ENNHRI European Network of National Human Rights Institutions

Operational Plan 2027

Adopted on 4 November 2026 ENNHRI's General Assembly meeting, Brussels

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Draft Operational Plan 2027

Overview

ENNHRI's Rule of Law reporting 2026 has shown continued trends of backsliding on human rights, erosion of rule of law, and threats to democracy. In such a context, it is even more important that ENNHRI works to strengthen its NHRI members, to support compliance with the UN Paris Principles, and to engage with regional mechanisms for reinforcing standards, recognition and protection. Furthermore, we must invest in NHRI resilience and provide timely support to European NHRIs under threat.

Beyond institutional strengthening, we have witnessed that NHRIs' broad functions are developing to address persistent and evolving human rights concerns. In 2027, we will invest in capacity building through our NHRI Academy, dedicated activities on NHRIs' role in EU accession and new EU mandates on migration and AI, as well as through peer exchange across our Working Groups. The Regranting Programme will offer members the opportunity to carry out small projects to develop their capacities at national level and share outcomes with peers.

In 2027, ENNHRI will continue to support European NHRIs' engagement with regional mechanisms, including through our Rule of Law reports and ad hoc submissions on key issues regarding human rights, democracy and rule of law. We will address the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights, the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights, and key related strategies. We will build NHRI capacity to support an enabling environment for civil society, and engage for stronger regional protection mechanisms for human rights defenders.

As a membership network, ENNHRI will continue to develop its opportunities and tools for cooperation between NHRIs. Beyond member meetings and events, and Guidance on the Working Group Policy, ENNHRI will begin development of an NHRI database, which can showcase the key characteristics of each member institution. Further, ENNHRI will hold governance meetings for the General Assembly, Board and Finance Committee, including elections for new office holders beginning a mandate in spring 2028.

In 2027, ENNHRI will enhance its digital readiness to boost efficiencies for the network. We will seek more diversified funding to achieve sustainability for the years to come.

Strategic Outcome 1: Strong and resilient NHRIs comply with the UN Paris Principles

Strategic Priority 1.1: Support NHRI accreditation in line with the UN Paris Principles

ENNHRI will continue to support the establishment, strengthening and (re)accreditation of NHRIs through tailored advice on founding legislation, the accreditation process and initiatives to implement SCA recommendations. In order to provide enhanced support to non-A status members, ENNHRI's Board will begin the first three year cycle of review of active steps taken towards compliance with the UN Paris Principles (article 6.5(c) ENNHRI Statute).

We will provide individualised support to each member undergoing SCA review, and participate at both SCA sessions. ENNHRI will also induct its new SCA member, who will begin its mandate in autumn 2027. As the SCA continues to develop, ENNHRI will feed into the review of its General Observations on the UN Paris Principles.

The Expert Group on Standards will continue to provide peer support for members. Its meeting will also allow for deeper reflection on developments at the SCA, including on the proposed updates to the General Observations.

Strategic Priority 1.2: Strengthen the ability of NHRIs to respond to common and future challenges

ENNHRI's Leadership Forum will take place in conjunction with its autumn General Assembly meeting. This will provide Heads of Institutions with an opportunity to exchange on the most pressing challenges facing European NHRIs, as well as developing approaches to face evolving scenarios.

Following ENNHRI's collection of data on NHRI resilience and preparedness, ENNHRI will develop peer exchange on key areas to address, in order to build a body of work to strengthen NHRIs' ability to withstand pressures faced in the current volatile context.

Seizing the opportunities provided by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers 2026 Report on the implementation of its NHRI Recommendation (CM Rec 21/1), as well as the increased EU recognition of the importance of NHRI standards, ENNHRI will work to leverage regional protections for NHRIs.

Strategic Priority 1.3: Provide tailored support to NHRIs under threat

The negative narratives and backsliding on human rights, democracy and rule of law, sadly leads to increased threats and even attacks against NHRIs. ENNHRI will continue to prioritise support to any member facing threats, with reference to NHRI standards.

Through ENNHRI's Contact Group on Support to NHRIs, ENNHRI will also facilitate timely support from partner organisations.

Strategic Outcome 2: NHRIs strengthen awareness and implementation of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

Strategic Priority 2.1: Strengthen NHRI functions to address key human rights challenges

Our NHRI Academy, co-hosted with OSCE/ODIHR, will bring together senior staff from 25 member institutions for a bespoke residential training on the use of the broad NHRI mandate. Peer exchange, an integral aspect of each ENNHRI capacity building initiative, will continue through ENNHRI's Working Groups: Artificial Intelligence; Asylum and Migration; Business and Human Rights; Climate Crisis; Communications; Conflict and Human Rights; CRPD; Economic and Social Rights; Legal and Older Persons' Human Rights [*exact list to be confirmed at General Assembly meeting on 4 November 2026*].

In 2027, we will also organise an in-person capacity building event on the role of NHRIs in strengthening respect for human rights, democracy and rule of law in the context of EU accession, as well as dedicated activities to support the new EU mandates for NHRIs (on AI, migration and beyond). A meeting of ENNHRI's Contact Group for Support to NHRIs will help create synergies and reinforcing actions, among partners working on building capacity of NHRIs throughout Europe.

ENNHRI's Regranting Programme will be open for all members in 2027, providing small grants for members to build on learnings from ENNHRI's initiatives, develop capacities at national level, and share outcomes throughout the network.

Strategic Priority 2.2: Facilitate NHRI contribution to the effectiveness of regional and international human rights mechanisms

ENNHRI will publish three Rule of Law reports in 2027, one to cover the entire European region, and specific reports on EU Member States and EU enlargement states. The Rule of Law reports will include country-specific reporting, as well as trends, focussing on the enabling environment for NHRIs, civic space, and law making processes.

We will continue to develop our Engagement and Outreach Strategy, which will guide our work with regional and international human rights mechanisms in support of human rights, rule of law and democracy. This will include cooperation with the EU on the implementation of the EU Charter, including follow-up to the 2026 European Commission

report on NHRIs, as well as the Democracy Shield, the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy and the finalisation of its next Multi-annual Financial Framework.

At the Council of Europe, ENNHRI will participate actively as Observer at the Steering Committee on Human Rights (CDDH) and the Steering Committee on New and Emerging Digital Technologies (CDNET). We will continue to engage on the Democratic Pact, democratic security and the execution of judgments, as well as in the Cooperation Platform on Social Rights. We will also organise a meeting for members with the European Court of Human Rights.

Strategic Priority 2.3: Enhance NHRI support for an enabling environment for human rights defenders and civil society

ENNHRI's newly established Working Group on Human Rights Defenders and Civic Space will have an in-person meeting, at which they will exchange practices and develop further initiatives to enhance NHRI support for an enabling environment. In parallel, the data collected on civic space, through ENNHRI's Rule of Law reporting, will be analysed with a view to maximising the impacts of future work.

In order to bridge NHRI activities to the EU Civil Society Strategy, ENNHRI will continue to engage in the Monitoring Network (coordinated by FRA) and the Community of Practice focused on strengthening HRD protection (coordinated by OHCHR).

Strategic Outcome 3: ENNHRI thrives, in solidarity, as a sustainable and future-proof network

Strategic Priority 3.1: Enhance NHRI cooperation

As a membership network, ENNHRI supports cooperation between its member NHRIs through all of its work. Through review of the available tools to support network cooperation, as well as analysis of evolving digital solutions, ENNHRI will develop further support for members' direct cooperation.

We will also develop Guidance on ENNHRI's Working Group Policy, applying the lessons learnt over the past year. ENNHRI's Working Group Chairs will meet to discuss synergies across their activities and opportunities to spread learnings throughout the network.

In order to ensure accessible, sustainable and user-friendly information, ENNHRI will develop an NHRI database. This will set out the core information held by the network on each member institution, as reported by them. The database will provide efficient support to members seeking sister NHRIs' expertise in particular areas, and also facilitate partners' understanding of each European NHRI and their mandate(s).

ENNHRI will organise an introduction to the network for each new Head of Institution. As the mandate for each NHRI leader is time-limited, the active introduction of new leaders to their peers will boost ongoing participation and support.

Strategic Priority 3.2: Enhance network governance

ENNHRI will convene two General Assembly meetings, at least four Board meetings and two Finance Committee meetings throughout 2027. In the autumn, the General Assembly will elect a new Chair, Board and Finance Committee to begin a new term in spring 2028.

The Board will monitor and drive the strategic direction of ENNHRI, in line with the Strategic Plan and Implementation Framework. It will review the Results and Learning Framework, Risk Registers and propose future prioritisation and planning to the General Assembly for adoption. The Finance Committee will monitor the network's finances and advise on ENNHRI's financial sustainability, in line with our Business Plan.

ENNHRI will continue to contribute to GANHRI's governance bodies, through its Bureau and Finance Committee. In autumn 2027, the General Assembly will vote to nominate a new GANHRI Chair from the European region, for election by GANHRI's General Assembly in spring 2028.

Strategic Priority 3.3: Enhance operational effectiveness and resources of the network

Beyond its ongoing operational, financial, human resources and office management, ENNHRI will continue its digitalisation project. In order to ensure digital readiness, providing efficiencies for the network as well as appropriate safeguards, ENNHRI will review current processes and introduce new technologies.

ENNHRI's visibility will also be developed, in line with its engagement and outreach strategy. The Communications Working Group will provide multipliers to reach national audiences.

In order to provide clear, complementary and joined-up support for our common members, ENNHRI will work with GANHRI to develop smooth and efficient cooperation.

ENNHRI will report on its activities, achievements and lessons learnt to members and to donors. We will seek more diversified and sustainable funding to protect the ongoing work of our vital network.

Key Activities by Strategic Outcome

Strategic Outcome 1: Strong and resilient NHRIs comply with the UN Paris Principles

Key Activity	Responsibility
1.1: Support NHRI accreditation in line with the UN Paris Principles	
Support NHRIs through the accreditation process (from establishment to follow-up to SCA recommendations)	Expert Group on Standards, Board, Secretariat
Induction of new SCA member	Secretariat
Tri-annual review of actions taken by B-status NHRIs to reach the A-status, and providing tailored support	Board, Secretariat
Contribution to development of SCA policies	SCA Member, Expert Group on Standards, Secretariat
Meeting of the Expert Group on Standards	Expert Group on Standards, Secretariat
1.2: Strengthen the ability of NHRIs to respond to common and future challenges	
Leadership Forum	NHRI Leaders, Board, Secretariat
Supporting on NHRI resilience	Secretariat
Development and enhanced implementation of regional standards and recognition of NHRIs	Expert Group on Standards, Board, Secretariat
1.3: Provide tailored support to NHRIs under threat	
Tailored support to NHRIs under threat	Board, Secretariat
Liaison with Contact Group for Support to NHRIs	Secretariat

Strategic Outcome 2: NHRIs strengthen awareness and implementation of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

Key Activity	Responsibility
2.1: Strengthen NHRI functions to address key human rights challenges	
NHRI Academy, in cooperation with OSCE/ODIHR	Member participants, Secretariat
Working Group meetings and peer exchange	Working Group Chairs and Members, Secretariat
Regranting Programme	Members, Board, Finance Committee, Secretariat
Capacity building on NHRIs in EU accession	Members, Secretariat
Meeting of Contact Group on support to NHRIs	Secretariat
2.2: Facilitate NHRI contribution to the effectiveness of regional and international human rights mechanisms	
ENNHRI Rule of Law Reports 2027 (Regional, EU and Enlargement)	Members, Secretariat
Engagement and Outreach Strategy	Secretariat
Ad hoc submissions, statements and interventions to regional level mechanisms	Working Groups, Board, GA, Secretariat
EU – Charter Strategy, Democracy Shield, new mandates for NHRIs, enlargement processes, MFF 2028-2034, Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy	Members, Board, Secretariat
Council of Europe – Democratic Pact, CDDH, Cooperation Platform, Meeting with the Court	Members, Board, Secretariat
2.3: Enhance NHRI support for an enabling environment for human rights defenders and civil society	
Collect and review data on civic space	Members, Secretariat
Engagement on EU civil society strategy and CoE Democracy Pact	Members, Board, Secretariat
In person WG meeting on HRDs	WG Chair, Members, Secretariat

Strategic Outcome 3: ENNHRI thrives, in solidarity, as a sustainable and future-proof network

Key Activities	Responsibility
3.1: Enhance NHRI cooperation	
Working Group Chairs meetings and development of Guidance on working Group Policy	Working Group Chairs, Secretariat
Development of NHRI database	Secretariat
Review and develop tools for network cooperation	Secretariat
Introduction for new NHRI leaders	Board, Members, Secretariat
3.2: Enhance network governance	
Governance meetings	GA, Board, Finance Committee, Secretariat
Election and induction of new office holders (Chair, Board, Finance Committee)	Board, Secretariat
Implement gender action plan	Secretariat
Participate in GANHRI governance	GANHRI office holders, Secretariat
3.3: Enhance operational effectiveness and resources of the network	
Digitalisation project	Secretariat
Review of ENNHRI website	Communications WG, Secretariat
GANHRI cooperation	Chair, GANHRI Secretary, Board, Secretariat
Increase diversity of funding	Board, Finance Committee, Fundraising Group, Secretariat

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