

Summary

Appraising the first 10 years of the Office for Non-Discrimination

Guadalupe Pulido

The Office for Non-Discrimination (OND) was conceived as a mechanism for guaranteeing the rights of all citizens and an unequivocal reflection of the Barcelona City Council's commitment to human rights.

It offers information, counsel, mediation and comprehensive assistance for individuals and groups in cases of alleged violations of rights and unequal treatment.

The OND has established itself as a public service of the City of Barcelona that works to make the city a place where rights are truly recognized.

The European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City: Perspectives and challenges. «More rights for more citizens»

José Manuel Bandrés

The European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City, signed on May 13, 2000, in the commune of Saint-Denis, France, is a political document with regulatory purposes that reflects the binding agreement made by the undersigning local governments to promote an efficient system for the protection of human rights at the municipal level, through the recognition of a complete catalog of differentiated individual and collective rights, which help to ensure the political, economic, social, ecological and cultural rights, without discrimination, of its entire population.

In the ten years passed since its enactment, the Charter has been applied quite satisfactorily, in that it has helped to not only create a «political culture of local government» based on respect as the guiding principle of human rights, but also to shape the sectoral public policy for the city's development according to a set of values—freedom, equality, tolerance, non-discrimination, respect for the environment—that legitimate the actions of the municipal authorities.

The challenges standing in the way of implementing the Charter are: to revitalize local democracy as a system of city government, to reinforce the citizens' statute, and to advance in the process of «universalizing» the Charter.

The Citizens' Charter. Reaching a milestone in the development of Barcelona

Joan Manel Abril

The seventh final provision of the bylaw of measures for fostering and guaranteeing the coexistence of citizens in the public setting of Barcelona (better known as the coexistence ordinance), stipulates that the City Council must draw up a charter on human rights and citizens' duties, and raise awareness about these rights and duties among the entire population of Barcelona. This article details the aforementioned process and summarizes the Charter's content. The Citizens' Charter is in an advanced state of development, and covers a set of citizens', social, cultural and environmental rights and duties, along with measures aimed at ensuring the fulfillment thereof.

Emerging human rights

Jaume Saura

Human rights are neither fixed nor immutable. Instead, they evolve historically according to the changing human and social needs.

In our globalized, steadily changing world, we must update the classic human rights, but do so without renouncing them. The social demands for new and renewed rights are not merely utopian aspirations, but are in fact firmly rooted in the prevailing law—as evidenced by the jurisprudence of the international courts of human rights—and are technically viable if the public authorities demonstrate the political will to acknowledge these new rights.

Education and citizenry in democratic societies: toward a collaborative citizenry

Miquel Martínez

We realize that it is sometimes more difficult to consolidate and expand democracy than to achieve it in the first place. When democracy is established, its strength depends on the education levels of the population and on the transparency, honesty and readiness of our leaders. Thus, over the past few years, issues involving citizen education and the furthering of democratic values are relevant not only in education but in the social and political realms as well.

Nonetheless, and despite the consensus regarding its importance, this is often a controversial topic, particularly when efforts are made to design proposals based on values for ensuring good citizenship, and even when trying to agree on a definition of citizenry or democracy, and going beyond the coincidental use of the same term.

This article proposes advancing toward a collaborative citizenry capable of appreciating the values of democracy and pluralism. There, we see the importance of pedagogical approaches that nurture collaborative learning and participation as means of building an active and collaborative citizenry.

Special Service Unit for Hate Crimes and Discrimination of the Provincial Prosecutor's Office of Barcelona

Miguel Ángel Aguilar

Hate crimes and discrimination are byproducts of racism, xenophobia, homophobia, intolerance (i.e., religious, ideological, consciousness) and other forms of hatred that constitute direct violations of the principles of freedom, equality, democracy and respect for human rights and basic freedoms. Based on the conviction that, due to their specific nature, such criminal acts warrant a specialized assistance and response, the Special Service Unit for Hate Crimes and Discrimination of the Provincial Prosecutor's Office of Barcelona was created in October 2009. The aim of this service is to coordinate the actions of all prosecutors of said Office related to crimes based on discrimination, in order to ensure the necessary unification of actions in interpreting and applying current legislation. The article presented here offers reflection on the nature of hate crimes and discrimination, the problems detected by this Service Unit and the primary legislative measures and resources that should be adopted in order to provide reinforcement for combating this type of crime.

The Human Rights Observatory of Barcelona

Xavier Vallvé

This article describes the process of founding and developing the Human Rights Observatory, a new municipal body for the promotion and defense of human rights in the city of Barcelona. That body is one byproduct of the commitment of the Barcelona City Council to the European Charter for the Safeguarding of

Human Rights in the City. The Observatory's mission is to monitor the situation of the city with regard to each of the rights covered in the Charter, by means of a periodic report. This article describes the drafting process and content of the first report, which is the result of cooperation between the Office of Civil Rights of the Barcelona City Council, the cooperative Gabinet d'Estudis Socials, and a platform of partner organizations.

Program for Protecting Human Rights Defenders

Xavier Badia

Under the current legislation, the government of the Generalitat of Catalonia has launched the Office for the Promotion of Peace and Human Rights. The Office supports the associations working in this field and fosters research on peace and human rights, promoting this perspective in the actions of the various departments of the Generalitat and establishing relationships with a variety of institutions, including city councils, Spanish autonomous communities and State agencies, as well as other international organizations. This article describes one of the Office's action programs, the Program for Protecting Human Rights Defenders, which focuses on the defenders of human rights who are seriously threatened in their country of origin. The Program's basic principles are identified, along with the criteria used to select its beneficiaries and the activities carried out, as well as an assessment of what has been done thus far and what challenges lie ahead.

The common language, a fundamental civil right

Puri Pinto and Martí Gasull

This article provides the bases for a linguistic discourse for social inclusion and well-being, by outlining a set of good practices. The defense of linguistic civil rights revolves around the notion of the common language, which must become the backbone of three absolutely essential milestones: to achieve social cohesion, to connect the current social reality with the country's cultural and historical tradition, and to uphold and respect linguistic diversity at the local and global levels.

Below, we offer several examples of cases in which Catalan has proven to be an effective tool for social inclusion and a vehicle for accessing civil rights and citizens at large. The

experiences described range from cooperative efforts with people and organizations that represent Spain's diversity, to the publication of materials and production of expository materials that enable work to be done on linguistic attitudes from the aforementioned perspective.

Orientation Program for Human and/or Citizens' Rights: «Focusing on Rights»

Mercè Meroño

In 2003, the Office for Non-Discrimination of the Barcelona City Council and the organizations Àmbit Prevenció and Creación Positiva jointly launched the program «Orientant-nos en Drets» («Focusing on Rights»). The program is founded on the realization that it is the most fragile social groups (e.g., immigrants, sex workers, drug users, transsexuals) whose rights are violated most and who have greater difficulty in knowing how to defend them. The mission of the program «Orientant-nos en Drets» («Focusing on Rights») is to raise awareness about citizens' rights and duties among the most vulnerable social groups, identify situations of discrimination, denounce these situations before the competent authorities and monitor these processes. The article details the types of discrimination detected by this program, the activities carried out and the challenges lying ahead.

Service of Assistance and Denouncement for the Victims of Racism and Xenophobia (SAiD). A «new» service based on over 15 years of field experiences of the organization SOS Racisme-Catalunya

Alicia Rodríguez

This purpose of this article is to introduce the Service of Assistance and Denouncement for the Victims of Racism and Xenophobia (SAiD) of the organization SOS Racisme-Catalunya, conceived as a mechanism for dealing with cases of racism that occur in our social environment.

Contextual information is presented for the current state of racism and diversity and their various facets, from a social and institutional perspective, to help understand the fields in which SAiD is active.

With this service, SOS Racisme aims to transform a previously existing service by making a qualitative leap forward

in providing full assistance to the victims of racism in an increasingly adverse and complex sociopolitical context.

Also presented here is the working methodology of SAiD, which focuses on online services in order to enhance the complete assistance given to the victims and to extend the scope of the service in the Catalan region.

First term of the Ombudsman service of Barcelona Pilar Malla

The Ombudsman (people's advocate) service of Barcelona was founded in November 2004. These first five years have allowed for the creation of a new institution while at the same time focusing attention on those issues in which the rights of all citizens are still not sufficiently guaranteed.

The mission of the Ombudsman service of Barcelona involves two scopes of action: defending citizens' rights in cases of alleged offenses, and safeguarding the guarantees of the fundamental rights of all with regard to projects and omissions of the City Council.

The competency of this institution comprises all municipal bodies and all individuals that are living, working or staying in Barcelona, although it is not authorized to countermand court decisions, or intervene in cases whose judicial decision is pending.

The Ombudsman service is an independent institution; its exclusive duty lies with the citizenry and spirit of the law, and it reports each year to the Municipal Plenary Council, which is responsible for its appointment with a five-year term that is independent of the electoral cycles.

Children's rights and participation

Josep Villena

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 recognizes the basic social and civil rights of children and adolescents and one of its basic founding principles is the child's right to be protected. Children and adolescents have the right to give their opinions about issues that affect them, to express themselves freely, to associate with others, to have privacy and receive adequate information; and society as a whole must guarantee the exercise of these rights. In that regard, the impending passage of Catalonia's Rights and Opportunities of

Children and Adolescents Act, currently in Parliament, will constitute an important inflection point for the recognition of said rights, by establishing mechanisms to ensure its fulfillment, such as the forthcoming National Council for Children and Adolescents of Catalonia and the founding of regional councils for participation.

20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Jordi Cots

This article starts out by highlighting the presence in Barcelona, at one time or another in these past 20 years, of highly relevant international experts, who have given us evidence of their deep knowledge of the Convention and their familiarity with this basic text. It then discusses the progressive and sometimes elusive acceptance of the Convention during this period, and the efforts needed to promote its implementation, as well as the obstacles that potentially stand in the way of boys and girls fully exercising their rights.

The final sections look at some of the main events that have been organized at the international level in order to commemorate this occasion and the intended meaning of these events, namely to have the Children's Charter inspire a remobilization, not just a mere celebration. The article concludes with a summary of the commemorative events that have taken place in Catalonia.