

European Charter

for the Safeguarding of Human
Rights **in the City**



Easy-Reading Texts

Ajuntament de
Barcelona



The European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City

is now 20 years old. And the commitments made by city councils to ensure cities respect the rights set out in the Charter are even more valid than they were two decades ago.

Faced with the regression of rights that is happening in much of the world around us, cities are becoming a space for freedom, development and welcoming people who are looking and wishing for a better world. Today, they are spaces for coming together, spaces with possibilities, where a new political and social space for local democracy is emerging. But contradictions and risks, inequalities and discrimination are also expressed more crudely there.

Twenty years ago, in 1998, the European Conference of Cities for Human Rights brought 70 European cities together in Barcelona to show how cities, the administration closest to citizens, defend, guarantee and protect the rights of everyone. In 2000 the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City, based on the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, but going further, was approved in Saint Denis, France.

The Charter is being applied in many cities, including Barcelona. Driven by associations, society, Barcelona citizens and Barcelona City Council, mechanisms have been established and measures adopted to make human rights effective, based on the principle of non-discrimination, social service policies that defend social rights, actions with a gender perspective that permeates the municipality's every action, and so on.

In this world of increasing xenophobia, fear, authoritarianism and inequality, cities and peoples want to be global actors for hope.

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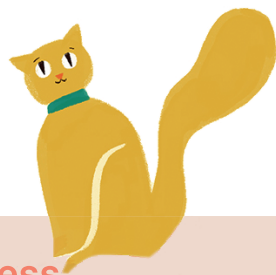
Principles



Equal rights and non-discrimination

Signatory cities recognise that we all enjoy all the rights stated in this Charter.

Local authorities ensure these rights for everyone, free from any form of discrimination.



Effectiveness of public services

Local authorities ensure effective public services adapted to the needs of everyone and seek to prevent situations of discrimination or abuse.

Local authorities shall assess their public services and take the results into account.

Transparency

Signatory cities guarantee the transparency of their administrative activities.

Local authorities shall publish their municipal regulations in such a way that all citizens can understand and acquaint themselves with their rights and obligations.

We all have the right to a copy of our local authority's administrative minutes.

The principles of transparency, publicity, impartiality and non-discrimination are applied to municipal contracts and staff selection.

Local authorities guarantee transparency in and monitoring of the use of public funds.

Subsidiarity

Under this principle, the aim is to ensure public services are accountable to the authority closest to ordinary citizens and, therefore, more effective.

It is applied to ensure that all authorities assume all the powers and responsibilities that correspond to them.

Solidarity

Solidarity keeps local communities united.

Local authorities work together with citizen organisations to foster solidarity networks and associations among their inhabitants.

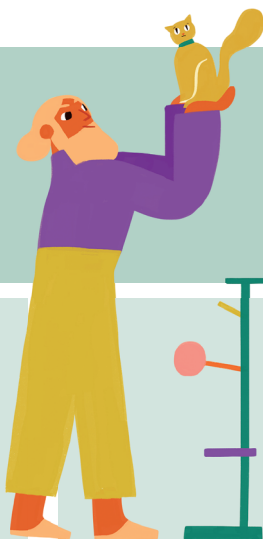
International municipal cooperation

Cities foster knowledge of other cultures among city residents.

Signatory cities undertake to support and promote cooperation programmes in developing countries, as well as involve both the public and economic actors in them.



Rights



Right to the city

Cities belong to all their residents.

Everyone must be able to find the conditions for achieving fulfilment there, from a social, political and ecological point of view, while assuming solidarity duties.

Local authorities foster respect for the dignity and quality of life of their residents.

Right to political participation

Everyone of legal age has the right to vote for and be voted as representatives of the city government.

Local authorities can call on the State for foreign nationals with two or more years' residence in the city to be allowed to take part in local elections.

All of us, individuals and associations, have the right to take part in our city's politics and express our opinions.

We all have the right to take part in associations, hold meetings and demonstrate.

Cities have public spaces for holding meetings and informal gatherings. City councils ensure everyone has access to these spaces, as long as they respect the regulations.





Right to public social protection services

Social policies are decisive for safeguarding human rights. Signatory cities undertake to work to guarantee them.

Local authorities recognise the rights of everyone to free access to municipal social protection services. They oppose the commercialisation of personal social support services and ensure they are quality services at reasonable prices.

Local authorities undertake to create social policies for the most underprivileged, to ensure their social inclusion, dignity and equality.

Right to education

We all have the right to education.

Local authorities provide basic education for young children and young people of school age.

They also promote adult training, in accordance with democratic values.

Cities put schools and cultural centres at everyone's disposal to promote social cohesion.

Local authorities launch campaigns and educational programmes to respect community harmony and fight against any form of discrimination.

Right of workers and unemployed people

We all have the right to a decent job and pay that guarantees our quality of life.

Local authorities promote the ongoing training of workers and unemployed people to improve their employment opportunities.

Signatory cities include a clause in their municipal contracts that rejects any illegal work by national or foreign workers, whether in regular or irregular situations, and any child labour.

Local authorities promote equality at work and access to work for women, by creating nurseries for children and centres for people with a disability, through accessible resources.

Local authorities foster the creation of jobs for people who need to find work.

Right to health

Local authorities promote access to medical care and prevention for everyone.

Signatory cities promote people's health through economic, cultural, social and urban planning measures.

Right to culture

We all have the right to enjoy our city's cultural and artistic activities and to express our creativity.

Local authorities work alongside associations and the private sector to promote a local cultural programme based on respect for diversity. They also make public spaces available to the general public for cultural and social activities.

Right to leisure

Local authorities recognise people's right to free time.

They ensure quality leisure spaces for young children, promote the pursuit of sport and provide sports facilities for everyone.

Local authorities promote sustainable tourism that enables a balance to be established between tourist activities and the social and environmental well-being of their citizens.



Right to a home

We all have the right to decent housing.

Local authorities endeavour to ensure a supply of suitable neighbourhood housing and facilities for everyone, regardless of income.

Such facilities must include shelters for homeless people and women who have been victims of abuse and sexual exploitation.



Consumers' rights

Local authorities protect consumers as far as their powers allow them to do so.

As regards food, they guarantee or ensure that all the information provided on a product's weight, measurements, quality, ingredients and expiry date is correct.



Environmental protection

We all have the right to live in an environmentally friendly city, where economic development is compatible with maintaining an environmental balance.

Local authorities act to reduce environmental and noise pollution and foster energy saving, selective waste collection and recycling as well as the expansion and protection of green spaces in the city.

Local authorities ensure environmental protection through education, regulations and monitoring.

Local authorities establish spaces reserved for pedestrians and promote the use of non-polluting vehicles.

Signatory cities ensure the smooth flow of traffic through their city, while respecting the environment.

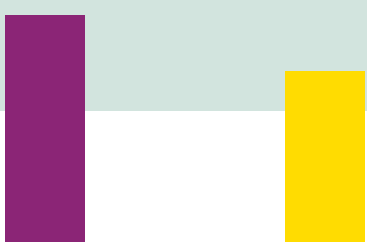


Right to harmonious and sustainable city development

We all have the right to live in a city where urban development is orderly and sustainable.

Local authorities seek to maintain the balance between urban development and the environment by involving everyone.

Local authorities undertake to respect their respective cities' natural, historical, architectural, cultural and artistic heritage and to reuse their property heritage to avoid building new properties.



Protection of the most vulnerable

The most vulnerable individuals and groups have the right to receive the special care and protection they need.

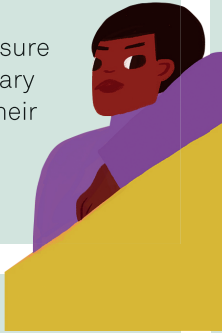
Signatory cities undertake to work so people with a disability have adapted housing, employment, public transport and leisure spaces. Cities implement social policies to promote the integration of people most in need.



Right to information

We all have the right to be informed of the city's social, economic, cultural and administrative issues, while respecting private life and minors.

Local authorities ensure they use the necessary means for making their information easy to understand.



Right to cultural, linguistic and religious freedom

We all have the right to exercise cultural freedom, speak in our language and profess our religion while respecting other believers and non-believers.

Local authorities do everything necessary to ensure children can study in their mother tongue.

Local authorities strive to ensure freedom of conscience and religion, and prevent the creation of ghettos.

Local authorities have a commitment to keeping historical memories and local history alive.

Right to the protection of private and family life

Cities safeguard the right to private and family life and promote respect for all families.

Local authorities offer families facilities, especially for access to housing.

People have access to financial help and social services, depending on their needs.

Local authorities run support programmes for abused people and for fighting abuse.

Local authorities work to protect young children and young people and to promote an education based on democracy, tolerance and participation in city life.

Local authorities create spaces where children can play, learn and enjoy their childhood.



Guarantee of local human rights



Signatory cities include the Charter's principles, rights and guarantee mechanisms within their respective municipal regulations, to make them legally binding.

Signatory cities undertake to reject or condemn any legal act whatsoever that violates the Charter's text.

Cities provide the general public with a service of qualified professionals for their safety and to prevent or mediate in conflicts:

- **Justices of the peace** exercise local justice independently. Justices of the peace are chosen by the people or the local authority and have the authority to resolve disputes between city residents and municipal authorities.

Cities strive to ensure the smooth running of local justice and to improve public access to justice.

They also resolve disputes out of court, through reconciliation, mediation and arbitration.

- The **local police** are responsible for public safety and community harmony in the city, by applying preventive and educational policies.



- The **ombudsman** defends the rights of all citizens against municipal action.
- **Social or neighbourhood mediators** work to resolve conflicts in the neighbourhoods.
- Cities create **committees** of citizens to assess the application of the Charter's rights.

Signatory cities undertake to draw up a budget that allows people to exercise the rights stated in the Charter.

They can ask citizens for their opinion by means of a participatory budget.

Signatory cities undertake to keep their social, environmental and any other kinds of activities within a legal tax framework.

Local councils undertake to work so that all authorities can enforce the rights recognised under the Charter within their areas of jurisdiction.



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70 20 ANNIVERSARY	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
	'Cities for Human Rights' Conference