



ESTONIAN HUMAN
RIGHTS CENTRE

The Human Rights Education Activity Design and Facilitation Guide



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(referred to as “the Guide” from here on) offers 10 easy-to-follow steps that support young people in planning, organizing, and reflecting on their own human rights education (HRE) activities or projects. It is primarily intended for young people taking their first steps in human rights education, with a format that remains focused and simple. However, more experienced people may also find it useful, as planning and carrying out an activity or project follows familiar stages, and returning to the basics from time to time can be valuable.

Thank you for your interest in human rights and this Guide. We hope you find it useful and that it will inspire and support many amazing human rights education projects and activities for years to come.

Estonian Human Rights Centre
April 2025, Tallinn, Estonia

This Guide was developed by the Estonian Human Rights Centre as part of the project “*Empowering Ukrainian Youth in Estonia to Protect and Advance Human Rights and Civic Engagement*.” The primary goal of this youth-focused project was to strengthen the understanding of democracy, human rights protection, and the principles of equal treatment among young refugees from Ukraine and young people living in Estonia. The involvement of both Estonian and Ukrainian youth aimed to support the adaptation of young Ukrainian refugees to life in Estonia, encourage mutual learning, and promote the exchange of experiences between the two communities.

As part of the project, young people had the opportunity not only to learn about human rights but also to carry out their own human rights projects. You can learn more about the different projects that were implemented from [here](#). Parts of this Guide were tested and discussed with project participants during the Human Rights Youth Camp held in Pühajärve, Estonia, from February 21 to 23, 2025.

The main author of the Guide is Kelly Grossthal, the Estonian Human Rights Centre’s expert on equal treatment, with intellectual input from the project participants. The Estonian Human Rights Centre, founded in 2009, is an independent, non-governmental organization that advocates for human rights. You can learn more about the centre from [here](#).

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ABC to Get Started: About the Guide, Values, and Terms

Who is this Guide for?

This guide is designed for you if you're between 16 and 24 and want to kickstart human rights-related activities and projects. But the age range is flexible. Whether you're younger, older, or anywhere in between, if you're interested in creating positive change for human rights, this guide may help you too.

What is this Guide for?

This Guide is here to help you prepare and lead HRE activities. It walks you through 10 easy-to-follow steps to plan, organize, and reflect on your own activities or projects. Whether you're putting together a workshop, leading a campaign, launching a social media challenge, or taking action at school, this tool will guide you through the process in a simple and practical way.

Each step includes helpful **tips** , and some steps also have **reflection questions**  to support learning, creativity, and thoughtful planning. Both are optional to read and use, but they can contribute to making the entire activity or project process more thoughtful and meaningful.

You can use this Guide individually or as a team, and adapt it to suit your goals, audience, and format, whether in person or online. It is intended for those taking their first steps in HRE, so it is short and simple. For more advanced guidance, see [Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People](#).

A Human Rights-Based Process Matters

Please remember that the process of designing and carrying out a human rights activity is just as important as the content of your activity. That means how you plan and implement your activity should also reflect human rights values.

Make sure your process is inclusive, non-discriminatory, bullying-free, and respectful of everyone's rights. Think about important aspects such as:

- Asking for consent before taking or sharing photos
- Being mindful of special needs, such as dietary restrictions or physical accessibility
- Making space for different voices and perspectives

You will not get everything perfect, and that is okay. What matters is that you try, reflect, and keep learning. The more aware and thoughtful you are, the stronger your activity or project will be.

Don't Forget to Have Fun!

As far as your chosen topic allows, make space for fun and team spirit. HRE should not feel like school. Laugh together, have snacks, take breaks, and create a space where people feel good being part of something meaningful.

What values is this Guide based on?

Rooted in [the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and [the Estonian Constitution](#), this Guide is designed to support key values from human rights, education, and youth work. These include cooperation, respect, fairness, diversity, inclusion, participation, solidarity, and non-discrimination. The Guide also encourages creating safe and supportive spaces where everyone feels respected, heard, and free to express themselves without fear of exclusion or judgement.

What are human rights?

Human rights are the basic standards that allow people to live in safety and dignity. They protect our lives and bodies from harm, support our freedom, and enable us to take part in society. Human rights allow us to express ourselves, access information, meet with friends or like-minded people, and much more.

The most well-known human rights document is the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#). However, to make these rights real and practical, states have committed to explaining and protecting them by adopting laws, setting up institutions, teaching human rights in schools, and taking other steps. It is the responsibility of the state and its institutions to uphold human rights and to hold accountable those who violate them.

Laws alone are not enough to make human rights a lived reality. Human rights are also about how we treat each other in everyday life. Respecting human rights begins with each of us, through our actions, choices, and relationships.

In Estonia, the foundations of human rights are laid out in the [Estonian Constitution](#). There are also other laws that explain what each right means and define what is allowed and what is prohibited.

EXAMPLE

The Estonian Constitution says that everyone is equal before the law and nobody shall be discriminated against. But the Gender Equality Act, Equal Treatment Act and other laws clarify how this right works in specific areas such as employment, education, healthcare and access to goods and services.

Read more about human rights and its protection from The Estonian Human Rights Centre's [Human Rights Guide](#).

What is the difference between human rights and human rights education (HRE)?

Human rights do not protect themselves - they need people who know about them, believe in them, and are ready to speak up when something is not fair. That's where human rights education comes in. It helps us understand not just our own rights, but also the rights of others. It encourages values like fairness, respect, and equality, and reminds us that we all share a role in making human rights real in our communities. When more people care and take action, human rights become stronger for everyone.

A slightly more formal but very important way to look at HRE is that it has three key parts:

- **Learning about human rights** – understanding what human rights are, how they work, and how they are protected.
- **Learning through human rights** – making sure that the way we teach and learn about human rights reflects those same values, like participation, freedom of expression, and respect. The way learning happens matters just as much as what is being learned.
- **Learning for human rights** – helping people build the skills, attitudes, and values they need to live by human rights and to take action, on their own or with others, to stand up for them.

Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People by the Council of Europe was used as the basis for the definition of HRE.

And a very practical question: what's the difference between a project and an activity?

Throughout this Guide, both “activity” and “project” are used as terms. However, it's important to understand the difference between them. A project and an activity are not the same. Here is how you can tell them apart.

A project

A project is a bigger plan that often includes several activities, and usually takes place over a longer time. A project often has a broader goal, timeline, planning process, and possibly a team or budget.

Examples of projects:

- A three-month campaign in school to raise awareness about hate speech, including workshops, posters, and a final event
- A youth-led project on gender equality that includes a survey, a podcast, and an exhibition
- A series of human rights education sessions held weekly at a youth centre

An activity

An activity is a single event or action. It can be part of a project or stand alone. It usually has a short duration and a specific purpose.

Examples of activities:

- A human rights workshop
- A street campaign
- A social media challenge
- A film screening and discussion
- A poster-making session

Human Rights Education Activity Design and Facilitation Guide

A step-by-step Guide for planning and carrying out human rights education activities and projects for young people. It is primarily intended for young people taking their first steps in human rights education, with a format that remains focused and simple.

Step 1: Explore and Choose the Topic

Start by learning about human rights. Before planning an activity or project, it's important to understand what human rights are, what issues they cover, and why they matter. Take time to explore the topic, watch documentaries, listen to podcasts, read articles, or follow reliable social media accounts that talk about human rights.

Think about which topics feel most relevant or important to you and your community. For example: equality, non-discrimination, freedom of expression, climate justice, education, online safety, or the right to feel safe.

Be critical about where you get your information. Not everything online is accurate or truly supports human rights. Check the source – is it a trusted organisation, an expert, or someone who might be spreading messages that go against human rights principles? Does it promote fairness, dignity, and equality for all? Make sure the topic you choose reflects the values of human rights such as respect, inclusion, and justice.



Tip: If you don't yet have a clear human rights topic that interests you the most, talk with others about which human rights issues matter to them. This can help you decide together what to focus on.

Step 2: Identify the Aim

Now that you've chosen a topic, decide what you want to achieve with your project or activity.

Ask yourself:

- What do I want others to learn, feel, or do about this topic?
- What kind of change am I hoping for, even if it's small?

Your aim should be clear, simple, and meaningful. It will guide everything else you plan. Try to write your aim in 1–2 sentences.

Examples of written aims:

- To help my peers understand why gender equality is important and how we can challenge harmful stereotypes.
- To raise awareness among students about the right to seek asylum and the realities faced by refugees, using stories and facts to challenge myths.
- To inspire young people to recognize online hate speech and learn how to respond to it safely and respectfully when needed. To encourage them to report hate speech to the social media platform or the police when necessary.



Tip: A good aim is like a compass. It helps you stay focused while planning and reminds you what matters most. Before you write it down, say your aim out loud to someone else. If it makes sense to them, it's probably clear enough.



Reflection question: Does my aim reflect what I really care about and what I want others to take away from the activity?

Step 3: Know the Audience

Ask: Who is this activity or project for? Friends? Classmates? A youth club? A wider public? Think about their age, interests, and what they already know (or don't know) about the topic.



Tip: Try putting yourself in their shoes. What kind of activity would feel interesting or fun for them? What might be too difficult, boring, or confusing? Understanding your audience helps make the activity more meaningful and engaging for everyone.

Step 4: Plan What Will Happen

Now it's time to plan what you'll actually do - whether it's one activity or a whole project with several parts.

Ask yourself:

- What kind of activity fits with the aim and audience?
- What steps need to happen before, during, and after the activity or project?
- What resources do I need (space, materials, time, people, support)? Do I need to make a budget?

Think about the timeline. Even a small activity needs some planning like preparing materials, inviting people, or making sure everyone knows what to expect. If it's a project, break it down into smaller steps and schedule each one.

Decide:

- What will happen step by step?
- How long will it take?
- What materials or space do I need?

If you're planning an online activity - such as a webinar, online campaign, or video call workshop - make sure the platform you choose is both accessible and familiar to your audience. Opt for tools like Zoom, Google Meet, or social media platforms they already use, such as Instagram or TikTok. Consider the technical resources and skills required, and involve people who have the necessary expertise if needed.



Tip: A clear and simple plan makes everything easier. You don't need to plan every second, but it helps to write down what will happen, who will do what, and when.



Reflection question: Is my plan realistic for the time, people, and resources I have?



Step 5: Involve Others

Ask: Do I want to do this alone or with others?

- Invite friends to join the planning.
- Ask a teacher, youth worker, or NGO for support or space.
- Split roles (e.g. one person leads, one takes care of materials, one takes photos, etc.).



Tip: Don't be afraid to ask for help! Many people are happy to support a good idea. Working with others makes your activity or project stronger, and it's also more fun.



Reflection question: Who could I involve to make this activity or project more creative, inclusive, or impactful, and how can I make sure everyone feels like a real part of it?

Step 6: Communicate and Invite

If it's a public or group activity, think about:

- How to explain it clearly and simply?
- How to invite people (posters, social media, school announcements)?
- What info people need to join (where, when, what to bring, etc.)?



Tip: Keep your message clear, simple, and exciting. Let people know why the activity matters and what they can expect. Use channels that your audience actually uses such as posters, messages, or social media.



Reflection question: Would I feel interested or curious if I saw this invitation?

Step 7: Run the Activity

So it is time to actually carry out your activity or the activity that is part of your project. This is where your planning comes to life, and you get to connect with others around the topic that matters to you. Whether your activity is in person or online, how you guide it will shape the experience for everyone involved.

If your activity is in person, such as a workshop or event, think about the space and atmosphere you want to create. On the day of the activity:

- Be prepared, but stay flexible. Even with a good plan, things might not go exactly as expected. Stay calm and adjust if needed.
- Make people feel welcome and safe. Greet participants with warmth and set a respectful, inclusive tone from the start.
- Introduce the topic and aim. Share what the activity is about and why it matters. Help participants understand the purpose.
- Lead the activity or discussion in a way that feels natural to you. Take your time, speak clearly, and do your best to explain each part. It is completely normal to feel a bit nervous. Focus on helping others understand what is happening and guide them gently from one part of the activity to the next.
- Keep it fun, respectful, and engaging. Use group work, creative methods, or energizers to keep people involved.

If your activity is online, such as a webinar, online campaign, or video call workshop, some things work differently:

- Make sure the platform is accessible and familiar to your audience.
- Test your internet connection, camera, sound, and any presentations or videos ahead of time.
- Open the session with a warm welcome and explain how to participate. For example, let people know if they should use the chat, raise their hand, or turn on their camera.
- Keep things interactive. Use polls, breakout rooms, or the chat to keep people involved and avoid long monologues.
- Encourage camera use if possible, but also respect if someone prefers to keep it off.

In both cases, encourage everyone to participate in ways that feel comfortable. Pay attention to the group dynamic and create space for different voices to be heard, including quieter participants.



Tip: Make a checklist for the day. Include everything from materials and equipment to timing and small reminders, such as preparing snacks or checking links. This can help reduce stress and allow you to focus on the process and adjust more easily if something unexpected happens.



Reflection question: Did I create a space where everyone could take part, feel safe, and be heard?

Step 8: Reflect Together

Make space for honest reflection within your team. Reflection helps everyone learn from the experience and grow, both as individuals and as a group.

Use fun or creative ways to reflect, such as a talking circle, drawings, or a simple evaluation sheet. The evaluation can also be anonymous if needed so that everyone feels comfortable sharing their thoughts.

Ask everyone:

- What did you learn?
- What surprised you?
- What could be done differently next time?
- How do you feel about the topic now?



Tip: Reflection is not about judging what went wrong. It is about learning from what happened and listening to each other with openness and respect.

Step 9: Share and Celebrate

Take time to share what you did and celebrate your efforts. Every step taken for human rights matters, no matter how big or small.

- Share what happened on social media or, if you have one, through a school newsletter or youth group platform. Include photos, quotes, or a short summary of the experience.
- Say thank you to everyone who helped or took part. This is really important because it values everyone's contribution and builds trust for future activities or projects. Try not to leave anyone out, no matter how big or small their role was.
- Celebrate the courage it takes to speak about and stand up for human rights. Find simple and joyful ways to mark what you achieved. Maybe order pizza with your team, make a short appreciation video, or post a public thank-you online.



Tip: Sharing and celebrating is not about showing off. It is about recognising effort, building motivation, and inspiring others to take action too.

Step 10: Think About What's Next

After your activity or project, take a moment to look ahead. Every experience can lead to something new. This could be a next step, a bigger idea, or simply doing the same thing with more confidence.

Ask yourself and your team:

- Do I want to do more?
- Could this be repeated in another place or with a different group?
- What else do I want to learn or try?

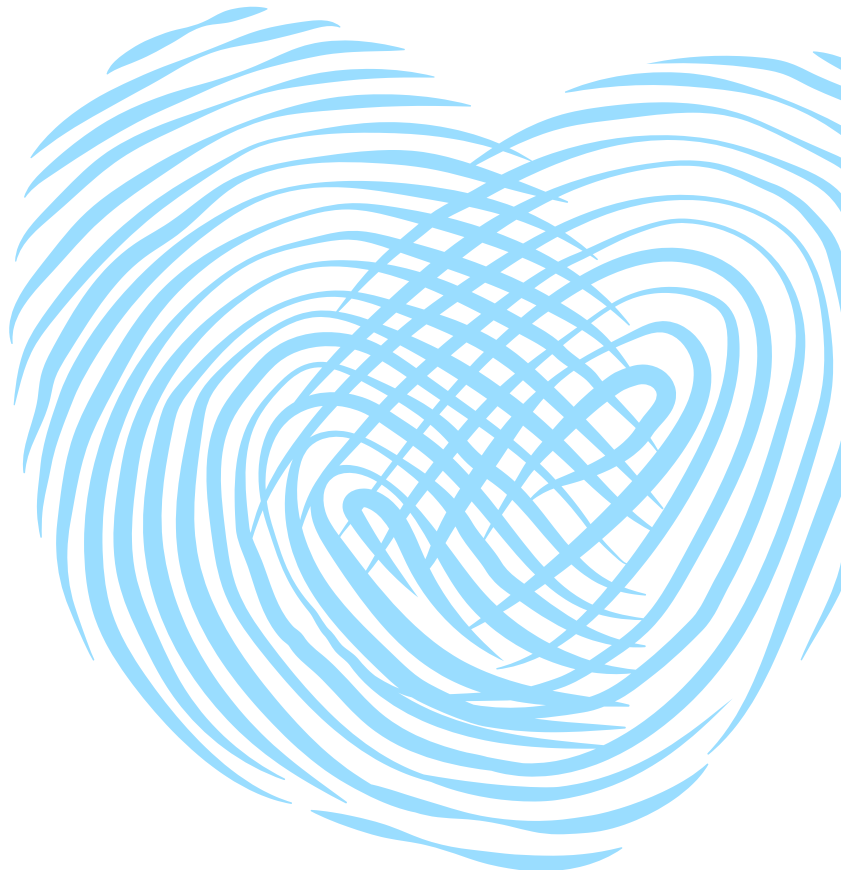
Maybe your activity inspired more interest than expected. Maybe others asked to join next time. Maybe it gave you the courage to speak up again or to keep learning about human rights.



Tip: Change takes time. Human rights work is a journey made up of many small steps. You do not need to do everything at once. Just keep moving forward, one idea and one action at a time.



Reflection question: What is one thing I can do next to keep promoting human rights in my community, school, or online space



A Note on Budgeting

Many youth projects and activities can be carried out without actual money transactions. In such cases, it is helpful to simply make a list of the resources needed. You can do this using paper, an online document, or an app.

However, if the activity or project involves money or invoices, you should prepare a budget to forecast your costs. When applying for funding, the project guidelines usually include a specific budget template that you must follow.



Tip: You'll only be able to draft an accurate budget once you have identified all the resources required and how long you need them.

Make sure to familiarise yourself with any relevant financial rules, and consult with the management of your school, youth centre, or youth organisation. Don't hesitate to seek help or advice from people with more experience in financial matters, as financial commitments may also carry legal responsibilities.

Useful Links for Further Reading About Budget Planning

- [An Easy 3-Step Way to Make a Budget – by Gediminas Kondrackis](#)
A short and practical guide aimed at young people planning campaigns or projects.
- [UNESCO Project Planner – Top Tips for Youth Action](#)
Step-by-step project planning tips for youth, including budgeting and resource planning.
- [European Youth Portal – How to Manage a Youth Project](#)
Tips for managing youth projects, including finances, reporting, and sustainability.