

Project Name: *"Boost Democratic Participation in Cities to Recharge Democracy in Europe" (DeCiDE)*

Implementing Organisations: *Global Parliament of Mayors and Human Rights Cities Network*

Duration: *2 Years - Starting October 2024*

Project Summary

The **Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM)** and the **Human Rights Cities Network (HRCN)** invite cities to embark on the "Boost democratic participation in cities to recharge democracy in Europe" (DeCiDE) project. This EU funded project aims to strengthen local democracy and to reinforce citizens' rights in the delivery of public policies.

The DeCiDE project envisages the development of a monitoring system for human rights in cities, in respect of each city's political priorities and challenges. This unique system foresees the co-production, between local administration and civil society representatives, of a set of indicators and monitoring tools integrating people and their rights at the center of the public policies and practices. With this, local authorities will enhance a human rights-based approach in their public services and will be able to regularly assess the impact of their work on people's life through a democratic and inclusive approach.

Scope

The project will involve **10 pilot cities** from 10 European cities selected based on criteria related to geographical balance, size of the city, its diversity, and the level of commitment to human rights. The main participants in the project will be representatives of the local administration and local civil society.

Objective

The overall objective of the project is to **enhance urban democracy** and **human rights practices** in European cities, through community participation in human rights monitoring and knowledge sharing between cities' networks.

The aim is to enhance urban equality, diversity and democratic participation. By doing so, participating cities will also become part of a wider network promoting human rights and democracy. While fostering **solutions to make human rights a reality in cities based on expertise and exchanges among peers**, the DeCiDE project will also reinforce the development of the human rights cities' movement at the local, regional and global level.

The project will contribute to achieving the following Specific Objectives (SO) at the outcome level:

1. Support ten cities European cities to **improve monitoring capacities** of public service delivery with a participatory, inclusive and human rights-based approach;
2. **Strengthen** cities and local civil society's **capacity to guarantee democratic participation** and **access to human rights** through enhanced consultation mechanisms with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the design of public services;
3. **Improve knowledge of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights** through capacity building and exchange of experience to translate it into practices at local level, promoting solidarity among citizens and engaging transnational city networks in policy dialogue.

Main Activities

The first year of the project will mainly focus on the training and the co-design of the monitoring system, with the support of a senior monitoring expert. During the second year, participating cities will implement the monitoring system while taking part in a wider capacity-building programme run by academics affiliated with the project. Regular exchanges of good practices and sharing of experience among participants will strengthen the network of cities.

While **most of the project activities will be online** to ensure costs and time efficiency for participating cities, key high level events in person will ensure bonding ties among participants. The costs for the in-person activities will be partially covered by the project. The project includes the following main activities:

- Official **launch of the project (in-person)**, November 2024);
- **Developing of a participatory and inclusive methodology** for the monitoring system (**online**, first year);
- **Training on a participatory and inclusive monitoring system (in-person)**, Fall 2025);
- **Implementation** of a participatory and inclusive monitoring system (**online**, between the first and the second year);
- **Standardisation and exchange of good practices** on a participatory and inclusive monitoring system (**online**, second year);

- **Consultations with civil society** on the shaping, implementation and evaluation of public policies (**online**, second year);
- **Raising awareness about the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (online**, throughout the project);
- **High level policy dialogue** and consultation meetings with citizens, EU institutions and policy makers (**in-person**, second year);
- **High level panel discussion raising awareness about the monitoring system (in-person**, second year).

The in-person activities in which cities are expected to participate are the exchange of good practices and the high level policy dialogue, both taking place in the second year of the project.

Expected Commitments

Each city will form a Monitoring & Evaluation Working Group (M&E WG) that will be the contact point between the municipality and the project. Each working group will include two municipal representatives and two representatives of local civil society that will coordinate the work for the co-design and implementation of the monitoring system locally. The M&E WG will activate the relevant technical expertise within the municipality and among civil society organisations to create a local dynamic to ensure the co-development and the adaptation of the monitoring system to the local context.

Participating municipalities are responsible to appoint two officers as focal points and members of the M&E WG. The time to be dedicated to the project is estimated at around 5% of their working time on average, depending on the period and the activities to implement. Focal points from the concerned departments are responsible to circulate the information and collect updates on the development of the monitoring system over time.

Contact Information



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Participating Cities



Braga, Portugal



The Hague, Netherlands



Ghent, Belgium



Padova, Italy



Krakow, Poland



Jozsefvaros, Budapest



Chisinau, Moldova



PRIMĂRIA ȘI CONSILIUL LOCAL
CLUJ-NAPOCA

Cluj-Napoca, România



Benalmádena, Spain

Launch of the DeCiDE Project at the Smart City Expo in Barcelona



On November 6, 2024, the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM) and the Human Rights Cities Network (HRCN) proudly launched the project “DeCiDE: Boost Democratic Participation in Cities to Recharge Democracy in Europe” at the Smart City Expo in Barcelona. This ambitious initiative aims to enhance democratic engagement and human rights-focused governance across European cities, fostering more inclusive and participatory urban environments.

The DeCiDE project will develop an innovative monitoring tool to assess and promote human rights in cities. This tool, created through collaboration with local governments, academic experts, and civil society organizations across ten cities, will support municipalities in adopting policies that promote urban equality, diversity, and democracy.

During the launch event, a distinguished panel discussed the importance of empowering cities to champion democracy and human rights. *Dr. Eric Corijn of GPM* highlighted the essential role cities play in advancing democracy, while *Tijn Kuyper, Digital Innovation Advisor for The Hague*, outlined the project’s significance for urban governance. *Councillor Nina Abrahamczik of Vienna*, which has recently been named EU Capital of Democracy, shared insights on the city’s commitment to human rights and democratic values. *HRCN Founder Frederique Hanotier* presented the scope of the project, its aims and its importance for cities, while moderating the discussion between panelists.

The event was attended by around 60 representatives of cities, civil society and private enterprises representing at least 14 European countries.

Human Rights Monitoring: Turn Theory into Practice

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world." Eleanor Roosevelt

Monitoring human rights at the local level is a fundamental step to becoming a human rights city and ensuring the rights of people are upheld. Local actors can face challenges in putting this into practice. To address this, the Human Rights Cities Network (HRCN) held the webinar "Human Rights Monitoring: Turn Theory into Practice", on 17 December 2024, as part of our "DeCiDE - Boost Democratic Participation in Cities to Recharge Democracy in Europe" project, in collaboration with the Global Parliament of Mayors.

The moderator Margarita Spasova, Acting Director of the HRCN, was joined by an exciting panel:

- Dr. Éva Tessa Udvarhelyi: Deputy Mayor of Józsefváros, who is one of the participants of the DeCiDe project, as opening speaker;
- Sirpa Rautio: Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, as keynote speaker;
- Paul Maassen: Chief of Global Programmes at Open Government Partnership;
- Benedetto Zacchioli: President of the European Coalition of Cities Against Racism;
- Fionn Toland: Researcher at the Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York.

All the panelists highlighted the power that local actors have to fulfill and protect the rights of people, but that they need to take a participatory approach to monitoring and data collection. On this, Mr. Maseen underscored the importance of adopting a bottom-up approach, where communities actively co-create and shape solutions to the challenges they face – a strategy closely aligned with the mission of our DeCiDE project. The participatory approach of co-creating monitoring indicators with the involved cities is a crucial aspect of our project.

"Working for the people, with the people", emphasised Mr. Maseen.

The Importance of Monitoring and Data-Driven Policy

Data is imperative to empowering local actors in making informed decisions and driving sustainable, community-driven solutions. The collection of good data is both essential and labour-intensive, as acknowledged by Ms. Rautio. She highlighted the importance of collecting data from many different sources, such as civil society organisations, local ombudsman, and academia. This was reiterated by Mr. Toland, who explained that the York Human Rights City Network uses case studies from local civil society organisations. The Fundamental Rights Agency carries out widespread surveys, collecting thousands of data points, such as on Roma populations and gender-based violence, that can help local actors understand the issues at hand and what types of services are required. Ms. Rautio suggested that looking at these resources is not only important for the data itself, but also to understand the methodology that can be adapted by local actors to fit their research needs.

Monitoring human rights in local policies and services is also imperative to ensuring accountability, promoting equity, and verifying that policies truly benefit the rights holders they are designed to protect. Mr. Zacchiroli shared that the European Coalition of Cities Against Racism has a data working group and a software where all cities can fill in yearly with their data and best practices, allowing them and the organisation to track their progress. He highlighted that this is also important for policymakers in the member cities because the findings are used to evaluate the efficiency of their policies.

There were queries amongst the attendees about how to collect data when one has limited manpower. Mr. Toland responded that, at the York Human Rights City Network, the data collection is done by external institutions. Then he alone gathers it, but involves civil society organisations and local political representatives in the analysis. This shows that it is possible to collect data in a small team with limited resources, and that engaging relevant stakeholders can facilitate the process.

Best City Practices from the Webinar

The panelists shared many good practices, not only in terms of monitoring, but also what cities can do to improve human rights oriented services at the local level. Ms. Rautio shared an important framework, which the Human Rights Cities Network contributed to, with concrete examples on how to become a Human Rights City.

Cities play a big role in upholding the rights of people. Despite being one of the poorest districts in Budapest, Ms. Udvarhelyi stated that the municipality of Józsefváros has created a stronger safety net for its residents as that of the national level was deemed insufficient by the municipality. This demonstrates that using a human rights based approach is possible on a smaller budget. It also shows how municipalities can provide solutions for national problems and shortages. In a similar vein, Mr. Zacchioli explained that to counter Italy's restrictive nationality laws, Bologna introduced an honorary citizenship 10 years ago to all newborns in Bologna with foreign parents. Although more symbolic than concrete action, it demonstrates how cities can change the narrative and make people feel more included— an essential step in addressing the divisions present in today's society.

Streamlining citizen participation is imperative to ensure reforms and better implementation of solutions. Józsefváros was the first district to open an office of community participation in the country, a practice that has now spread to other municipalities. Mr. Maseen gave the example of Decide Madrid that began in 2015 to promote participatory budgeting, which has since been used in over 100 places. Similarly, the York Human Rights City Network chose its five priority rights based on public surveys given to the local communities, and the indicators were chosen through focus groups which were held with local civil society organisations. This further highlights the need for a participatory approach— a running theme throughout the webinar.

This webinar was filled with insightful discussions and exchanges of best practices, offering participants valuable perspectives and actionable strategies. The collaborative environment fostered meaningful dialogue, inspiring innovative approaches to address shared challenges.

Learn more about our EU-funded [DeCiDE project](#).

Workshops - 20th & 27th February 2025

With the [DeCiDE project](#) well underway, the [Human Rights Cities Network](#) hosted a webinar on the 20th of February and an online workshop on the 27th of February for the participating cities. The engaging sessions helped the participants familiarise themselves with our [Standardized Monitoring System \(SMS\)](#), which is the human rights monitoring methodology that will be used during the project. The workshop was dedicated to collectively choosing the three human rights topics that all the cities will monitor as part of the project, based on their priorities and capacity.

Insights from the Webinar

Our SMS is the first standardized system for monitoring human rights in cities, making it an invaluable tool for the local actors to use. The system ensures accountability and systemic monitoring, while its participatory approach promotes cooperation and the sharing of best practices among cities. Designed specifically for municipal-level use, it serves as a more effective tool than pre-existing systems geared toward national or international levels.

The expected outcomes of using this monitoring system are to build a robust system for tracking human rights progress, strengthen collaboration between cities, increase accountability and transparency, with the aim to expand the use of the SMS to more cities.

The participants were given the space to start thinking about what resources and strengths they already have to help them implement this methodology. Some participants explained they already had strong datasets, which would give them a basis of what to monitor. Others have established monitoring tools, which can be integrated into the new system. Many said they have strong communication practices, not only within the municipality but also in inter-city collaborations with civil society organisations. All these valuable pre-existing resources will help the cities successfully implement and utilise the Standardized Monitoring System.

Choosing the Topics to Monitor

All the participants agreed from the very beginning that the right to access social and cultural services is an essential right to monitor. Participants from Padova shared that the city has already been working on an important project to promote this right, providing a strong foundation for the future monitoring efforts. The choosing of this right brought on a discussion about how the increase in multiculturalism needs to be taken into account when providing such services. The only way to ensure everyone has the right to access these services is if they are provided without discrimination. Civic rights were also discussed as essential to ensure that all the other rights are also being upheld. With the current backslide in democracy, this area is becoming increasingly important to monitor.

After an engaging discussion the participants agreed on the following human rights topics that they will monitor:

1. Right to access social and cultural services
2. Right to non-discrimination
3. Civic rights to democratic participation and the right to vote

In the next step of this project, the participants will participate in an exciting training in Treviso, Italy to build indicators to monitor these three human rights topics.

Delivering Democracy: DeCiDE – At the GPM Annual Summit 2025



On Friday, 6 June, the Global Parliament of Mayors Annual Summit 2025 in Braga, Portugal kicked off with a powerful session titled **“Delivering Democracy: DeCiDE”**, highlighting the growing role of cities in safeguarding democracy and human rights amid global challenges. The event was part of the ongoing **DeCiDE Project** (Boost Democratic Participation in Cities to Recharge Democracy in Europe), co-led by the GPM and the **Human Rights Cities Network (HRCN)**.

The session opened with high-level keynote speeches that underscored the urgency of the moment:

- Younous Omarjee, Vice-President of the European Parliament, called on cities to stand firm in defending democratic values across Europe.
- André Sobczak, Secretary General of EUROCITIES, emphasized the role of urban alliances in promoting inclusive governance.
- Mayor Ricardo Rio, GPM Chair and Mayor of Braga, reaffirmed his city's commitment to local democracy and the DeCiDE initiative.
- Rainer Kern, GPM Executive Director, stressed that democracy must be anchored where people live: in cities.

The session was introduced and moderated by **Professor Eric Corijn**, GPM Director of Policy & Research. In his framing remarks, Corijn highlighted how **cities are uniquely positioned as spaces of resistance to authoritarianism**, where democracy is practiced daily through local governance, public service delivery, and citizen engagement.

The core of the session featured a compelling discussion with leading city representatives:

- Mayor Ricardo Rio (Braga, Portugal)
- Mayor Mathias De Clercq (Gent, Belgium)
- Deputy Mayor Łukasz Sęk (Krakow, Poland)
- Frederique Hanotier (Human Rights Cities Network)
- Eric Corijn (GPM, Moderator)

The local leaders on the panel, all representing cities participating in the DeCiDE project, addressed key questions on the state of democracy and human rights today, including:

- Democracy and human rights are under threat across the world: How do you evaluate the situation today? Why are cities places of resistance to authoritarian tendencies?
- Why is it important for your city to participate in the DeCiDE Project? How does this initiative support your broader vision for urban democracy?
- Which of the three DeCiDE monitoring areas—non-discrimination, access to services, or civil and political rights—resonates most with your city's priorities, and why?
- What practical steps have you taken to translate human rights principles into service delivery? Can you share an example of impact?

In response, the mayors shared their cities' efforts to integrate human rights into local governance—highlighting how inclusive service delivery, participatory mechanisms, and a focus on equity are being used to safeguard democracy at the local level. Each speaker provided concrete examples of how their cities are translating human rights principles into daily governance, from inclusive service design to participatory practices that empower residents and promote accountability.

Frédérique Hanotier, Founder of the Human Rights Cities Network and DeCiDE board member, reflected on the discussion and provided a broader project update. She outlined:

- The progress cities have made in implementing local human rights monitoring
- The specific topics cities will focus on—from discrimination to civic participation
- The roadmap ahead, including upcoming trainings and expanded collaboration among participating cities

During the open floor discussion, Mayor Emil Boc of Cluj-Napoca (Romania) raised an urgent and timely issue: the impact of artificial intelligence on democratic rights, particularly the right to vote and the right to access truthful information. Citing recent elections in Romania, he invited panelists to reflect on how AI-generated content is reshaping the democratic landscape and how cities can respond.

This session delved into the global challenge of democracy and human rights in urban governance, particularly in relation to the DeCiDE project. It highlighted the worldwide variation in democracy and underscores the need for urban democracy in addressing pressing urban challenges. The speakers also outlined the objectives and the progress of cities in the DeCiDE project, and outlined the importance of co-creating a monitoring tool for human rights in cities.

As democracy faces renewed pressures globally, this session reaffirmed that cities are not passive observers—they are active defenders of rights and inclusion. The DeCiDE project offers a concrete way for local governments to measure, strengthen, and share their efforts to protect the fundamental rights of their residents.

Webinar: DeCiDE - 25 June 2025

On 25 June 2025, the **Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM)**, in partnership with the **Human Rights Cities Network (HRCN)**, hosted a dynamic webinar highlighting how cities across Europe are stepping up to monitor and advance human rights at the local level. The event was held in the framework of the **DeCiDE project** (Boost Democratic Participation in Cities to Recharge Democracy in Europe), a joint initiative of the GPM and HRCN supported by the European Union.

The webinar brought together city representatives, civil society leaders, and human rights experts to explore how the **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights** can be translated into meaningful action at the city level. The focus was on three priority areas identified by participating cities: **non-discrimination, access to social and cultural services, and democratic participation.**

In his opening statement, **Rainer Kern**, Executive Director of the GPM, emphasized that human rights are not only national or international concerns; they are lived and contested every day in **cities**. Whether through access to housing, education, healthcare, or public space, it is local governments that play a frontline role in ensuring these rights are respected and fulfilled.

Kern stressed that the **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights** outlines vital protections such as dignity, freedom, equality, and justice but these must be **brought to life** at the municipal level through local policy, budgets, and citizen engagement. He underscored that the DeCiDE project empowers cities to co-create tools that allow them to **monitor rights-based progress**, learn from one another, and embed human rights more deeply into local governance.

Following Kern, **Julia Johnson** of the Human Rights Cities Network explained the **participatory process** used to select the three human rights areas that cities will monitor under the DeCiDE project. She highlighted that the selection was grounded in a **bottom-up approach**, reflecting the cities' priorities, capacities, and local relevance.

Cities were presented with a shortlist of ten topics based on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and selected the final three through deliberative discussions, ensuring both feasibility and impact. Johnson emphasized the need for practical, city-led monitoring frameworks, and underscored that while the DeCiDE project is a pilot, it is designed to have a long-term legacy by equipping cities with the skills to monitor a wider range of rights beyond the project's formal scope.

The session featured insightful contributions from city officials and civil society organizations actively shaping the DeCiDE project:

Carmen Van Puyenbroeck from the City of Ghent shared how her city is tackling issues of non-discrimination and inclusion in public services. She highlighted both areas of progress and challenges that remain in ensuring equal access for all.

Fanni Bíborka Kontró from Józsefváros District in Budapest described how the city encourages civic and political participation beyond elections, through participatory budgeting and inclusive democratic mechanisms—bringing the spirit of Articles 12 and 39 of the Charter to life in local governance.

Farkas Attila, Program Manager at Mira! Intercultural Community, spoke about unmonitored or under-reported human rights issues, particularly those affecting migrants and refugees. He emphasized the importance of community spaces that provide language learning, access to information, and a sense of belonging.

Peter Roosens, a youth worker and quality policy maker at LEJO (Belgium), discussed how civil society can play a key role in turning monitoring results into change. He provided concrete examples from LEJO's work using experiential learning to support vulnerable youth and influence policy.

[The webinar session can be viewed here.](#)

The webinar was moderated by Frédérique Hanotier, Board Member of the Human Rights Cities Network, who guided the discussion through key themes of democratic inclusion, local empowerment, and practical human rights implementation. Insights gathered during the webinar will inform the upcoming DeCiDE training session in Treviso in the fall, which will be tailored to the needs and priorities of participating cities. The session also reaffirmed the growing momentum behind local human rights monitoring as a powerful tool for strengthening democracy and inclusion in Europe.

Speakers:

Rainer Kern, Executive Director, GPM

Julia Johnson, HRCN

Councillor Francesca Benciolini from the City of Padova

Carmen Van Puyenbroeck from the City of Ghent

Fanni Bíborka Kontró from the district of Józsefváros in Budapest

Farkas Attila, Program Manager at Mira! Intercultural Community And

Peter Roosens, Youth Worker and Policy Maker at LEJO, Belgium

Info Session - 10 September 2025

Following the successful sessions in February, the Human Rights Cities Network organised an additional info-session on the 10th of September for the newly joined cities. This session replicated the format and content of the February 20th webinar, providing an introduction to the Standardized Monitoring System (SMS) and its role within the DeCiDE project.

The aim was to ensure that the new participants were fully aligned with the project's methodology, objectives, and shared monitoring framework. Much like the original webinar, the session encouraged interactive discussion and exchange, allowing the new cities to explore how the SMS could be integrated into their local governance structures.

The participants expressed enthusiasm about joining the common monitoring effort and showed strong commitment to contributing to the collective goals of the DeCiDE network.

During the session, more details were also provided about the upcoming training in Treviso, which will focus on developing common indicators for the three selected human rights topics and strengthening the participants' practical understanding of the monitoring process.

Webinar: DeCiDE to Celebrate Diversity Cities Taking Action Against Discrimination - 23 September 2025

As part of the DeCiDE project's continuing work to strengthen human rights at the local level, the Human Rights Cities Network (HRCN) and the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM) co-hosted a high-level webinar titled "DeCiDE to Celebrate Diversity – Cities Taking Action Against Discrimination" on 23 September 2025. The session built upon previous project activities by focusing specifically on one of the three shared monitoring areas identified earlier in the year with the right to non-discrimination.

The event aimed to connect international frameworks with local realities, demonstrating how cities can translate global human rights commitments into concrete policies and actions that promote equality and inclusion. It brought together city officials, international organisations, and civil society partners to share tools, good practices, and lessons learned from the field.

The webinar opened with a presentation by Adrià Duarte, Coordinator of the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, who introduced the Guidance Framework for Creating a Human Rights City, developed jointly by UCLG and OHCHR. His intervention underlined the critical role of cities as the closest level of government to citizens where human rights norms become tangible realities. He highlighted how urbanisation, digitalisation, and global crises often deepen inequalities, but also how municipalities, with the right structures and partnerships, can lead transformative change. The framework's structure, built on foundations, structures, tools, and participation offered cities a clear roadmap for embedding human rights in their governance systems.

Following this, the spotlight shifted to concrete municipal experiences showcasing how cities across Europe are confronting discrimination in diverse contexts.

- Barcelona presented its Observatory on Discrimination, coordinated by the Human Rights Resource Center in partnership with 26 civil society organisations. The observatory produces annual reports based on quantitative and qualitative data, revealing key trends such as the persistence of racism, gender-based discrimination, and discrimination linked to health status. Barcelona’s intersectional approach and its emphasis on collaboration with civil society were highlighted as key success factors in improving trust, visibility, and accountability.
- Leuven shared insights from its Diversity and Equal Opportunities Department, which employs 28 staff and prioritises proactive inclusion and data-driven policy. By systematically documenting discrimination, Leuven has made inequalities more visible, creating a sense of political urgency that drives continuous improvement in policy responses.
- Utrecht presented the work of Discriminatie.nl, a provincial anti-discrimination office that provides legal advice, mediation, and policy input across 26 municipalities. With over 2,400 cases registered by mid-2025, Utrecht’s use of real-time digital dashboards to connect municipal, police, and judicial data stood out as a model of innovation. The city’s emphasis on outreach and community engagement was noted as essential to overcoming underreporting and fostering public trust.
- Graz shared the evolution of its Anti-Discrimination Office, which originated in early 2000s activism and has grown into a vital local institution. Despite facing political and financial challenges, the office continues to support residents affected by hate speech, racial profiling, and harassment through tools such as a mobile “Hate” reporting app.

Throughout these exchanges, a number of cross-cutting themes emerged: the persistent gap between experiences of discrimination and formal reporting; the need to address overlapping and intersecting forms of discrimination; and the crucial importance of trust-building and civil society participation for legitimacy and impact. Participants also discussed the influence of political environments, how supportive local leadership can accelerate progress, while hostile contexts risk undermining hard-won gains. The session concluded with a reaffirmation of cities’ commitment to act as champions of equality and inclusion, demonstrating that municipal leadership, backed by data and community partnerships, can make tangible progress in combating discrimination at all levels.

DeCiDE Monitoring & Evaluation Training in Treviso, Italy 6 – 10 October 2025



From 6 to 10 October 2025 in Treviso, Italy, the Human Rights Cities Network (HRCN) and the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM) conducted a five-day Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) training. The training brought together 26 participants from municipalities, civil society organizations, HRCN and GPM, and was facilitated by a senior M&E expert to support the development of a Standardized Monitoring System (SMS) for 8 to 10 pilot Human Rights Cities.

The training served as a key milestone in DeCiDE's work to embed a results-based monitoring culture across participating cities. It created a structured learning space to explore how municipalities can move from general human rights indicators towards monitoring change through measurable indicators. Through a combination of theory, practical exercises, group work, and peer exchange, the sessions highlighted how M&E tools can make rights-based policies more transparent, accountable, and effective.

The training began by grounding participants in the principles of results-based monitoring. The facilitator emphasized the shift from tracking activities to measuring real change experienced by people. The presentations illustrated how municipalities can identify outcomes, formulate QQT indicators (Quantity-Quality-Time), and avoid common pitfalls such as vague phrasing or overly activity-focused metrics. The initial sessions established the foundation for the hands-on application tools.

Across eight technical modules, the training introduced a suite of user-friendly M&E tools designed to help cities define, track, and analyze human rights progress:

- **Simplified Results Framework (SRF)** – a concise, three-column tool for summarizing a project’s logic, expected changes, and key indicators.
- **M&E Matrix** – the central tool for data organization and monitoring, allowing cities to document baselines, targets, achieved values, data sources, and responsibilities.
- **Indicator Identity Sheet (IIS)** – the most highly valued tool of the training. IISs standardize definitions, data collection methods, sampling, and analysis procedures, enabling municipalities and service providers to work with aligned indicator methodologies.
- **Indicator Analysis Sheet (IAS)** – introduced as a structured guide for turning data into meaningful insights, preventing “data collection without analysis,” a common challenge in municipal reporting.
- **Composite Indicator** – presented as a method for measuring complex human rights outcomes that cannot be captured by a single metric.

Through group exercises, participants had the opportunity to collaborate and prepare these tools. The collaborative nature of the work deepened peer learning, fostered exchange between municipalities, and strengthened cohesion among participants.

A major achievement of the training was the structured and participatory process undertaken to identify the core ten outcome human rights indicators that will form the backbone of the DeCiDE monitoring system. Working individually, at municipal level, in thematic clusters, and finally in plenary, participants proposed and reviewed 33 candidate indicators across DeCiDE’s three rights areas:

- Access to social and cultural services
- Civic participation and the right to vote
- Non-discrimination

Based on the analysis of applicability and collectability of the indicators indicated by the participating cities, these indicators were narrowed down to 10 core human rights indicators. This formed the common measurement framework across all pilot cities.

The final evaluation of the training demonstrated a strong appreciation for both the quality of facilitation and the practical applicability of the content. Participants valued the participatory methodology, the real municipal examples used throughout the course, and the clarity and usability of the M&E tools.

Particularly strong learning themes included: the importance of designing indicators that truly capture change; the need to harmonize data collection across municipalities; the value of simple tools for complex human rights work, and the recognition that M&E can be efficient, not burdensome, when properly structured. Participants also highlighted that group work deepened understanding and fostered cross-city collaboration.

The training closed with a strong sense of momentum and shared ownership. Participants reaffirmed their commitment to operationalizing the ten DeCiDE indicators and to embedding M&E as an integral part of local human rights governance. The experience confirmed that municipalities when equipped with clear tools, shared methodologies, and collaborative spaces can meaningfully monitor human rights progress in ways that are both rigorous and practical.

With next steps defined for Indicator Identity Sheet development, validation, and rollout, the DeCiDE pilot cities are now positioned to begin data collection in early 2026. The training therefore marks a key transition from design to implementation in building Europe's emerging Standardized Monitoring System for Human Rights Cities.

HRCN Webinar: Setting the Compass: Human Rights Indicators 1 – 4 December 2025

The Human Rights Cities Network launched the first webinar of the five-part DeCiDE: The Monitoring Journey series on 4 December 2025, marking the beginning of a structured learning pathway designed to guide cities through the full cycle of the Standardized Monitoring System. This series formed a central component of the Boost Democratic Participation in Cities to Recharge Democracy in Europe (DeCiDE) project and is intended to accompany municipalities from conceptual understanding to practical implementation of human rights monitoring. The overall objective of the webinars is to support cities in developing, validating, and testing their monitoring tools, ensuring coherence and comparability across diverse local contexts while maintaining a participatory, bottom-up approach.

This first webinar, *Setting the Compass: Human Rights Indicators*, introduced the Human Rights Indicator Framework that will guide the work throughout the series. Participants explored the importance of using indicators aligned with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency's framework and discussed how these can be meaningfully adopted in municipal contexts. Drawing on examples from their own experiences, DeCiDE cities reflected on ongoing projects and examined how the selected indicators can be applied to their local realities.

The session opened with an overview of the EU-funded DeCiDE project, presented by Julia Johnson of HRCN, highlighting its two-year collaboration with the Global Parliament of Mayors and nine diverse European municipalities; Braga, Padova, Ghent, The Hague, Krakow, Józsefváros, Chisinau, Benalmádena, and Cluj-Napoca. Despite differing in size, geography, and demographics, the cities share a common commitment to strengthening democratic participation and embedding human rights in local governance. Built on a co-creative methodology, the project ensures that monitoring tools reflect municipal realities while maintaining a shared framework. Three thematic priorities guide the work: access to social and cultural services, non-discrimination, and civic rights related to democratic participation and voting areas that respond to growing challenges such as social fragmentation, xenophobia, and shrinking civic space, and which the project seeks to address through practical tools and a standardized, replicable monitoring system.

The first keynote speaker, Jacqueline Hale from the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships, provided a strategic overview of the evolving civic landscape. She highlighted how human rights work has traditionally been anchored at national and international levels, often overlooking the critical role of cities. Yet urban networks are uniquely positioned to respond to contemporary challenges such as anti-rights discourse, discrimination, and threats to civic freedoms. Hale described the EU's Civil Society Strategy as a key response to these pressures and emphasized the need for strong partnerships between cities and civil society. She stressed that monitoring must be cyclical, inclusive, and grounded in human rights standards, with civil society contributing expertise, community connections, and innovative approaches, while cities provide institutional capacity and accountability.

The second keynote speaker, monitoring and evaluation specialist Andrea Pozza, shifted the discussion toward the technical aspects of indicator design. He noted that municipal monitoring systems often rely heavily on output indicators, measuring what a project delivers while paying far less attention to outcomes, which capture the actual changes produced by interventions. Andrea advocated for a results-based management approach that links inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts in a coherent chain. For the DeCiDE project, indicators must capture short-term, measurable changes attributable to municipal actions, align with the project's three focus areas, and be applicable across all participating cities. He introduced a simplified monitoring and evaluation system that includes indicator identity sheets, data collection tables, aggregation tools, and presentation templates.

The webinar then turned to the experiences of two participating cities. Antonio Soares Direito presented Braga's approach, emphasizing the need to rethink data collection and improve information sharing across municipalities. Braga has aligned its work with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and focused on indicators related to non-discrimination, services, and gender. The city has developed a social diagnosis and action plan aimed at supporting minority communities through the InLoco project which aims to promote migrant inclusion through awareness-raising and training initiatives. Antonio stressed that reliable data collection is essential for understanding vulnerable communities and building an inclusive society.

Paola Palmisciano from the Municipality of Padova followed with an account of the city's work within the DeCiDE framework. Padova has sought to strengthen human rights practices through a participatory and inclusive approach, focusing on improving monitoring capacities in public service delivery. The city's process began with methodological training, followed by implementation and the exchange of good practices. Paola highlighted both the strengths of Padova's approach such as its multi-level governance model and co-design with civil society and the challenges it faces, including establishing a stable cross-sectoral working group and implementing consistent data collection and analysis. Padova's monitoring efforts have focused on vulnerable groups, particularly disadvantaged primary school students and marginalized communities.

The webinar concluded with reflections from Marshall Wanimbo, the DeCiDE Project Coordinator, who reflected on the importance of measuring change rather than simply documenting activities. Effective monitoring, he noted, enables cities to understand the impact of public policies and respond to community needs. Marshall described DeCiDE as a pilot model for assessing human rights and public policy performance at the local level, with the long-term ambition of developing a democracy index and enabling comparative analysis across participating cities.

DeCiDE Info Session 11 December 2025

On 11 December 2025, the Human Rights Cities Network conducted an online info-session with the DeCiDE participating municipalities to review progress on the development of the Standardized Monitoring System (SMS). The meeting served as a follow-up event after the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Training in Treviso and the first webinar of the Monitoring Journey series.

The main objective of the info-session was to gather feedback from cities on the ongoing validation of the ten human rights indicators, assess progress in matching these indicators with local human rights projects, and identify any challenges encountered in completing the Indicator Identity Sheets (IIS) questionnaires. The session also aimed to support cities in refining their monitoring processes by identifying technical gaps, facilitating peer learning, and setting clear targets for the next implementation phase.

Prior to the session, municipalities had been asked to complete validation exercises through Excel sheets and Google Forms. These activities involved reviewing the ten human rights indicators identified during the Treviso M&E training, linking them to relevant local projects, and providing information on current data collection data collection practices. The feedback collected was analysed by the Project Coordinator and the M&E expert to identify areas requiring clarification or support.

During the meeting, M&E Expert Andrea Pozza revisited the ten selected indicators and explained the methodology used to assess the feedback submitted by cities. The discussion highlighted several important points. For instance, one municipality suggested merging two indicators related to improvements in the quality of life of vulnerable groups through social and cultural activities, noting that in practice these dimensions are often closely interconnected. Other cities reported challenges related to political transitions, shifting municipal priorities, and the need for interdepartmental coordination within local administrations. Limited financial and human resources within local civil society organizations were also identified as factors affecting the pace of implementation.

Despite these challenges, participating municipalities reaffirmed their commitment to the DeCiDE process and stressed the importance of measuring the real impact of municipal initiatives on vulnerable groups and communities. The session concluded with an overview of the 2026 engagement plan presented by the DeCiDE Project Coordinator, including the completion of IIS documentation, preparation for data collection, and continued support through the Monitoring Journey webinar series.

HRCN Info Session 22 January 2026

On 22 January 2026, the Human Rights Cities Network (HRCN) conducted an online info-session with participating municipalities of the DeCiDE project. Building on the discussions held during the meeting on 11 December 2025, the session aimed to continue the participatory validation process of the Standardized Monitoring System (SMS). With the DeCiDE Human Rights indicators revised and the Indicator Identity Sheets (IIS) developed based on feedback from municipal representatives and partner civil society organizations, the objective of the online activity was to review the revised indicators, clarify the methodology of data collection proposed in the IIS, and confirm readiness for the next stage of implementation.

The session included a presentation of the revised human rights indicators and a review of feedback previously submitted through the IIS questionnaires. Participants were guided through the structure and purpose of the Indicator Identity Sheets, including their components, links to EU human rights policies, and their connection to specific municipal projects. Particular attention was given to explaining the proposed data collection methods for each indicator and addressing initial concerns raised by municipalities regarding feasibility and implementation.

Participants had received the IIS documents in advance and were encouraged to assess the proposed methodologies against their local administrative and policy contexts. During the discussion, several municipalities shared updates on their progress as follows:

- Some cities reported limited capacity to review the documentation due to heavy workloads and staffing constraints, noting that the process of organizing data collection might require additional time.

- Others highlighted that the broad scope of the project requires coordination across multiple municipal departments, which could slow the implementation process.
- At the same time, some municipalities confirmed that they had completed the review and were ready to begin data collection.

Constructive feedback was also provided on specific indicators. For example, representatives from Padova suggested additional parameters to improve the methodology for measuring academic improvement for indicator number 4. These comments were acknowledged and incorporated into the revision process. The session also included a refresher on the monitoring tools introduced during the Monitoring and Evaluation Training in Treviso, reinforcing how the IIS contributes to standardizing data collection.

The meeting concluded with an overview of the upcoming implementation timeline. With the core monitoring tools finalized and the necessary capacity-building activities completed, participating cities were encouraged to begin data collection from mid-February 2026, with the first round expected to conclude between March and April. To support this phase, a public webinar on the use of the M&E Matrix was scheduled for 5 February 2026, targeting municipal representatives, civil society partners, and their colleagues to further strengthen awareness and understanding of the monitoring system.

HRCN Info Session 22 January 2026

The Human Rights Cities Network (HRCN) continued the DeCiDE Monitoring Journey Webinar Series with its second session titled Building the Map: The DeCiDE Core Indicators & the Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix. This webinar marked the transition from conceptual work on human rights indicators to the practical steps of the Standardized Monitoring System e. This webinar represented a key step in supporting participating municipalities to operationalise the Standardized Monitoring System (SMS) and strengthen their capacity to monitor human rights implementation in a systematic, participatory, and comparable way. The webinar built on the foundations established during the first session, and the info-session conducted with DeCiDE Participants. This second webinar focused on translating these indicators into an operational and measurable tool for the monitoring system . The session introduced the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Matrix as the first concrete implementation tool within the SMS framework and positioned it as a central component of the project's methodology.

Marshall Wanimo, the DeCiDE Project Coordinator opened the session with a brief recap of the DeCiDE project and its broader objective of strengthening participatory democracy and human rights implementation at the local level through a standardized and co-created monitoring system. He elaborated on the progress made by participants from conception till now. Through his presentation, he emphasised the recognition of cities as frontline actors in translating human rights standards into everyday policy and service delivery, and that effective monitoring requires strong cooperation between local authorities, civil society, and local communities.

The core focus of the webinar was the presentation of the M&E Matrix by the DeCiDE Monitoring and Evaluation Expert, Andrea Pozza. He started his presentation by giving an overview of the DeCiDE Human Right Indicators, explaining how they were formulated and validated through a participatory process. This introduction set the foundation to introduce the M&E Matrix as a tool designed to consolidate monitoring information using the established indicators into a single and structured overview, allowing cities to track progress across indicators and projects in a clear and comparable way. Through his presentation he emphasized that, rather than being a-

purely technical reporting tool, the M&E Matrix functions as a summary representation of the overall monitoring system, enabling cities to understand what has been achieved over a given period and identify areas requiring further action.

The M&E Expert established that within the DeCiDE framework, the Matrix is linked to the broader results-based monitoring logic of the SMS, which connects activities, outputs, outcomes, and long-term impact. This approach supports municipalities in moving beyond activity reporting toward measuring real changes in people's lives, particularly in relation to access to services, non-discrimination, and civic participation. The M&E Matrix therefore contributes directly to strengthening accountability and evidence-based decision-making at the local level.

Participants were introduced to the practical structure of the Matrix, including the various columns that form a complete matrix. A presentation of a complete matrix—including: data, units of measurements, data collection period, responsible entities, and verification documents—was done, establishing the practicality of the monitoring tool. The DeCiDE M&E Matrix is designed to be regularly updated, allowing cities to monitor progress over time and maintain a clear and accessible overview of their human rights monitoring performance. The session also highlighted the importance of ensuring that all indicators are stored and tracked in a unified format to improve clarity, comparability, and methodological consistency across cities.

The webinar also connected the Matrix to the next stage of the monitoring journey, including the development and practical application of Indicator Identity Sheets (IIS). These tools will support cities in moving from indicator theory to implementation by providing detailed operational guidance on data collection, indicator definition, and measurement processes.

The webinar also provided participating cities a platform to share their experience in participating in the DeCiDE Project. Katerina, a representative from Benalmandena Municipality, shared initial reflections on the change of approach in monitoring public service delivery. In her speech, she highlighted the opportunity the tools of the Standardized Monitoring System provide to translate human rights principles into measurable policy outcomes. Looking ahead, she identified the Matrix as a tool that can be adopted at the local level to better understand the impacts of the municipal-

initiatives. Through the presentation Katerina also highlighted both the initial complexity of adopting a new monitoring tool in Benalmádena and the added value of being able to transform the EU Charter of Fundamental rights into action through concrete, measurable indicators that support more inclusive public service delivery.

The discussions also reinforced the participatory nature of the DeCiDE methodology, which is based on close collaboration between local authorities and civil society actors. Frederique Hanotier, a cofounder and Board Member at HRCN, gave her remarks, explaining that the monitoring system is designed not only to collect data but also to strengthen dialogue, co-governance, and shared ownership of human rights implementation at the local level. She highlighted the strategic importance of the monitoring system in the current democratic context. She also pointed out that by advocating for collaboration between Civil Society Organizations and local governments The DeCiDE project aims to equip all parties with the tools and methodologies needed to address social challenges, and strengthen democratic resilience.

This webinar marked a shift from conceptual alignment toward practical implementation. By introducing the M&E Matrix and strengthening cities' technical and institutional readiness, the session laid the groundwork for the next phases of the project, including engagement with civil society actors and commencement of data collection. The discussions and lessons from this session will continue to guide participating cities as they move toward full implementation of the standardized monitoring system.

Advisory Board - First Meeting 13 February 2026

The Advisory Committee of the DECIDE Project was established to provide independent expertise, ensure the robustness and relevance of the project's outputs, and guide its strategic direction.

1st Advisory Board Meeting - 13 February 2026 (Online)

In line with its mandate, the Committee has reviewed the initial implementation phase across participating cities and engaged in structured reflection on both progress achieved and challenges encountered.

Members Participating: Eric Corijn (Chair of the Advisory Board) Carmen Van Puyenbroeck, Frederique Hanotier, Sofia Vanzan, Alexandr Votcariov, Ekaterina Shcherbinina Nazarova.

Also attending the meeting were Pietro d'Arcano (GPM, Moderator) and Ariana Mazli (GPM).

Meeting Outline:

The Role of the Advisory Committee & Context Setting

Introduction to the work and mandate of the Advisory Committee by Pietro d'Arcano (GPM)

The moderator briefly reiterated the purpose and mandate of the Advisory Committee. The Committee has been established to provide independent expertise and validation throughout the DeCiDE project cycle. Members are expected to assess progress, identify strengths and challenges in the cities' implementation of human rights at the local level, and provide strategic guidance on the direction of the project.

The Advisory Committee's role includes contributing expert analysis, facilitating knowledge exchange among participating cities, and offering feedback on project development and implementation.

In terms of outputs, an initial findings paper will be drafted within approximately one month, incorporating feedback from the meeting and any additional input provided by members. This paper will be presented to-

participating cities in a dedicated webinar. A second, more comprehensive paper will be produced at the end of the project, summarising findings and recommendations, and will likewise be shared with cities in a webinar.

An additional internal meeting of the Advisory Committee is planned for June to conduct a mid-term review of city progress and the monitoring framework. Members were encouraged to provide open and candid feedback. The moderator noted the value of having both long-standing contributors and members bringing fresh perspectives to the project.

The broader context of democracy and human rights in cities by Eric Corijn

Advisory Board Chair Eric Corijn provided a broader contextual reflection on the significance of the DeCiDE project. He situated the initiative within what he described as a period of major global transformation, marked by the decline of the neoliberal globalization model and a shift toward geopolitical fragmentation and competing spheres of influence.

He noted that Europe is currently navigating strategic uncertainty, including weakened transatlantic alignment and internal political divisions. Within this broader shift, he highlighted a documented global regression in democratic governance, reflected in both the rise of authoritarian tendencies and the declining quality of democratic processes.

In this context, he emphasized the growing importance of cities as spaces of democratic resilience. He observed that urban areas often act as counterweights to authoritarian developments at national level, citing examples where cities have played a key role in defending democratic values.

Against this backdrop, he stressed the strategic importance of the DeCiDE project. Developing an objective, practical instrument to measure and monitor human rights implementation in cities was described as a crucial contribution to strengthening democratic practice at the local level. He underlined the ambition to produce a prototype monitoring tool that could later be tested and expanded in a broader range of cities.

He concluded by emphasizing that the project is not merely technical or academic in nature, but represents a meaningful contribution to safeguarding democratic values and supporting cities in advancing human rights-based governance.

Project Update: Where We Stand: Overview of project progress to date by Frederique Hanotier (HRCN)

Frederique Hanotier presented the conceptual foundation and current progress of the DeCiDE project.

She emphasized that the project responds to a broader context of democratic decline and aims to support cities in strengthening democratic resilience. A core principle of the project is fostering close cooperation between municipalities and civil society organizations. This partnership approach is intended to embed human rights-based governance at the local level in a sustainable manner, independent of political cycles.

The project seeks to equip municipalities with both tools and knowledge to assess the implementation of human rights in local public policies. Rather than focusing solely on measurement, the emphasis is on evaluating how human rights principles are applied in practice and ensuring policies respond to the needs of all inhabitants. The initiative is conceived as a pilot project with the potential for replication and broader dissemination, including engagement with civil society networks and European-level institutions.

Regarding implementation:

- Pilot cities were selected to participate, each working in partnership with civil society representatives.
- Participating cities received training on a common monitoring mechanism, including how to design indicators, collect data, and apply a shared methodology.
- Ten common indicators have been jointly defined and reviewed by experts and the Human Rights Cities Network.
- Cities have selected specific local projects—primarily within social policy areas such as anti-discrimination—through which they will apply and monitor these indicators.

Municipal and civil society partners are jointly responsible for monitoring: civil society actors collect data, and municipalities integrate findings into policy implementation.

The project has now reached the stage of validating indicators and preparing for data collection. Additional webinars are being organized to support awareness-raising and internal capacity-building within municipalities.

Frederique noted that the pilot nature of the project has presented challenges, particularly in identifying comparable indicators across diverse cities. The next phase will focus on collecting and analysing data, assessing comparability, drawing conclusions, and exploring possibilities for scaling or expanding the model.

She concluded by inviting Advisory Committee members to share their reflections, identify gaps, and provide guidance on the project's direction.

Advisory Board Reflections & Input by all Advisory Committee Members

Moderator d'Arcano emphasized the importance of hearing Advisory Committee members' perspectives rather than providing further commentary himself.

To structure the discussion, he proposed several categories for feedback:

- Reflections concerning the role and performance of GPM and HRCN as organizing bodies, including areas for improvement and elements that are working well.
- Reflections on participating cities, noting in particular the significant time commitment required from municipal staff and the challenges this posed in recruiting fully engaged cities.
- Reflections on the project more broadly, including its scope, timelines, and overall feasibility.

He then invited members to share their views, beginning with a member bringing a fresh perspective to the project.

Sofia Vanzan welcomed the coherence of the project framework, noting the strong alignment between the selected focus areas; social services, non-discrimination, and democratic participation and the defined indicators. She highlighted the positive integration of specific human rights references within the indicators and commended the attention given to vulnerable groups.

She suggested that further strengthening the reference to the rights of persons with disabilities, including explicit mention of Article 26 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, could enhance the framework. She also sought clarification on the role of civil society organizations in the project, particularly regarding their involvement in data collection and whether they were working on the same projects as municipalities.

In response, **Frederique Hanotier** clarified that municipalities were responsible for identifying civil society partners, often through a call for interest. Civil society representatives and municipal staff received joint training and are collaborating on the same selected projects, using shared indicators and methodologies for monitoring and data analysis.

Carmen Van Puyenbroeck provided reflections based on the experience of the City of Ghent. She noted that recent financial cutbacks had affected the city's capacity to participate fully, highlighting the importance of considering resource constraints when designing future projects. She also indicated that deadlines for reviewing instruments and providing feedback were sometimes tight and suggested allowing more flexible timelines. Additionally, she observed that the broad thematic scope of the project required involvement from multiple municipal departments, which posed challenges during periods of budgetary pressure.

She suggested that focusing on a single policy domain (e.g., housing) across participating cities might facilitate more streamlined collaboration and indicator development. Given the broad scope of the current framework, multiple municipal departments had to be engaged, which proved difficult in the context of financial cutbacks and limited staff capacity.

Carmen also pointed out that budget cuts affected the role and participation of civil society: Gent's partner civil society organization fears that if the data they collect does not show a positive impact by them that their budget will be cut. She also emphasized that one of the project's strengths is that it makes human rights more concrete and operational at the municipal level.

Alexandr Votcariov noted that the time required to meaningfully engage in the project was also a challenge for the City of Chisinau, highlighting the broader issue of staff capacity and workload constraints.

Ekaterina Shcherbinina Nazarova stressed the importance of further strengthening the involvement of civil society. She noted that political interference and changes in political leadership can affect continuity in project implementation. She also observed that donor requirements particularly strict timelines and expectations regarding concrete deliverable can limit flexibility. Additionally, while citizens may be aware of their human rights, there is often limited understanding of how these rights can be implemented in practice.

Frederique Hanotier acknowledged that the project framework could benefit from clearer definition. However, she explained that the intention was to apply a participatory approach by involving cities in the decision-making process regarding indicators and methodology. She also emphasized the importance of maintaining the independence of civil society organizations, particularly where financial relationships between municipalities and civil society partners exist.

Eric Corijn acknowledged the issues brought up by the advisory board members and highlighted difficulties in measuring broad concepts such as democracy, as well as that while democracy is under threat it is essential to mobilize local and civil society against this threat.