



**HUMAN RIGHTS
CITIES NETWORK**

YEAR OF REPORT 2024

ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared By:

The Human Rights Cities Network

www.humanrightscities.net

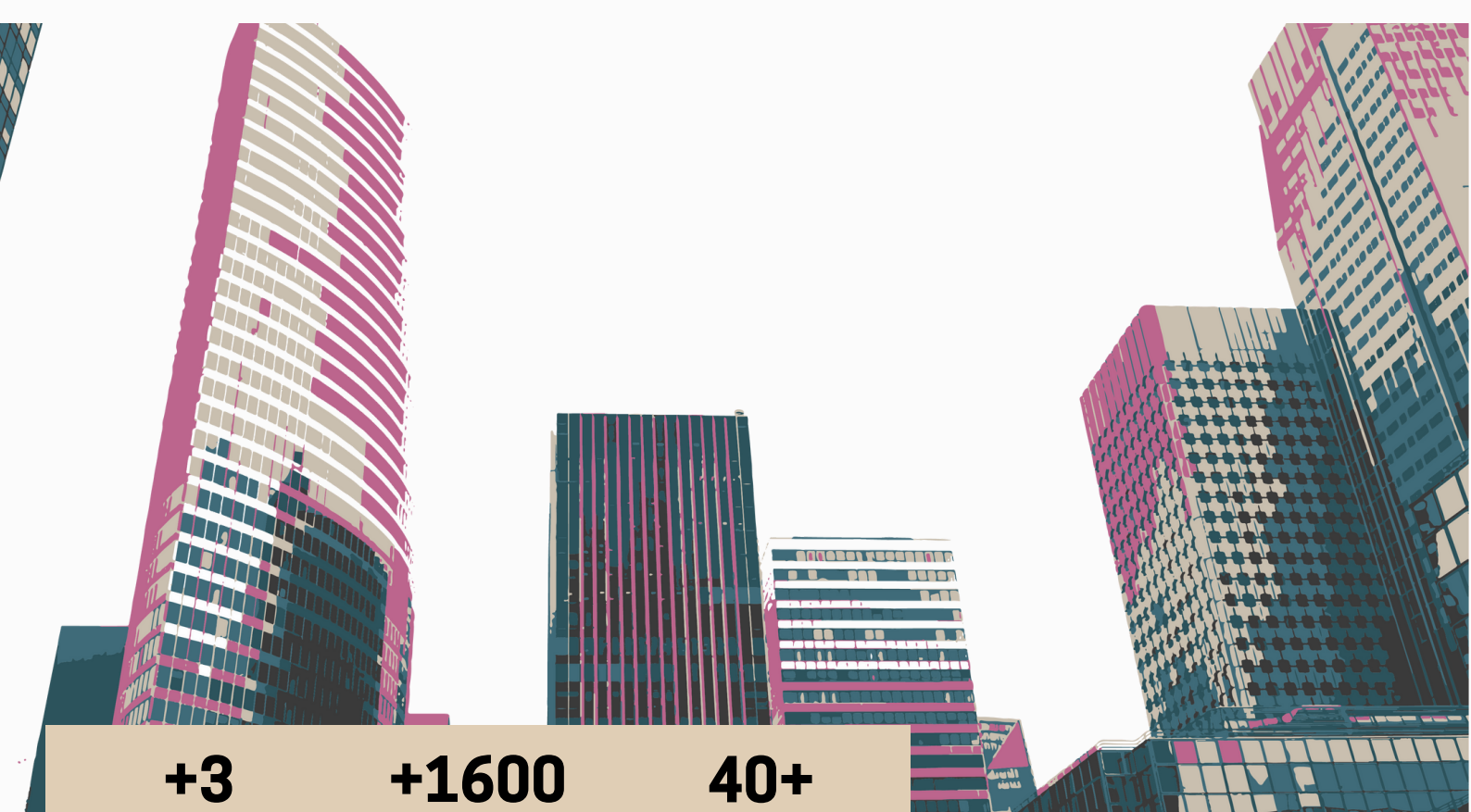


The HRCN in a nutshell

The Human Rights Cities Network (HRCN) is a civil society organisation, based in Belgium.

Our vision is to turn human rights into reality for everyone and by doing so, foster inclusive democracy and social justice at the city level.

Our mission is to multiply the number of human rights cities in Europe by 2050.



+3
EU-FUNDED
PROJECTS

+1600
NEW
FOLLOWERS

40+
CITIES
REACHED

“

A human rights city is a place where everyone can live with dignity and enjoy equal access to their rights. My wish is to see more cities championing human rights in Europe and to help bring cities actors together to integrate a human rights-based approach in public services in response to people's needs.

• *Frederique Hanotier, founder*

Achievements of 2024

In 2024, the Human Rights Cities Network (HRCN) made significant strides in expanding its reach, strengthening partnerships to advance human rights initiatives in cities across Europe. Activities focused on fostering collaboration, promoting knowledge exchange, and implementing impactful projects that enhanced democratic participation and human rights monitoring at the local level. Through strategic partnerships, new projects, and increased engagement, the network has consolidated its role as a key actor contributing to the human rights cities movement.



Network growth

In 2024, the HRCN grew significantly through the collaboration with six new cities, four new partner organizations and one team member. We welcomed the City of Leuven as a new human rights city and started collaborating with six new cities - Padova, Ghent, Braga, The Hague, Krakow, and Józsefváros - through the DeCiDE project. The network also grew with four new partner organisations.



Our Flagship projects

- **DARE** empowered first-time voters with migration and refugee backgrounds to engage in the 2024 EU elections and beyond.
- **CAREinCities** enhanced human rights monitoring in social services and inclusion in Ghent and Padova.
- **DeCiDE** supported democratic participation and human rights practices through co-created monitoring tools in 10 pilot cities.



HRCN work

The network enhances urban democracy and human rights practices in Europe. Activities promote community participation in human rights monitoring and facilitate knowledge sharing among city networks.

In 2024, the organisation initiated a pilot project to develop and pilot a practical monitoring tool to support the growth of human rights cities. This initiative ensures strong citizen engagement and fosters innovative governance that connects local participation to policymaking at the EU level.

By sharing good practices through a creative website and connecting inspiring city initiatives, the HRCN encourages human rights-based local policies and reinforces the global human rights cities movement. Its vision is to make human rights a reality for everyone, fostering inclusive democracy and social justice at the city level, with a mission to multiply the number of human rights cities in Europe by 2050.

Network growth

2024 has been a year for growth for us. We focused on not only growing our network, but also doing so meaningfully through projects and consolidating partnerships.



New partners

+4 new partners

The network of partners also grew, with the **Global Parliament of Mayors** in May and under the collaboration of the joint DeCiDE project. We partnered with **Fira de Barcelona** for the Smart City Expo World Congress (SCEWC) to officially launch DeCiDE, in person, on November 6th.

In the context of the 2024 European Parliament Elections, the HRCN signed a partnership agreement with the **European Parliament** (EP) in June. The partnership with the European Parliament strengthens HRCN's role in promoting democratic engagement across the EU, including participation in European elections. The formal framework for cooperation is enabling the HRCN to align communication activities with EP campaigns while keeping full independence. The HRCN gains visibility and credibility under the EP's banner, while the agreement opens direct channels for exchange with the EP, fostering information sharing, joint planning, and strategic coordination. It offers access to EU-level messaging, tools, and networks, amplifying HRCN's outreach to citizens.

By engaging in this collaboration, the HRCN multiplies the impact of its activities and position itself as a key civil society multiplier for EU democracy initiatives

The HRCN joined **Nets4Dem** in December. This partnership connects the HRCN to a broad European "network of networks" dedicated to democratic innovation, citizen participation, and inclusion.

Through this collaboration, HRCN gains access to cutting-edge tools, research, and resources, as well as peer-learning opportunities with practitioners, policymakers, and researchers across Europe. It opens space for the HRCN to contribute to co-creation of participatory governance solutions, pilot initiatives, and evidence-based policy recommendations.

Membership also strengthens HRCN's visibility, provides channels to engage underrepresented groups, and amplifies its human rights work within the wider democratic renewal agenda. By participating in working groups, policy dialogues, and innovation labs, the HRCN can influence the European conversation on inclusive, participatory decision-making while expanding its own capacity and network reach.

Network growth

2024 was a year of growth, where we expanded our network while strengthening it through impactful projects and deeper partnerships.

◆ Partner cities +6 cities

In 2024, **Padova**, and **Ghent** joined our network of cities through the Civic Action for Rights in Cities (CAREinCities) project. Both cities are also partner cities in the DeCiDE project. In addition, we also welcomed **Braga**, **The Hague**, **Krakow**, and **Józsefváros** as participating cities through the DeCiDE initiative.

◆ New Human Rights City

In 2024, the HRCN welcomed the City of **Leuven** as a new human rights city.

◆ Internal changes +1 new team member

In April 2024, **Julia Johnson** joined the team to assist with communications, capacity-building activities, and project development.

◆ New brand identity

In July 2024, HRCN refreshed its brand identity with a new logo to better reflect its vision. At the same time, the network refined its mission to ensure it is fully in line with the purpose and values of the organisation.

◆ Social Media Performance

In May 2024, HRCN expanded its social media presence and started an **Instagram** and **Facebook** account.

◆ Newsletter

In September 2024, we launched '**The Human Rights Readers**,' a newsletter designed to share updates on our activities and those of our partners. Over the year, we published a total of three editions.



LinkedIn

+55% growth



Facebook

Launched !



Instagram

Launched !



Newsletter

Launched !

Our projects

1 DARE

The Democratic Action of Refugees in Europe project promoted the democratic participation of persons with diverse migration and refugee backgrounds in the 2024 EU elections and beyond.



2 CAREinCities

The Civic Action for Rights and Equality in Cities improved cooperation within and among two European cities (Ghent and Padova) to enhance human rights monitoring in the fields of social services and social inclusion.



3 DeCiDE

The Boost Democratic Participation in Cities to Recharge Democracy in Europe project started a process to enhance urban democracy and human rights practices by co-creating monitoring tools in 10 pilot European cities

DeCiDE
**Recharge Democracy and
Human Rights in Cities**

DARE - Democratic Action of Refugees in Europe

The project was supported by **ALDA – European Association for Local Democracy** and co-funded by the European Union



24 000 +
people reached
through social media

4 activities

- **Activity 1** : awareness-raising webinar
- **Activity 2** : participatory workshop in two parts
- **Activity 3** : online discussion for exchange of good practices
- **Activity 4** : high-level dialogue meetings with decision-makers

Participants from
12 + European countries



Summary of achievements

Through webinars, workshops, and policy dialogues, DARE equipped 53 direct beneficiaries with advocacy skills and resources, enabling them to **promote democratic engagement within their communities**. This approach, supported by **multilingual content** and partnerships, reached over 24,000 individuals.

The **policy paper** produced as the final project output is **based on the lived experiences** and information shared by participants in the different phases of the project. It includes a list of **concrete and actionable recommendations** outlining the steps that stakeholders should take in order to improve the democratic participation of citizens with migration or refugee background. Thus we have ensured that the project results benefit persons with diverse migration backgrounds by describing the challenges to democratic participation experienced by them on the ground and by proposing **solutions that reflect their needs** promoting a **bottom-up approach**.

CAREinCities : The Civic Action for Rights and Equality in Cities



Summary of achievements

The project improved recognition and cooperation among different actors from the two cities through the acquisition of knowledge on human rights monitoring and the opening of spaces for civic dialogue within and among cities. The project provided both in-person and online training on the human rights framework and human rights monitoring, as well as on the results-based management approach and the use of monitoring tools.

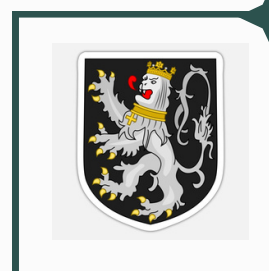
A series of online workshops offered the opportunity to participants from each city to discuss a methodology for the collaborative creation and implementation of a monitoring system for human rights at the local level, and adapt it to local needs, capacities and challenges. Finally, an in-person workshop facilitated the exchange and peer learning between the two cities, resulting in the development of a set of recommendations and tips to help cities overcome the main challenges they may find in this process.



Padova



Ghent



11
organisations
from 2 cities

12/06/2024 - 31/12/2024

7 civil society organisations, 2 universities and 2 municipalities from the cities of Ghent and Padua engaged in a process of training and mutual learning to reflect on the methodology to implement a collaborative monitoring system for human rights in cities.

DeCiDE - Boost Democratic Participation in Cities to Recharge Democracy in Europe

Boost Democratic Participation in Cities to Recharge Democracy in Europe (DeCiDE) is a two-year initiative launched in October 2024. It involves municipalities and civil society organizations from 10 pilot cities to co-create human rights indicators and monitoring tools. The aim is to enhance urban democracy and human rights practices in Europe, through community participation in human rights monitoring and knowledge sharing between cities' networks. The project is jointly implemented by the Human Rights Cities Network and the Global Parliament of Mayors.

6 cities & municipalities joined in 2024

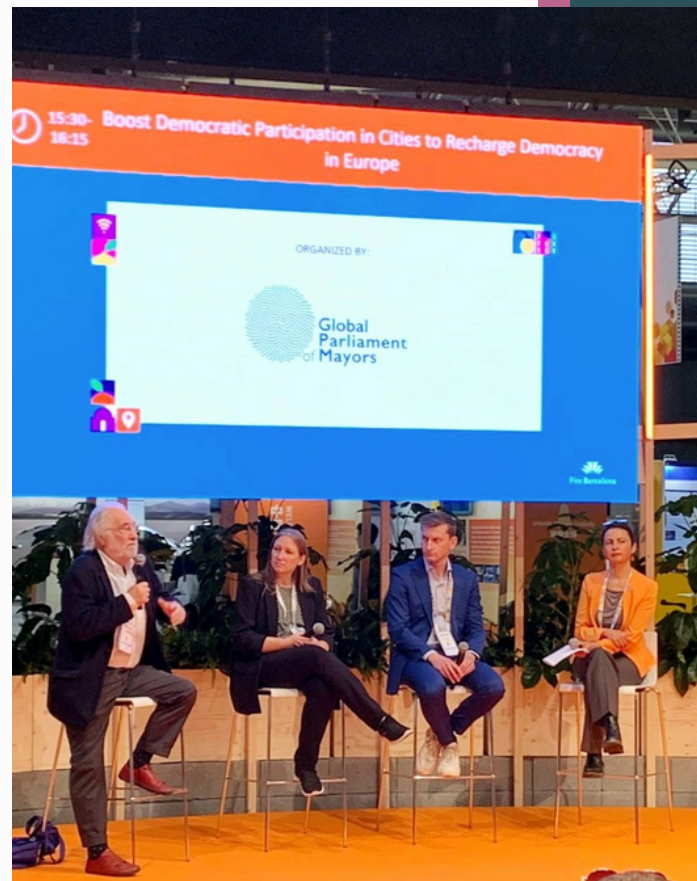
Braga (Portugal), **Ghent** (Belgium), **Padua** (Italy), **The Hague** (The Netherlands), **Kraków** (Poland), and **Józsefváros** (the 8th district of Budapest, Hungary).

Activities

- The in-person kick-off event in Barcelona
- A public webinar - Human Rights Monitoring: Turn Theory into Practice
- Over 10 in-person and online meetings with cities

Our Objectives:

- Support ten European cities to improve monitoring capacities of public service delivery with a participatory and inclusive approach;
- Strengthen cities and local civil society's capacity to guarantee democratic participation and access to human rights through enhanced consultation mechanisms with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the design of public services;
- Improve knowledge of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights through capacity building and exchange of experience to translate it into practices at local level, promoting solidarity among citizens and engaging transnational city networks in policy dialogue.



HRCN at work !

Our 5 Values

1 CREATING SYNERGIES

Working on partnerships and synergies is crucial to creating coalitions to promote rights in Europe and beyond. In 2024, we officialised our partnership with the European Parliament - [together.eu](#) community and with the Smart City Expo World Congress, and we started the process of joining the Nets4Dem partnership. Moreover, we enhanced the synergy between our action and the European Civic Forum's, ALDA – European Association for Local Democracy and the European Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights's action on the ground.

2 EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE

In 2024, we published two policy papers concerning voting rights in European elections: one on the [role of cities in enhancing voting rights](#), and the other on [enhancing the participation of citizens with migration background](#). We also published a pamphlet of [recommendations for the participatory monitoring of human rights in cities](#). In September, we launched our monthly newsletter, the [Human Rights Cities Readers](#).

3 FACILITATING DIALOGUE

We facilitated dialogue among different actors (city representatives, European institutions, and civil society organisations at the European and local levels) by organising webinars and facilitated discussions on various topics. The main issues discussed were the role of cities and European institutions in enhancing the participation of citizens with migrant or refugee backgrounds in elections and the development of participatory human rights monitoring tools in cities.

4 PROVIDING LEARNING CAPACITIES

The HRCN's team offered training to participants from local administrations and civil society organisations from at least 7 European countries and 15 different cities. The main topics of training were the EU Charter of human rights, the international human rights framework and human rights principles, as well as the Fundamental Rights Agency framework for human rights cities in the EU.

5 ADVOCATING FOR A HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA FROM THE GLOBAL TO THE LOCAL LEVEL

Advocacy is a core activity for the defence and protection of human rights. This year, we did so by participating in the regular meetings of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency with civil society, by participating in the panel "Local Democracy for Inclusivity: Exploring Gender Equality and Human Rights in Urban Spaces, Time Policies and the Political Sphere" during ALDA's General Assembly, as well as in the panel "Peace and conflict resolution, democracy, decentralization and guarantee of Rights" for the City Diplomacy in a World of Conflicts event in the Province of Barcelona.



Future Goals & Strategy

In 2025, the HRCN will strengthen its impact by strengthening collaborations, advancing knowledge, and reinforcing the human rights cities movement. Our objectives for 2025 align with our mission to multiply the number of human rights cities in Europe by 2050, and foster participatory democracy and social justice at the local level.

01. Expanding the network of Human Rights Cities:

Expand the network of human rights cities by engaging new municipalities across Europe, encouraging human rights-based policies, and strengthening partnerships with guest member cities as models of best practices.

02. Enhancing knowledge and capacity-building:

Document and share best practices in human rights from cities, provide accessible resources on local policies, and organize training sessions for authorities, civil society, and academia to enhance human rights implementation and participatory governance.

03. Strengthening advocacy and global influence:

Strengthen the involvement in key European and global networks (ECF, ALDA, GPM), collaborate with EU institutions (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the European Parliament), and advocate for the inclusion of human rights cities in global agendas - the World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF), the Brussels Urban Summit (BUS) - to amplify their impact on local human rights policies.

04. Developing innovative tools and methodologies:

Facilitate collective dialogue to develop tools and guidelines for monitoring and improving human rights implementation, co-creating participatory systems with local authorities and civil society to track progress.

05. Fostering synergies and strengthening the community of practice:

Connect city officials, human rights practitioners, and civil society to foster knowledge sharing and collaboration on urban human rights challenges, while organizing exchanges to promote peer learning and cross-border cooperation.

06. Scaling Up initiatives:

Roll out and scale up the DeCiDE project, leveraging the results of DARE and CAREinCities to influence broader policy discussions on democratic participation and social inclusion, while developing new initiatives that align with HRCN's core mission and broaden our areas of impact.

Conclusion

2024 was a pivotal year for the Human Rights Cities Network (HRCN), marked by meaningful expansion, deeper collaboration, and the successful implementation of impactful projects. We started our collaboration with seven new cities and four new partner organisations, launched a renewed brand identity, and significantly broadened our public outreach. Flagship initiatives like DARE, CAREinCities, and DeCiDE empowered local actors, advanced democratic participation, and strengthened human rights monitoring across Europe.

These achievements not only reinforced our position as a key actor in the human rights cities movement but also laid the foundation for future growth. Looking ahead to 2025, HRCN is committed to scaling up its work by expanding our network, developing innovative monitoring tools, and amplifying our advocacy on the European and global stages. By fostering stronger synergies, supporting local capacity-building, and promoting inclusive urban governance, we remain steadfast in our mission to make human rights a lived reality in cities across Europe.





HUMAN RIGHTS CITIES NETWORK

**“We promote & strengthen
Human Rights in cities in
Europe and beyond!”**

Contact Details:

Email: hrcn@humanrightscities.net

Website: www.humanrightscities.net