'Local Human Rights in Utrecht;

Empowering a Local Network with Global Value'

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| Administrative and basic information |
| **Name of Project** | 'Local Human Rights in Utrecht; Empowering a Local Network with Global Value' |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| Contact Details of Lead Applicant |
| **Name of Organisation** | Municipality of Utrecht |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Size of the Organisation** | 500-5000 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Number of people directly involved in the project** | >15 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| **Country origin** | [Netherlands](http://www.epsa2015.eu/en/tbl_Countries/show/%26tid%3D25) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| Other Applicant(s) |
| **Partner Organization(s)** | Utrecht University, University College Roosevelt, Netherlands Institute of Human Rights, Ministry of Interior, Fundamental Rigths Agency, and many local partners such as: Kinderrechtenschool, Pharos, Amnesty International, Al Amal, Hacking Habitat, Vreedzame School/Wijk, ... |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Project received EU funds (co-financing)** | No |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **If yes, please specify which fund(s)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Case Description |
| **Executive Summary (2500 to 5000 characters)** | *“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home − so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual: the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”* (Eleanor Roosevelt, Remarks at the United Nations, March 27, 1958). During the past few years there has been growing support for a human-rights based approach at a local level: it is at this level where human rights are violated. It is up to local authorities to guarantee the rights of their citizens and to act upon this responsibility. Therefore, the City of Utrecht has been actively working on promoting a human rights culture in the city since 2010. The city is aware of the importance of her role in defending people’s human rights and fitting the identity of an open, social city in which many social and civil organizations are employing their activities. After consolidating and rethinking the concept of local human rights in the city, a Local Human Rights Coalition was born in 2013. This coalition consists of local civil society organizations, businesses, policy officers and scientists and is meant to create ownership of local human rights and to establish a local human rights culture. This main objective is achieved by bringing together many organizations to discover crossovers between different initiatives, by improving local policies in the sense that these policies should comply with human rights standards and finally by developing an (inter)national joined-up governance process in which knowledge, methods and strategies are shared. The innovative feature of the coalition is the structure of the network and at the same time this is her strength: since actors from both the legitimizing and operational capacity environment are represented in the coalition, all resources are present to create the public value aimed for. The fact that indeed this network is effective, appears from the results of the Local Human Rights Coalition: new crossovers between initiatives and organizations are discovered, policy officers are increasingly using human rights as a frame for local policy and Utrecht has gotten an advisory role towards other (inter)national cities and is often invited to give presentations at universities and congresses both national and international. This effect is not just temporary: for example the coalition has ‘survived’ the change of mayor and alderman. This sustainability is ensured by the governance model aimed to developing a sustainable network. This governance model of the coalition is transferable to other cities, both national and international. Therefore the Local Human Rights Coalition does not only improve the quality of life of Utrecht’s citizens, but also creates global value. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Type(s) of sector** | Justice, police, human rights and security |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Other Sector** | Social Inclusion |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Key words of project** | human rights culture, city, local coalition, joined up governance, public value creation |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Main web address(es) of the project (if applicable)** | http://humanrightsutrecht.blogspot.com |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Main content part |
| **Background (e.g. grounds/reasons for the project idea, max. 5000 characters)** | In 2010, the Council of Europe pronounced that “local and regional authorities are no doubt key players in implementing different kinds of human rights. It is the local and regional authorities that bear the primary responsibility for implementing these policies and strategies in their communities, tailoring them to the specific situations on the ground and to the needs of their citizens and taking concrete steps for improving citizens’ daily lives. One has to keep in mind that beyond the legal texts, human rights are a reality in every single case where they occur, even if we often speak of them in abstract terms”. (https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1590059&Site=COE#P184\_25148) During the past few years there has been growing support for a human-rights based approach at a local level. It is at this level where human rights are violated: issues such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, child – and elder abuse or discrimination are taking place in everyday life, close to home. To effectively guarantee the human rights of everyone, attention should be paid to protection of these rights in local context. Human rights should be dealt with on the level they arise and occur. It is up to local authorities to guarantee the rights of their citizens and to act upon this responsibility. The municipality of Utrecht has not only acknowledged this, but also took notice of the possibilities she is in possession of to protect the right of the inhabitants of her city. Since 2010 she has been actively working on promoting a human rights culture in the city. This culture can be defined as the daily concrete initiatives in which citizens, organizations, enterprises and governments take joined-up actions to realize the ideas and aims of the global human rights regime. This culture is based on communities and towns, but strongly related to a global standard. This standard is defined by challenges of social responsibility, living conditions and the protection of private integrity. As the city of Utrecht is aware of the importance of her role in defending people’s human rights and fitting the identity of an open, social city in which many social and civil organizations are employing their activities, the city started to explore the meaning of local human rights by participating in international networks like FRA and UCLG, and by collecting examples of human rights in the city. Local authorities managed to overcome much of the ruling scepticism by building an internal and local ‘coalition of the willing’ and by creating a network of NGOs, volunteer groups and social entrepreneurs. After a second phase of consolidating and rethinking the concept of local human rights in the city – for example by cooperating with the national association of municipalities, organizing debate series by local organizations on local human rights topics, and the start of research on strategies for implementing human rights policies – a Human Rights Coalition was born in 2013. This local coalition that consists of local organizations, businesses, scientists, policy officers and civic groups, is meant to create ownership of local human rights and to establish a local human rights culture. By combining forces, the actors involved believe they can enhance and guarantee the quality of life of Utrecht’s citizens; human rights belong to the people, they are not the property of courts and judges. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **General and Specific Objectives (max. 2500 characters)** | The general objective of the Local Human Rights Coalition is to develop an inspiring human rights culture, in which diverse and on actualities based initiatives are enabled to flourish. These initiatives could function as a human rights education by raising awareness and by cultural interventions instead of formal procedures. This general objective is meant to lead to the main aim of the coalition: strengthening and anchoring a local human rights culture that protects human rights and human dignity. Fundamental to this goal, the following specific objectives can be distinguished. 1. First of all, an objective of the coalition is to bring together many organizations to discover crossovers between different initiatives of the organizations in the city, which would otherwise remain unexplored. A platform is offered to citizens, experts, companies, NGOs, cultural sector and others to meet each other. By discovering crossovers, organizations learn on what topics or policy areas and with which partners it is beneficial and effective to collaborate. In this way, interesting and useful new partnerships arise. Existing projects that contribute to the protection and strengthening of a local human rights culture are given extra flair and are connected to each other. 2. Secondly, these new partnerships could contribute to improving local policies, in the sense that these local policies should comply with human rights standards. This way the Local Human Rights Coalition plays an important role in contributing to local policies by actively giving input and in controlling the consistency of policies with human rights standards. Human rights thus function as a quality standard for local policies, in which the coalition is the monitoring actor. The coalition also gives input to the local policies, by translating the abstract international treaties to the local context and to local policies. In this way, a contemporary interpretation is given to a local human rights culture. An important effect of this would be that the human rights narrative is made tangible in everyday life of the local society, which is of great importance for embedding human rights culturally. 3. A final objective is to develop an (inter)national joined-up governance process in which knowledge, methods and strategies are shared. This is done with regard to the question of how to develop a local strategy to enhance and guarantee people’s human rights on the local level and how to enhance a human rights culture. By collaborating with other cities and stakeholders, both national and international (e.g. Amnesty International and the FRA), the development of strategies are given a global dimension. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Input/resources utilized/allocated to the project [HR, budget, etc] (max. 2500 characters)** | In the attached file you find the budget and other resources that are allocated to the local human rights coalition. The resources mentioned are the breeding ground for the coalition. With this input the network is facilitated and possibilities for implementing new initiatives are defined. Of course the resources allocated, both budget and HR, are greater than mentioned here: there are many projects set up by organizations, as a consequence of the discovered crossovers. We do mention here only the resources that are allocated by the municipality. These resources enable the organizations to let their projects flourish and at the same time offer a platform to the Local Human Rights Coalition. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Implementation (e.g. structure, processes, management, communication, max. 7500 characters)** | Since our objective is to stimulate a movement from a bottom-up approach with the aim to anchor a human rights culture, the ideal form to realize this is a loose network structure. Inside these loose networks we create opportunity to grow by giving people and organizations the chance to come up with new initiatives. We therefore deliberately did not opt for a centralistic or bureaucratic approach, since this would limit this space and thus hinder the objective of the coalition. The structure of this loose network, what the process looks like and what kind of management and communication is suitable for this network, is described below. The Local Human Rights Coalition is a network in which diverse civil society organizations, the municipality, and the university are collaborating. This structure empowers the network, since by this composition of diverse actors there is access to a vast amount of knowledge and resources. Another advantage of this structure lies in the way of interacting with one another. Within a loose network, actors meet in many occasions and activities other than planned meetings of the Local Human Rights Coalition. This facilitates a more informal and low-threshold way to exchange ideas, knowledge, resources, and important issues. Although the Local Human Rights Coalition consists of many organizations, civilians, local authorities and scientists, there exists a core group. In this core group several civil society organizations of the city are represented, as well as members of the municipality of Utrecht. Since it is not possible to come together with the entire coalition regularly, this core group functions as a sounding board and is surrounded by hundreds of organizations in the city. This group consists of the most active persons in the local human rights coalition, but needless to say the surrounding organizations and actors are of great importance to strengthen, support and extend the coalition. In addition to their function of sounding board, the core group is also continuously busy with including more actors actively in the network and mobilize organizations to be more conscious of the importance of local human rights and the contribution they can deliver to establish a local human rights culture. The above mentioned core group of the Local Human Rights Coalition meets every four weeks to talk about both the process of how to extend and improve the coalition and the content, i.e. local activities concerning human rights. The process of the core group is a search to answer the question if and in which manner human rights as such can help on the local level to strengthen the connections between organizations, to discover and create new connections between them, to initiate new projects, and finally, to work towards a culture in which a critical urban view on social development is stimulated. They attempt at all this by translating the worldwide human rights frame into the local context of the city. Another important task of the coalition is reflection. They reflect on the process: is the way they construct a local human rights culture the right and most effective way? They reflect on the way the global narrative is told and translated to the local community: is the way we make this translation the right and most effective one? Is the process as employed in this moment one that contributes to getting answers to the abovementioned questions and does it help us to achieve our goals? In this process of reflection, the coalition is supported by several advisors. These advisors also reflect upon the coalition and think about further development. They are the director of Amnesty International, the director of the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, and the Dean of law faculty of the University of Utrecht. As mentioned before one of the objectives is to give a platform to organizations and actors to discover crossovers. Therefore, an important feature of the process is to facilitate the emergence of a group and to create opportunities for the organizations in the city to meet each other, with the aim to extend and strengthen the network and thus to extend the fundament for a local human rights culture. One way this is facilitated is by organizing human rights cafés four times a year. These cafés are a great way for organizations to network and explore crossovers. The cafés are also important in enhancing the use of the human rights narrative by organizations. No less than four hundred organizations are actively invited to the cafés, but of course they are accessible to all those interested.The management of the coalition actually consists of the before mentioned core group. This managerial role means steering the process as little as possible in order not to lose the loose network structure. It is of great importance that input of initiatives stems from all the organizations, not just those included in the core group. So, the network is horizontally structured and the core group is not meant to be the director of a vertical structure, but just to be part of the network. A last important part of the process, in order to meet the third objective, is to join (inter)national networks in which several cities are cooperating on local human rights: how do other cities work on local human rights policies? The coalition is regularly in search of new connections across the borders of the city and across the borders of the state. Taking part in (inter)national conferences and networks is an important feature of the learning process and to establish the joined-up governance process. In conclusion, the most important thing is to make the human rights coalition something ‘light’ and positive, to search for creative projects. It is important to get the attention and to raise awareness of local human rights in the city, in a lively fashion. The coalition strives to make the matter of local human rights tangible for the citizens of Utrecht. The coalition tries to bring human rights to the citizen’s homes and is in constant search of ways to come up with projects that people can identify with. For example, there have been projects like an art-exhibition created by children in the town hall and theatre plays.The local Human Right Coalition actively makes use of several communication strategies. First of all, the coalition is sending newsletters to the 400 organizations in the city employing activities regarding human rights. Also, videos of the cafés and other activities are published on our main communication canal, the human rights BlogSpot. Beside the videos, on this blog there also can be found written reports of activities, information about upcoming human rights events in Utrecht and other news. Another website used for communication is the webpage of the City of Utrecht and of the National Human Rights network. Reports and publications are written to make all the information transferable. Finally, articles are also published in magazines, such as the Glossy ‘Leven!’. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Most important innovative features according to the applicant's point of view (max. 2000 characters)** | In two ways the Local Human Rights Coalition can be seen as innovative. First, the projects that arise from the coalition are often original, the coalition brings about a lot of new plans. For example the bed, bath and bread project developed by organizations in the city of Utrecht, that exceeded national policies but perfectly suited the international human rights regime. Besides bringing about innovative ideas, an even more innovative feature of the project is the way in which the network is structured and the way in which the process is shaped and managed. Whereas in many cities the municipality has a central and leading role in local human rights policies, that is, where municipalities choose a very clear top-down approach towards local human rights, in Utrecht it has been a very conscious choice of the municipality to take a loose steering role and to choose for a facilitative approach, shaped by a bottom-up approach. Thus, the Local Human Rights Coalition in Utrecht is innovative in the sense that instead of approaching local human rights from a top-down juridical regime, it is approaching local human rights as a bottom-up cultural phenomenon. There is another very important feature that distinguishes the network from other local human rights policies. The public sector has known several kinds of management styles, from the old public administration towards the new public management, towards, lately, public value management. Attention to public value management is growing, but yet not really often it is translated into practice. However, the Local Human Rights Coalition does; as mentioned before, the network consists of actors of the university, municipality and civil society organizations. In this we find a connection to the upcoming public value management. In the end, the objective of public organizations is to alter social conditions in collectively desired directions, that is, creating public value. In this context, the Local Human Rights Coalition shows her strength: in the coalition both the legitimating authorities as well as the operational capacity are active and present. Therefore, as soon as a shared vision on public value is formulated, all resources are ready to bring this into practice. It is not often that all three factors, legitimacy and support, operational capacity, and public value, are represented in one and the same network at the same time. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Results (e.g. concrete quantitative performance measurement) (max. 5000 characters)** | With regard to our main aim to establish a local human rights culture, we conducted a baseline measurement in order to examine if after some time the coalition has indeed contributed to this aim. The survey focused on attitudes and opinions of citizens towards human rights and the actions they are taking to enhance human rights.Over the years the coalition proved to be stable. This is evident from the fact that the coalition ‘survived’ the change of mayor and alderman. There is also growing interest and support from the two greatest political parties in the Board of the municipality. They are organizing cafés with human rights as a central theme and setting up workgroups in which members of the party interested in the topic of human rights work together on this theme. Moreover, a great result of the work of the coalition is an initiative of a councilor of making Utrecht Shelter City; initiatives of political parties are prove that the coalition managed to raise awareness of the importance of local human rights and to put in on the political agenda. Another result is the fact that after the report of bed, bath and bread, the awareness not only reached the local, but also the national policies. With regard to the first objective of discovering crossovers, results are the new collaborations that emerged because of the opportunities created by the coalition to meet. There are more and more organizations reaching out to each other, there is more cooperation between municipality and organizations in the city, between organizations but also between cities, both national and international, for example at the world human rights forum in Gwangju. Another result is the national network. Also, more organizations became actively involved, more organizations are mobilized to stand up or refer to local human rights. Concerning the objective of improving local policies, we started at the beginning of the coalition in 2010 with a research to ten policy areas and the degree to which they are related to local human rights, as a starting point to which policy areas the Local Human Rights Coalition should be directed in order to indeed improve local policies. This research does of course not comprehend all policy areas that need attention of the coalition, but can be viewed as a good indicator of the relation between policy areas in the city and local human rights. Finally, regarding the last objective of establishing a (inter)national joined-up governance, a result is that during previous years the local coalition has got an advisory role towards other cities, both national and international. Others cities are interested in the way the coalition works and they consider the Utrecht human rights approach as effective. At the national level for example Amsterdam asked Utrecht to give advice about how to implement a local human rights policy in Amsterdam and at the international level Utrecht was invited by Vienna to give a presentation about her approach to and implementation of a local human rights policy. The city of Gwangju also invited members of the municipality of Utrecht to share their knowledge. Beside the interest coming from these cities in our Local Human Rights Coalition, universities and the European Commission too are asking members of the coalition to give lectures about the Utrecht approach towards local human rights. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Stakeholder Involvement (max 2000 characters)** | Since stakeholder involvement is the core part of the human rights coalition, this topic has been discussed before and we would repeat ourselves if we would explain it extensively here. In short: a broad and varied set of actors is included in the coalition. To create a human rights culture in the city it is important to involve as many relevant stakeholders as possible. What is interesting to mention here, is that although the coalition, even as the core group, is in principle accessible to everyone, there are a few criteria that actors have to meet when they want to take up an active role in the core group. We think this is of importance to hold on to, given the objectives of the coalition. Organizations must be proposing initiatives that are realistic to accomplish, the initiatives must be added value compared to existing initiatives, the activities of the organizations must show clear connections with the human rights frame, the organization must contribute a sustainable contribution to the human rights coalition, and finally, the initiatives of the organizations must have visible contribution to a human rights culture in the city. In conclusion, stakeholders that want to play an active role in the core group of the coalition must employ simple initiatives that touch the heart, that bring the big human rights narrative close to the people. We value initiatives from the people themselves, preferably playful and with a twist. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Social inclusion of the project (max. 2000 characters)** | The social inclusion of the project is inherent to its aim. Human rights are about social inclusion and therefore the Local Human Rights Coalition is a promoter of social inclusion. The social inclusion of the local human rights policy already became clear by the first research conducted in 2011, analyzing the importance of local authorities in implementing a local human rights policy. The research was conducted on ten policy areas that seemed to be directly connected to human rights, concerning the homosexual emancipation policy (anti-discrimination), U-pass (Poverty Reduction), Shelter for Asylum Seekers (Immigrant Policy), Domestic violence (inviolability of the person), Shelter for the homeless (social care), prostitution policy (human trafficking), camera policy/privacy (public order), fair trade (social corporate responsibility), peaceful school (human rights education), and Elderly Policy (Health care). Of course, there are many more areas to think of within the context of human rights, but the research shows that attention to diversity has been present throughout the years the coalition has been active and the local coalition has always continued to build on this diversity explicitly. The coalition employs activities not only in the center of Utrecht, but also in the surrounding neighborhoods, which are usually the neighborhoods where people with different cultural backgrounds live together. Also, the active actors in the coalition represent different organizations, each defending the rights of a different vulnerable group in society. The organizations included in the core group of the coalition are ‘De Kinderrechtenschool’, which tries to make children aware of their rights in a creative and interactive way; Pretty Woman, educating and offering help to girls of 12-23 years with reference to relationships and sexuality; Al Amal, who is working on improving the participation in Dutch society of multiproblem families, women, youth and children; and Pharos, committed to reduce health inequalities and to improve the quality, effect and accessibility to healthcare to low-educated and migrants and to enhance the self-management of these groups. Furthermore, the organizations and individuals we invite to join our events all represent a wide range of social, cultural and ethnic groups. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Sustainability (embedding in future activities) (max. 2000 characters)** | As said before, the municipality plays an important role in facilitating the local human rights coalition. However, by maintaining the bottom up approach, the organizations will become the owners of the coalition so that her existence is guaranteed also when the municipality is not a facilitating factor.The governance model as described in the process is aimed to developing a sustainable network. By constantly asking what dimensions of public value we produce and how we can produce more net value in the future, the local human rights initiatives will keep on existing in people’s daily lives and concern relevant issues. By reflecting on this value, it is guaranteed that the coalition is translating human rights to local actualities to keep local human rights vividly. Besides the public value defined by the coalition, it is important not to lose the legitimacy and support by regularly asking the question what sources of legitimacy and support we rely on and how we can increase legitimacy and support in the future. The fact that legitimizing actors are currently included in the network should not withhold us from considering actively involving new actors, relevant for a particular issue or context. Finally, regarding the operational capacity we should keep on asking ourselves how well and how reliable our programmes, policies and procedures are in creating value, and how can they be made more efficient and effective in the future. As long as we keep on paying attention to these three factors, i.e. value, legitimacy and operational capacity, the Local Human Rights Coalition will be sustainable, no matter the value to be created, context, nor circumstances. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Transferability** | The Utrecht approach is embedded in an (inter)national network in which the exchange of knowledge is an important value. Also, Utrecht has taken part in producing several information brochures and a toolkit that arose from such exchanges. Furthermore the idea of a Local Human Rights Coalition is transferable, but is context-dependent in which way and in collaboration with which partners it should be established. Also, the time needed to develop such a coalition and the different ways the human rights narrative can be introduced depends on the context. A good sense of local circumstances and practices is of great importance when thinking of the question if human rights are of relevance to the local level at all, which story should be told, which actors to involve and how to implement. Although the transferability of the Local Human Rights Coalition as implemented in Utrecht cannot occur by simply copying the concept in another city, the process in which this implementation takes place is transferable. The upcoming trend to governance models is universal, and the coalition is one of the examples that show how such a governance model could be developed, organized, shaped and implemented. This governance concept is not only relevant in Utrecht, but in many more national and international cities. From this point of view international exchange of knowledge is crucial. Beside the way a Local Human Rights Coalition is developed and implemented, also the way in which local policy can be evaluated/monitored from the perspective of international human rights treaties is transferable. Also in the future Utrecht will work on the transferability of its experiences by participating in networks like Eurocities, UCLG and the World Human Rights Forum. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Reference Documents |
| **Description of references:** | The files and Links are giving an overview of the process and the impact of the Utrecht Local Human Rights Coalition, locally and as a crossborder contribution in promoting local human rights. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Files** | You are allowed to upload documents until 10 MB. **Please only the most relevant!** If you have other media material that supports your submission, please provide the link below |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Links** | Virtual hub of the Local Human Rights Coalition: http://humanrightsutrecht.blogspot.nl Municipal website on human rights: http://www.utrecht.nl/internationale-zaken/lokale-mensenrechten/ European Local Human Rights Conference in Utrecht: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpGpI4DljdY Utrecht Human Rights Coalition Startconference (2013):https://vimeo.com/79671719 Utrecht Human Rights Café XL (2014):https://vimeo.com/120604583 Youth and Rights project:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngt99AtlOcg Peace Treaty of Utrecht 1713 - 2013:http://www.vredevanutrecht2013.nl/ Utrecht Co-creating European toolkit: http://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2011/joined-governance-connecting-fundamental-rights Utrecht initiating the National Network for local Human Rights: http://www.mensenrechtenlokaal.nl/themas/burgerschap |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Finalize |
| **Legal Notice** | Yes |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |