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ZENTRUM ZUR FÖRDERUNG DER MENSCHENRECHTE IN GEMEINDEN UND REGIONEN
CENTRE FOR THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Under the auspices of UNESCO

HUMAN RIGHTS GO LOCAL: WHAT WORKS

Academy and Conference on Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels 2027

Human Rights Accountability of Local Governments: Assessment Frameworks and Tools

PROGRAMME

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UN-HABITAT

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

THE CONGRESS LE CONGRÈS

UCLG United Cities and Local Governments

Bundesministerium Europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten

Das Land Steiermark

GRAZ

Programme Outline

(Version: 15 October 2026)

Background and rationale

In recent years, a range of non-judicial accountability mechanisms, including human rights assessment frameworks and tools, have been developed by various international and regional organizations and networks. These mechanisms support local governments in strengthening their human rights accountability. These mechanisms also serve local governments in demonstrating their human rights commitments and efforts as well as the outcomes for the people on the ground.

The Academy and Conference supports local authorities in identifying and choosing those accountability mechanisms, whose frameworks and tools match their specific local realities and needs. Firstly, the Academy program will showcase various assessment frameworks and tools, effectively building a shared knowledge base on "what works." This serves to build a practical bridge between international and regional organizations as developers and local authorities as users and will thereby support local authorities in identifying frameworks. Secondly, the program addresses a fundamental question: What does a local authority gain from introducing a human rights accountability mechanism? To answer this, it demonstrates how these mechanisms translate into concrete political, economic, social, or legal potentials. Local authorities will furthermore get insights on how existing mechanisms yield tangible reputational gains, increased public trust, and a distinct competitive advantage on the global stage.

The 6th edition of the "Human Rights Go Local: What Works" Academy and Conference provides an online platform to stock take existing assessment frameworks and tools and learn from the lived implementation experiences of local authorities.

Some of the main topics discussed in the Academy's plenary sessions and workshops are:

- **Stocktaking:** Which accountability mechanisms are already available for local governments committed to human rights? How binding are their assessment frameworks, and what concrete benefits do local authorities gain from applying them?
- **Lessons from the field:** What are the perceptions of local authorities with first-hand implementation experience regarding "what works"? What are the political, economic, social and legal benefits for local governments implementing these accountability mechanisms? What efforts and resources are required to undergo the assessment framework? Which lessons have been learned so far? How can existing practical experiences best be transferred to different local contexts?
- **Needs and potentials:** What do local authorities need to implement human rights assessment frameworks and tools (e.g. technical support, capacity building and funding)? How can local authorities' practical needs be matched with international capacity building offers and the interests of potential donors? What are the key success factors that drive and sustain human rights accountability at the local level?

Plenary sessions and workshops will bring together human rights experts and practitioners from the local, regional, national and international levels to discuss challenges, solutions and best practices. The Outcome Document is the tangible output of the Academy. It will be discussed with high-level policy makers at the closing Conference on 11 February 2027.

Methods and setting

Each day takes from 11:30 to 4pm (GMT+1) and comprises a Plenary Session, Workshop sessions and a Closing Session. In addition, there are networking events organised.

1. Plenary Sessions

These comprise the following components: 1) opening and welcome by UNESCO Chair and Centre; 2) panel discussion among representatives of int./reg. organisations and representatives of local authorities; 3) optional brief Q&A

2. Workshop sessions

The workshops aim at addressing open questions from the plenary sessions and facilitating exchange of approaches, experiences, knowledge and regions of practitioners at all governance levels. This exchange of practitioners all over the world will substantiate the content for the Academy's Outcome Document. By means of including the practical experiences of local authorities all over the world, the workshops aim at ensuring the practical and inter-regional applicability of the Academy's outputs.

Each workshop is facilitated by two moderators and several interlocutors, who actively engage with other participants to share ideas on the workshop topics. Interlocutors are fellow participants, who are recruited from the pool of HRGL contributors, the Steering Group and the team at the Centre and the Chair.

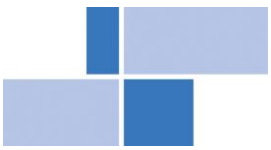
3. Closing

The results from workshop sessions are presented and discussed in the closing session. Each Academy Day is closed with the "Thoughts on the day", which is a short input/commentary on the day's topic. The "Thoughts on the day" round off the day on an inspirational note and set the scene for the next day.

4. Networking

Day 3 facilitates exchange between human rights experts of the next generation and established experts in the field. As next generation experts, we understand people of all ages who are just starting out in the field of human rights. This networking event aims to present next generation human rights experts role models in the field, to motivate them by presenting potential job opportunities in the field of human rights and – last but not least – facilitate networking and the establishment of working relationships.

Further exchange and networking opportunities for participants are provided as well. The organisers aim to facilitate further exchange and networking among participants and to establish working relationships. In the same way that cooperative relationships can be deepened in an informal setting over a coffee together in real life, informal virtual spaces invite participants to do so. More information on this networking programme will be provided in due time.



Tentative Agenda

All times are listed in CET (GMT+1)

Monday, 8 February 2027: Stocktaking: Frameworks and instruments

The first day is dedicated to an exchange of existing concepts and approaches relating accountability frameworks and tools at the international and local level. Thereby, we aim at creating a common understanding of what we are talking about, when referring to accountability frameworks.

11:30-12:00	**Opening ceremony** Academy organisers
12:00-13:00	**Plenary Session A** Impulse speeches
13:00-13:30	Break
13:30-14:30	**Workshop session 1** Discussion
14:30-15:00	Break
15:00-15:30	**Closing** Summary of workshop findings Thoughts on the day

Tuesday, 9 February 2027: Lessons from the field

The second day builds on the outcomes of the stocktaking and goes a bit deeper into local authorities' application experiences. The following questions will be addressed: What are the perceptions of local authorities with first-hand implementation experience regarding "what works"? What are the political, economic, social and legal benefits for local governments who implement these frameworks? What efforts and resources are required from local authorities, who undergo the assessment framework? Which lessons have been learned so far? How can existing practical experiences best be transferred to different local contexts?

11:45-12:00	Introduction and organisational matters
12:00-13:00	**Plenary Session B** Impulse speeches
13:00-13:30	Break
13:30-14:30	**Workshop session 2**

	Discussion
14:30-15:00	Break
15:00-15:30	**Closing** Summary of workshop findings Thoughts on the day

Wednesday, 10 February 2027: Local authorities' way forward to accountability

After the two days of intense exchanging strategic frameworks and practical approaches regarding human rights monitoring between and within international organisations and local authorities, day 3 is a summary with a view to the future: What do local authorities need to embed human rights monitoring and accountability frameworks in local government systems worldwide? How to ensure human rights accountability? What steps need to be taken next so that human rights monitoring can be better used to promote local authorities' human rights accountability? Day 3 will determine how local authorities can be supported in their potentials towards human rights accountability.

11:45-12:00	Introduction and organisational matters
12:00-13:00	**Plenary Session C** Impulse speeches
13:00-13:30	Break
13:30-14:30	**Workshop session 3** Discussion **Networking and opportunties for professionalisation** Exchange
14:30-15:00	Break
15:00-15:30	**Closing** Summary of workshop findings Thoughts on the day

Thursday, 11 February 2027: High Level Conference to present the results of the Academy

A Conference will take place with high level representatives to discuss the outcomes of the Academy and to make concrete proposals on how to locally implement international accountability frameworks and tools. The Outcome Document will be adopted as a guideline for local authorities on how to effectively strengthen a human rights-based monitoring.

12:00-12:30	**Opening and Welcome**

12:30-12:45	**Keynote Speech**
12:45-13:45	**Outcome Document** Presentation and high-level discussion on the implementation of findings and encouragements of the Academy
13:45-14:00	**Farewell address**