

Preamble

Whereas cities bear a special responsibility for realising human rights because a majority of the global population lives in urban areas today, and cities play a fundamental role as centres of innovation and progress in society,

Whereas cities worldwide have used this role to become Human Rights Cities, inspired by the *People's Movement for Human Rights Learning* and the *World Human Rights Cities Forum* established as a result of the 1993 World Human Rights Conference in Vienna,

Whereas Vienna has participated in the conferences of the *World Human Rights Cities Forum* since 2008 already, receiving inputs that have triggered its Human Rights City process,

Whereas it is characteristic of a Human Rights City¹ in these international forums that human rights serve as

- guiding principles for as many public and private institutions as possible,
- a basis for decision-making at city level
- a directional indicator for institutional measures,
- a key topic in education and training,

Whereas the internationally recognised human rights were adapted to reflect the urban context in the 2001 *European Charter for the Protection of Human Rights in the City*, and whereas the Charter as well as the human rights treaties ratified by Austria at the level of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the European Union, serve as a basis for the City of Vienna in implementing the goals, decisions and measures set forth in the present declaration,

Whereas the human rights documents that have been adopted since the Charter, including the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and the *EU Charter of Fundamental Rights*, play an important role in securing and enhancing the protection of human rights and their application in cities,

Whereas current human rights jurisdiction and recommendations by international organisations (UN, Council of Europe, etc.) on promoting the protection of human rights are continuously applied in Vienna,

Whereas the tenets of equal treatment and protection against discrimination are emphasised by the principle of non-discrimination on the grounds of sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, colour, national, ethnic or social origin, property, birth or other status, which is set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and by the relevant UN Conventions on the rights of children and on abolishing any form of discrimination against women, as well as by the EU directives and their implementation in Vienna,

¹ Graz, Salzburg, Nuremberg, Barcelona, Lyon, Porto Alegre, Washington D.C., Montreal,... these are but some of the many Human Rights Cities in Austria and abroad.

Whereas the City of Vienna is committed to initiating human rights processes at national level and implements recommendations by national institutions like the Austrian Ombudsman Board (AOB) to promote human rights in an urban setting,

Whereas Vienna has a long-standing tradition and high standards in many areas relevant for human rights (as described in the report “Vienna – City of Human Rights”, available online at www.menschenrechtsstadt.wien.at);

The City of Vienna hence invites its population and staff, as well as civil society organisations, political and religious institutions, interest groups, businesses, scientists and researchers, the media and all other organisations to advance and actively promote human rights in the city.

Considering past achievements and the challenges ahead, the Vienna City Council adopts the

Declaration “Vienna – City of Human Rights”

The City of Vienna pledges to act as a guardian and defender of human rights by striving to respect, protect, fulfil and be accountable for human rights in all of its areas of competence. Based on this approach, the City of Vienna actively supports its citizens in asserting and upholding their human rights by providing adequate framework conditions and using them as a basis for its actions. This approach is based on the principle that every person living in the city has the same human rights – regardless of their nationality or residency status.

1. The human rights approach – a cross-cutting principle for political and administrative decisions in the municipality, city and province of Vienna

The City of Vienna uses human rights as guidelines for its decisions and actions in the fields of legislation, executive authority and administrative jurisdiction, when acting as a local authority or as a private entity, in its own sphere of competence or in matters of delegated federal competence (hereinafter referred to as “in all areas of competence”). Its democratic and administrative structure rests on the central pillar of realising human rights, which are known to contribute significantly to strengthening democratic and socially inclusive processes.

As an employer, service provider, contract placing authority, and enterprise, the City of Vienna is aware of its role in upholding, promoting and protecting human rights.

Operative measures taken by staff and representatives of the City and Province of Vienna, or of affiliated institutions, are based on the universally recognised human rights in all areas of competence.

This makes human rights the basic principles for shaping urban processes and structures, as well as the way people live together in the city. The overall objective consists in the human rights approach being integrated in all operative and strategic processes implemented by the city.²

To this end, the City of Vienna develops measures to promote openness, diversity, political participation, a barrier-free environment, and equal chances, thus guaranteeing universal access to rights. All these steps serve to advance the development of a human rights culture encompassing all fields of life in a city.

2. Civil society participation

In order to allow for the development of an urban culture of human rights, it is of major importance to promote and advance comprehensive participation and involvement of the city's population and civil society organisations in decision-making processes.

The City of Vienna strives to further develop existing methods of continuous, sustainable citizen involvement in planning, decision-making and implementation processes, and to make use of these methods as it shows respect for civil society organisations' expertise in various areas.

The City of Vienna actively contacts newly established initiatives and is open to new forms of participation that promote the advancement of human rights in cities, such as the international *Right to the City* movement.

3. Human rights learning in the city

Given that human rights are of concern to all of us, educational initiatives by the city are known to strengthen and encourage both the city's staff and its population to become more aware of human rights in their daily actions, and to exercise moral courage as they live, together, in the city every day.

Due awareness of the right to equal treatment and of the duty to grant this right to others forms a key basis for developing a human rights culture in the city's institutions and among its population. This also includes knowledge of the institutions that support citizens in upholding their human rights.

The City of Vienna therefore promotes human rights learning among different target groups, such as political and administrative decision-makers, city staff and employees, civil society institutions, political and religious organisations, interest groups, the media, businesses, scientists and researchers, with a particular focus on multipliers in the above areas and on the city's population in general.

4. Cooperation with national institutions, international networking and solidarity

Due to the federal structure and distribution of competences, the City and Province of Vienna forms part of a complex network of national and international actors.

² cf. various publications including the *Smart City Vienna Framework Strategy*, the Vienna Urban Development Plan 2025, the *Vienna 2020 Strategy* for research, technology and innovation, as well as the planning mechanisms and sectoral strategies drawn up by the Vienna Health and Social Welfare Planning service.

The City of Vienna strives to promote respect for human rights in areas where the city and its inhabitants are affected by the actions of federal authorities, such as the police, the Service of the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, or service enterprises under public law, such as the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS). To this end, the City of Vienna uses existing interfaces or establishes new forums for cooperation and exchange with relevant institutions.

The City of Vienna cooperates with other Human Rights Cities to exchange experience and provide mutual support, as well as to participate in regional, European or global networks, thus fulfilling its human rights responsibility not only in a local context but also at national and global level.

5. Institutional provisions, independent monitoring and implementation steps

A central characteristic of Human Rights Cities consists in defining goals and measures, i.e. providing an institutionalised basis for human rights in administration and politics, and introducing an independent review mechanism (human rights monitoring). To this end it is necessary to analyse the city's fields of action with respect to their human rights dimension, and to develop relevant indicators.

To be able to verify, at regular intervals and from different perspectives, to what extent the goals defined in the Action Plan have been attained, the City of Vienna devises effective *internal* and *external* monitoring mechanisms. The monitoring results are used by the City of Vienna to advance human rights objectives and activities at all levels of action.

The process of devising *internal* monitoring mechanisms for the city administration is to start from current structures, reports and self-evaluation mechanisms. It involves developing human rights questions and indicators that are subsequently integrated in existing monitoring mechanisms. On their basis, a comprehensive human rights monitoring system is to be created to highlight shortcomings in human rights protection while supporting and sharing best practices. In this context the competences of the City of Vienna Human Rights Coordinator's Office are to be expanded accordingly.

As an *external* monitoring structure, a body of independent experts is to be set up to monitor and regularly report on whether and to what extent human rights have been violated at individual and/or structural level. This body is also in charge of identifying focus topics, monitoring the implementation of measures, providing recommendations, and publishing a report at regular intervals.

Within the coming year the City of Vienna will draw up an Action Plan defining structural and thematic focus areas for the following four years at both strategic and operative level. The Action Plan is to include a concept for setting up independent, adequately funded monitoring structures to ensure the planned goals are achieved. In order to promote dialogue with civil society, and to provide a broad basis for the subsequent Human Rights City process, the process of drawing up the Action Plan will also draw on the expertise of civil society organisations working for human rights.