What capacity building initiatives have been taken to implement/incorporate human rights in local administration?

a. Please provide information on institutional structures for coordination and

harmonization of capacity building initiatives.

In Graz, a human rights city since 2001, the mayor’s office is competent for human rights. In order to get advice on the human rights impact of daily policy-making and administration, the human rights advisory council was established in 2007. The human rights advisory council recommends human rights training activities for the staff of the municipality including the staff of the service companies owned by the municipality. The mayor’s office is further responsible for the head-office of the administration which is in charge of the human resource department including the administration training centre. Thus, the structural competence and the thematic expertise are bundled in the mayor’s office and coordinated in this way.

b. Please provide information on the involvement of civil society, the private

sector, academia, etc. in capacity building initiatives.

The human rights advisory council of the city of Graz has up to 30 members from all areas of society with a specific human rights expertise. Judicial administration, law enforcement, faith groups, civil society organisations, academia and popular individuals are represented in the council. Via membership all of these persons, groups and organisations are participating in the planning and also in implementing human rights trainings. The city of Graz is a co-founder and a member in the Graz’ Centre for the promotion of human rights at local and regional levels under the auspices of UNESCO. The Centre organizes and holds human rights trainings for the municipality’s administration. It further organizes the international human rights academy Human Rights Go Local: What Works which is co-organized by UN-, CoE and EU organisations. The city of Graz is also a partner is this effort.

c. Please provide information on any monitoring or evaluation mechanisms

assessing the effectiveness of capacity building initiatives and their impact

on the promotion and protection of human rights at the local level.

It is again the human rights advisory council, evaluating the effectiveness of Graz’ human rights activities including capacity building.

2. What are the capacity building gaps and needs of local governments in relation to

implementing/incorporating human rights at the local level?

Provided that local governments and its administrations pursue human rights goals, they need:

Professional staff

Capacity building structures

Public management organization which allows for result-oriented administration

Training of knowledge on the relevance of human rights for the daily administrative work

Training of skills necessary to cope with human rights issues in daily work (technical knowledge, soft-skills)

Awareness of good governance is an important aspect of human rights

Shaping attitudes of professional ethics

Monitor behaviour of administrative staff

3. What measures are needed to further strengthen the capacity of local governments

to implement/incorporate human rights at the local level?

To provide for above list

4. What are existing procedures and practices for engaging local governments in the

work of the United Nations human rights mechanisms and in implementing,

reporting and following up on relevant recommendations? How could the existing

level of engagement be enhanced?

The city of Graz applies some practices in this respect (see point 7). However, there is hardly any information shared by the national level on the procedures, requests for information, relevance of reporting or relevance of recommendations and so on. All this knowledge is shared by academia and some civil society organisations representing specific groups. Thus, the engagement could be enhanced when triggered by the national authorities. They should show the relevance of those procedures including their outcomes, and involve subnational authorities in reporting and in delivering on the recommendations.

5. What are the capacity building gaps and needs of local governments in relation to

engaging with the United Nations human rights mechanisms and in

implementing, reporting and following up on relevant recommendations?

It simply lacks knowledge.

6. What are the main challenges in your country in the promotion and protection of

human rights at the local level?

The major challenge is the rise of populist, illiberal political voices followed by a significant number of followers.

7. Please provide examples, good practices, challenges, and recommendations with

regard to the above-mentioned issues.

The city of Graz makes use of international norms/treaties in the way that it tries to contextualize them on the one hand, and to make standards and recommendations the criteria for evaluation on the other hand. These examples may demonstrate the approach:

                Contextualization:

The children’s ombuds office built its children rights action plan of the city on the child rights convention with specific emphasis on the recommendations given by the respective treaty body.

The city’s disability council formulated a local action plan on inclusion and participation as an local implementation of the international convention.

                Evaluation:

                The city’s women’s council used CEDAW and the Committee’s recommendations on Austria to evaluate the situation of women in Graz.

                The human rights advisory council applies the Council of Europe’s hate speech acquis to monitor hate speech during election campaigns.

                The human rights advisory council applies the 4A scheme of CESCR to evaluate social policies and service provision of the city of Graz.

                The human rights advisory council applies Art 1 CERD as standard in impact assessment concerning racial discrimination of local policies.