



European Charter for Safeguarding Human Rights in the City

Easy-Reading Texts



**Diputació
Barcelona**

**Ajuntament de
Barcelona**





European Charter for Safeguarding Human Rights in the City

The European Charter for Safeguarding Human Rights in the City includes citizen rights and local authority commitments to ensure cities respect these rights.

Cities welcome large numbers of people and have become meeting spaces offering possibilities for everyone.

Here civic and caring attitudes coexist with conflicts and contradictions, very often arising from unemployment, poverty and a disregard for cultural differences.

To ensure the community harmony, cities have to lay down basic rights such as the rights to housing and work, while recognising new ones, such as respect for the environment and the rights to healthy food and leisure time.

Cities are becoming ideal spaces for ensuring a more caring and participatory local democracy.

Under the Barcelona Commitment signed in 1998 by the cities taking part in the European Conference of Cities for Human Rights, a committee was established to draw up a Charter. This was approved in the French city of Saint Denis, in 2000. Ten years later more than 350 cities have already signed it, including 146 from Barcelona Province.

The European Charter for Safeguarding Human Rights in the City is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and on other regional and international texts for safeguarding human rights.

The Charter has to be approved at a plenary meeting of each local authority. Its signatory cities undertake to respect and guarantee the rights and principles set down in the text.

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 everyone's needs and see to preventing situations of discrimination or abuse.

Local authorities have to assess their public services and take their results into account.

● **Transparency**

Signatory cities guarantee the transparency of their administrative activities.

Local authorities have to publish their municipal principles 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 apply to municipal contracts and the selection of people.

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 promote knowledge of other cultures among city residents.

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



Rights

●● Right to the city

Cities belong to all their residents.

Everyone must be able to find the conditions for achieving fulfilment 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 choose, and be chosen 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, and hold meetings and demonstrations.

Cities must have public spaces for holding meetings and informal gatherings. Local authorities must ensure everyone has access to these spaces, in accordance with 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 the quality and fair prices of such services.



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 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 to work

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

Local authorities promote the 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 the equality of everyone at work and access to work for women, by creating nurseries for children, and for people with a disability, through accessible facilities.

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

●● Right to health

Local authorities provide everyone with access to medical care and prevention.

Signatory cities promote everyone's health, through economic, cultural, social and urban planning initiatives.

●● 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 everyone for cultural and social activities.





●● Right to leisure

Local authorities recognise people's right to have free time.

They guarantee quality leisure spaces open to all children, promote the pursuit of sport and provide sports facilities for everyone.

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

●● Right to housing

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.





● Consumer rights

Local authorities protect consumers as far as their powers so permit.

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 to foster energy saving, selective waste collection and recycling as well as the expansion and protection of green spaces in the city.

Local authorities see to 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 urban planning

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.



●● 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 culture 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. Families most in need will have social support and services available for their children and elderly members.

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

Local authorities work to protect 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.

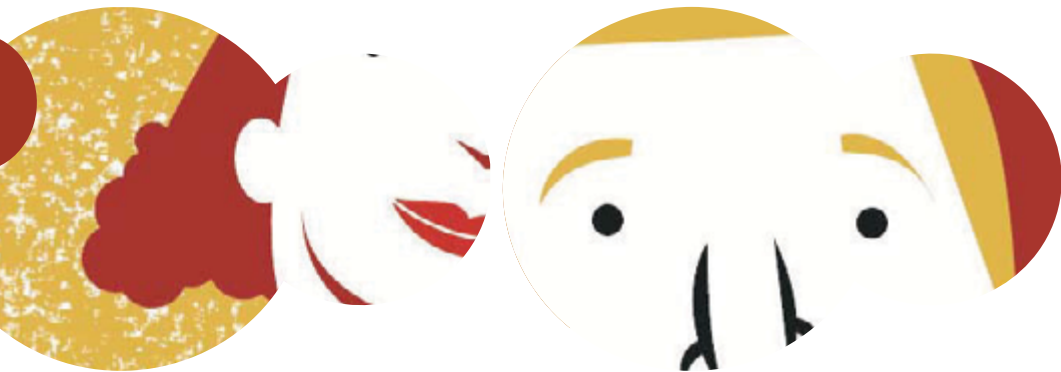
●● Protection of the most vulnerable

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

Signatory cities undertake to work for people with a disability to have housing, a job, public transport and adapted leisure spaces.

Cities implement social policies to promote the integration of people most in need.





A 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 put a service of qualified professionals at everyone's disposal for safety, mediation and the prevention of disputes.

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

Cities see to the smooth running of local justice and to improving everyone's 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** defend the rights of all citizens in the most vulnerable areas.

●● Cities create **committees** of citizens to assess the application of the Charter's rights.

Signatory cities undertake to draw up a budget that enables the enforcement of the rights stated under the Charter. They may ask for the public's opinion through a participatory budget.

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

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



This material has been prepared by the Easy Reading Association, based on the original text of the "European Charter for Safeguarding Human Rights in the City".



