

5th Academy and Conference

Human Rights Go Local: What Works

“Local Governments and Human Rights-Based Budgeting: Pathways to Accountability”

2 – 5 February 2026

Agenda

All times are listed in CET (GMT+1)

Monday, 2 February 2026: Stocktaking: Frameworks and instruments

The first day is dedicated to an exchange of existing concepts and approaches relating human rights budgeting at the international and local level: we aim at creating a common understanding of what we are talking about, when referring to human rights budgeting. Our previous research has shown, that there are very different approaches and practices.

- **Benefits for the local level:** Why should local authorities apply a human rights-based approach to their budgeting frameworks? What are concrete benefits for local authorities, who frame their budgeting distributions under the umbrella of human rights standards? How can an intrinsic motivation among local authorities be created?
- **Linking human rights to budgets:** What are the central components of a human rights budgeting? Mutual conditionality of human rights and budgeting processes towards local authorities' accountability.
- **Drivers of human rights budgeting:** What strategies can local governments employ to strengthen their commitment to human rights budgeting, particularly in the context of decentralization? How can international organisations inspire and support the local level?

11:30-12:00 **Opening ceremony**

Academy organisers

12:00-13:00 **Plenary Session A**

Moderation: Klaus Starl | UNESCO Centre

- Morten Kjaerum | Adjunct Professor at the University of Aalborg, Denmark, and Affiliated Scholar at the Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI), SWE, Co-Editor of the Book: Human Rights Economies and Subnational Governance: Theory and Practice

- Gerd Oberleitner | UNESCO Chair, University of Graz, Editor of the HRGL publication series Volume 6
- Adrià Duarte | Coordinator of the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, UCLG
- Peter Drenth | Deputy Standing Rapporteur on Human Rights, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

13:00-13:30 Break

13:30-14:30 Workshop session 1

Linking human rights and local budgets

Workshop session 1 aims at exploring opportunities to bring the human rights discourse into budgetary processes at the local level. We aim at supporting local authorities in connecting the budget distributions to the human rights agenda. The workshop discusses how local governments concretely benefit when using human rights as a framework for budget allocation. What are the key factors that help local governments to promote accountability through budgets?

Moderation: Markus Möstl | UNESCO Centre and Claudia Scheufler | UN-Habitat

Interlocutors:

Igor Gryshko | OHCHR

Ivana Dalessandro | CoE Congress

Berit Englmayer | UNESCO Centre

Klaus Starl | UNESCO Centre

Todd Howland | Vermont Law and Graduate School, Vermont, USA

14:30-15:00 Break

15:00-15:30 Closing

Moderation: Klaus Starl | UNESCO Centre

Summary of workshop findings: Claudia Scheufler | Associate Human Rights Officer, UN Habitat

Thoughts on the day: Savitri Bisnath | Senior Director, Institute on Race, Power and Political Economy, The New School, NY, USA, Co-Editor of the Book: Human Rights Economies and Subnational Governance: Theory and Practice



Tuesday, 3 February 2026: Lessons from the field

The second day builds on the outcomes of stocktaking of frameworks and instruments and goes a bit deeper into procedures of HR budgeting. Research shows that local authorities apply HR budgeting in specific areas of competence. Moreover, HR budgeting is dedicated to certain groups, such as minorities or people in situations of vulnerability. We will be dealing with questions, like: How can human rights-based budgeting approaches actually make a difference at the local level? What lessons have been learned so far and can be shared? How can existing practices best be transferred to other local contexts?

The second day is dedicated to exchange lessons from the field in terms of scopes and beneficiaries of HR budgeting. We will be addressing questions like:

- **Scope of HR-budgeting:** What steps can be taken to encourage local authorities to use human rights (explicitly) as a framework of their economic policies? How to support the mainstreaming of HR budgeting across all areas of local governance?
- **Diversity of budgeting instruments:** What best practices among different budgeting approaches (participatory, gender, results-based) can be identified as starting models for the integration of a more programmatic human rights-based approach to local budgets?
- **HR-budgeting processes:** What are the most effective budgetary processes for integrating HR considerations, and how can we standardize these practices across different local authorities?
- **Spending orientation:** How can local authorities enhance their focus on revenue generation in HR budgeting to ensure sustainability and long-term impact? How to engage private market actors and cooperate with them?
- **Targeted beneficiaries:** How to design HR budgeting to address the needs of both targeted vulnerable groups and the broader population?
- **Principles vs. standards:** In what ways can we ensure a balanced approach that incorporates both human rights principles and standards in HR budgeting?

11:45-12:00 Technical check

12:00-13:00 Plenary Session B

Moderation: Gerd Oberleitner | UNESCO Chair

- Savitri Bisnath | Senior Director, Institute on Race, Power and Political Economy, The New School, NY, USA, Co-Editor of the Book: Human Rights Economies and Subnational Governance: Theory and Practice
- Claudia Scheufler | Associate Human Rights Officer, UN-Habitat
- Nina Ebner | City of Graz, AUT
- Najat Zarrouk | Director of the African Local Government Academy (ALGA) of UCLG Africa



13:00-13:30 Break

13:30-14:30 Workshop session 2

Two parallel workshops will take place. Workshop A will practically discuss human rights-relevant budgetary decisions, based on a practical scenario on human rights-based budgeting in maintaining a school. Workshop B will elaborate the content for the explanatory remarks in the Outcome Document.

Workshop A: Case analysis on how a human rights-based approach helps resolving budgetary public service dilemmas.

Moderation: Klaus Starl | UNESCO Centre

Resource person: Klaus Tasch | Headmaster BRG/MS Klusemannstraße, City of Graz, AUT

Interlocutors:

Markus Möstl | UNESCO Centre

Daryna Sokolova | Council of Europe

Workshop B: Human Rights-Based Budgeting: Lessons from the field and exchange of practices

Moderation: Isabella Meier | UNESCO Centre and Adrià Duarte | UCLG Coordinator of the Committee

Interlocutors:

Prof. Jorge Luis González González | Lawyer and Researcher, City of Medellín, COL

Daniela Copetti Cravo, City Attorney of Porto Alegre Porto Alegre, BRA

Sanna Virta | Participation Coordinators, City of Lahti, FIN

Wilfredo B. Prilles | City Planning and Development Coordinator, Naga City, PHL

Prof. Gyonggu Shin, Minsu Kim | Gwangju International Centre, City of Gwangju, KOR

14:30-15:00 Break

15:00-15:30 Closing

Moderation: Gerd Oberleitner | UNESCO Chair

Summary of workshop findings: Adrià Duarte | UCLG and Klaus Starl | UNESCO Centre

Thoughts on the day: Amanda Richer | Displacement Consultant, Advocate, City of Seattle, USA



Wednesday, 4 February 2026: Local authorities' way forward to accountability

After the two days of intense discussing frameworks and practical approaches regarding human rights budgeting, day 3 takes a forward perspective: What do local authorities need to embed human rights-based budgeting approaches in local government systems worldwide? How to localise the human rights economy? What steps need to be taken next so that budgets can be better accessed to promote local authorities' human rights accountability?

Day 3 will determine how local authorities can be supported in their potentials towards human rights accountability. Thereby, human rights accountability is seen as content-specific bridge between the technical budget-systems and the normative human rights-system.

10:30-11:30 Networking and exchange in the Virtual Living Room

11:45-12:00 Technical check

12:00-13:00 Plenary Session C

Moderation: Klaus Starl | UNESCO Centre

- Pradeep Wagle | Chief of ESCR Section, OHCHR
- Linda Tinio-Le Douarin | Deputy Chief of the Inclusion, Rights and Intercultural Dialogue Section, UNESCO
- Bachir Kanoute | Secretary General of the International Observatory for Participatory Democracy (OIDP) for Africa Region, SN
- Alison Hosie | Scottish Human Rights Commission, Research Officer, Edinburgh, UK

13:00-13:30 Break

13:30-14:30 Workshop session 3

The workshop on the last day explores means to support the local authorities in applying a HR based approach to local budgeting. Thereby, we will focus on supporting local authorities in the areas: research and data, horizontal networks and capacity building. The workshop aims at strengthening local authorities' accountability by elaborating on benefits regarding transparency, trust-building through access to information and participation. The workshop elaborates on how human rights budgeting helps to establish oversight and monitoring mechanisms that assess and track the human rights impacts of budgetary decisions and expenditures. The workshops also aim at negotiating partnerships among interdisciplinary researchers in human rights-based economics.

Local authorities' way forward to accountability

Moderation: Markus Möstl | UNESCO Centre and Claudia Scheufler | UN-Habitat

Interlocutors:



Linda Tinio-Le Douarin | Deputy Chief of the Inclusion, Rights and Intercultural Dialogue Section, UNESCO

Najat Zarrouk | UCLG Africa

Danijel Cubelic | City of Heidelberg, DE

Jana Christ and Marie Paule N'Guessan | European Coalition of Cities against Racism

Nina Ebner | City of Graz, AUT

Igor Gryshko | OHCHR

14:30-15:00 Break

15:00-15:30 Closing

Moderation: Klaus Starl | UNESCO Centre

Summary of Workshop findings: Claudia Scheufler | UN-Habitat

Thoughts on the day: Shailee Chaudhary | Human Rights Advocate, empowering Dalits, women, and LGBTQI+ individuals through strategic community programs, Melbourne, AUS

Networking and career development for the next generation human rights professionals

On Day 3, the next generation human rights professionals will have an informal place to engage and connect with established human rights experts and practitioners. All other participants will have the option to meet for further exchange in the Academy's virtual living room. The virtual living room will provide needs-based topical tables for exchange but also an open space for networking.

The networking programme for the next generation human rights experts seeks to establish a link between today's stakeholders and tomorrow's actors in order to exchange practical knowledge of working in the field, discuss the realization of future perspectives and aspirations, and provide insight into the opportunity to professionalize in human rights, a field of professional activity that is becoming increasingly important at the local level.

13:30-14:00 Introduction and inputs of role models

Moderation: Lisa Heschl | UNESCO Chair

Shams Asadi | Human Rights Officer, City of Vienna, AUT

Aulia Rachmah Putri (Aura) and Alyaa Nabiilah Zuhroh | Human rights Advocates and Co-Founders of Inisiatif Suara Nusantara, a civil society initiative focused on Human Rights Cities, democratic participation, and social inclusion, IDN

Dorian Rommens | Programme Specialist of the Inclusion, Rights and Intercultural Dialogue Section, UNESCO

14:00-14:45 Discussion: 45 min

Human rights experts and practitioners engage in informal discussion with next generation human rights professionals

15:30-16:30 Networking and exchange in the Virtual Living Room



Thursday, 5 February 2026: high-level Conference discussing the outcome of the Academy

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

12:00

Opening and Welcome

Peter Riedler | Rector of the University of Graz

Manuela Khom | Deputy Governor, Province of Styria

Josef Schellhorn | State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, Republic of Austria

Anacláudia Rossbach | Executive Director, UN-Habitat

Lidia Brito | Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences *a.i.*, UNESCO

Keynote Speech

Nada Al-Nashif | United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

12:45

Encouraging Local Governments to Human Rights-Based Budgeting: Pathways to Accountability

Moderation:

Prof. Martha Davis | Professor of Law at the School of Law, Northeastern University, Boston, USA, Co-Editor of the Book: Human Rights Economies and Subnational Governance: Theory and Practice

Presentation of the Academy's Outcome Document:

Markus Möstl | UNESCO Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels, Graz, AUT

Panel discussion:

Elke Kahr | Mayoress City of Graz, AUT

Claudia Luciani | Director of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Emilia Saiz | Secretary General of UCLG

Dafna Feinholz | Director Research, Ethics and Inclusion *a.i.*, UNESCO



Savitri Bisnath | Senior Director, Institute on Race, Power and Political Economy, The New School, NY, USA, Co-Editor of the Book: Human Rights Economies and Subnational Governance: Theory and Practice

Alison Hosie | Scottish Human Rights Commission, Research Officer, Edinburgh, UK

13:45 approx.

Farewell address

