister

Nature / level / date of the “good practice”:

In 2017, based on the Act of 15 September 2017 on the National Institute of Freedom - Centre for the Development of Civil Society, a new structure was established: the National Institute of Freedom – Centre for the Development of Civil Society, under the direct supervision of the Committee for Public Benefit.

Substantive explanation of the "good practice":

The National Institute of Freedom (www.niw.gov.pl) is an institution competent in matters of supporting the development of civil society, as well as public benefit and voluntary work, to the extent specified in the Act of 24 April 2003 on Public Benefit and Voluntary Work. As it is stressed in the preamble of the Act, the Institute is the executive agency dedicated to support the development of civil society in Poland by strengthening organized and voluntary activity of citizens in favour of various socially important goals, which refer to the Polish heritage of free citizens' community and at the same time to fulfil the ideals of freedom. Its task is to run programs supporting the development of civil society and to collect and analyse data from all areas of cooperation between the state administration and the civic sector. The programs to be run by the National Institute of Freedom are being developed by the Department of the Civil Society at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, and adopted by resolution of the Council of Ministers, after consultation process with non-governmental organizations. The representation of civil society organisations – beneficiaries of the NFI-CCSD works, contributes directly to the Institute's programme concept via the Council of the National Institute of Freedom, being the formal opinion-giving body. It meets at least once a quarter and is appointed for a 3-year term. The structure of the Council is regulated by articles 9-12 of the NFI-CCSD Act, the internal proceedings of the Council are determined by the Committee rules. Since 2024, by the decision of the Chair of the Committee for Public Benefit, it is composed in majority of representatives of civil society organisations. The Council gives its opinions on every area of Institute's activity, incl. programming works and reporting, and approving the regulations of tender contests (<https://niw.gov.pl/en/about-nfi/council-of-the-national-institute-of-freedom/>).

The Committee for Public Benefit is a government administrative body competent in matters of public benefit and volunteering, including programming, coordination and organization of cooperation between public administration bodies and entities operating in the public benefit sphere. The Committee's tasks include: (i) coordinating and monitoring of cooperation of government administration bodies with the non-governmental organizations sector and other organized forms of civil society; (ii) consulting with the civil society programs developed by the Department of the Civil Society at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister to support civil society, (iii) monitoring programs implementation; preparing and issuing opinions on draft legal acts in the field of civil society development; (iv) cooperating in matters related to the development of civil society with other countries, international and foreign organizations and institutions; (v) cooperating in the preparation of reports on the implementation of international agreements binding Poland in the matters of civil society; (vi) presenting opinions on the possibility of Poland joining international agreements regarding the development of civil society.

Implementation:

By the Act on the National Institute of Freedom – Centre for Civil Society Development, the previous competences of the Ministry of Family, Work and Social Policy in the field of public benefit were taken over by the Committee for Public Benefit. The Committee consists of the Chair of the Committee, vice-chairman – secretary of state in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister appointed by the Prime Minister at the request of the Committee's Chairman, members in the

rank of constitutional ministers participating in the work of the Committee personally or represented by relevant secretaries of state, and the Director of the National Institute of Freedom - executive agency competent in matters of supporting the development of civil society. The implementation of the Act should primarily effect in increasing government administration cooperation with civil society organizations, launching additional funds, mechanisms and programs to support the development of civil society.

Apart from the Civic Initiatives Fund the National Institute of Freedom run other programs that aim to strengthen civil society and civil society actors in Poland such as: In 2024 the funding programmes include:

- **CSODP / The Civil Society Organisations Development Programme for 2018-2030** – the first ever direct support programme for the development of Polish civil organisations. The grants are intended for the institutional development of the organisation and the implementation of their statutory objectives. Specific operation rules are set by the Steering and Monitoring Committee. In the years 2018-2030, 585M PLN (136M EUR) will be allocated for the implementation of CSODP, which will allow the support of nearly 12,000 non-governmental organisations operating in Poland.
- **The Civil Initiatives Fund NEW-CIF for 2021-2030** constitutes a continuation of a well-known governmental programme addressed to non-governmental sector. The main goal of the program is the promotion of social activity, activation and formation of civic conduct in society.
- **Solidarity Corps – The Long-term Volunteering’s Support and Development Programme for 2018-2030** – a long-term volunteering programme which aims to provide comprehensive support for the development of a long-term relationship between volunteers and institutions using their services.
- **The Scout Movement Development Governmental Programme for 2018-2030** is a new form of support for scouting organisations, which are an important partner of the state in activities for the development and upbringing of youth, as well as important contributor to civil protection mechanisms.
- **The Folk Universities Development Programme for 2020-2030** is the first programme in Poland with the main goal to develop adult education in the form of Grundtvigian folk universities.
- **International Meeting Centres** - aiming to promote networking between societies in the EU and beyond, to promote solidarity and intercultural understanding, and to promote the national heritage of Poles and the history of Poland.
- **Polish Craft Incubator** - emphasizing the strategic role of crafts in Poland and the importance that the Polish state assigns to their development.
- **Counselling Organizations** - providing public support to non-governmental organizations involved in counselling.
- **COVID-19 Programme** - aiming to provide ad hoc institutional support for organizations and to help initiate local activities that are intended to combat the effects of the covid19 pandemic.

The special attention will be given to provide support to organizations that so far had little chances of receiving government support – to balance chances and facilitate diversification and sustainable development of the civil society sector in Poland.

Intended/ measured outcomes and/or envisaged impact:

The NFI-CCSD Act transferred the management of public funds from the Ministry of Family, Work and Social Policy to the National Institute of Freedom. At the same time the Chairman of the Committee for Public Benefit became the administrator of the Civil Society Support and Development Fund.

The measure intends to organise more effectively the support civic organizations involvement in the fulfilment of their public benefit tasks. At the same time the Civil Society Support and Development Fund will be used to implement support and development programs run by the National Institute of Freedom.

Cooperation with civil society in developing the “good practice”

The NFI-CCSD Act is a result of the broad dialogue with the civil society actors in Poland. The consultation process was entirely opened and anyone could participate in 23 information/consultation conferences held during the consultation process across the whole country. The National Institute of Freedom operates in a transparent manner and it is open to social control through the Council of the Institute that assists the Committee in supervising the Institute. The Council also approves the rules of grant competitions.

Programmes run by NFI-CCSD are developed at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister in cooperation with groups of experts representing civil society and scientific institutions and then they are also subjected to public consultation and opinions of Council for Public Benefit Activities – consulting body consisting of the representatives of central and local governments and non-profit organizations.

- records in chapter 3.5 / Resources and long-term support (p. 91) – we propose to replace them with updated versions:

Funding civil society initiatives and volunteering through Civil Society Support and Development Fund

Nature, level, date of the “good practice”:

The Civil Society Support and Development Fund was created on 1 April 2017 under the Act of 15 December 2016 amending the Act on Gambling Games and Certain Other Acts (national level).

Substantive explanation:

The Civil Society Support and Development Fund’s revenue is 4% of the proceeds from the game subsidies. <https://www.gov.pl/web/pozytek/programy-wspierania-rozwoju-spoleczenstwa-obywatelskiego2>

How it is concretely implemented:

The Chair of the Committee for Public Benefit determines, by way of a regulation, detailed conditions for obtaining co-financing for the implementation of tasks, the procedure for submitting applications and transferring funds. The Chair of the Committee, in cooperation with the Department of the Civil Society and the NFI prepares directions, concepts and projects of government programmes for civil society support and development which will be subjected to social consultations and submitted for approval by resolution of the Council of Ministers.

Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

Civil Society Support and Development Fund is used to implement support and development programs run by the National Institute of Freedom, based on open contests. Institutional development support programs are addressed in the first place to civic organizations that could hardly solicit public funds, including: local organizations and watchdog groups, civic media, advocacy organizations, civic think-tanks, federations and confederations of non-governmental organizations, civic media, civic educational units including folk universities and scouting organizations.

Funding mechanism: the increase of the 1% Personal Income Tax for the public activity services

Nature, level, date of the “good practice”:

The 1% mechanism is one hundredth part of the personal income tax (PIT) that a taxpayer can transfer to a public benefit organization of their choice that exists in the Polish legal system since 2003 and is operating since 1 January 2004. The possibility of transferring 1% of personal income tax was introduced in 2003 by the Act of 24 April 2003 on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work, and specific provisions specifying who and how can transfer 1% of tax are included in the Act of 26 July 1996 on Income Tax of an Individual – following necessary amendments of the latter. The increase of its amount into 1.5% took place in 2023.

Substantive explanation:

1.5% is not a donation or a relief. It is the disposition of a taxpayer, addressed to the State Treasury, so that 1.5% of their income tax will be used for social purposes carried out by an entity providing public benefit services. The disposition is being made while filing the PIT tax declaration by a taxpayer.

How it is concretely implemented:

Implementation by establishing necessary taxation legal framework as well as organizational developments that facilitate the process of participation in the 1.5 % mechanism by taxpayers. The list of organizations having the status of public benefit organisation (OPP), ongoing verification of their eligibility to receive funds (OPP status), as well as publication of both annual activity reports and financial statements of the public benefit organisation is managed by the National Institute of Freedom (<https://niw.gov.pl/en/pbo/>). The taxpayers can fill-in the PIT tax declaration and indicate the chosen NGO (and even its specific initiative) via Internet with the usage of an online platform managed by the Ministry of Finance (<https://www.podatki.gov.pl/en/>).

Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

The figures show that the society’s involvement in the 1% -> 1.5% mechanism is successively growing. According to the Ministry of Finance, in the first year of the regulation (2004) there were only 80,000 taxpayers (0.3% of the total) making such contributions, and organizations received 10.4 million PLN. Ten years later, in the year 2014 the 1% mechanism was used by over 12 million people (45 percent of the total number of taxpayers, 56% of the number of taxpayers reporting tax due). In total, the public benefit organizations received over 506 million PLN (117M EUR). In the year 2023, the public benefit organizations (OPP) received 1.5 billion PLN (349M EUR) - 12.7 million taxpayers provided their support. The average amount of 1.5% was PLN 121 (28 EUR).

2. New examples of “good practice” that can be added

- Following record in chapter 3.3.1 could be added:

Strengthening the civil-society space in the field of freedom of speech throughout adoption of legislative measures in the field of criminal law

Nature, level, date of the “good practice”:

Currently, a draft law amending the Criminal Code prepared by the Minister of Justice is under consideration by the Council of Ministers (UD29).

Substantive explanation of the "good practice":

The project supplements the catalogue of aggravating circumstances considered in sentencing (Article 53 § 2a point 6 of the Criminal Code) by including the commission of a hate crime motivated by disability, age, gender, or sexual orientation, and expands the scope of

criminalization, as criminal liability will also be possible when the victim does not possess the characteristic that triggered the perpetrator's behaviour.

How it is concretely implemented:

The legislative works are still in progress.

Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

The aim of the project is to:

- strengthen legal protection against criminal behaviours motivated by discriminatory reasons related to disability, age, gender, or sexual orientation by expanding the catalogue of discriminatory grounds in Article 53 § 2a point 6 of the Act of June 6, 1997 - Criminal Code (Journal of Laws of 2024, item 17) (hereinafter "P.C."), Article 119 § 1 of the Criminal Code, Article 256 § 1 of the criminal Code, and Article 257 of the Criminal Code to include criteria of disability, age, gender, and sexual orientation;
- ensure a fuller realization of the constitutional prohibition of discrimination for any reason, as well as the implementation of international recommendations regarding the standard of protection against hate speech and hate crimes.

Strengthening the civil-society space in the field of freedom of speech throughout adoption of legislative measures in order to implement the EU law

Nature, level, date of the "good practice":

Analytical and conceptual work regarding the implementation of the provisions of the aforementioned directive of the European Parliament and the European Council 2024/1069 of 11 April 2024, regarding the protection of individuals engaged in public debate from obviously unfounded claims or abusive legal proceedings (strategic lawsuits against public participation – SLAPP).

Substantive explanation of the "good practice":

On 6 May 2024, the directive of the European Parliament and the European Council 2024/1069 of 11 April 2024, regarding the protection of individuals engaged in public debate from obviously unfounded claims or abusive legal proceedings (strategic lawsuits against public participation – SLAPP) came into force.

In connection with the above, the Ministry of Justice has begun analytical and conceptual work regarding the implementation of the provisions of the aforementioned directive.

How it is concretely implemented:

The analytical works are still in progress.

Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

The implementation of the directive (which should take place by 7 May 2026) will improve the conditions for civil society by providing better protection for individuals and legal entities engaged in public debate on matters of public interest, including journalists, publishers, media organizations, whistle-blowers, and human rights defenders, as well as civil society organizations, NGOs, trade unions, artists, researchers, and academics, against obviously baseless or abusive lawsuits initiated against them to deter their participation in public debate.

Establishment of an Advisory Team to the Prosecutor General for combating hate speech and bias-motivated crimes

Nature, level, date of the “good practice”:

An Advisory Team to the Prosecutor General for combating hate speech and bias-motivated crimes has been established in June 2024.

Nature, level, date of the “good practice”:

The Prosecutor General, recognizing the importance of the issues related to counteracting hate speech and crimes motivated by prejudice, by order of 12 June 2024 appointed a Team whose goal is to prepare the assumptions of a systemic, comprehensive and detailed strategy for counteracting and punishing such behaviours. The Team is interdisciplinary in nature.

Its main tasks include:

- analysing the methods of responding to crimes motivated by prejudice by the relevant state authorities, including organizational units of the prosecutor's office,
- indicating the basic areas of the lack of an appropriate response, especially in the aspect of the applicable legal system, together with draft legislative changes,
- conducting an analysis of the case law of the Supreme Court and common courts related to the application of provisions concerning counteracting hate speech and crimes motivated by prejudice,
- conducting consultations with judges, prosecutors and representatives of other legal professions and social organizations in order to determine the most important problems related to the selection of appropriate tools for counteracting hate speech and crimes motivated by prejudice.
- initiating research aimed at diagnosing phenomena conducive to the dissemination of hate speech and crimes motivated by prejudice.

The team will develop new guidelines and orders to ensure an appropriate response by state authorities in connection with crimes of this type, with particular emphasis on the problem of hate speech present on the Internet.

It will also prepare a set of good practices and recommendations regarding methods of counteracting such behaviour.

In addition, in cooperation with the National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution, it will prepare training materials for judges and prosecutors on this issue.

How it is concretely implemented:

A team of advisors has been appointed by the order No. 25/24 of the Prosecutor General of 12 June 2024, regarding the establishment of an Advisory Team to the Prosecutor General for combating hate speech and bias-motivated crimes.

Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

The team of advisors is to prepare the foundations of a systematic, comprehensive, and detailed strategy for countering and punishing hate speech and bias-motivated crimes.

- Following record in chapter 3.4 could be added:

Involving youth in the activism and dialogue with public administration

Nature, level, date of the “good practice”:

The Council for Dialogue with the Young Generation is an advisory and consultative body to the Chairman of the Committee for Public Benefit. It was established pursuant to the Act amending the Act on Public Benefit Activities and Volunteering of 19 July 2019 (Journal of Laws 2020, item 1057, as amended). The Council gathered for the first time in 2019.

Substantive explanation of the “good practice”:

The Council was established as a response to the demands of youth groups. It is the first in the history of Poland organ of civic dialogue between the young generation of Poles and the most important state institutions. The main tasks of the Council include expressing opinions on draft legal acts and government programmes concerning the young generation as well as initiating and supporting activities aimed at increasing the level of civic participation of young people.

The Council meetings are held according to the needs. The Council's work is managed by two Co-Chairs, who are elected from among the Council members: 1/ a representative of public administration bodies and 2/ a representative of non-governmental organizations, unions and associations of NGOs, or a representative of youth councils of municipalities, youth councils of counties, youth assemblies of provinces or a representative of the Students' Parliament of the Republic of Poland.

How it is concretely implemented:

Members of the Council for Dialogue with the Young Generation are appointed and dismissed by the Chairman of the Committee for Public Benefit. The term of office of the Council lasts 2 years. The Council consists of representatives of non-governmental organizations, associations of non-governmental organizations, entities listed in art. 3 sec. 3 and youth councils of municipalities, youth councils of counties, youth assemblies of provinces and the Parliament of Students of the Republic of Poland. The non-governmental representation constitutes at least half of the composition of the Council.

Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

Specific initiatives related to the activity of the Council for Dialogue with the Young Generation are:

- **the Youth Fund** – launched in 2022 for the period of 2022-2033, the Fund's budget amounts to 230M PLN (53.5M EUR). It is intended to serve the development of various forms of youth activity in many organizational forms: (i) youth activism in local self-government structures, (ii) strengthening the role of youth organizations in public life, (iii) capacity and skills building for youth organisations. The Fund is operated by the National Institute of Freedom.
- **Youth Councils in the structures of local authorities** – by force of amendment of the Act on Municipal Self-Government dated on June 21st, 2021, the possibility to organise youth councils within the municipal structures has been established. This allows to the young activists to have direct impact on local policies and initiatives related to young generation's priorities. The costs of youth councils' activity are covered from municipal budget.

Involvement of the civil society in the process of restoration of the rule of law in Poland

Nature, level, date of the “good practice”:

Since December 2023 the civil society organizations are involved in the process of making a series of legislative actions as part of public consultations aimed at implementing the Action Plan for restoring the rule of law.

Substantive explanation of the "good practice":

Based on the Regulation of the Prime Minister of 13 December 2023, an Inter-ministerial Team for the Restoration of the Rule of Law and Constitutional Order has been established.

The Team consists of: the Minister of Justice as the Chairperson, representatives (at the level of Deputy Minister) of the Minister for European Affairs, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Regional Development, the Head of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister or their representative, the President of the Government Legislative Centre or their representative, and the Secretary of the Team (an employee of the Ministry of Justice). According to §2 section 3 of the Regulation, the Chair of the Team may invite individuals whose knowledge and experience may be useful for the tasks of the Team to participate in its work, with an advisory voice, particularly representatives of non-governmental organizations, representatives of the judicial self-government or judicial associations, and representatives of legal professions. The representatives actively participated in the vast majority of the Team's meetings.

How it is concretely implemented:

The representatives of non-governmental organizations, representatives of the judicial self-government or judicial associations, and representatives of legal professions actively participated in the vast majority of the Team's meetings.

Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

The team is responsible for restoring the rule of law and constitutional order by:

- identifying related areas and analysing issues related to them;
- defining proposals for action, including legislative actions;
- monitoring these actions and analysing proposed solutions;
- providing opinions on draft government documents;
- other tasks in this area, assigned by the Prime Minister.

*Process of selecting Polish candidates for the ECtHR***Nature, level, date of the "good practice":**

Wide participation and dialogue with the civil society in the process of selecting Polish candidates for the European Court of Human Rights.

How it is concretely implemented:

The new regulations governing the selection procedure of candidates for Judge of the European Court of Human Rights, which were introduced by the MFA in March 2024, had been consulted with the Polish Ombudsman, legal professions and NGOs, both in the written process and at a meeting, as a result of which numerous changes to the whole selection process were introduced in order to increase the standards of fairness and transparency.

Based on the new regulations, both the President of the National Bar Council of Attorneys-at-Law and the President of the Polish Bar Council appointed their representatives to sit in the selection committee (alongside e.g. the Ombudsman).

A vacancy announcement was widely published and additionally disseminated by the MFA inter alia among the presidents of the relevant professional bodies of legal practitioners: the Polish Bar Council, National Bar Council of Attorneys-at-Law and the National Council of Court Bailiffs, the chairpersons of the human rights commissions of advocates and attorneys-at-law, as well as 16 non-governmental organisations (those that cooperate on a permanent basis with the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Matters Concerning the European Court of Human Rights and those that had appointed observers in the previous selection procedures).

A possibility was maintained for non-governmental organisations and legal professions whose statutory activity includes actions in the sphere of promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms and civil liberties, to appoint observers of interviews held by the selection committee with applicants for the post of Judge.

The following NGOs availed themselves of the possibility to appoint observers:

- Amnesty International Association (Stowarzyszenie Amnesty International)
- Association for Legal Intervention (Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej)
- “Better Human Rights” Foundation (Fundacja Lepsze Prawa Człowieka)
- Citizens Network Watchdog Poland (Sieć Obywatelska Watchdog Polska)
- Foundation for Women and Family Planning (Fundacja na rzecz Kobiet i Planowania Rodziny)
- Free Courts Foundation (Fundacja Wolne Sądy)
- Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka)
- “Indicium” Foundation (Fundacja Indicium)
- Ordo Iuris Institute for Legal Culture (Instytut na rzecz Kultury Prawnej Ordo Iuris)
- Professor Zbigniew Hołda Association (Stowarzyszenie im. prof. Zbigniewa Hołdy)

and so did the following organisations representing legal professions:

- Regional Bar Council in Warsaw (Okręgowa Rada Adwokacka w Warszawie).
- Regional Bar Council of Attorneys-at-Law in Gdańsk (Okręgowa Izba Radców Prawnych w Gdańsku)

All 12 observers were invited to attend the applicants’ interviews with the Selection Committee. In practice, nine observers on average followed the interviews each day.

After the completion of the procedure before the Advisory Panel but before the submission of the final list to the Parliamentary Assembly, a public meeting with the three candidates was held in the Senate to which civil society was invited and could exchange views with the candidates. The aim of the meeting was to ensure the transparency of the selection process and increase the role of the civil society in the selection process. Senators and invited guests had the opportunity to ask questions and listen to the responses of the three candidates. Among the participants were observers of the selection process appointed by NGOs and legal professions, numerous other representatives of the civil society, alongside other representatives of the Polish Bar Council and the National Bar Council of Attorneys-at-Law. The meeting constituted an opportunity for the discussion on the most important challenges ahead of the Convention system. It is available online.

Throughout the whole selection process and responding to the calls from the civil society organisations, special care was taken to ensure its transparency and appropriate access to information on the respective stages of the procedure so as to provide for public scrutiny over its conduct. Not only was the announcement widely disseminated, but the MFA also launched a dedicated website where it regularly published news on the respective stages of the selection process, including information on persons appointed to sit as members of the Selection Committee, detailed information on both meetings of the Selection Committee, the conduct of interviews with language experts, the rules of conducting interviews with applicants by the Selection Committee, and – after the respective interviews – the questions posed to the applicants.

The MFA continues to engage in dialogue with the civil society organisations, in the framework of which it analyses and replies to the observers’ comments on the conduct of the selection process. After the successful election of new Polish judge by the Parliamentary Assembly, a meeting with observers and representatives of the Ombudsman and legal professions is planned in order to draw conclusions for the future and notably discuss the possibility of adopting a law governing the selection process regarding the ECtHR and human rights monitoring bodies.

Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

Significant democratisation of the selection process of candidates for judge of the European Court of Human Rights and for other members of the human rights monitoring bodies, increasing legitimacy and support of the Polish society for persons appointed to sit on these bodies.

The selection procedure was positively assessed both by the Advisory Panel and the PACE.

*Process of selecting Polish candidates for the CPT***Nature, level, date of the "good practice":**

Participation of the civil society in the process of selecting Polish candidates for the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT).

Substantive explanation of the "good practice":

Providing a possibility for granting an observer status to the representatives of the civil society during the current process of selecting Polish candidates for the CPT.

How it is concretely implemented:

During the current process of selecting Polish candidates for the CPT, the interviews with candidates were observed by social observers representing a total of seven legal professional self-governing bodies and non-governmental organizations focused on human rights protection: the Supreme Bar Council, the District Bar Council in Warsaw, the National Chamber of Legal Advisers, the National Council of Guardians, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the Free Courts Association, and Amnesty International. The possibility of such observation was announced on the website of the Ministry of Justice. All registered civil society observers were allowed to be present during the interviews.

Intended outcomes and/or envisaged impact, proof of its impact:

To allow participation of the civil society in the process of selecting Polish candidates for the CPT.



SLOVAK REPUBLIC / RÉPUBLIQUE SLOVAQUE

3.1 Supportive legal regulatory framework at domestic level

The protection and promotion of civil society space in Slovakia is crucial for fostering democracy, human rights, and active citizenship. While Slovakia has a legal framework that supports civil society, ongoing advocacy is essential to address implementation challenges and protect the space for NGOs to operate freely and effectively. Regular monitoring and engagement with policymakers can help safeguard these rights and ensure a vibrant civil society. The legal and regulatory framework for the protection of civil society space in Slovakia consists of various laws and policies aimed at ensuring the rights and freedoms necessary for civil society organizations (CSOs) to operate effectively. Here's an overview of the key elements:

Constitutional Provisions

Freedom of Assembly: The Slovak Constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly, allowing citizens to gather for demonstrations and public meetings.

Freedom of Association: It protects the right to form and join associations, including NGOs and other civil society groups.

Relevant Acts

Act on Non-Governmental Organizations (1990): This law regulates the establishment and operation of NGOs, outlining their rights and responsibilities. It provides a framework for registration, funding, and activities.

Many CSOs rely on external funding and changes in government policy can affect their financial sustainability. The increasing emphasis on domestic funding can limit the scope of activities for some organizations. Recent developments have been made to strengthen the legal and operational environment for CSOs, including initiatives to reduce bureaucratic hurdles and enhance transparency. Ongoing monitoring of political developments is essential to respond to any threats to civil society space. While Slovakia has a foundation for a vibrant civil society, ongoing advocacy, public engagement and supportive policies are essential to ensure its protection and promotion. Continued vigilance against political and societal challenges will help safeguard the democratic fabric of the country.

3. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

The Office of the Representative for the Development of Civil Society

In July 2024, the head of the office outlined the office's primary agenda, along with details on four national projects. The office has currently two government-approved strategic materials: *The Concept for the Development of Civil Society in Slovakia until the year 2030* and the *Initiative for Open Governance*. These materials are being executed through action plans for the upcoming years, in collaboration with central State administration bodies and civil society. As part of the Open Government Action Plan, the office is developing the Open and Participatory Government Index, aimed at fostering trust between citizens and the Government. Additionally, it continues to educate public administration staff through the Learning Institutions, Learning Regions and Learning Cities and community programs.

The office actively collaborates with ministries, municipalities, and non-governmental non-profit organizations, placing particular emphasis on engaging with the younger generation and promoting active citizenship. It is also working on establishing regional coordinator positions to assess regional needs and gather examples of best practices.

(For further details see: [Strategy of Civil Society Development in Slovakia-Action Plan for 2022-2026](#);

https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/rozvoj_obcianskej_spolocnosti/rozvoj_obcianskej_spolocnosti/2023/AP%20KROS%202022_2026_AJ.pdf.)

The Committee for Gender Equality

The protection and promotion of human rights, along with the development of civil society, are currently overseen by one of the Government of the Slovak Republic's permanent advisory bodies—the Slovak Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality. As part of a broader reform of these advisory bodies, the Joint Secretariat of Committees was established in May 2011 under the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic. The Committee serves as a permanent expert body under the Slovak Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality, focusing on gender equality issues. It also monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, alongside other international human rights treaties, laws and the strategic goals of the European Union in this field. The Committee acts as an interdepartmental body and cooperates with other ministries and other central state administration bodies, social

partners, municipalities, higher territorial units, local state administration bodies, non-governmental and non-profit organizations, scientific workplaces and academic institutions.

Coordination and Methodology Center for the Prevention of Violence against Women

The Coordination and Methodology Center for the Prevention of Violence against Women was established within the Institute for Work and Family Research. An expert team responsible for professional coordination and supervision of systemic prevention and intervention to support victims and provide services in the field of violence against women and domestic violence has been created within the Center.

Slovakia will participate in the global campaign against violence towards women. The campaign will be promoted on social media, allowing the public to add themed frames to their photos and share banners and facts about the challenges women facing violence encounter. The initiative was also supported by Zuzana Čaputová, the former President of the Slovak Republic during her term.

Slovak National Center for Human Rights

The Slovak National Center for Human Rights is an independent institution with two mandates. National human rights institutions are independent institutions established on the basis of agreement between the United Nations and governments of sovereign states, who aim to monitor and analyse observance of human rights, point out their violations and spread awareness on the role of human rights in a democratic society. Extent this mandate is regulated by law. Their main tasks are to ensure that our international human rights obligations are adequately reflected in the Slovak legislative system. In this regard they annually publish a Report on the observance of human rights including equal treatment principle. National equality bodies are also independent organizations whose main task is to protect the rights of victims of discrimination. The centre acquired this mandate in 2004 based on the Equal treatment act. Since then they have been monitoring the observance of antidiscrimination legislation, providing legal aid to victims of discrimination, representing them in antidiscrimination disputes, publishing expert opinions on what is and what is not discrimination.

In July 2024 they have submitted an alternative report on the implementation of the [European Social Charter](#) to the European Committee of Social Rights. This year, the Committee is addressing the cost-of-living crisis and will provide a general overview of the situation and some recommendations.

The Government of the Slovak Republic submitted its Ad-hoc [National Report](#) on the cost-of-living crisis to the Committee in December 2023.

The report provides information on cost-of-living crisis and housing affordability, living conditions of Roma living in excluded communities and the housing situation of the Ukrainian refugees. The report is available at [this link](#).

Office of the Representative of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma communities

In April 2021, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved the *Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma by 2030* by Resolution no. 181/2021. This strategic framework document is a commitment of the Government of the Slovak Republic that defines, at the level of priorities, the direction of public policies in order to achieve visible change in the field of equality and inclusion of Roma. Regular European and national evaluations continues to conclude that the four priority areas – employment, education, health and housing are key to achieving the

objectives. Particular emphasis is placed on non-discrimination and on stepping up interventions to combat anti-Roma racism.

The 2030 Strategy has been developed on the basis of a request for a conceptual material that takes into account the development of the situation and the experience of the previous eight years since the adoption of the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Roma Integration up to 2020 and the relevant action plans. It was also initiated by the joint efforts of the Member States of the European Union. Due to its cross-cutting nature, the 2030 Strategy is an umbrella document for the development and implementation of the planned strategic documents of the responsible ministries in the relevant areas and it also provides a link with existing materials.

Its content contributes to the fulfilment of the Government's intentions in relation to the improvement of the status and situation of the Roma, as stated in the Program Declaration of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the period 2020-2024, and also reflects the objectives of the Vision and Strategy for the Development of Slovakia until 2030. The National Strategy presents a set of starting points and objectives aimed at ending the segregation of Roma communities, a significant positive turn in the social inclusion of Roma, non-discrimination, changing attitudes and improving coexistence.

Action Plans to the Strategy of Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for 2022-2024

The Action Plans started to be prepared in May 2021 and are a direct follow-up to the previously adopted 2030 Strategy, containing concrete measures and activities from each priority area, including their financial quantification, which need to be implemented to achieve the set objectives.

The development of the Action Plans was carried out in a participatory manner within the framework of the thematic working groups, in which respective ministries, as well as other State institutions and, last but not least, non-governmental and non-profit organizations that have long been involved in the inclusion of excluded communities, academia and representatives of local and regional government were represented. Prior to the formal commenting process, the material was also made available for public comment. Representatives of the European Commission were also consulted on the draft Action Plans through technical negotiations.

After the completion and evaluation of the inter-ministerial comment procedure, the draft document was submitted to the Government of the Slovak Republic, which approved the Action Plans by Resolution no. 256/2022 of 6 April 2022. The approved material, as an annex, includes a Methodological Document on the calculation of indicator values, which is a manual for the calculation of indicator values, presented in a uniform structure. The dataset for each indicator includes: the unit of measurement; the baseline value (as of year); the data source; the definition and calculation methodology; the target values; and the authority responsible for collecting the indicator data.

The coordinating role in relation to the 2030 Strategy and the implementation of the Action Plans is fulfilled by the Representative of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities through the Office of the Representative of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities, which is also the national focal point.

(For further details see: [Strategy of equality, inclusion and participation of Roma until 2030; https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1526/strategy_of_equality_inclusion_and_participation_of_roma_until_2030.pdf?csrt=8981253983253229147](https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1526/strategy_of_equality_inclusion_and_participation_of_roma_until_2030.pdf?csrt=8981253983253229147) and [Action plans to the Strategy of equality, inclusion and participation of Roma until 2030 for 2022 – 2024;](#)

https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1526/action_plans_2022_2024_of_the_strategy_of_equality_inclusion_and_participation_of_roma_until_2030-1.pdf.)

Office of the Public Defender of Rights

The Public Defender of Rights is an independent body of the Slovak Republic which, to the extent and in the manner prescribed by law, protects the fundamental rights and freedoms of natural and legal persons in proceedings before public administration bodies and other public authorities if their actions, decisions or inactions are in conflict with order. In cases provided by law, the Public Defender of Rights may participate in the exercise of the liability of persons acting in public authorities, if these persons have violated a fundamental right or freedom of natural and legal persons. All public authorities will provide the necessary cooperation to the Ombudsman.

For further details see: [Activities of the Public Defender of Rights during her 2017-2022 tenure](#)

Active Citizens Fund – Slovakia

Active Citizens Fund – Slovakia is a grant program aiming at strengthening civil society, supporting active citizenship and empowering vulnerable groups in Slovakia. The ACF – Slovakia supports Slovak civil organizations in engaging citizens in decision-making and public policy making, in efforts to create better conditions for good governance, protect human rights and provide civic education and improve the position of vulnerable groups in society. Particular attention is paid to young people and their participation in public affairs. The horizontal priorities of the program are to support bilateral co-operation between Slovak organizations and partners from the donor countries and to develop capacities as well as to improve the position of civic organizations in society.

The ACF – Slovakia is part of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway’s financial assistance to 15 Member States of the European Union. The program is managed by the Ekopolis Foundation in partnership with the Open Society Foundation and the Carpathian Foundation.

In the period 2018 – 2023, the ACF – Slovakia will allocate 7.7 million EUR in 17 open grant calls for projects of civil society organizations and will provide other support activities, training in project management, organizational development and self-financing.

The Institute for Public Issues

The Institute for Public Issues is an independent non-governmental and non-profit organization bringing together experts from various fields, created with the intention of promoting the values of an open civil society and democratic political culture in public policy and social decision-making. The goals of the institute include: analyse social, political, foreign policy, legal, cultural and other issues of public interest and publish the findings to contribute to an important professional dialogue, open topics, actively participate in the formation of public administration prepare expert opinions on important issues, public consultations on organizations and individuals in areas important to the Institute’s program priorities organize seminars, conferences, discussion forums, interdisciplinary round tables, workshops and trainings to stimulate the active approach of citizens to public affairs bring together experts dealing with issues in various areas of public policy, create conditions for their efficiency and meaningful cooperation engage in publishing and publishing activities to contribute to the improvement of expertise and to the education of young professionals.

4. 1. 2 Legislation to protect whistle-blowers

Whistleblower Protection Office

Slovakia has made strides in recent years to strengthen protections for whistleblowers through legislation. Here is an overview of the current legal framework regarding whistleblower protection in Slovakia:

The Whistleblower Protection Act (2023): This Act was enacted to implement the EU Whistleblower Directive (2019/1937), which aims to protect individuals who report breaches of EU law. The Act covers whistleblowers in both the public and private sectors. It provides protection for those who report information about wrongdoing, including corruption, fraud, or violations of legal obligations. Whistleblowers are protected from retaliation, including dismissal, discrimination, or harassment as a result of their reporting. The Act establishes secure reporting channels for whistleblowers to submit their concerns, ensuring confidentiality and protection of their identity. The recent Whistleblower Protection Act represents a significant step forward in safeguarding the rights of individuals who report misconduct in Slovakia. Continued advocacy, awareness-raising, and effective enforcement will be essential to ensure that whistleblowers can report wrongdoing without fear of retaliation.

The Whistleblower Protection Act established the Whistleblower Protection Office, which is an independent, nationwide institution dedicated to safeguarding the rights of whistleblowers. It holds a unique authority to step in when an employer retaliates against an employee—such as through dismissal—after they report illegal activities. The office primarily addresses cases that pose a threat to the public interest.

For further details see: [The Whistleblower Protection Office 2023 Annual Report](#)



UNITED KINGDOM / ROYAUME-UNI

International Standards / Normes internationales (2.)

Existing Council of Europe tools / Normes et outils existants du Conseil de l'Europe (2.1)

Case Law of the European Court of Human Rights / Jurisprudence de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme (2.1.1)

Legal advice on European Court of Human Rights cases

The EHRC reviews the progress of implementation of European Court of Human Rights judgements against the UK and considers outstanding cases against its strategic priorities to decide on appropriate action, which may include a rule 9 submission or recommendations to the UK government.

The Commission engages periodically with the central government team with responsibility for coordinating the implementation of judgments.

Other relevant international and regional standards and tools / Autres normes et outils pertinents au niveau international et régional (2.2)

The core international human rights treaties / Principaux traités internationaux relatifs aux droits de l'homme (2.2.1)

Resolutions, declarations and reports of the United Nations / Résolutions, déclarations et rapports des Nations Unies (2.2.2)

Collaboration with other UK NHRIs on UN CRPD treaty monitoring and reporting.

In August 2023, the United Kingdom Independent Mechanism (UKIM) prepared a joint submission to support the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' follow-up review of its 2016 inquiry into the rights of disabled people in the UK. UKIM consists of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI), the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) and the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC). UKIM is designated under Article 33 of the CRPD to promote, protect and monitor implementation of the CRPD across the UK, taking into account the commissions' respective mandates, as set out in the report.

This report gives an update on the steps taken by the UK government and the devolved administrations to implement recommendations from the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to improve the lives of disabled people across the UK.

It notes the progress that has been made by the UK government and the devolved administrations, as well as the areas where improvement is still needed.

Mechanisms at domestic level offering protection and redress / Mécanismes de protection et de recours au niveau national (3.1.2)

Operating a legal support scheme

Since 2017 the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has operated a legal support scheme to provide funding and legal assistance to help people who have experienced discrimination to pursue their claims and access justice. Since November 2021 the EHRC has been operating a Fund for Race Discrimination Cases (the Fund) under the legal support scheme which has helped improve outcomes for victims of race discrimination, harassment and victimisation. The Fund follows the success of the EHRC's previous schemes which have provided support to disabled people who have experienced discrimination and to those who have been discriminated against by education providers and transport operators.

The Fund has supported over 45 cases where people have experienced prejudice and discrimination because of their race and would not have been able to fund representation without the Fund. As well as supporting the individuals in bringing their claims, this has also helped employers, service providers and educational establishments to understand their responsibilities and what the consequences of not following the law are. Many of the claims concluded positively for the claimants and resulted in the employers or service providers agreeing to update their equality and diversity policies and provide relevant training for staff members.

One case supported by the Fund involved a father and daughter who submitted a claim for race discrimination and harassment against a club who had refused to host their christening party on

learning they were Irish Travellers. The father and daughter took legal action against the club on the grounds it had racially discriminated against them both because they were Irish Travellers. The claim also included one of harassment against the father as a result of the staff member's offensive comments about Travellers. The claimants received compensation and as part of the settlement, three members of staff, a club official and a member of the club board have received cultural awareness training regarding the Gypsy and Irish Traveller communities.

Conducive political and public environment / Environnement politique et public favorable (3.2)

Human rights monitoring

As the National Human Rights Institute (NHRI) for England and Wales the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has a responsibility to promote the effective implementation of the human rights treaties the UK has ratified. The Commission's human rights monitoring work includes providing advice to the UK and Welsh governments and to stakeholders to ensure that human rights breaches are prevented and challenged. The Commission engages with international human rights reviews, including submitting independent reports on implementation of treaty obligations in the UK.

In 2023–24 the EHRC advised the UK Government through parliamentary engagement and accompanying media work on new immigration legislation. It threatened compliance with international law and treaty obligations. The EHRC also issued public statements on the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill which the EHRC considered to be damaging to the UK's human rights legal framework and a breach of its obligations under international law. The EHRC published three major reports on the UK government's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Istanbul Convention and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

The Commission published its report on how well the UK Government has implemented the Istanbul Convention, following its ratification in July 2022. The EHRC also developed and ran a webinar explaining the Istanbul Convention monitoring process, with over 70 attendees. The EHRC report was submitted to the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) and will inform GREVIO's baseline evaluation of the UK's compliance with the Istanbul Convention.

In February 2024 the Commission provided a submission to inform the UN's examination of the UK's implementation against the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and engaged in dialogue with the Human Rights Committees as part of the examination in March 2024. The EHRC submitted its response to the Senedd's Equality and Social Justice Committee inquiry into the Welsh Government's Draft Child Poverty Strategy. It highlighted the following concerns:

- the strategy had not been sufficiently framed or informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- there was a lack of specific action to address poverty experienced by people with protected characteristics
- the absence of an Equality Impact Assessment for the strategy
- there was a lack of clear and measurable targets and actions

This resulted in changes to the strategy to better incorporate the CRC.

Right to access and communicate with international bodies / Droit d'accéder aux instances internationales et de communiquer avec elles (4.3.2)

Participation of Civil Society in treaty monitoring and reporting

In April 2022, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published a report for the United Nation's fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UK. This details progress made towards protecting human rights in Britain since the EHRC's last report in 2017 to help other countries in making their recommendations to the UK as part of the peer-review process. It covered health, education, work, justice, liberty, and personal security and included recommendations to the UK and Welsh governments on how to better protect human rights. In furtherance of the UPR submission, the EHRC funded Birmingham City University's (BCU) Centre for Human Rights to empower and support civil society through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. They provided training and networking opportunities for civil society in England and Wales to engage effectively with the UK's 4th UPR Cycle.

Also in 2022-23, the Commission funded a project by Just Fair to prepare an independent shadow report for the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), on behalf of civil society in England and Wales. Through this project, Just Fair empowered and supported civil society to hold the UK Government to account on its international obligations through gathering evidence and holding events for organisations to learn about the process, and to support other organisations with their submissions.

National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) / Institutions nationales des droits de l'homme (5.)

Methods of operation, models, roles and activities / Méthodes de travail, types, rôles et activités (5.1.3)

Human Rights Promotion

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's (EHRC) website contains a dedicated section on human rights, including information on:

- i. Where human rights come from, what they mean and how they are protected;
- ii. The Human Rights Act 1998, setting out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to;
- iii. How to use the Human Rights Tracker to monitor UK and Welsh Governments' progress in meeting their international human rights obligations;
- iv. Our mandate as an NHRI;
- v. UN bodies and mechanisms, such as the Human Rights Council;
- vi. Human rights education report and teaching resources;
- vii. Exercising your human rights, with advice on practical action that individuals can take if they feel that their human rights have been breached; and
- viii. Our human rights work.³⁹

The EHRC works with others to promote greater understanding of human rights. For example, it collaborated with the University of Nottingham to produce videos on economic and social rights

³⁹ EHRC: Human Rights: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights>

to build understanding in this area. The videos are available to view on the EHRC YouTube page⁴⁰ and the University also produced supplementary written materials.⁴¹

The EHRC undertakes ongoing work to build the capacity of civil society organisations in relation to the international human rights framework. Ahead of treaty body and Universal Periodic Review processes, the EHRC has funded large civil society projects to build capacity among civil society to better understand the international human rights system and how to participate in UN monitoring processes, consult on current concerns with compliance and collate evidence for joint civil society submissions to the UN.

The EHRC has provided funding to enable representatives of civil society organisations to attend in-person hearings in Geneva in order to ensure their evidence is heard by both the UN treaty bodies and UK Government officials.

**CONFERENCE OF INTERNATIONAL NGOs OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE /
CONFÉRENCE DES ONG INTERNATIONALES DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**

We are pleased to respond to your request to contribute to your review of the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)11 on the protection and promotion of the civil society space.

This short summary is intended to consolidate the responses from CINGO members in addition to comments included in the draft recommendation document. Responses to this consultation were provided by 14 INGOs with participatory status at CINGO:

1. Balkan Civil Society Development Network.
2. Correlation European Harm Reduction Network;
3. Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum;
4. European Organisation of Military Associations and Trade Unions;
5. European Psychiatric Association;
6. European Seniors' Union;
7. European Union of Judges in Commercial Matters;
8. Federal Union of European Nationalities;
9. Greenpeace;
10. Initiatives of Change International;
11. International Allotment Federation;
12. International Movement of Apostolate in Middle and Upper Classes;
13. Lifelong Learning World Committee;
14. Open Dialogue Foundation;

From the many responses CINGO has received and from our own observation during the many country visits (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/country-visits>), we distil the following points of additional attention:

⁴⁰ EHRC: Explaining Economic and Social Rights: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?app=desktop&list=PLrE6Pzde0sahIKCbMaHoo-T5sRDGi0B8E&cbrd=1>

⁴¹ University of Nottingham: Making Economic and Social Rights Real: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hrlc/operationalunits/economic-and-social-rights-unit/videos.aspx>

1. The subsidy system by which civil society (CiSo) is enabled to carry out its work (i.e., through monitoring, awareness raising, direct help and relief, litigation and advocacy) and the administrative obligations it has to comply with, is in some countries highly steering, not seldom in a government-friendly direction. The practical consequence is that support for CiSo to fulfil its objectives and mandate is decreasing.

1.1. Foreign agent-like regulations make CiSo more state-dependent and detract from effective communication, the broad exchange of views, and serious international benchmarking.

1.2. Administrative obligations, even if based on a sincere desire to counter money laundering and terrorism financing, should be applied more proportionately. In the majority of cases, CiSo represents smaller organisations with fewer material and financial resources. Any grant should include money to meet administrative requirements.

1.3. Opposition and minority views are not infrequently filtered out systematically.

2. A public-oriented government must organize its own criticism, otherwise it can degenerate into an inward-looking organization that wastes money and can lose support from the population through pointless projects or neglecting urgent needs. Good cooperation with NGOs improves the quality of government services. Unfortunately, country visits show arbitrariness, unpredictability and insufficiently effective legal protection in the grant award process. This makes CiSo dependent on the whims of grant providers and thus prevents CiSo from acquiring a serious position in the debate. If CiSo wants to be able to act as a full-fledged discussion partner, its legal position must be protected by an adequate legal setting. In order to increase the quality of the response, knowledge building must at least be guaranteed and preferably stimulated. In addition, the grant award process must be open and honest. CiSo needs a transparent counterparty and a safe working environment.

To address these challenges the following should be considered:

BUDGETTING

1. If only 'sunset budgeting' for the whole NGO takes place, the NGO effectively cease to exist if it cannot get a follow-up grant (normally no grant is given to acquire the follow-up grant). These short cycles prevent expertise building and weaken the position of the CiSo.

2. ADEQUATE LEGAL PROTECTION

There is a need for effective legal protection that oversees the entire cycle of grant granting

- 2.1. transparent criteria,
- 2.2. fair procedure
- 2.3. no nepotism
- 2.4. realistic timeframes
- 2.5. realistic and achievable goals
- 2.6. a government that sticks to its own rules
- 2.7. no improper third-party intervention or SLAPPs
- 2.8. fair and open data provision from the government (transparency)
- 2.9. a free media landscape.

Already for many years the CINGO Expert Council on NGO Law, provides detailed analyses of the legal landscape around NGOs, the CDDH is invited to refer to recent studies:

- "Non-Governmental Organisations and the Implementation of Measures Against Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing" (2022) and the summary and conclusion which highlight the need to have better risk-based approaches; and
- "Stigmatisation of Non-Governmental Organisations In Europe (2024)"

**EUROPEAN NETWORK OF NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS / RÉSEAU
EUROPÉEN DES INSTITUTIONS NATIONALES DES DROITS DE L'HOMME -
(ENNHRI)**

Introduction

As emphasized in [CM Recommendation 2018/11](#) (hereinafter: "the Recommendation"), National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) play a key role in promoting and protecting human civil society space and rights defenders (HRDs), and are considered HRDs themselves. Given their pluralist institutional structure in line with the Paris Principles, NHRIs have a unique position as bridges between HRDs, CSOs and the government.

In its role as observer to the CDDH, ENNHRI submits this information and recommendations to feed into the Committee of Ministers (CM) review of the implementation of the Recommendation. This information includes a focus on NHRIs and builds on ENNHRI's work with European NHRIs on promoting and protecting civil society space and HRDs. This includes a compilation of NHRIs' good practices through the [ENNHRI resource on human rights defenders](#), as well as monitoring undertaken through ENNHRI's annual rule of law [reporting](#).

In the context of increasing challenges and threats to civil society space and HRDs across the Council of Europe, ENNHRI calls upon the Council of Europe and its Member States to further prioritise the strengthening of the promotion and protection of civil society space and HRDs, in line with the high-level commitments in the [Helsinki Decisions](#) and [Reykjavik Declarations](#). We make three specific recommendations which seek to further enhance the protection of civic space and human rights defenders in the current context, including the role of NHRIs in this.

ENNHRI Key Recommendations

In light of the overall negative trend concerning the promotion and protection of civil society space and HRDs in Europe, as confirmed through [NHRIs' annual joint reporting](#), ENNHRI confirms the important relevance and need to further advance the Recommendation's implementation. In particular, ENNHRI wants to emphasise following three recommendations, as developed further in this submission:

- 1) For each Council of Europe Member State to establish and strengthen a holistic national HRD protection ecosystem for HRDs in-country, including:
 - the registration of individual attacks and early-warning trends;
 - rapid response to attacks, including through i) investigations, redress and follow up, and ii) rapid emergency support which might include physical, psychosocial, legal, and digital protection;
 - ensure long-term response by changing laws and policies to promote and protect HRDs.

- 2) For each Council of Europe Member State to support NHRIs' role in the protection of HRDs, including:
 - ensuring an enabling legal framework;
 - respecting the independent mandate of NHRIs in the promotion and protection of HRDs;
 - following up on NHRIs' reports and recommendations concerning the promotion and protection of HRDs, and integrating this into a holistic national HRD protection ecosystem;
 - providing adequate resources to NHRIs to promote and protect civic space and HRDs.
- 3) To establish and strengthen a holistic HRD protection ecosystem within the Council of Europe, including:
 - Registration of individual reprisals, with regular public reporting and discussion at the Committee of Ministers of early-warning trends, including reliance on information of national actors doing HRD monitoring such as NHRIs nationally and ENNHRI cross-regionally;
 - Rapid response, including i) investigations, redress and follow up on reprisals, and ii) rapid emergency support following reprisals which might include physical, psychosocial, legal, and digital protection;
 - Long-term protection, including i) consistent follow-up of implementation of ECtHR judgements on HRDs at the Committee of Ministers, with independent reports from NHRIs and other HRDs; ii) further developing dedicated CoE standard-setting and awareness-raising instruments to address (early warning) trends affecting HRDs; iii) allocating dedicated funding for CoE cooperation programmes in support of HRDs and civic space, in cooperation with HRDs.

Implementation of CM Recommendation 2018/11 Focused on NHRIs

I. National legal frameworks and political and public environment to protect and promote civil society space

Member States should:

- a. ensure an enabling legal framework and a conducive political and public environment for human rights defenders, enabling individuals, groups, civil society organisations and national institutions for the protection and promotion of human rights (NHRIs) to freely carry out activities, on a legal basis, consistent with international law and standards, to strive for the protection and promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;

Contrary to Recommendation 2018/11, European NHRIs have been identifying since 2020 an **overall increase in the challenges and threats to HRDs** in ENNHRI's [Annual State of the Rule of Law Report](#), which pointed out at online and offline intimidation and hate speech; strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) and criminalization of HRDs, particularly targeting HRDs working on sexual and reproductive rights, LGBTIQ+ rights, rights of migrants and asylum seekers, and those working on environmental protection.

At the same time, under instigation of new EU and Council of Europe standard-setting, **some NHRIs across the Council of Europe have been allocated additional specific mandates which are conducive to strengthen their role in the protection of civic space and HRDs**; including being mandated as SLAPP focal point (eg.: NHRIs in Belgium-FIRM; Romania) or with a role to protect whistleblowers (eg.: NHRIs in Armenia, Belgium-FIRM, Croatia, Hungary, Moldova, Poland). Yet, in some instances, the allocation of such additional protection mandates

for NHRIs has not been met with adequate additional resources to carry out the mandate, thus undermining its effectiveness (Romania).

In some countries, a more conducive political and legal framework for civil society and HRDs has been adopted, including through government's engagement with NHRIs. A positive example can be found in Moldova with the adoption the Law on children rights in 2023, which includes the recognition, empowerment and protection of child human rights defenders. The Law was informed by a [working group including civil society organisations](#), and the NHRI. The NHRI [continues its advocacy](#), in cooperation with civil society, for a dedicated Law on human rights defenders, providing a legal framework for promotion and protection of all HRDs.

II. National measures to protect civil society space

Member States should;

d. consider giving, or where appropriate strengthening, the competence and capacity of independent NHRIs to effectively carry out their role to protect civil society space through their monitoring, investigation, reporting and complaints handling functions;

NHRI good practices

As further illustrated in [ENNHRI's resource on HRDs](#), NHRIs conduct **independent monitoring of and report** on civil society space and the enabling environment for human rights defenders. NHRIs can develop a monitoring system to collect reliable data on human rights violations committed against human rights defenders in various contexts, including at public demonstrations, in detention centres, and in the digital sphere. These findings can be reported to national authorities to call for effective and tailored protection and prevention mechanisms, as well as shared with regional and international human rights mechanisms. Some NHRIs can assist individual human rights defenders by **handling and investigating individual complaints**, challenging rights violations before tribunals, and intervening before national and regional courts. NHRIs also **support human rights defenders deprived of their liberty**, in prisons and police stations, and those unreasonably accused of illegal activities while performing their human rights work.

For example, [in Armenia](#), the NHRI deploys rapid response teams to investigate the observance of human rights during demonstrations, including through visiting police stations where demonstrators are detained. The **Belgian NHRI FIRM** has been conducting [in-depth research](#) into pressures faced by HRDs in country. The research shows that about half of the HRD respondents indicate to have faced intimidation and aggression due to their work, especially legal intimidation. Through its research, FIRM envisages to enhance awareness about challenges for HRDs in Belgium, and inform follow-up actions to address these. Another good example is represented by the **Danish Institute for Human Rights**, which developed [the "right to defend rights"](#) monitoring tool, built on a set of 73 human rights-based indicators which are anchored in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and related human rights law. In 2019, the **NHRI of Albania** monitored 31 public demonstrations organised by various entities, including opposition political parties, civil society, students, and citizens. Some of these resulted in physical confrontations. Through working groups, the NHRI monitored the situation on the ground and immediately verified cases of alleged illegal actions committed by state authorities. The **Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR)** closely monitors the execution of European Court of Human Rights judgments, including those related to human rights defenders. In August 2018, the GNCHR submitted to the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers its Recommendations under Rule 9(2) with regard to the immediate full compliance of the Greek government with the landmark Court judgment *Chowdury and Others v. Greece* (known as the "Manolada case"). Two years later, in June 2020, it made an additional Communication on the

assessment of the level of compliance of the Greek State with the GNCHR's recommendations on the *Chowdury* judgment.

NHRI findings to enhance national HRD protection

While NHRIs are undertaking substantive activities to protect civil society space and HRDs, they have also expressed [needs to step up their work in this area](#):

- Further work and commitment from states to ensure legislative, policy and funding frameworks;
- An enabling environment for NHRIs to act in defence of HRDs. Threats to NHRIs' independence and effectiveness as well as to NHRI staff and heads of institutions limit the ability of NHRIs to protect other HRDs.
- Additional obstacles are faced by NHRIs when engaging on issues that have become increasingly polarised, such as migrants' rights, reproductive rights and LGBTIQ + rights. NHRIs need to have enabling space to document, report and act on cases without interference or challenges in access and funding.

[A reason](#) for the continued increased challenges and attacks to HRDs reported over the past years may be that the nature of challenges and attacks against human rights defenders have a 'snowball' effect. While the challenges may start with negative comments on (social) media channels, the scale of threats can increase towards smear campaigns, and over time turn into physical attacks and even killings. This is particularly the case when 'low-level' threats to HRDs are not taken seriously, followed up or investigated, and where there is a lack of accountability. While varied initiatives at national level exist which contribute to the protection of HRDs (including through CSO, NHRIs and state initiatives), important gaps remain. For example, in [Finland](#), the Finnish Foreign Service has developed guidelines for supporting human rights defenders abroad. Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has funded several INGOs to develop activities protecting human rights defenders. At the same time, the NHRI has recommended to authorities to also establish a national mechanism to assist and protect human rights defenders in-country.

A coalition of civil society organisations, supported by ENNHRI, has [mapped](#) the existing protection landscape and, based on the gaps and challenges identified, [proposes](#) how to build a stronger ecosystem for the protection of human rights defenders and civil society organisations. Accordingly HRD protection systems should:

- 1) Register attacks allowing to document attacks and track developments;
- 2) Respond rapidly through i) investigations, redress and follow up on attacks, and ii) rapid emergency support which might include physical, psychosocial, legal, and digital protection;
- 3) Adapt by changing laws and policies to better support long-term protection needs.

III. National measures to promote civil society space

Member States should:

Ensure access to resources to support the stable funding of human rights defenders, including NHRIs and civil society organisations, and increase efforts to promote their activities; explicitly recognise the legitimacy of human rights defenders, including NHRIs and civil society organisations, and publicly support their work, acknowledging their contribution to the advancement of human rights and the development of a pluralistic society

With regards to access to resources, sadly, the trend across the CoE is also negative. Funding for HRDs is becoming more limited and conditional, including through legislation aimed at targeting foreign funding and increasing administrative burdens for registration of NGOs. An

extremely worrying trend which targets also beyond limiting funds, is the undermining of public trust in such NGOs by labeling them as foreign agents.

[NHRIs can support](#) CSO's access to funding by calling against policy and legislative initiatives with negative repercussions on CSO's access to funds, as has been done for example by the NHRIs in **Croatia and Ireland**. Moreover [in Ireland](#), the NHRI supports a grants scheme and awards projects to empower the advocacy and work of civil society in Ireland.

Further, NHRIs also promote and publicly support HRDs work, for example through the awarding of prizes. In [Georgia](#), notably, the NHRI has nominated HRDs under threat for international prizes, including the CoE's Vaclav Human Rights Prize, to elevate the international attention and support for the HRD. [In Denmark](#), the NHRIs' Council annually awards an HRD. Candidates are nominated through a public consultation and by the media, with the NHRI acting as the secretariat for the Council jury.