

National human rights action plans in the EU

Practices, experiences and lessons learned for more systematic working methods on human rights

Report of the National Liaison Officer Working Party
on National Human Rights Action Plans

Vienna, 27–28 March 2019

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Introduction

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, recommended “that each State consider the desirability of drawing up a national action plan identifying steps whereby that State would improve the promotion and protection of human rights”.¹ Since then, 10 different EU Member States² have adopted such general National Human Rights Action Plans (NHRAP). In addition to this, many more have issued thematic action plans that have a human rights dimension.

NHRAPs have the potential to be a valuable tool to more systematically promote and protect fundamental rights. As the EU plays an important role in relation to fundamental rights protection at the national level, it is interesting to explore the EU dimension to these Action Plans. With this in mind, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) established a Working Party which met on 27–28 March 2019 in Vienna. It brought together the National Liaison Officers³ to the Agency and national experts on this subject, as well as representatives from the Council of Europe and the Open Government Partnership (OGP).⁴

The Working Party convened European countries that were considering drawing up their first ever NHRAP, as well as countries that already had adopted multiple NHRAPs. This mix of experience and new perspectives allowed for rich discussions during which participants could exchange promising practices, indicate things to avoid, and come up with fresh ideas. Participants considered the meeting timely and felt reassured to see that other countries had similar positive experiences, but also difficulties and concerns in this context.

This report harvests the main findings from the Working Party meeting, which was held under the Chatham House Rule,⁵ in order to facilitate open and honest discussions. Not to miss important lessons, participants were later in the year asked to submit further promising practices from their countries, which have been added to this report.

The report has four main sections. The first provides a brief overview of some of the global initiatives in the area of human rights action plans over the last decades. The second explores these action plans in the EU context. The third examines human rights action plans in more detail: what defines an action plan, how do general NHRAPs differ from thematic ones, and are there alternatives to traditional NHRAPs? Finally, the report reflects on the drafting and follow-up processes of NHRAPs.

¹ Adopted on 25 June 1993, Part II, par. 71.

² As the Working Party took place in 2019, this report still includes information on the United Kingdom. However, as the report was published after 31 January 2020, references to “EU Member States” exclude the United Kingdom.

³ The National Liaison Officers are government officials who are the main contact points for FRA in the EU Member States, see: art. 8 of [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 168/2007 of 15 February 2007 establishing a European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights](#).

⁴ OGP is an international partnership initiative involving government and civil society, see www.opengovpartnership.org.

⁵ “When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.” See: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/chatham-house-rule#>.

Global initiatives

The first reference to national actions plans in international human rights law can be found in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR):⁶

“Each State Party to the present Covenant which [...] has not been able to secure [...] compulsory primary education, free of charge, undertakes, within two years, to work out and **adopt a detailed plan of action** for the progressive implementation [...] of the principle of compulsory education free of charge for all.”⁷ (emphasis added)

However, it was not until 1993 that the World Conference on Human Rights, with its renewed focus on the responsibility of States to fulfil their human rights obligations, called for general human rights action plans in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Since then, at least 44 countries worldwide have adopted such a plan.⁸

In addition to general NHRAPs, there have also been many calls for thematic action plans on specific human rights topics – such as the one in the ICESCR. These documents are sometimes called “action plans” or “strategies”, but all have the same goal: a more systematic approach to dealing with human rights issues. These thematic human rights action plans cover many different topics, as noted in the examples below:

- On 31 October 2000, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on **women, peace and security** was adopted, which encouraged countries to adopt national action plans as an implementing tool. To date, 83 countries have adopted such an Action Plan, of which 19 are EU Member States.⁹ In addition, in 2008 the Council of the European Union adopted a Regional Action Plan on this issue,¹⁰ which was updated in 2016.¹¹ In 2018, it was replaced by the new EU Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security.¹²
- The UN Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted in 2001 by the UN World Conference Against **Racism**, calls upon States to “develop or elaborate national action plans to promote diversity, equality, equity, social justice, equality of opportunity and the participation of all”.¹³ So far, only 14 EU Member States have a dedicated action plan against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in place.¹⁴ Therefore, in Opinion 4.3 of its Fundamental Rights Report 2019, FRA calls upon EU Member States to develop such action plans, as this would provide them “with an effective means for ensuring that they meet their obligations under the Racial Equality Directive and the Framework Decision on Combating Racism and Xenophobia.”
- In its resolution 59/113, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the World Programme for **Human Rights Education**. As part of the first phase of this programme (2005–2007), a Plan of Action for human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems

⁶ Chalabi, p. 1.

⁷ Article 14.

⁸ At <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/plansactions/pages/plansofactionindex.aspx>, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights lists the NHRAPs of 39 different countries. However, this list excludes, for example NHRAPs of Croatia, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands and Slovakia. Also, not all action plans are still active – having a time period which already has lapsed and without being replaced by a new one.

⁹ <https://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>.

¹⁰ “[Comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security](#)”, 1 December 2008, 15671/1/08.

¹¹ “Revised indicators for the Comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security”, 22 September 2016, 12525/16.

¹² Annex to “Women, Peace and Security - Council conclusions (10 December 2018)”, 15086/18.

¹³ <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/process/action-plan-cycle/>.

¹⁴ FRA, [Fundamental Rights Report 2019](#), pp. 92-93.

was developed.¹⁵ This action plan calls on Member States to adopt a national implementation strategy for the planning, implementation and evaluation of human rights education in the school system.

- Since the adoption of the United Nations Guiding Principles on **Business and Human Rights** in 2011, States have been encouraged to adopt National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights. Worldwide, 25 countries now have such plans or have a dedicated chapter on Business and Human Rights in their general NHRAP, of which 15 are EU Member States.¹⁶
- Although not a specific obligation under the Convention on the Rights of **Persons with Disabilities** (CRPD), most EU Member States have developed national disability strategies and action plans. In addition, the European Commission adopted a European Disability Strategy 2010–2020 – a form of action plan – in order to ensure effective implementation of the CRPD at EU level.¹⁷
- Through the **Open Government Partnership** (OGP), governments and civil society co-create action plans in two-year cycles, in which they aim to “develop ambitious commitments to foster transparency, accountability, and public participation.”¹⁸ Worldwide, 78 countries are members of the OGP, of which 21 EU Member States.

The European Union perspective

This section examines the EU perspective to NHRAPs, by first exploring the different types of human rights related action plans that exist in an EU context, and then looking at the NHRAPs that have been published by EU Member States. Which themes do they cover, how do they refer to the EU, and what has their impact been?

Action Plans in the EU context

One can distinguish between three types of human rights related action plans that are relevant in the broader EU context:

1. EU action plans adopted through EU legal procedures

Examples of these types of action plans include:

- the 2019–2023 Action Plan on European e-Justice (March 2019);¹⁹
- the Action Plan against Disinformation (December 2018);²⁰
- the Action Plan 2017–2019 Tackling the gender pay gap (November 2017);²¹
- the Action Plan on Drugs 2017–2020 (July 2017);²²
- the Renewed Action Plan on a more effective return policy in the EU (March 2017);²³

¹⁵ Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/PActionEducationen.pdf>.

¹⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Business/Pages/NationalActionPlans.aspx>. For an analysis of such action plans, see The Danish Institute for Human Rights, [National Action Plans on Business & Human Rights: An analysis of plans from 2013 – 2018](#), 2018. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has also called upon Council of Europe Member States to develop NAPBHRs, see: [PACE Resolution 2311 \(2019\)](#), points 6 and 8.1.

¹⁷ [COM\(2010\) 636 final](#).

¹⁸ [OGP Handbook](#), p. 9.

¹⁹ [OJ C 96, 13.3.2019, p. 9–32](#).

²⁰ [JOIN\(2018\) 36 final](#).

²¹ [COM\(2017\) 678 final](#).

²² [OJ C 215, 5.7.2017, p. 21–58](#).

²³ [COM\(2017\) 200 final](#).

- the Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals (June 2016);²⁴
- the Gender Action Plan 2016–2020 (October 2015);²⁵
- the Action Plan against migrant smuggling 2015–2020 (May 2015);²⁶
- the Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors 2010–2014 (May 2010);²⁷
- the Action Plan Implementing the Stockholm Programme (delivering an area of freedom, security and justice for Europe's citizens) (April 2010);²⁸
- the Action Plan developing a comprehensive and coherent EU strategy to measure crime and criminal justice 2006–2010 (August 2006).²⁹

The EU has adopted an Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015–2019³⁰ for its relations with non-EU countries, and has a new one in the making.³¹ There is at present no comparable EU Action Plan on an internal strategy for human or fundamental rights. However, in the 2014 Council conclusions on the Commission 2013 report on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the consistency between internal and external aspects of human rights' protection and promotion in the European Union, the Council "notes with interest the idea of an annual assessment by the Council on the basis of the Commission's annual report on the application of the Charter of Union action regarding the provisions of the Charter and of pointing out areas for future action. This could gradually lead to a Union internal strategy on fundamental rights, possibly through an action plan on a mid-term basis, regarding the respect and promotion of the Charter."³²

2. National action plans established in response to EU requirements

Examples include:

- Article 4(1) of the Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC obliges Member States to adopt national renewable energy plans. These are to be drafted in compliance with a template adopted by the European Commission.
- Directive 2016/1148 concerning measures for a high common level of security of network and information systems across the Union (NIS Directive) "lays down obligations for all Member States to adopt a national strategy on the security of network and information systems".³³
- In 2018, the Council of the European Union invited "the Member States to adopt and implement a holistic strategy to prevent and fight all forms of antisemitism as part of their strategies on preventing racism, xenophobia, radicalisation and violent extremism".³⁴

²⁴ [COM\(2016\) 377 final](#).

²⁵ [Council conclusions on the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020](#), 13201/15, 26 October 2015.

²⁶ [COM\(2015\) 285 final](#).

²⁷ [COM\(2010\) 213 final](#).

²⁸ [COM\(2010\) 171 final](#).

²⁹ [COM\(2006\) 437 final](#).

³⁰ Available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30003/web_en_actionplanhumanrights.pdf.

³¹ [Commission Work Programme 2020: A Union that strives for more](#), COM(2020) 37 final, p. 7.

³² Council of the European Union, [Council conclusions on the Commission 2013 report on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the consistency between internal and external aspects of human rights' protection and promotion in the European Union](#), 5-6 June 2014, p. 4.

³³ Article 1(2)(a).

³⁴ Council of the European Union, [Council Declaration on the fight against antisemitism and the development of a common security approach to better protect Jewish communities and institutions in Europe - Council conclusion](#), 6 December 2018, p. 6.

- In 2011, EU Member States were encouraged to adopt National Roma integration strategies with the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020.³⁵

3. Other national action plans that are relevant to the EU

EU Member States can also draft action plans, which are relevant to EU law and policy, without a requirement from the side of the EU to do so. For instance, most NHRAPs of EU Member States will have EU components, and Member States also develop thematic action plans that cover themes that are important at the EU level. Dedicated action plans and strategies against racism, xenophobia and ethnic discrimination, which 14 EU Member States had in place as of 2018, are a good example of the latter.³⁶

Such national action plans can be a useful tool for Member States when implementing EU law and policy. The next section examines in more detail the NHRAPs that have been issued by EU Member States, and to what extent they refer to on EU law and policy.

National Human Rights Action Plans in the EU

10 of the 27 EU Member States have published NHRAPs. At the time of writing, five of these are still current.

Table 1: NHRAPs in EU Member States and the UK

Current	Expired	future NAP under preparation/consideration
Finland (2017–2019; 2012–2013 + a new one under preparation for 2020-2023)	Croatia (2013–2016; 2008–2011)	Austria
Germany (2019–2020)	Greece (2014–2016)	Croatia (2020–2024)
The Netherlands (2020; 2013–2019)	Latvia (1995)	Portugal
Slovakia (2014–2020)	Lithuania (2002)	
Sweden (2016; 2006-2009; 2002–2004)	Spain (2008–2012 + a new one under preparation/consideration)	
	Scotland in the United Kingdom (2013–2017)	

Source: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/systematic-human-rights-work>, with additional input from the Working Party participants.

There is no standard model for NHRAPs, and as a result every action plan has its own structure. However, there is commonly some overlap in the themes that these plans cover. For example, every country, except Lithuania, has dealt with the topics of racism and gender in its latest NHRAP. The rights of minorities and vulnerable groups are covered by over 80 % of the latest NHRAPs in the EU and the UK, while over 70 % dealt with the theme of justice.

³⁵ [COM\(2011\) 173 final](#).

³⁶ [Fundamental Rights Report 2019](#), p. 93.

Table 2: Themes covered by the latest NHRAPs of EU Member States and the UK

	Racism	Gender	Minorities	Vulnerable Persons	Justice	Integrity	Environment
Croatia							
Finland							
Germany							
Greece							
Latvia							
Lithuania							
Netherlands*							
Slovakia							
Spain							
Sweden							
Scotland in the UK							

* For the Netherlands, its first Action Plan (2013–2019) was examined, which was current during the meeting of the Working Party. However, it should be noted that at the time of publication of this report, the Netherlands had published its second NHRAP (2020).

Source: FRA, Working Party meeting 27–28 March 2019

EU references in National Human Rights Action Plans

Given the important role of fundamental rights in the EU,³⁷ it is not surprising that NHRAPs drafted by EU Member States frequently refer to the EU. Looking in more detail at the five current NHRAPs in the EU shows how EU law, policy and actors are mentioned, and how they have helped shape them.

The NHRAP of **Finland** (2017–2019)³⁸ refers to the EU several times in its introduction. For example, it specifies that “the priority areas of the Action Plan are in general consistent with the external relations policy of the European Union”, it speaks of “the need to raise awareness of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights”, and it refers to “tools for safeguarding fundamental rights in legislative drafting [that] have [...] been developed on the EU level.” Under the chapter that deals with the four priority areas of the action plan, every action point covers four points: contents, legal basis, responsible ministry and indicators. Under legal basis, it very often cites the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The most extensive references to EU related topics are found in the chapter on fundamental rights and digitalisation which mentions the Charter, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the EU Data Protection Supervisor, the EU Data Protection Regulation and Directive, FRA, decisions of

³⁷ See for example: arts. 2 and 6(3) [Treaty on European Union](#), and the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#).

³⁸ Ministry of Justice of Finland, [National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights 2017–2019](#).

the Court of Justice of the European Union, the EU Accessibility Act, the Commission's Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online, the EU Commission's High Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, the EU Anti-Discrimination Directive 2000/43/EC, the European Disability Strategy, and the EU Network and Information Security Directive. Other chapters of the NHRAP of Finland refer to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, and to FRA's Fundamental Rights Survey.

Germany published its NHRAP in February 2019, as part of the 13th Government Report on its Human Rights Policy.³⁹ The action points in the plan are divided into 22 themes, of which half have direct references to the EU. Some refer to ongoing discussions that take place at the EU level, such as those on the accession of the EU to the European Convention on Human Rights; on EU-wide minimum standards in criminal proceedings; and on the Common European Asylum System. Others underline the importance of the implementation of EU documents, such as the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy; the EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief; the EU Action Plan 2017–2019 – Tackling the gender pay gap; the EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020; the Guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons; and the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders.

The German Action Plan also mentions topics that the Federal Government will work on in the EU context. These include the promotion of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC); the worldwide abolition of the death penalty; the prevention of violations of the freedom of expression and freedom of the press, as well as the right to information; advocacy for people who are persecuted, punished or subjected to violence on the basis of their religion or belief; business and human rights; and the management of refugee and migration movements in the Mediterranean. Finally, the NHRAP states that the Government will continue the programme “Quereinstieg – Männer und Frauen in KITAS”, co-funded by the European Social Fund.

Next to the German NHRAP, the 13th Government Report on its Human Rights Policy also contains an annex which describes institutions and procedures that are of relevance to human rights protection. In this annex, there are many references to the EU, such as descriptions of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and of the FRA.

The first NHRAP of **the Netherlands** (2013–2019)⁴⁰ dealt with the EU level quite extensively in its background chapter on the importance of human rights and in its more general chapter on the human rights infrastructure in the Netherlands. In its thematic chapters, there are EU references related to the development of the General Data Protection Regulation; EU law and EU Court of Justice rulings in the area of biometric data in travel documents; the most relevant EU instruments in relation to Dutch asylum and migration law; the right to physical integrity and the right to health care as stipulated in the Charter of Fundamental Rights; the EMPACT anti-trafficking project; an EU Conference on anti-trafficking; Directive 2010/53/EU on standards of quality and safety of human organs intended for transplantation; Directive 2011/93/EU (Combating the sexual abuse and the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography).

In the opening chapters of the *National Strategy for Human Rights Protection and Promotion in Slovakia* (2014–2020),⁴¹ the importance of Slovakia's membership to the EU is mentioned several times. This is mostly with regard to human rights policy in general, but also in the context of Slovakia's

³⁹ [13. Bericht der Bundesregierung über ihre Menschenrechtspolitik](#).

⁴⁰ Netherlands' Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, [National Action Plan on Human Rights](#), 2014; please note that this NHRAP was current during the Working Party meeting, but since then the Netherlands has published its second NHRAP: [Nationaal Actieplan Mensenrechten 2020](#).

⁴¹ Slovak Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality, [National Strategy for Human Rights Protection and Promotion in Slovakia](#), 2014.

Antidiscrimination Act (which transposed the EU’s relevant Directives into the legal order of Slovakia) in particular. It is also interesting to mention that “[t]he time frame of the Strategy corresponds to the EU programming period 2014–2020, including the effective use of structural funds in designing action plans.”⁴² In the ten specific action points (or “tasks”) of the strategy, the EU is referred to three times. First, the EU is mentioned as one of the sources for a comprehensive analysis of the compatibility of national human rights policies vis-à-vis policies of international organisations. Then, the plan mentions the importance of effective use of the EU structural funds, in particular the European Social Fund and other financial mechanisms to help disadvantaged population and support their social inclusion. Finally, it stipulates that it is necessary to provide systematic training for judges in fundamental rights and freedoms protection in respect of the case-law of constitutional courts and the courts of the EU.

Sweden, following the publication of two National Human Rights Action Plans, opted to adopt a Human Rights Strategy in 2016.⁴³ The “strategy is limited to addressing overarching and structural issues”, as the “area-specific convention commitments are managed within each respective area of policy.” It speaks of the EU system in the protection of human rights in the chapter on Sweden’s international human rights commitments. In the paragraph about National Human Rights Institutions, it stipulates that the EU (together with the UN and the Council of Europe) has regularly repeated and confirmed the Paris Principles. In the action points, it is noted that the application in Sweden of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights ought to be evaluated, and in the explanation it is noted that FRA regularly requests information on this topic.

Table 3: EU references in current NHRAPs by theme

	Finland	Germany	Netherlands*	Slovakia	Sweden
Accessibility					
Antidiscrimination					
Asylum and Migration					
Business and human rights					
Charter of Fundamental Rights					
Children’s Rights					
Criminal Procedural Rights					
Data Protection					
Disability					
EU accession to the ECHR					
EU Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy					
FRA					
Gender					
Hate Speech					
Human Rights Defenders					
Human Trafficking					
Judicial training EU case-law					
LGBTI					
Network & Information Security					

⁴² Id. p. 4.

⁴³ Government of Sweden, [A strategy for national efforts with human rights](#).

NHRIs					
Organ transplantation					
Racism					
Religion and Belief					
Sexual abuse					
Structural funds					

* For the Netherlands, its first Action Plan (2013–2019) was analysed, which was still current during the Working Party meeting. At the time of publication of this report, the Netherlands had published its second NHRAP (2020).

Source: FRA, Working Party meeting 27–28 March 2019

Impact of National Human Rights Action Plans in EU Member States to date

In 2017, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe organised a workshop “aimed at facilitating an exchange of lessons learned from the implementation of [NHRAPs] in several Council of Europe member states”.⁴⁴ The workshop came as a follow-up to an earlier workshop on the topic in March 2014. The conclusions of the workshop provide some good insights into the impact of NHRAPs in Europe to date.

One important conclusion from the workshop was that developing a successful NHRAP is a complex task. All participating European countries with a NHRAP faced challenges during the development and implementation process.⁴⁵ Several examples of factors that hampered the impact of NHRAPs in Europe were given:

- It is difficult to find the right balance between an action plan that shows a strategic vision on human rights on the one hand, and an action plan with concrete action points on the other;
- Public confidence in NHRAPs is undermined if they exclude certain sensitive issues;
- The timely implementation of NHRAPs requires an effective coordination mechanism, but this can be difficult to establish;
- Political will is sometimes lacking to properly follow up on an action plan, especially when the reason for drafting the NHRAP in the first place was pressure from outside sources (e.g. development partners or international human rights monitoring bodies);
- Uncontrollable external factors, such as political or economic crises can deprioritise the implementation of NHRAPs.⁴⁶

Despite these challenges, the development of NHRAPs have had a clear positive impact in Europe too. For example:

- NHRAPs have “contributed to improving states’ alignment with international human rights standards”;
- NHRAPs have improved the way in which governments implement human rights, e.g. by creating coordination mechanisms, improving the relationship with civil society, and enhancing the government’s accountability;

⁴⁴ [Workshop on Developing and Implementing National Action Plans for Human Rights](#), 27–28 March 2014, Conclusions, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Id. p. 4.

⁴⁶ Id. pp. 4-5.

- NHRAPs have raised awareness for human rights, both among civil servants working in relevant areas, and with the general public (if there was sufficient communication on the NHRAP).⁴⁷

The workshop found also that the most positive impact of NHRAPs in Europe seems to have been achieved in the structural approach to human rights in general, rather than in the implementation of specific action points.⁴⁸

National human rights action plans – the framework

General principles

There is no one-size-fits-all approach for the establishment of NHRAPs. The OHCHR notes that in fact, “it has always been central to the national action plan approach that each country starts from its own political, cultural, historical and legal circumstances.”⁴⁹ However, there are certain common elements, and the participants of the Working Party meeting were encouraged to explore these. The outcome from this session is clustered below into four main categories: aim, format/contents, process and conditions for success.

Aim

- National Human Rights Action Plans are a vehicle to fulfil human rights obligations, stemming from the international, national and regional/local level.
- However, the aim of National Human Rights Action Plans can still vary. A NHRAP can provide a general strategic roadmap for the implementation of human rights obligations; it can be a tool to formulate concrete actions in the area of human rights, or it can be a combination of the two.
- A National Human Rights Action Plan can be used as a baseline study that assesses the state of the art with regard to human rights at the national level, and can identify gaps in national human rights law and policy.
- A National Human Rights Action Plan can also serve to raise awareness about human rights, both for the general public, and within the government. It can highlight the human rights perspective of topics that are not necessarily always seen as human rights issues.

Format/Contents

- There is no one-size-fits-all format for National Human Rights Action Plans.
- The format should match the main aims of the action plan.
- As it is nearly impossible to tackle all human rights issues in one action plan, choices have to be made with regard to the plans’ comprehensiveness and thematic prioritisation. The most urgent issues can define the priorities, but other factors can also play a role. For example, some themes might have a greater chance to be implemented in light of available resources, political will, etc.
- The plan should be evidence-based.

⁴⁷ Id. p. 5.

⁴⁸ Id. p. 7.

⁴⁹ [OHCHR Handbook on National Human Rights Plans of Action](#) (2002), p. 8.

- The NHRAP can also serve as an umbrella under which multiple thematic action plans could be developed.
- The Action Plan should set specific targets (through the use of SMART indicators) with clear deadlines. The targets can be both quantitative and qualitative.
- Measures that can lead to sustainable change are often preferable over one-off actions.

Process

- Relevant stakeholders have to be involved in the drafting process of the action plan, including but not limited to civil society. It is important to manage expectations in this context: do the stakeholders have any formal decision-making powers or responsibilities or are they merely consulted? How often and at what stages will they be involved? Do they also have a role to play in the implementation phase?
- A mapping of all relevant stakeholders and their interests will help create an action plan that is viable, complete and widely supported.
- A SWOT analysis can help identify possible obstacles to the development of a successful action plan.
- A mechanism should be in place for the coordination between the different responsible ministries, as well as with the other stakeholders.

Conditions for success

- The process should be as inclusive as possible.
- There should be sufficient budget for the implementation of the action plan.
- A communication strategy should be in place. FRA's 10 keys to effectively communicating human rights can be instrumental in this context.
- In order to gain interest, human rights could be linked to standards that are more popular, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- An evaluation of the action plan should take place.
- The government has to show ownership over the action plan, and there should be political will and the necessary authority to make the plan a success.
- To raise the chances of success, it is important for the ownership to also be felt by local level authorities, national human rights institutions, and by the private sector.
- In order to raise the chances of success for a follow-up action plan, a logbook should be kept of lessons learned.

General versus thematic action plans – strengths and weaknesses

There are calls for States to adopt both general National Human Rights Action Plans, and specific action plans that deal with a human rights related theme. Participants of the Working Party meeting noted advantages and disadvantages of both types of action plans, as can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Strengths and weaknesses of general NHRAPs versus specific/thematic human rights action plans

	General (NHRAPs)	Specific/Thematic Action Plans
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to promote the idea of human rights in general and give a strategic vision for the future. • The overview of all/most government actions in the area of human rights can be helpful for awareness raising at the national level, and for reporting obligations at the international level. • It is easier to deal with crosscutting issues in general action plans. • They can serve as an “umbrella”, paving the way for more specific thematic action plans, while also dealing with topics that are less easy to cover in specific action plans. • General action plans can send a stronger human rights signal when the whole government feels ownership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific/Thematic Action Plans allow for more details, a better focus and more easily measurable impact. • Less coordination is needed and it is easier to rely on existing networks of stakeholders. • Easier to generate funds and to allocate existing funds in a targeted way. • It is easier to create government ownership over a thematic action plan, when only one or two responsible ministers are involved. • It is easier to communicate on specific themes than on human rights in general.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Action Plan which falls under the responsibility of multiple ministries can lead to issues of lack of coordination and ownership. • It is more difficult to engage with civil society when an Action Plan covers a wide range of issues. • A general Action Plan is at risk of missing depth, focus and concreteness. • If a general Action Plan overlaps with existing thematic Action Plans, there is a risk of adding to administrative and reporting workload, which in itself could undermine support. • It is nearly impossible to deal with every single human rights issue in one action plan, which leads to problems of the selection of topics and prioritisation. • It is more difficult to evaluate and monitor a broad Action Plan. • It is more complicated to budget for a general Action Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The link to the concept of human rights can easily be missed when focusing on one theme. • Links between different but related human rights issues can be missed (such as crosscutting issues), or there could be inconsistencies when different action plans deal with similar topics. • It can be harder to communicate on one specific issue, if it is too “expert” or does not appeal to the wider public. • Multiple specific/thematic action plans in the area of human rights can be a missed opportunity for cooperation, and lead to a competition for resources and stakeholders’ attention. • Separate thematic action plans can lead to fragmentation in terms of methodologies, indicators, consultations, follow-up, etc.

Source: FRA, Working Party meeting 27–28 March 2019

Alternatives to traditional human rights action plans

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action recommends “each State [to] consider the desirability of drawing up a national action plan identifying steps whereby that State would improve the promotion and protection of human rights”⁵⁰. Today, in view of experience gained through state and civil society cooperation, alternatives to this “traditional” notion could be considered, explained below.

Drafting by actors other than the Government

In its *Handbook on National Human Rights Plans of Action* (2002), the OHCHR states that a National Human Rights Action Plan should be “developed in a manner similar to that of other major government activities”. However, the Handbook does not limit the task of drafting the Action Plan to the government: while the government must be involved significantly in the process, as it is ultimately in charge of its implementation, the report emphasises that “in some cases, [the focal agency] may be a national human rights institution, although it should be understood that responsibility for implementation must always rest with the government.”⁵¹ Moreover, the report encourages “broad participation at the stages of both development and implementation”, listing a wide range of potential recommended stakeholders, which again reiterates the high importance given to the involvement of entities other than the government.

While the government should take the lead in the drafting of the Action Plan, this does not preclude other stakeholders, including explicitly NHRIs, from making significant contributions to both its drafting and subsequent implementation. In fact, according to the OHCHR, their input is precisely what will prevent an Action Plan from being little more than “a rhetorical gesture”.⁵² At the same time, it should not be forgotten that the power to take policy decisions remains with the government. It would be unrealistic – or even unfair – to put a great amount of responsibility for the implementation of a NHRAP on an NHRI, when it does not have corresponding forms of governmental authority.

An example of a NHRAP where the drafting responsibility did not fully lie with the government, is the **Scottish** National Action Plan for Human Rights (SNAP), which had a Drafting Group drawn from 23 public and civil society organisations.⁵³ On its own website, the SNAP is described as having “moved from being a traditional action plan, into a plan for acting together”.⁵⁴ However, the question is whether this process has also led to sufficient commitment from the Scottish Government. According to the evaluation report of the SNAP, “[t]here have been examples of commitment and support from the Scottish Government, but this does not appear to be consistently given, and has reduced over time.”⁵⁵

Other tools to improve the promotion and protection of human rights

NHRAPs are not the only way for a government to fulfil human rights obligations. Alternatives include tools to check whether proposed policy or legislation is “human rights proof”, and the reporting to and by national and international human rights bodies. An important example in the EU context are checklists to ensure compliance with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Examples at international level include the monitoring mechanisms of the United Nations (such as the Universal Periodic Review

⁵⁰ Part II, par. 71.

⁵¹ UN OHCHR, [Handbook on National Human Rights Action Plans](#), p. 42.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ [Scotland’s National Action Plan for Human Rights 2013-2017](#), p. 21.

⁵⁴ <http://www.snaprights.info/how-snap-was-developed/participation>.

⁵⁵ J. Ferrie (2019), [Evaluation of Scotland’s National Action Plan for Human Rights \(SNAP\) 2013-2017](#), p. 25.

and the Treaty Body System), and of the Council of Europe (such as European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR)).

Human rights checklists, such as those related to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, provide a useful instrument to ensure that new policies conform to human rights obligations. However, they are less well suited for the encouragement of the progressive implementation of human rights. It is therefore important to distinguish between checklists and action plans. Checklists can usefully complement NHRAPs which encourage the transformation of human rights commitments into tangible progress and actions.

National and international monitoring bodies also play an important role in transforming human rights commitments into action, by measuring compliance and issuing recommendations on how a country can improve its human rights performance. Despite the important work of these monitoring mechanisms, there is still a difference between their role and that of NHRAPs. First of all, the reporting done to these mechanisms by Member State governments is often backward-looking, showing the monitoring body what has changed since the last reporting cycle. Conversely, NHRAPs are forward-looking by nature, showing what the government is planning for the upcoming years. Secondly, the recommendations that come from these institutions, though convincing, are not binding until they are officially adopted by the government, for example by being incorporated into a NHRAP.

Promising practice

During the preparation phase of its second NHRAP, the **Dutch** Government listed the 500+ recommendations it had received from international monitoring bodies since 2013 and analysed them. This showed that in the context of accessibility (the theme of the NHRAP), international recommendations to the Netherlands mostly paid attention to the accessibility of vulnerable groups – mostly children – to education, health care and anti-poverty services; the promotion of the inclusion of people with disabilities; and the prevention of discrimination and exclusion of people in a vulnerable situation. This is a good example of how international recommendations can be translated into a NHRAP.

Source: Netherlands' Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, [Nationaal Actieplan Mensenrechten 2020: Toegankelijkheid van voorzieningen](#), p. 12.

Strategy or Action Plan?

Before the publication of its Human Rights Strategy in 2017, the Government of **Sweden** had already issued two NHRAPs: one in 2002 and one in 2006. The NHRAPs “included concrete measures in a number of specific areas of rights”, whereas the Strategy focuses exclusively on targeting overarching and structural issues as an “overarching strategy for work with human rights”.⁵⁶ The move towards a Strategy stems from the fact that “area-specific convention commitments are managed within each respective area of policy” and should therefore “be reported within each area of policy”.⁵⁷

The Swedish example seems to address certain weaknesses of NHRAPs that were identified during the Working Party meeting.⁵⁸ For example, it does not run the risk that the NHRAP has insufficient depth, focus and concreteness. It also avoids adding administrative and reporting workload in the case of overlap with thematic Action Plans. In addition, an overarching Strategy does not have to seek prioritisation within the wide array of human rights issues, which was also identified as a weakness of NHRAPs. Furthermore, a Strategy can retain some of the strengths of NHRAPs identified during the Working Party meeting, such as the opportunity to promote human rights in general and give a strategic vision for the future; the provision of an “umbrella” which paves the way for more specific thematic action plans; and a strong signal of political ownership. At the same time, an overarching Strategy misses the added value a NHRAP can give in providing an overview of all/most government actions in the area of human rights, which in itself can be helpful for awareness raising at the national level, and for reporting obligations at the international level. Furthermore, by managing area-specific commitments within the respective policy areas, there is less of an opportunity to address cross-cutting issues.

Process, content and follow-up of action plans

Coordination within the government

Human rights are relevant to many policy areas and many – if not all – line ministries will be involved in the promotion and protection of human rights. Many EU Member States set up inter-ministerial working groups on human rights to coordinate this work. They meet regularly (2-4 times per year) to exchange information and viewpoints on ongoing projects and international reporting and the follow-up of recommendations.

The challenges of coordination in this field become all the more apparent when a government decides to publish a NHRAP, as all the relevant ministries have to agree on a common document. This requires strong coordination and effective communication between all relevant ministries. In order to aid this process, one ministry will typically be responsible for drafting the NHRAP. This facilitates coordination, but can result in a lack of ownership among other involved ministries. Unless there is a clear accountability mechanism in place, this could result in the absence of follow-up after the NHRAP has been adopted.

In order to meet these challenges, some Member States established specific inter-ministerial working groups for their NHRAPs. For example, in **the Netherlands**, representatives of the ministries most directly involved met once every one to two months over a 1.5-year period during the development of its second NHRAP. In **Croatia**, the responsibility for the development process of its first NHRAP lies

⁵⁶ Government of Sweden, [A strategy for national efforts with human rights](#), 2017, p. 20.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ See the paragraph on “General versus thematic action plans – strengths and weaknesses” of this report.

with the Government Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, but a special inter-ministerial working group is tasked with drafting of the document, and it will provide guidance throughout the preparatory and developmental stage of the process. In **Finland**, a national network of fundamental and human rights focal points was introduced as a specific action under its first NHRAP. All ministries had representatives in this network and it had the responsibility of ensuring the follow-up of the action plan. The network is still in place, and in its third term will have the responsibility of overseeing the preparations of Finland's third NHRAP. Such a working group can also include third parties. On 8 November 2018, **Slovenia** adopted a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, and its implementation is monitored by a Contact Group composed of representatives of state bodies and other stakeholders (NGOs, Human Rights Ombudsman, Advocate of the Principle of Equality, Slovenian Rectors' Conference, trade unions). The Group holds quarterly meetings.

Effective communication between NHRAP working group(s) and general inter-ministerial working group(s) on human rights is necessary to link the drafting and follow-up of a NHRAP and other human rights processes – such as (inter)national reporting obligations, other (thematic) human rights action plans, etc. This can be facilitated by assigning the same officials to both working groups, but this might not be possible, especially in countries with large administrations.

Cross-sectoral and multi-level national action plans

A NHRAP will generally be drafted and implemented by the national government. However, it will benefit substantially from strong cooperation with the local and regional levels,⁵⁹ as well as from effective coordination with government-related sectors. To illustrate the latter, one must only think of the human rights-related aspects of the work of teachers, employees in the social and health sectors, police and border officers – to name a few. Similarly, regional and local levels of government are engaged in the promotion and protection of human rights, both independently of the national government or through coordinated efforts. A great benefit of involving local authorities is that it can improve the achieved impact at the individual level and vastly increase citizen participation and accountability.⁶⁰

Cooperating and coordinating between these levels and sectors of government will allow for increased synergies and the further development of existing resources, while avoiding duplication of efforts or responsibilities.⁶¹ This is not to underplay the difficulties inherent to achieving thorough cross-sectoral coordination: to do so requires the commitment of several stakeholders, political will, capacity and finances.

The added value of cross-sectoral and multilevel action plans is recognised in existing NHRAPs. For example, the **Swedish** Human Rights Strategy calls for “coordinated and systematic efforts within public services activities”, which is deemed necessary to ensure that “the rights of the individual, such as the right to education, health and social care; as well as freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, and freedom from torture; and through the principle of non-discrimination in the enjoyment of human

⁵⁹ See also the “call to action” from [FRA's 2018 Fundamental Rights Forum Chair's Statement](#), p. 8: “National governments should involve local authorities when developing human rights action plans or related policy initiatives, building on lessons learned from the EU's Urban Agenda. At the same time, the human rights dimension should be mainstreamed across important EU level initiatives, such as Smart Cities or Cities of Culture, as a catalyst for growth and development.”

⁶⁰ FRA, [An EU internal strategic framework for fundamental rights: joining forces to achieve better results](#), 2014, p. 15.

⁶¹ Ibid.

rights are upheld”.⁶² The Strategy offers several descriptions and evaluations of specific undertakings in the context of the national strategy on human rights by various government agencies and other stakeholders – such as state employees, local government, and schools and universities – providing a comprehensive example of the ways in which a NHRAP may pursue cross-sectoral cooperation.⁶³ The separate and joint responsibility of the different tiers of government for the protection and promotion of human rights is also recognised and elaborated on in the first **Dutch** NHRAP.⁶⁴ A similar reference is made in **Finland’s** NHRAP, which emphasises that “in practice, fundamental and human rights are implemented [...] by national, regional and local authorities and officials, such as police officers, border surveillance authorities, employees in social and health sectors and teachers.”⁶⁵

The **Hungarian** National Social Inclusion Strategy shows how a thematic human rights strategy can have both a cross-sectoral and multilevel approach.⁶⁶ In its chapter 2.4, the Strategy specifies that “[t]he problem areas of social inclusion (long-term need, improving the situation of children living in poor families, Roma affairs, regional disadvantages and discrimination) are integrated and positioned into a single target system, while harmonizing with relevant strategic policy documents, and topics concerning cross-sectoral approaches are placed into a uniform framework.”⁶⁷

Joined-up Governance

Joined-up governance “describes a strategy that aims to coordinate the development and implementation of fundamental rights across government structures”.⁶⁸ This entails both the aforementioned vertical coordination between levels of government, and also the cross-sector, or horizontal, involvement of different governmental sectors. For joined-up governance on fundamental rights to successfully take place, FRA has recommended that four principles must be observed:⁶⁹

- **Joint commitment and mutual recognition:** each entity involved must be committed to joined-up governance on fundamental rights issues, but also aware and transparent about its roles and responsibilities and those of the other entities involved.
- **Division of responsibilities:** the responsibilities for policies undertaken are distributed among all, avoiding duplication of interventions and accounting for the rights of all groups and individuals.
- **Sharing resources:** resources must be adequately distributed between all involved levels and sectors. Here, it is often the duty of the central government to physically provide local and regional authorities with the material resources they may need to carry out their tasks.
- **Sharing and spreading information:** all involved sectors and levels must regularly share information and updates. This helps to avoid overlaps and duplication in efforts and implementation, but also makes it easier to address gaps or lapses and respond to them more promptly.

Figure 1 illustrates horizontal and vertical cooperation on fundamental rights issues.

⁶² Swedish Government, [Introduction to the Human Rights Strategy](#), 2016, p. 17.

⁶³ Id, pp. 39-52.

⁶⁴ Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, [National Action Plan on Human Rights](#), 2014, pp. 26-28.

⁶⁵ Ministry of Justice of Finland, [National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights 2017-2019](#), 2017, p. 29.

⁶⁶ [Magyar Nemzeti Társadalmi Felzárkózási Stratégia II: TARTÓSAN RÁSZORULÓK – SZEGÉNY CSALÁDBAN ÉLŐ GYERMEKEK –ROMÁK \(2011–2020\), Frissített változat](#) (English: [Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy II: permanently deprived – children living in poor families – Roma \(2011-2020\), updated version](#)).

⁶⁷ Id. p. 17.

⁶⁸ FRA, [Joined-up governance for fundamental rights](#).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Figure 1: Joined-up governance for fundamental rights (FRA)



Source: FRA, [Joined-up governance for fundamental rights](#)

Local Human Rights Action Plans

In view of the human rights responsibilities of local government, it is not surprising that there have also been human rights action plans developed at and for the local level. The greater proximity of the local level to the citizen allows these action plans to focus on concrete issues.⁷⁰ Examples include the removal of easily eliminated obstacles (EEOs) to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities, training medical professionals on providing adequate and respectful treatment to LGBTI people, offering free access or reduced rates to cultural and sport events for assistants or caretakers of persons with disabilities to foster their participation in city life,⁷¹ or even offering “work experience placements to newly arrived job-seekers”⁷² to improve integration and non-discrimination. Below are some examples that illustrate the development and implementation of human rights action plans at the local level.

Sweden

The Swedish region of Västra Götaland has developed a 2017–2020 Action Plan for Human Rights, which “applies throughout the organisation and efforts to achieve its goals are coordinated via a network”, highlighting the region’s emphasis on collaborating with other stakeholders, such as “other internal divisions that want to improve their human rights profiles” or civil society organisations, for

⁷⁰ FRA, [Action plans](#).

⁷¹ Ayuntamiento de Madrid, [Plan Estratégico de Derechos Humanos \(2017-2019\)](#), p. 54.

⁷² Region Västra Götaland, [For Every Human Being: Action Plan for Human Rights Work in Region Västra Götaland 2017-2020](#), p. 24.

example.⁷³ The city of Lund is also a Human Rights City and, although it does not explicitly use the term “Action Plan”, it has developed “a systematic work procedure regarding human rights” since 2016, adopting a human-rights-based approach to decision-making and engaging a wide range of stakeholders in the process.⁷⁴

Austria

The city of Vienna, which in 2014 adopted the Declaration “Vienna – City of human rights”, established a Human Rights Office in 2015, working “with other municipal departments, public institutions, NGOs, civil society initiatives, and experts”, thereby engaging in both vertical and horizontal collaboration. In the next few years, the Office intends to publish a human rights action plan for the city of Vienna, solidifying on the Office’s work, initiatives and dialogues the past few years.⁷⁵

Spain

The city of Madrid unveiled a local human rights strategic plan for 2017-2019, which was devised through regular consultation with citizens, representatives throughout all areas of local government, and civil society stakeholders. It presented 22 goals or rights, under five thematic areas, which the City aimed to address in order to protect and promote human rights for all citizens of Madrid.⁷⁶ Every section presents concrete ways, under the exclusive competence of Madrid’s local government, in which the city intends to pursue its objectives.

Barcelona has adopted the action plan “Barcelona, city of rights”, which aims to include a “human-rights-based approach in public policies and in designing and implement policies on human rights based on thematic priorities”.⁷⁷ It focuses on hate speech and discrimination, and promotes access to citizenship rights, diversity and support for the Roma community, among others.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

In 2019, the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of the largest global network of local governments, the World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), unveiled its Action Plan on “Human Rights, Rights to the City and Participatory Democracy”. The Committee’s participants, representing cities and regions across the globe, agreed on an action plan that, among others, “promotes the recognition of local governments’ role in the protection and promotion of human rights” and “aims at co-creating a policy agenda for [...] local governments for human rights”, supporting them in doing so and establishing a network to share findings and experiences.⁷⁸

Effective consultation – from information to participation

During the drafting process and the implementation phase of National Human Rights Action Plans, it is vital that all relevant stakeholders are effectively consulted. These include civil society organisations, Equality Bodies, National Human Rights Institutions, local and regional government.

At the Working Party meeting, participants identified challenges and promising practice when it comes to organising effective consultations. Table 5 provides details.

⁷³ Region Västra Götaland, [Human Rights](#), 2019.

⁷⁴ Raoul Wallenberg Institute, [Lund Becomes Sweden’s First Human Rights City](#), 2018.

⁷⁵ City of Vienna, [Human Rights Office of the City of Vienna](#).

⁷⁶ Ayuntamiento de Madrid, [Plan Estratégico de Derechos Humanos \(2017-2019\)](#).

⁷⁷ Ajuntament de Barcelona, [Barcelona, city of rights](#).

⁷⁸ UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, [The Committee presents its Action Plan for 2019: Human Rights, Right to the City and Participatory Democracy](#), 2019.

Table 5: Challenges and promising practices in the context of stakeholder consultations

Challenges	Promising practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to select Civil Society Organisations to consult (selection criteria: how to ensure diversity, representability, inclusiveness, and transparency of the process)? • How widely to consult? • How to avoid consultations becoming political? • How to find the balance between real participation of the consulted, while still being in charge of the drafting process as the government? • How to deal with expectation management of the consulted? • How to keep consultation sessions focused? • Consultations are time consuming, for both the government and the consulted. • How to deal with conflicting views/competition between different organisations that you consult? • How to build trust? • How to make sure that you are inclusive within a certain stakeholder group (e.g. when consulting an ethnic group, making sure that you have a good gender balance within that group)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of different tools, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, e.g. hearings, consultations, outsourcing, ...) • Consulting the general population instead of/as well as civil society organisations. • Outsourcing the analysis of input given (as a means to deal with issues of capacity and independence). • Thinking about the persons present at the consultation: outsourcing can tackle a possible issue with trust; having (high-ranking) civil servants present can lead to a more informed discussion; having politicians present increase political commitment. • Cooperation with the Ombudsman • Financial assistance for travel for the consulted • Ensuring broader perspectives by consulting widely • Working with umbrella organisations to reach more stakeholders • Taking a decentralised approach (also looking at the local/regional level) • Searching for available EU funds to help with the process of setting up the framework to consult civil society • Involving the NHRI in the design of the consultation • Consultations not only during the drafting process, but also during the evaluation process.

Source: FRA, Working Party meeting 27–28 March 2019

The elements identified corroborate the findings in FRA’s 2018 report “Challenges facing civil society organisations working on human rights in the EU”. This report, notes that although “[s]ome form of access to the decision-making process exists across all EU Member States”, civil society organisations do experience obstacles preventing them from fully and effectively participating in the decision-making process.⁷⁹ “Challenges include:

- Limited access to information on policy or legal initiatives;
- Lack of minimum standards or clear rules on implementing the right to participation, or lack of knowledge about them and hence inconsistent implementation;
- Lack of political will, or lack of understanding that consultation is not a ‘box ticking’ exercise but, if done well, contributes to better quality policymaking;

⁷⁹ FRA (2018), [Challenges facing civil society organisations working on human rights in the EU](#), p. 39.

- Lack of awareness of the various modes and methods, and lack of skills, of how to involve stakeholders in law and policymaking in a meaningful and effective way;
- Specific challenges regarding, and barriers to, involving persons with disabilities, including the lack of necessary measures to ensure that web accessibility standards are met, and the need to offer official information, where needed, in sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, as well other accessible means, modes and formats of communication, such as easy-to-read formats;
- Tight timelines (including for administrations themselves) as well as tight budgets and human resource allocations in public services for this purpose;
- Lack of clarity and transparency regarding who is consulted before decisions are made. CSOs also report that often there is no systematic consultation of all key players;
- Cuts to relevant funds can indirectly affect CSOs' ability to participate in decision-making in a meaningful way;
- Insufficient or lack of feedback on CSO input or reasoned information on what was or was not taken into account;
- Lack of trust between public services and civil society organisations.”⁸⁰

The **Open Government Partnership (OGP)** is an important initiative in this context, as through them, governments and civil society co-create action plans in two-year cycles. These action plans deal with issues such as anti-corruption, gender and inclusion, health, human rights, and transparency. Public participation and citizen engagement is at the core of OGP, and many commitments within the OGP framework have focused on enhancing public participation and improving social accountability measures.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAPP) designed a specific tool, the Spectrum of Public Participation, which is often used in this context, “to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public’s role in any public participation process”.⁸¹ The tool addresses five forms of participation and their impact on decision-making: informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, and empowering. It encourages the transition from merely informing and consulting your stakeholders, to actually empowering them.

Since cooperation between governments and civil society is at the heart of the OGP, action plans are always developed and implemented through a multi-stakeholder process. According to OGP’s guidelines, a Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF), which should include both government and NGOs representation, and meets every three months, is mandatory. As it is not a standing body, it is possible for the exact composition of the MSF to vary from time to time. The OGP has developed rules and guidelines as a way to measure the quality of consultations. These standards include:

- The public availability of a timeline of the consultation process;
- Adequate notice of the consultation;
- Awareness raising to enhance public participation;
- Multiple channels of engagement with citizens (incl. online and meetings in person);
- A wide range of types of stakeholders to consult;
- Publicly available documentation and feedback on the input received at consultations.⁸²

⁸⁰ Id. pp. 39-40.

⁸¹ [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#).

⁸² OGP, [Designing and Managing an OGP Multistakeholder Forum: a Practical Handbook with Guidance and Ideas, Executive Summary](#) (2016), p. 3.

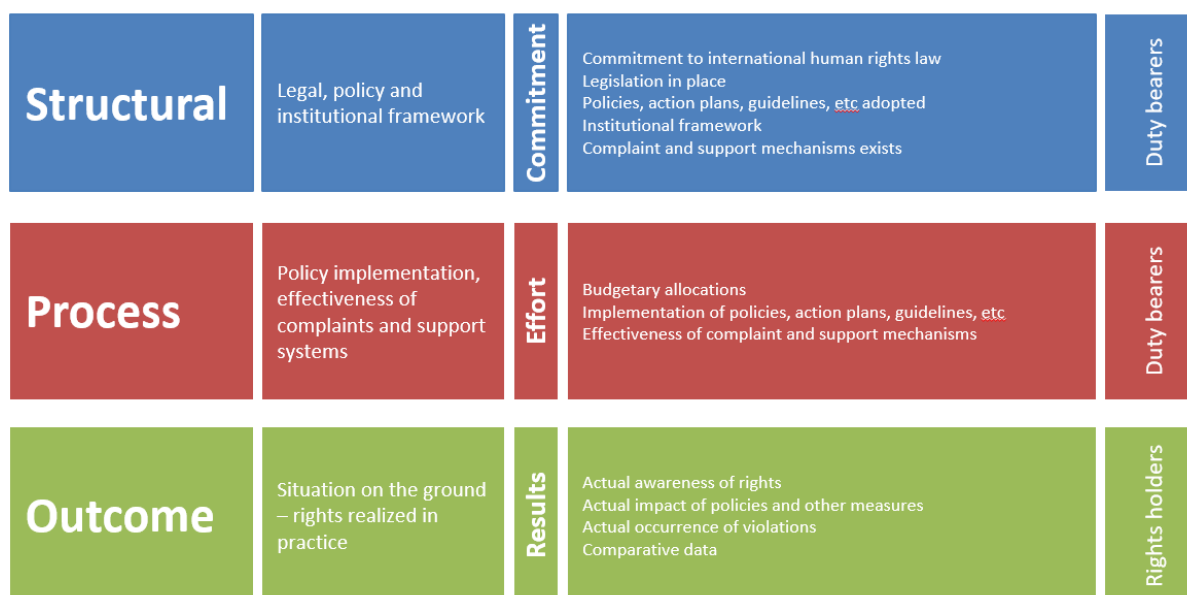
Content and methodology

Indicators

During the Working Party meeting, the importance of reliable human rights indicators was brought up several times. Without proper targets and indicators, it is difficult to measure the impact of a NHRAP.

FRA works on developing indicators on different human rights across the EU, bridging methodological differences in data collection among Member States. The use of human rights-based indicators improves monitoring of compliance to human and fundamental rights standards.⁸³ The indicators developed and used by FRA build on the conceptual framework proposed by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR). This framework measures progress in the implementation of human and fundamental rights through three major types of indicators: structural indicators, process indicators and outcome indicators (see Figure 2).⁸⁴ This is also reflected in the FRA Opinion on “the development of an integrated tool of objective fundamental rights indicators” in the context of measuring compliance with the values listed in Article 2 TEU.⁸⁵

Figure 2: Developing structural, process and outcome indicators (FRA)



Source: FRA 2016; visualisation based on OHCHR (2012), *Human rights indicators: A guide for measurement and implementation*, New York/Geneva, United Nations

Practical examples of human rights indicators can be found in many different areas. Some notable examples will be given below in the areas of Roma inclusion, disability rights, and gender equality. These examples show that it is often not necessary to develop an entire new set of indicators in the context of a NHRAP.

⁸³ FRA, [Fundamental Rights Indicators](#), 2011.

⁸⁴ UN OHCHR, [Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation](#), 2012.

⁸⁵ The same FRA opinion provides substantial further information regarding the development of indicators, including their population and contextualisation through the use of existing UN, EU and national data. (FRA, [FRA Opinion – 2/2016 \[Art. 2\]](#), 2016.)

FRA devised a number of key indicators to monitor the respect of fundamental rights of Roma living in the EU, as well as progress achieved in their social inclusion, for example in terms of “labour market participation and level of education, as well as housing and living standards, including access to public utilities and basic housing amenities”.⁸⁶ FRA ensured the involvement of various stakeholders in the development and update of these indicators.⁸⁷ These indicators were then populated with both official data, and data from FRA’s own surveys, which attempt to remedy the general “lack of official statistical data on core socio-demographic indicators” on Roma, which is caused by EU-level data not being disaggregated by ethnic origin.⁸⁸

Another relevant example is found in the field of disability rights. FRA, in close cooperation with the European Commission and the Academic Network of European Disability Experts (ANED), developed indicators on the right to political participation of persons with disabilities in the EU. The resulting 28 indicators, which may also be considered independently, jointly provide an overview of the situation concerning the political participation of persons with disabilities. These indicators build on the human rights-based structure-process-outcome indicator framework developed by the UN OHCHR, and focus on relevant articles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) concerning national strategies; accessibility standards for polling stations, public buildings, elections-related media sources; and the availability of alternative ways of voting, among others.⁸⁹

A further example is the United Nations’ comprehensive set of indicators to measure gender equality and women’s empowerment, known as the ‘Minimum Set of Gender Indicators’. It includes 52 quantitative and 11 qualitative indicators, spanning across major themes on gender equality and women’s empowerment. They are ranked by “tier” based on their conceptual clarity, methodology, and the regularity with which pertinent data is produced.⁹⁰

The Council of Europe has also worked on indicators, for example to measure progress towards balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making. By gauging indicators such as percentage of women and men elected to various political positions, their success rate, the roles and committees assigned to them, and many others, the Council of Europe is able to gather, analyse and compare gender-disaggregated data and evaluate progress on this issue.⁹¹ Similarly, the Council of Europe’s European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) was able to compare the quality and efficiency of court activities of the different judicial systems of its Member States (plus Morocco and Israel) by, among others, developing an extensive set of general indicators.⁹²

Useful tools and data

The Handbook on National Human Rights Plans of Action published by OHCHR in 2002 provides detailed guidance and a wealth of relevant tools. The Handbook notes that a “comprehensive and accurate baseline study is a key element in any systematic approach to the development of a national action plan”. However, as the Handbook acknowledges, such a study can be politically sensitive, as

⁸⁶ FRA, [Roma and Travellers Survey 2018-2019](#), 2017.

⁸⁷ FRA, [Working party on Roma integration indicators meets at FRA](#), 2015.

⁸⁸ FRA, [Roma and Travellers Survey 2018-2019](#), 2017.

⁸⁹ FRA, [Indicators on the right to political participation of people with disabilities](#), 2014

⁹⁰ United Nations, [Minimum Set of Gender Indicators](#), 2018

⁹¹ Council of Europe, [Balanced Participation of Women and Men in Decision-making: Analytical report – 2016 data](#), 2017 [PDF]

⁹² Council of Europe, [European Judicial Systems – Efficiency and quality of justice – CEPEJ Studies No. 26](#), 2018 [PDF]

well as time- and resource consuming, even undermining the NHRAP process, and recommends a common-sense approach to the preparation of the study”.⁹³

In order to set targets and indicators, it is first necessary to establish what the status quo is. As a full comprehensive baseline study is a huge undertaking, and could even undermine the NHRAP process if it consumes too many resources, it is important “to find a common sense approach to the preparation of the study”.⁹⁴ One way of achieving this, is to rely on existing tools and data.

The [EU Fundamental Rights Information System \(EFRIS\)](#), which was developed by FRA in close consultation with the UN, the Council of Europe, and other EU entities, can be a useful tool in this regards. It is designed as a human rights information gateway, bringing together information from various existing human rights databases and enabling analysis of relevant assessments of fundamental rights in the EU. It aims to be the go-to tool for anyone wishing to monitor, visualise or compare states’ commitments and implementations of a wide range of human rights monitoring mechanisms, such as the UN’s Treaty Bodies or Universal Periodic Review, or regarding the various Council of Europe conventions, to name but a few of the over-80 mechanisms that will be covered through EFRIS.

Recommendations from international and regional human rights mechanisms can play an important role in the NHRAP process. These recommendations can, for example, play a role in deciding which themes to prioritise in the NHRAP. Vice versa, a NHRAP can serve as an implementation tool for these recommendations.⁹⁵ As a result, it is advisable for those drafting NHRAPs to cooperate with their **National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF)**. Taking different forms in different countries, a NMRF “is a national public mechanism or structure that is mandated to coordinate and prepare reports to and engage with international and regional human rights mechanisms [...] and to coordinate and track national follow-up and implementation of the treaty obligations and the recommendations emanating from these mechanisms.”⁹⁶ These mechanisms can be ministerial, inter-ministerial, institutionally separate, and they can be ad-hoc or standing.⁹⁷

A tool that can be helpful in this context is the **National Recommendations Tracking Database (NRTD)**, which the UN OHCHR developed as part of its capacity building programme. The NRTD aims “to enhance States’ reporting and data collection capacity and to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations deriving from the UN human rights mechanisms, the Universal Periodic Review, the Special Procedures and the Treaty Bodies”, and is “offered by the UN OHCHR to States for their individual customization.”⁹⁸

More specifically with regard to the **2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals**, the Danish Institute for Human Rights has developed a **Human Rights Data Explorer**. This searchable database allows users to “explore human rights recommendations and their connections to the 2030 Agenda”: the recommendations of international monitoring bodies are made available, and their nexus to the SDGs’ 169 targets is highlighted.

Governments also receive **human rights advice and recommendations from national actors**, such as National Human Rights Institutions, Equality Bodies, and Ombudsmen. The Paris Principles even list

⁹³ UN OHCHR, [Handbook on National Human Rights Plans of Actions](#), 2002, p. 61.

⁹⁴ UN OHCHR, [Handbook on National Human Rights Plans of Actions](#), 2002, p. 61.

⁹⁵ UN OHCHR, [National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up: A Practical Guide to Effective State Engagement with International Human Rights Mechanisms](#), 2016, p. 25.

⁹⁶ Id., p. 2.

⁹⁷ Id., pp. 5-8.

⁹⁸ For more information on the NRTD, see: OHCHR, [The National Recommendations Tracking Database \(NRTD\)](#).

“[d]rawing the attention of the Government to situations in any part of the country where human rights are violated and making proposals to it for initiatives to put an end to such situations” as a specific responsibility of NHRIs.⁹⁹ Such guidance from the national level can also create a valuable basis for a NHRAP.

A further useful resource when drafting and implementing a NHRAP can be survey data. The results of FRA’s **Fundamental Rights Survey**¹⁰⁰ could be useful in this context. The survey, which covers all EU Member States, the United Kingdom and North Macedonia, addresses a wide range of thematic areas ranging from data protection to equal treatment, access to justice, consumer rights, crime victimisation, good administration and the importance of protecting rights. It is the first of its kind and provides an unparalleled amount of comprehensive, comparable data on the fundamental rights situation in the EU, offering insight into the experiences with fundamental rights issues.

Surveys that focus on specific thematic areas can also be of great value. For example, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) regularly publishes the results of its **European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)** and its **European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)**, both of which have data available online.¹⁰¹ EUROSTAT provides data on several cross-cutting topics of relevance to NHRAPs – such as health, the labour market, inclusion, equality, and the environment – which are often accompanied by content on relevant EU policy.¹⁰² Finally, FRA provides **disaggregated data from its surveys on minority populations** which can be useful for further analysis during the preparation of a NHRAP; see for example the Agency’s work on Roma issues, persons with disability, LGBTI, Jewish people or the data stemming from the EU-MIDIS surveys on EU minorities and discrimination.¹⁰³ FRA’s surveys on such ‘hard-to-reach’ groups can help NHRAPs focus on the needs of those most vulnerable in society. Some of the questions in the minority surveys are the same as in the Fundamental Rights Survey, making it possible to compare the experiences of minorities to those of the general population. FRA’s website offers visualisation of these data through numerous [data explorers](#).

Another tool that deserves mention is FRA’s [Charterpedia](#). This is an online tool that provides easy-to-access information on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. It is essentially an information hub, providing article-by-article information including related case law, references to the respective Charter provision in “EU secondary law” and related provisions in “international law”, as well as explanations of each article and relevant FRA publications on each subject.

Monitoring and evaluation

The OHCHR Handbook explains that following up on the implementation of a NHRAP, as is the case for any other major government programme “is a regular and dispassionate process of evaluation”¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Paris Principles, ‘Competence and responsibilities’, Paragraph 3(a)(iv).

¹⁰⁰ FRA, [Fundamental Rights Survey](#).

¹⁰¹ For EQLS, see: Eurofound, [European Quality of Life Survey \(EQLS\)](#), 2017. For the EWCS, see: Eurofound, [European Working Conditions Survey \(EWCS\)](#), 2015.

¹⁰² Eurostat, [Browse Statistics by Theme](#).

¹⁰³ For an overview of FRA’s data collection by theme, see: FRA, [Data and Maps](#). For direct access to FRA’s Publications, which can be sorted by theme, see: FRA, [Publications](#).

¹⁰⁴ UN OHCHR, [Handbook on National Human Rights Plans of Actions](#), 2002, p. 94.

which aims to achieve moving “human rights activity from the realm of idealism and rhetoric into the realm of practice and routine”.¹⁰⁵

In this regard, FRA has emphasised the importance of “setting up a common monitoring framework for all stakeholders involved in the implementation of an action plan”.¹⁰⁶ There are several examples of such frameworks. For example, the prime responsibility for monitoring the implementation of **Finland’s** 2017–2019 National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights lies with the Government network of fundamental and human rights contact persons. In addition to this, the NHRAP encourages the involvement of a range of “independent supervisory authorities”. These include Finland’s Human Rights Centre, the Human Rights Delegation, the special ombudsmen, but also relevant NGOs.¹⁰⁷ **Greece** established a National Mechanism for the elaboration, monitoring and evaluation of Action Plans for the Rights of the Child¹⁰⁸ coordinated by the General Secretariat of Justice and Human Rights, with the participation of all sectors of public administration and, as well as independent statutory human rights bodies, such as the Children’s Ombudsman and the National Commission of Human Rights.

The significance of the involvement of non-governmental actors is also highlighted in **Sweden’s** 2016 Human Rights Strategy. While the government is overall responsible for monitoring and evaluating the strategy, it is emphasised that “the viewpoints advanced in open consultations with civil society actors and the public sector will form an important platform for the monitoring process”, as well as input from relevant government agencies and national human rights institutions, and also “international monitoring and special commissions”.¹⁰⁹ It is also worth noting that the Strategy requires the Government to report to Parliament on the work it has carried out towards the objectives of the Strategy.

Reporting to a national parliament is an excellent way to improve accountability.¹¹⁰ When the progress of the follow-up of the NHRAP is publicly available, it allows for easier scrutiny: not only by Parliament, but also by other actors outside of the government. For instance, a year after the publication of its first NHRAP, the **Dutch** government sent its interim report on the Action Plan to Parliament, combining it with the Government’s response to the Annual Report 2013 of the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights.¹¹¹ Another example of a publicly available follow-up document, is the one related to **Sweden’s** action plan on business and human rights, launched in August 2015. In 2018, the government followed up on the implementation of the action plan, producing a 15-page report on its results, evaluations, and ways forward.¹¹² In **Hungary**, the National Social Inclusion Strategy is assessed annually through

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ FRA, [Action plans](#).

¹⁰⁷ Ministry of Justice of Finland, [National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights 2017-2019](#), 2017, p. 27.

¹⁰⁸ Law 4491/2017, [Legal recognition of gender identity – National Mechanism for the elaboration, monitoring and evaluation of Action Plans for the Rights of the Child](#), arts. 8-12.

¹⁰⁹ Swedish Government, [Introduction to the Human Rights Strategy](#), 2016, p. 59.

¹¹⁰ See also: UN Human Rights Committee, [Draft Principles on Parliaments and human rights](#), A/HRC/38/25, Annex I, clause 2(g).

¹¹¹ Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, [Tussenrapportage Nationaal Actieplan Mensenrechten en Kabinetsreactie op de Jaarrapportage "Mensenrechten in Nederland 2013" van het College voor de Rechten van de Mens](#), 2014.

¹¹² Swedish Government, [Follow-up of Sweden’s action plan for business and human rights](#), 2018.

monitoring reports that measure progress and use independent studies to present the impact of the Strategy.¹¹³

Finally, as was pointed out by participants of the Working Party meeting, it is important to evaluate the NHRAP after a sufficient amount of time.¹¹⁴ This can be done by the Government itself, as well as – preferably – by independent bodies. For example, in **the Netherlands**, the NHRI commissioned an evaluation by three independent researchers, which was published three years after the publication of the first NHRAP.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ The monitoring reports are available at: <http://romagov.hu/dokumentumok/>.

¹¹⁴ See the Chapter “National human rights action plans – the framework”, subchapter “General principles” of this report.

¹¹⁵ <https://mensenrechten.nl/en/publicatie/5b46fce4748c2212a54517fc>.

An indicative checklist for the development of NHRAPs

Content

- ✓ Decide what type of NHRAP is most appropriate for your country (general vs thematic; an overarching strategy vs concrete action points; a mixed model).
- ✓ Decide which themes to cover, e.g. with the help of a baseline study, a mapping of the State's human rights commitments (under the National Constitution, relevant UN and CoE treaties, and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights), and by using existing data and recommendations from national and international human rights actors.
- ✓ Define which goals the NHRAP should achieve (e.g. general awareness raising, incl. promotion of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights; creating a baseline study; improving government coordination in the area of human rights; building an umbrella for thematic action plans).
- ✓ Match the format and contents of the NHRAP to the overall aim(s).
- ✓ Ensure the NHRAP is evidence-based, for example by relying on new and existing data and tools, and through plans to measure the impact.
- ✓ Develop specific targets (through the use of SMART indicators) with clear deadlines, so the success of the NHRAP can be measured.
- ✓ Map existing processes/reports that the NHRAP can be linked to, both in the human rights field, but also in related ones (like the SDGs).
- ✓ While recognising that every action plan is unique, look for inspiration in other NHRAPs or EU action plans and strategies related to human rights.

Framework and process

- ✓ Set up an effective coordination mechanism for the drafting of the NHRAP, consisting of (at the least) representatives from all relevant ministries. One ministry might bear the main responsibility for the NHRAP, but it is vital that the other ministries are involved and committed.
- ✓ Ensure political support for the publication and follow-up of a NHRAP.
- ✓ If the government already has an inter-ministerial working group on human rights in place, which is different from the NHRAP coordination mechanism, establish good lines of communication and cooperation between the two.
- ✓ Make a plan on how to effectively and inclusively involve all relevant stakeholders from civil society, the National Human Rights Institution, the Equality Body, Ombuds institution etc. and manage their expectations.
- ✓ Plan your consultations well (see table 5 for common challenges and promising practices in this regard).
- ✓ A SWOT analysis can help identify possible obstacles to the development of a successful NHRAP.
- ✓ Assess what budget is available for the NHRAP.
- ✓ Develop a communication strategy.
- ✓ Aim for strong cooperation with the local and regional level, as well as coordination with government-related sectors, as to allow for increased synergies and the further development of existing resources, while avoiding duplications of efforts or responsibilities.
- ✓ Keep a logbook of lessons learned to assist in the development of a next NHRAP.

Evaluation and follow-up

- ✓ Regularly evaluate the NHRAP.
- ✓ Set up an effective implementation body or monitoring framework to oversee the effective and timely implementation of the NHRAP, involving all relevant stakeholders.

Background documents

General guidance on Action Plans

- Council of Europe (CoE):
 - [Workshop on Developing and Implementing National Action Plans for Human Rights](#), Strasbourg, 2 June 2017, Conclusions
 - [Workshop on Developing and Implementing National Action Plans for Human Rights](#), Strasbourg, 27-28 March 2014, Conclusions
 - [Commissioner's Recommendation on systematic work for implementing human rights at the national level](#) (2009)
- EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA):
 - [Action plans](#)
- European Network Against Racism (ENAR):
 - [Lessons for Effective National Anti-Racism Policies: National Action Plans Against Racism](#)
- Open Government Partnership (OGP):
 - [Action Plan Cycle](#)
- United Nations (UN):
 - [OHCHR Handbook on National Human Rights Plans of Action](#) (2002)
 - [OHCHR Guidelines for National Plans of Action for Human Rights Education](#) (1997)
 - [OHCHR Developing National Action Plans Against Racial Discrimination: a Practical Guide](#) (2014)
 - [OHCHR Guidance on National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights](#) (2014)
 - [UNODC's guidance on anti-corruption action plans](#) (2015)
- Literature
 - Chalabi, A. (2018). *National Human Rights Action Planning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Indicators

- FRA, [Fundamental Rights Indicators](#)
- FRA, [Opinion of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights on the development of an integrated tool of objective fundamental rights indicators able to measure compliance with the shared values listed in Article 2 TEU based on existing sources of information](#) (2016)
- OHCHR, [Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation](#) (2012)

Consultations

- CoE, "[Guidelines for meaningful civil participation in political decision-making](#)" (2017).
- International Association for Public Participation, [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#)
- FRA, [Challenges facing civil society organisations working on human rights in the EU](#) (2018), Chapter 4: Right to Participation
- OGP, [Handbook: Rules + Guidance for Participants](#) (Version 4.1 – 2020)
- OGP, [Participation and Co-Creation Toolkit](#)
- OGP, [Designing and Managing an OGP Multistakeholder Forum: a Practical Handbook with Guidance and Ideas, Executive Summary](#) (2016)

Process and Follow-up

- OHCHR, [National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up: a practical guide to effective state engagement with international human rights mechanisms](#) (2016)
- FRA, “[An EU internal strategic framework for fundamental rights: joining forces to achieve better results](#)” (2015)
- FRA’s toolkit “[Joining up fundamental rights](#)”, section “Coordination and leadership” and “Planning, monitoring and evaluation”

Tools

- Danish Institute for Human Rights, [Human Rights Data Explorer](#)
- FRA, [Charterpedia](#)
- FRA, [European Union Fundamental Rights Information System \(EFRIS\)](#)
- FRA, [Interactive Data Explorer](#)
- UN, [National Recommendations Tracking Database \(NRTD\)](#)
- Surveys, such as:
 - Eurofound, [European Quality of Life Survey \(EQLS\)](#)
 - Eurofound, [European Working Conditions Survey \(EWCS\)](#)
 - Eurostat, [Browse Statistics by Theme](#)
 - FRA, [Fundamental Rights Survey](#)
 - FRA, [LGBTI Survey](#)
 - FRA, [Roma and Travellers Survey](#)
 - FRA, [Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey \(EU-MIDIS II\)](#)

Existing National Human Rights Action Plans in the EU and the UK

- Croatia ([2013-2016](#); [2008-2011](#))
- Finland ([2017-2019](#); [2012-2013](#))
- Germany ([2019-2020](#))
- Greece ([2014-2016](#))
- Latvia (1995)
- Lithuania (2002)
- The Netherlands ([2020](#); [2013](#))
- Slovakia ([2014-2020](#))
- Spain ([2008-2012](#))
- Sweden ([2016](#); [2006-2009](#); [2002-2004](#))

- Scotland ([2013-2017](#))