

MULTI ANNUAL STRATEGY

SUPPORTING CATALYSTS OF CHANGE FOR JUST SOCIETIES



2023-2026



SUPPORTING CATALYSTS OF CHANGE FOR JUST SOCIETIES

SUMMARY

In wider Europe today, more and more people are confronted with backsliding of the rule of law and violations of human rights. We face a fundamental challenge of peaceful coexistence on our continent and this has direct and sometimes destructive consequences for citizens, as we can witness on the news every day.

At the same time, catalysts of change can be found everywhere. Even under the most difficult circumstances, brave citizens are standing up for fundamental rights and justice, fighting against existing power structures which perpetuate inequality. Building on our track record of 35 years, we consider it to be our mission to inspire, engage and support these catalysts of change in building just and rights-respecting societies.

We want vibrant civil society organisations that raise their voices in defence of human rights. We want our governments to be held accountable and act with integrity. We want independent, inclusive and humane justice systems that put people first, especially when they are marginalised or historically underrepresented in decision-making. These areas form the cornerstones of our work.

Everybody can be a catalyst of change, and we are ready to support them by strengthening their capacities and by amplifying their voices through advocacy and campaigns. Our networks reach out to civil society, governments as well as the justice chain. With the catalysts of change from these sectors, we are able to mobilise the right peer-to-peer expertise and build bridges between them. Together we stand strong for human rights, the rule of law and justice in wider Europe.



BETONDEMONTAGETE

LOVE & PEACE
WEST & EAST

Test West

Fall of the Berlin Wall, November 1989

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OUR MISSION AND VISION

The Netherlands Helsinki Committee was founded in 1987 as part of the wave of new human rights watchdogs across wider Europe, established following the signing of the Helsinki Accords. Long-time dissidents and newly inspired activists behind the Iron Curtain called on their governments with appeals for political reform and improved protection of human rights. They were using the human rights commitments of the parties to the Accords to hold their governments to account.

Especially today, we are still deeply encouraged by these brave human rights defenders and we continue to work on our mission to inspire, engage and support catalysts of change in building just and rights-respecting societies in wider Europe, covering Eastern Europe, Western Balkans, Caucasus, Central Asia and the European Union. We envision a world in which every person lives in a just society where human rights and the rule of law are respected, and where people join forces to actively contribute to change in that direction.

For this to happen, we need resilient civil society organisations that raise their voice in defence of human rights, we need our governments to be held accountable and act with integrity, and we need independent, inclusive and humane justice systems that protect people, especially when they are marginalised or historically underrepresented in decision-making. These areas form the cornerstones of our work.

We believe that positive change is possible, and that it can happen especially when we are building bridges among the different actors that have a role to play in bringing about the change we urgently need in the world today. We see that catalysts of change can be everywhere: in the East and in the West of Europe, in civil society, in government administrations, in the judiciary and in communities.

Through our unique and historic networks and contacts, we are able to support change makers in these sectors by strengthening their capacities and by amplifying their voices. By building bridges between catalysts of change from different sectors and countries, we stand strong together for human rights, rule of law and justice in wider Europe.



Stop the war protest, Dam Square, Amsterdam February 2022

On 24 February 2022, the European continent was shaken by the outbreak of war in Ukraine. For the first time since the war in former Yugoslavia, the European continent found itself amidst a large-scale armed conflict. The consequences are dire and all encompassing, and a direct attack on our fundamental values. We are witnessing thousands of casualties, crimes against humanity and millions of refugees and displaced people, in a country close to our hearts and our homes.

The war in Ukraine painfully reminds us that freedom and democracy can never be taken for granted. Now more than ever we must realise that sustainable, lasting peace can only be achieved by building democratic, free and rights-respecting societies – and that a strong focus on human rights and the rule of law lies at its core. The war in Ukraine is not the only development in the world that is affecting our work. The further closing of civic space, and roll back of the rule of law in wider Europe, including inside the European Union, presents continued challenges.

Shrinking civic space has many meanings for people defending human rights. It encompasses harassment through propaganda or social media, inciting statements by politicians, investigations or even legislation targeting the work or resources of non-governmental organisations. It affects in particular historically underrepresented people, as well as groups that raise their voice in defence of fundamental values. This becomes painfully visible in the attack on women's rights, anti-corruption, environmental and LGBTQI-activists in some countries, also in the European Union. Furthermore, shrinking civic space negatively impacts democratic participation of people and therefore inclusive policy making, in a time where trust in politicians is declining and there is a wide-spread sense of underrepresentation for large groups in society.

Judges are removed from the bench simply for applying EU law and standing up for judicial independence in Poland. Journalists are targeted with all-intrusive spyware and NGOs are accused of being “foreign agents” in Hungary. Closer to home, the Netherlands fell by 22 places in the World's Press Freedom Index this year; an unprecedented drop reflecting the undeniable increase in aggression against journalists. The rule of law and fundamental freedoms need to be

monitored and safeguarded, as we see backsliding can happen everywhere.

New threats are coming from cyberspace. Not only digital security threats and attacks from hostile countries like Russia, but also closer to home the gathering and use of data by our own governments without sufficient protection against unjust and illegal profiling of citizens are posing a threat to fundamental rights. As the power of big-tech continues to rise, so does a need for a consistent, values-based approach enshrined in the fundamental principles of democracy and human rights from our governments and overarching institutions.

We have to conclude that though governments undertook an obligation to respect human rights and the rule of law, as laid down in the International Bill of Human Rights which includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Helsinki Accords that formed the foundation for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)'s human dimension agenda, reality is often different, and decisive action is needed.

At this time of history, there is a geopolitical necessity and opportunity to strengthen and enlarge the community of fundamental values on the European continent. Though we would like to see the OSCE and Council of Europe (CoE) solidify their support for the fundamental values that stand at their core, limited positive influence is to be expected due to lack of reforms and the blockade by authoritarian participating states. At the same time, 10 years since the last EU expansion with Croatia, the momentum of EU candidate status granted to Ukraine and Moldova offers an opportunity to strengthen the European Union and intensify support for democratic reforms in wider Europe. While we see polarisation and perhaps even a new Iron Curtain arising in Europe, we also continue to see pockets of change in each and every country. Even under the most difficult circumstances people continue to stand up for freedom, for peace and for fundamental rights, sometimes with a very high price. The historic mission of the NHC to build bridges between the catalysts of change in the East and the West, has become more relevant and needed than ever.

OUR STRATEGIC CHOICES

These new realities have an immediate impact on the work of the NHC. For the period 2023-2026 it means that we make the following strategic choices, that will guide our decision-making:

- We use the sense of urgency and political momentum of solidifying the EU and its fundamental values to intensify our work in support of the rule of law and human rights in wider Europe. If and when needed, our demands are activist and political;
- Realising that in some countries lack of political will to reform is blocking progress, we will step up the strengthening of civic space and building resilient civil society organisations that can act as watchdogs and mobilisers of civic support for reforms. Change can only root when people are part of it;
- We continue to be active in the networks around the OSCE and CoE, but focus our work there on solidarity actions within the networks of partners. For policy advocacy we will intensify our focus towards the EU and national governments in wider Europe.
- We believe in the power of inclusion and equality. We continue to recognize that race, gender, age, social class, disability, beliefs or sexual orientation influence the perceived position, chances to participate in decision-making and the possibility to get access to justice. We contribute to shifting the power balance and embrace an intersectional and inclusive approach throughout our work;
- We can only be credible if we are also critically reflecting on human rights and the rule of law in our own society. The coming years we will further strengthen our presence and activities in the country where we are based, the Netherlands;
- We continue to innovate and adapt by learning and exchanging, and by looking for new partnerships on new developments and topics that are decisive for the future of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe, such as digital rights, open source and big tech.

- We are inspired by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and recognize the increasing impact of the climate crisis on our work. We are in particular led by goal 16, which is to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- Knowing that systemic change requires a change in society with its socio-cultural norms, beliefs and practices as well as in the formal institutions through laws, policies and resource allocations, we will strengthen focus on strategic communication, engagement and advocacy;
- The volatile situation demands more resilience and flexibility. This will be reflected in the fact that we define our overall strategy with three broad programme areas that allow for flexibility, and that we prioritise acquisition of core funding over project funding.

DEFINING INTERSECTIONALITY

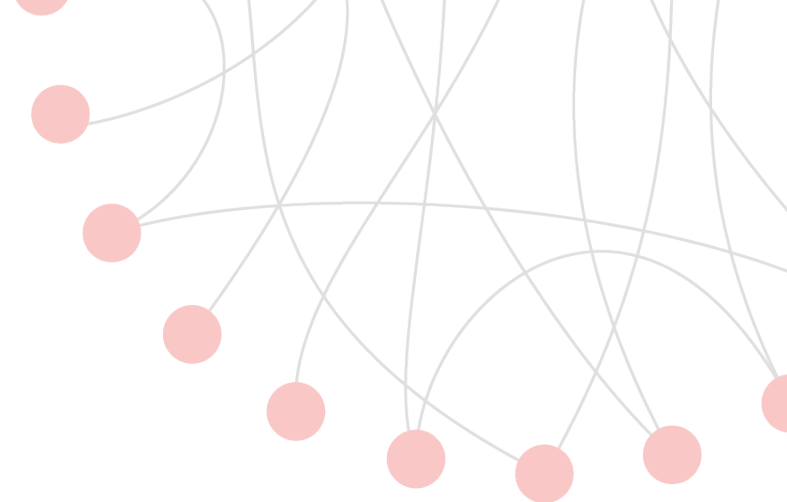
Individuals often experience different forms of marginalisation, discrimination, or persecution not because of one identified factor or social situation but rather because of intersecting aspects of their identity such as, gender, race, age, or socio-economic status. As such, the term 'intersectionality' is often used to describe the overlapping social characteristics or identify factors that underlie human rights violations. An intersectional perspective or approach is both a critical tool for analyzing and better understanding the interrelated causes of discrimination and abuse, as well as a practical tool for adopting measures to address and eliminate intersectional discrimination.

OUR PATHWAYS OF CHANGE

Despite these challenging times for the human rights movement, we are determined to make a difference, and we see opportunities to contribute to sustainable change. We are inspired by the brave human rights defenders that do not give up on advocating for rights, by the civil servants that want to contribute to reform in their country, and the magistrates who continue to do their job with integrity and determination under difficult circumstances. We are encouraged by the worldwide human rights movement to change the mind-sets and behaviour of those actors that shape the future of wider Europe.

There is no blueprint for change, but we know that change will not happen in isolation. Multiple actors play a role and the outcome is based on a balance of power between different spheres of influence. It is the actors in both these spheres (governments and the institutions and organisations that keep them in check) that we want to target with our work; by amplifying their voices, by supporting the change process for more just and rights-respecting policies and laws, and by building bridges to foster cooperation.

Our programmes are our pathways of change. It is in these areas that based on our 35-year track record we can achieve real impact. Together they are the pillars of our Theory of Change that show how we are bringing our mission of just and rights-respecting societies in the wider Europe a step closer.



OUR PATHWAY OF CHANGE

	Human Rights Defence	Integrity & Accountability	Rights-Based Justice
Capacity Strengthening & Monitoring	Emergency- and targeted support for CSOs, mutual learning, exchange and training on communication and advocacy	Rule of Law training, learning & exchange between reform oriented governmental peers	Capacity development for actors in the justice chain
Policy Advocacy & Networking	Networking and joint advocacy for human rights and civic space (OSCE, CoE, EU)	Monitoring & joint advocacy for rule of law and anti-corruption, annual input European Commission Rule of Law report	Innovating policies and advocating for criminal justice reforms with Ministries of Justice, Health, Interior and Education
Awareness raising & Engagement	Solidarity campaigns with and for civil society organisations, activists and human rights defenders, hope-based communication to raise awareness on and the level of engagement of the public in human rights and their protection	Public events and communication on the rule of law as a critical factor for democracy	Supporting the work of organisations, institutes and individuals with watchdog functions

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Every person in the wider Europe region lives in a just society where human rights and rule of law are respected and upheld, and where people join forces to actively contribute to change in that direction

Vision

People in society are actively defending and promoting human rights and civic space

Governments have integrity and are held to account

Justice systems comply with international rules and regulations, guaranteeing the protection of human rights

Civil society activists and their organisations are more resilient catalysts of change within their countries

There is an enabling environment that facilitates the emergence of a robust rule of law culture that is embedded in internationally agreed standards and criteria

Key-actors in the justice chain ensure access to justice and execute criminal sanctions in a humane and rights-respecting way

CSOs identify and effectively address non-compliance with international human rights standards and verdicts of the ECHR

OSCE, CoE, EU and national governments have created spaces for meaningful advocacy by Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and adopt strategies in support of strengthening civic space

Authorities recognize and support good governance, anti-corruption, rule of law and media freedom as fundamentals of democracy

CSOs that address corruption and rule of law issues are holding governments to account

Justice sector partners cooperate with each other to improve the position of rights-holders

Outcome

Inter-vention Strategies

Awareness Raising & Engagement

Policy Advocacy & Networking

Capacity Strengthening & Monitoring

Engagement events (on and offline)

Solidarity campaign for CSOs and their organisations

Explainers and infographics rule of law

Developing innovative policy proposals

Side-events at OSCE, CoE and EU spaces

Joint advocacy with our networks

Targeted support to groups under attack

Subgranting and emergency assistance

Mutual learning & Exchange, peer-to-peer

Activity

Human Rights Defence Programme

Integrity and Accountability Programme

Rights-Based Justice Programme



OUR AMBITION

The situation of human rights is deteriorating on a global scale. From the increasingly frequent subversion of the rule of law by authoritarian regimes, shrinking civic space and fundamental freedoms, to a sharp rise in nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric and practice in democracies, the universal human rights values and principles are coming under intensifying threat and attack. What was once perceived as a given – a shared culture of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms – is more and more showing itself to be a precarious ideal that must be ardently fought for and consistently defended.

Despite this sobering context, human rights organisations fiercely push back against repression. To support this push back, our ambition is that by 2026 human rights defenders, civil society activists and their organisations become more resilient catalysts of change within their countries; their support base is increased; and their activities have greater impact and outreach, allowing them to effectively contribute to the process of building just and rights-respecting societies in wider Europe.

OUR APPROACH

In order to achieve the above-mentioned goals, we will focus on the following intervention strategies:

- Strengthening the capacity of HRDs and civil society activists and their organisations: through peer-to-peer coaching, training, facilitating exchange of best practices with and between HRDs and their organisations, we strengthen their profiles with regard to communication and advocacy campaigns at national and international levels. Support also includes providing targeted and emergency support.
- Amplifying voices of HRDs and civil society activists to increase the impact of their activities through networking and bridge building for joint advocacy: we rely on our convening power and mobilise actors through our multiple networks.

Together we strengthen the voice of civil society to call upon governments and international organisations such as the OSCE, CoE and EU, to uphold, support and promote fundamental rights, to implement judgements of the European Court of Human Rights, and to strengthen civic space.

- Solidarity with HRDs and civil society activists and their organisations by campaigning for more awareness on human rights and the work of HRDs: we amplify the voices of human rights defenders by drawing attention to their work and their fight; by issuing calls to action towards a variety of stakeholders and the public, to support HRDs and their activities. We critically evaluate how we measure reach and engagements, in light of digital rights and the need for big tech to be held to account under a values-based, human rights narrative.
- Integrating an intersectional approach: we will provide targeted support for and solidarity with those groups and people whose rights are first and most under pressure because of their backgrounds and historic position in society. Building on our history of engagement, we especially look for alliances with and support to LGBTQI+ and women's rights and gender equality organisations that are active in the field of human rights.



NHCs 35th Anniversary Event, December 2022

- Awareness raising and advocacy towards Dutch public and political actors on the issues focused on civic space and pushing for development and implementation of effective strategy aimed at protection of civic space within the Netherlands and the European Union: we will monitor and critically assess civic space developments in the Netherlands and use these data in building the counter narrative against populist and anti-democratic movements in the Netherlands and in our advocacy towards relevant actors.

OUR TRACK RECORD

We have been able to continue to provide support to human rights organisations under the most difficult circumstances. With target and emergency support and actions for joint advocacy we supported and worked together with key human rights organisations and defenders in for example Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. We were able to continue to work with them despite increased repression and war. In 2022, some of these partners were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, while others continue to work more under the radar.

Our active participation in a number of civil society networks in the region enabled us to initiate various actions in support of human rights and HRDs. Part of this is to amplify their demands and collectively reach out to key-actors in the international policy arena, for example with joint calls for reform of the OSCE and CoE through the Civic Solidarity Platform (102 members) and EU-Russia Civil Society Forum (192 members).

We will continue to build on the success of the #BringHumanRightsHome campaign. With this campaign, we showed that human rights are not a theoretical exercise, but a matter for each and everyone of us. The campaign was successfully launched in 8 countries, including in The Netherlands, over the summer of 2021 and reached over 11 000 000 people. This showed to be a powerful counter narrative against anti-democratic and populist forces that are delegitimizing the work of rights defenders. By focusing on hope-based communication the campaign also contributed to a change in perspective on how we as human rights organisations can innovate and communicate to inspire broader audiences to support human rights.



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This story is about **resistance to common evil**, about the fact that freedom has no borders, and the values of human rights are universal. That human rights defenders build invisible horizontal connections in their societies to **assert freedom and protect people** in our part of the world, in which a monster is once again trying to rule. And who will lose sooner or later. And then peace will come.” **Oleksandra Matviychuk, head of the Center for Civil Liberties (NHC partner organisation) at the press conference dedicated to the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize**



Kirsten Meijer, Democracy Under Threat Event, November 2022

OUR AMBITION

The rule of law and its standards of integrity and accountability have seen serious erosion in many countries, with as worst-case examples Hungary and Poland where the independence of the judiciary and media pluralism are under direct attack by the government. Also in countries with overall well-functioning democracies, specific weaknesses in the rule of law can have a huge impact on people's lives, as the Dutch childcare benefit scandal has shown.

With the increased attention to the rule of law in the European Union and the renewed urgency for candidate countries to join the EU and its community of fundamental values, we believe there is momentum to give citizens and institutions a new push to stand up against backsliding, and stand up in protection of the rule of law. Our ambition is that by 2026 we made progress in overcoming the barriers to change by strengthening catalysts of change: (reform-oriented) civil servants are better equipped to initiate and sustain reforms; civil society is strengthened; politicians speak up and media experiences more protection

and freedom, so they can play their role of critical observers. Together, this will contribute to an environment that facilitates the emergence of a robust rule of law culture that is embedded in internationally agreed standards and criteria.

OUR APPROACH

In order to achieve the above-mentioned goals, we will focus on the following intervention strategies:

- Advocacy for good governance, anti-corruption and the rule of law. We will be using EU instruments, while at the same time remaining critical of the EU's role itself. We focus on promoting the principle of good governance and budget protection measures under the conditionality regulation. We want to stop the financing of corruption, undemocratic governments and other breaches of the principles of the rule of law from the EU budget.

- Strengthening capacities of key-actors, with a strong focus on learning and exchange on integrity and accountability of civil servants, magistrates and other representatives of the state. This includes strengthening trust and cooperation between the judiciary and media, to increase protection of media freedom and the watchdog function of journalists that is so important for holding governments to account.
- Building bridges and creating networks consisting of civil society, civil servants and politicians; because we believe only jointly we can achieve lasting results. We especially focus on the rule of law within the EU.
- Addressing harmful mechanisms that reinforce historic power imbalances and injustice. We do this for example by integrating gender, social inclusion and intersectionality as topics in our training modules or by making this perspective part of our analysis and policy advocacy.
- Awareness raising on the need to preserve and strengthen democracy and the rule of law in the Netherlands. We continue to contribute to the debate on the rule of law as a critical factor for democracy. We do this together with other Dutch allies on strategic moments, for example in the consultation of the European Commission's Rule of Law reports.

OUR TRACK RECORD

Over the past 5 years, building on our excellent reputation as experts and creators of dialogue on good governance, we have been able to inspire, engage and support almost 1.000 civil servants from 11 countries. These civil servants gained the knowledge to be the voice for reform in support of the rule of law and democracy in their own country. Their Back Home Action Plans ignited reforms on institutional, sectoral and national level. Thanks to this Rule of Law Training Programme new alliances and contacts were established, together contributing to the formation of a network of reform-oriented peers.

Since 2014, we have been identifying how Russian oligarchs gathered their wealth and became so influential, in close cooperation with the Russian investigators of the Transborder Corruption Archive. We lobbied for a tougher EU sanctions regime and found some political will within the ranks of the European Parliament. After the beginning of

Russia's invasion in Ukraine, most oligarchs with assets outside of Russia were put on sanctions lists. The network that we built continues to be instrumental in joint advocacy for a unified approach in the EU to tackle transnational kleptocracy.

We have been building networks in the Netherlands and abroad on the rule of law. One such newly created coalition is Recharging Advocacy for Rights in Europe (RARE), which is the first capacity-and alliance building programme for leaders of civil society organisations from the EU. We have coordinated input from Dutch civil society for the annual Rule of Law report of the European Commission. With our networks in Europe, we were able to monitor, track, expose and act upon rule of law abuses and misuse of funding within the EU. Such evidence-based advocacy resulted in the creation of a dedicated working group on the rule of law in the COSAC (Conference of the committees of the national Parliaments as well as representatives of the European Parliament).

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I think that now is the chance to **implement reforms** because we have a new government that is very pro-European and they are pushing the justice system a lot. I think future reforms will be a good chance for us to start with a clean slate and to start to do things correctly. I took away many **new skills** from the course and I have been busy implementing what I have learnt into my own work.” **Eugeniu Ciubotaru, RoLT participant and judge from the Republic of Moldova**

RIGHTS-BASED JUSTICE

OUR AMBITION

Increased pressure on human rights is experienced in particular by people who have traditionally been marginalised in society, including those who are depending on protection from the state, for example prisoners, survivors of gender based violence, victims as well as ex-offenders. In most societies, we witness a trend towards more focus on security, punishment and protecting rules and procedures instead of people. The examples are manifold: from the shift towards a more punitive stance in criminal sanctioning to authorities that do not see the importance of addressing discrimination and institutional racism. These trends have a huge impact on people's lives, in particular of those people in society who are already in an underprivileged position. It leads to more poverty and exclusion and less safe societies. At the same time, most governments are, at least on paper, committed to respecting international human rights standards.

We see their commitment, and sometimes strong political will to comply, as an opportunity to hold authorities accountable and to support catalysts of change in the justice system to ensure access to justice and to execute criminal sanctions in a humane and rights-respecting way. Our ambition is that by 2026 we have contributed to strengthening the capacity of key-actors in the justice chain to uphold fundamental rights; more attention to the well-being and rehabilitation or restoration of those affected by crime and conflict - both victims and offenders; and increased collaboration in the whole justice chain. This will contribute to our ultimate goal, which is to have justice systems that are inclusive, effective and humane.

OUR APPROACH

In order to achieve the above-mentioned goals, we will focus on the following intervention strategies:

- Strengthening the capacities and cooperation of actors in the justice chain (police, defence lawyers, prosecution, judiciary, correctional services and civil society), by facilitating joint projects and learning and exchange aimed at

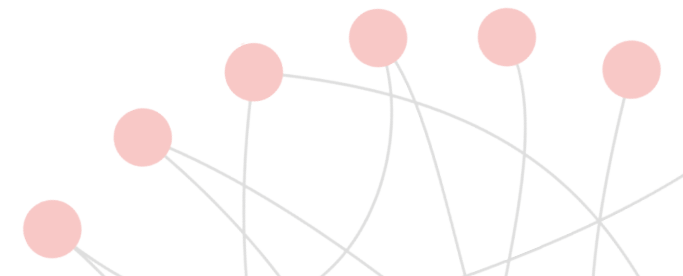
applying a rights-based approach;

- Advising and advocating for reforms with Ministries of Justice, Health, Interior and Education on how to create justice systems that are compliant with human rights standards and best international practices and by supporting the adoption and effective implementation of rights-based policies and procedures;

- Better monitoring on (non)compliance with international standards and increased awareness in society by supporting the work of organisations, institutes and individuals with watchdog functions, such as human rights institutions, ombudsmen, equality bodies, civil society and lawyers;

- Integrating an intersectional approach and targeted projects for those rights-holders that are in urgent need of vocal and direct support. Building on our track record, we especially focus on: humane conditions and reintegration of prisoners, participation of children in decision-making, and access to justice for women affected by gender-based violence. Reintegration also considers which alternative forms to detention may be more suitable and how their use can be while for reparation alternative forms of conflict resolution may be more effective;

- Innovation and advocacy in the Netherlands: By building on best practices and action-research, we continue to develop new models and policy proposals aimed at making justice chains more humane, inclusive and future-oriented. We want to counter the trend towards a more punitive stance on criminal sanctioning, starting in the country where we are based.



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Incarcerated minors are now being offered the opportunity to achieve higher education. I cannot overstate the importance of this. Three minors from the correctional facility in Kosovo are now pursuing a Bachelor degree. The NHC helped so much, with **establishing the connections and funds needed** for the first minor, Mirlinda*. Some projects come and go, however, the work of getting Mirlinda* into university rolled into other minors attending higher education, which has had a big impact” **Rita Selimi, criminology researcher from Kosovo**

OUR TRACK RECORD

Thanks to our projects focused on prison reform and by using our wide network, we were able to improve access to education for juveniles in detention, and by doing that, we had a positive impact on their return to society. By stimulating cooperation between universities and penitentiary institutions in for example Kosovo, university students are now guiding incarcerated minors in following higher education and supporting them after release and official, long-term cooperation has been established.

Over the past years, when COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, we focused on supporting the rights and physical and psychological well-being of people in closed institutions. Through monitoring by civil society organisations in four countries we were able to identify social problems and contributed to the increased protection and safety of people in closed institutions. As former female prisoners were involved in the implementation of activities, it will contribute to the mitigation of their social problems after release.

In other work, we supported cooperation between police and LGBTQI+ organisations. By providing training for police officers, the Police Academy in Albania has taken up discrimination and hate crime of LGBTQI+ in their main curriculum. As a result, trained police officers are now able to recognize and act upon a hate crime against someone from the LGBTQI+ community.



Rita Selimi, Study Visit to the Netherlands, May 2022

OUR NETWORKS AND PARTNERS

In most countries in wider Europe, we have multiple partners with whom we cooperate. These partners can be civil society organisations as well as governments and state institutions, and we have a strong track record on building bridges between the catalysts of change coming from these different sectors.

We believe in building on existing organisations and networks, to increase impact and to avoid duplication. By joining forces in networks, we stand stronger in our advocacy, we learn and share best practices and we can facilitate cooperation with governments and institutions. Being part of strong international networks also enables us to put international solidarity into practice. When partners are in need, we know this and we can support them. Together we amplify the voices of human rights defenders from the local to the European level and back, resulting in European policies that are responsive to the needs and demands of communities.

We believe that change should start at home and invest in building a human rights community with like minded partners in the Netherlands. We do this as part of several networks in the Netherlands, including also with our neighbours in the Human Rights Space in The Hague, the city of Peace and Justice.

OUR NETWORKS

NHC Participates in 17 networks operating within our core competencies: strengthening rule of law; safe-guarding human rights; and strengthening civil society

KEY TO ACRONYMS

BMO	Netherlands Human Rights Network
CICC	Coalition for the International Criminal Court
CSP	Civic Solidarity Platform
EAP-CSF	Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
EIN	European Implementation Network
EPD	European Partnership for Democracy
EPTA	European Prison Training Academies Network
EU-FRAP	EU Fundamental Rights Platform
EU-RUCSF	EU-Russia Civil Society Forum
EUROPRIS	European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services
HRDN	Human Rights and Democracy Network
JUSTITIA	JUSTITIA Network
LEAP	Legal Experts Advisory Panel
PARTOS	Dutch Network for International Development Cooperation
RARE	Recharging Advocacy for Rights in Europe
THHH	The Hague Humanity Hub
UNCAC	UN Convention Against Corruption



UNCAC

CSP
EU-RCSE
EIN

CICC
EPD
HRDN
RARE

PARTOS
BMO
EAP-CSF
EU-FRAP

JUSTITIA

EPTA
EUROPRIS
LEAP



OUR ORGANISATION

In order to realise our ambitions we need to adapt our organisation to new realities and become more resilient. The past years the organisation grew and developed into a programme organisation with a dedicated and highly professional staff (end of 2022: 25 persons). In 2022, we consolidated the organisation around three programmes: Human Rights Defence (HRD), Integrity and Accountability (I&A) and Rights-Based Justice (RBJ). We aim for continuity and further solidifying the existing building blocks that form the foundation of the organisation.

Our people are the cornerstone of our success. The coming years we will further invest in the well-being and personal development of our staff. We attach great importance to facilitating a good work-life balance. The NHC is and will be a safe space for everyone, and we invite anybody who witnessed or experienced misconduct in the context of the work of the NHC to report on this. External parties can do this by sending an email to office@nhc.nl. In addition, the NHC has an external confidential counselor as well as an external whistleblower point at SeeHearSpeakUp. More information can be found at our website. We will strengthen skills and knowledge, both collectively through Learning and Exchange Days, as well as individually through mentoring and training. Organisational learning will be strengthened by increasing the capacity for monitoring, evaluation and learning.

We believe in flat hierarchies, openness, and democratic decision-making, while at the same time ensuring clear and consistent line management. The newly formed Leadership and Development Team, will further work towards a structure and culture that motivates and supports our staff to excel in their work. This means that we will strengthen focus on organisational and personal development, including ensuring that work at the NHC is not only meaningful, but also stimulates personal growth, develops team spirit and builds a sense of belonging.

In order to realise our ambition to be more visible and vocal and to further strengthen our support base, we need to invest in strategic communication and advocacy. We believe in the strength of value-based and hope-based communication and storytelling. With more resources, we would like to further develop this approach, and continue to integrate it both in our own communications, advocacy, and

training with partners. It means that in our communication we are expressing universal, human values underlying human rights, the rule of law and justice reform, acknowledging and drawing attention to problems, but always including innovative solutions with a view to the future. We are committed to ensuring more diversity in both the type of content and stories we develop, reflecting the intersectional approach of the organisation as a whole.

To realise our ambitions we need more flexible funding. We need this to be able to respond to crises, to ensure continuity in case one project ends and another has not started yet. In addition, we need it to cover the gap that is created by the lack of coverage for all costs from donors. Therefore, we will explore new avenues of funding, and we will be part of joint advocacy efforts to increase awareness among donors on the importance of a resilient civil society and an intersectional approach to funding for the human rights movement.

The NHC governance and structure is based on a two-tier governance structure: a Board and a Supervisory Board. Both are assisted by a Committee that advises on long-term policies and strategy. Our Committee and the broader network of experts from different sectors in society continue to be of incredible importance for upholding the highest standards in our work. In our way of working, we integrate the motto “Nothing about us without us” and we continue to look for new ways on how to strengthen accountability. We want to build our work on the strategic needs and demands from the people we work with and for.

We build on our rich experience of 35-years work on the rule of law and human rights, and building bridges between people, sectors and countries. Together we stand strong to inspire, engage and support catalysts of change in building just and rights-respecting societies in wider Europe.





Just Peace Day, October 2022



The NHC team with Oleksandra Romantsova, December 2022



The NHC Team, Strategy Day, June 2022

