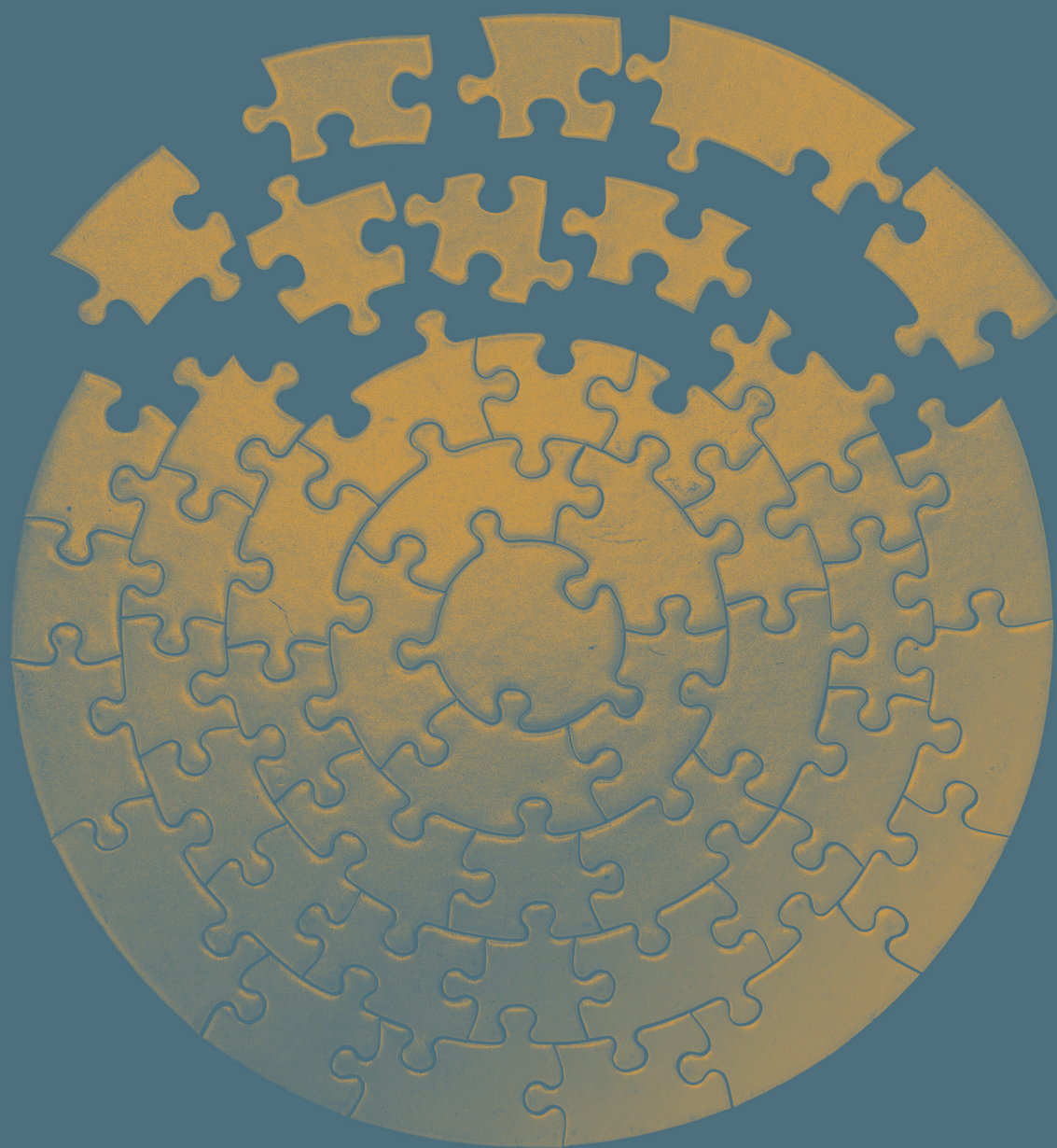


# Good practices from Federal States in the UPR process



## UPR Info

Rue de Varembé 3  
1202 Geneva Switzerland  
+41 22 321 77 70  
info@upr-info.org

UPR Info is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation. It aims to promote human rights through the Universal Periodic Review. To this end, UPR Info supports the engagement of all stakeholders, such as UN Member States, Members of Parliament, National Human Rights Institutions, civil society organisations, media and academics in the UPR process.

**Author:**  
UPR Info

**Project coordinators and content development:**  
Nargiz Arupova, Tenar G Lorente, Laura Sinner, Mona M'Bikay

**Proofreading and translation:**  
Eurideas

**Design, layout:**  
Axel Guérineau, Atelier Graphique

© 2021 UPR Info

All rights reserved. Materials contained in this publication may be freely quoted, reprinted, reproduced or translated, provided credit is given to the source.

Official versions of this guide were produced by UPR Info in English and French.



# Foreword

The Wallonia-Brussels Federation thanks UPR Info for this interesting and innovative initiative, which takes into account the institutional and constitutional evolution of the member countries. The Wallonia-Brussels Federation eagerly supported this initiative because it is important to show how closely the federated entities are associated with the UPR in Belgium and actively contribute to it within the framework of their numerous competences.

This is an opportunity for us to reaffirm the priority given by the French-speaking Belgian governments, as well as the federal government, to all dimensions of human rights. This study also serves to demonstrate the well-established and functioning internal consultation mechanisms that serve to meet our country's obligations and give human rights their rightful place, especially in the context of this pandemic, in which they are under greater threat than ever. These consultations also aim to hear the voice of civil society, which is essential!

**Fabienne Reuter**

General Delegate

General Delegation of Wallonia and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation in Geneva

Permanent Representation of Belgium to the United Nations in Geneva

## **Message from the Executive Director of UPR Info**

The Universal Periodic Review, by its very nature, lends itself to the structure of federal States that are based on participatory democracy. That model of democracy offers opportunities for federated entities to act as an innovation lab for more effective protection of human rights. Being close to their constituents also allows local governments to respond better to the needs of rights-holders and develop tailored rights-based responses. Furthermore, a measure to promote human rights taken by one region can have a positive ripple effect in other localities and create healthy competition to realise human rights for all. To prevent any restriction of rights and liberties from encouraging other federated entities to follow suit, it is critical that local authorities remain driven by the values set forth in the fundamental charter and founded on human rights and principles of the rule of law. The recommendations issued during the UPR working groups reflect the concerns expressed by civil society. It is only natural that local governments are involved, based on their competences, during the implementation stage to honour not only the commitments made at the international level, but also at the domestic level. Fostering transparency regarding the fulfilment of UPR recommendations – which mirror citizens' human rights concerns – facilitates the monitoring of public performance and increases accountability at all levels of government, whether local, regional or national. Dialogue, cooperation and communication between the federal government and local governments are key to creating ownership and constructive engagement in order to ensure effective implementation of the UPR recommendations. This research paper explores important building blocks for fruitful and inclusive participation of and among national stakeholders to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. We hope that the approach developed in some countries will inspire other federal and unitary States and support the strengthening of mechanisms already in place.

**Mona M'Bikay**

Executive Director

UPR Info



UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES





# Outline

---

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<i>p.4</i>
-------------------------	------------

---

<b>Executive summary</b>	<i>p.5</i>
Methodology	<i>p.6</i>
Note on terminology	<i>p.6</i>

---

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<i>p.7</i>
------------------------	------------

---

<b>2. National human rights frameworks in federal States : an overview</b>	<i>p.8</i>
--	------------

---

<b>3. Good practices in UPR implementation in federal States</b>	<i>p.10</i>
3.1 Coordination and implementation structures and processes	<i>p.10</i>
3.2 Human rights action plans and sectoral action plans	<i>p.16</i>
3.3 Good practices of engagement of other stakeholders	<i>p.18</i>
3.4 Monitoring	<i>p.26</i>

---

<b>4. Addressing challenges</b>	<i>p.28</i>
4.1 Before the review	<i>p.28</i>
4.2 After the review and before the adoption stage	<i>p.29</i>
4.3 Implementation	<i>p.29</i>

---

<b>5. Concluding remarks and recommendations</b>	<i>p.30</i>
--	-------------

---

<b>Annex 1</b>	<i>p.32</i>
----------------	-------------

---



# Acknowledgments

UPR Info would like to acknowledge all those who supported the research by responding to the questionnaire, participating in interviews and sharing information. They included representatives of regional and federal governments, national human rights institutions and human rights bodies, civil society organisations and academia from the countries that form the focus of the research.

We are grateful to our colleagues who led and wrote this research with enthusiasm and to all those who provided feedback on the draft report. Special thanks go to Nargiz Arupova, Tenar G Lorente and Laura Sinner.

UPR Info wishes to express its gratitude to Wallonie-Bruxelles International and the General Delegation of Wallonia and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation in Geneva, Permanent Representation of Belgium to the United Nations in Geneva, for supporting this publication.



Wallonie - Bruxelles  
International.be



# Executive Summary

The UPR is a unique human rights mechanism of the United Nations system that allows for Member States to formulate recommendations to peer States with the aim of improving the human rights situation in the respective States. The uniqueness of the process also lies in the context-specific nature of the recommendations received since they take into account the particular features of each State reviewed. This study aims to highlight how the implementation of these UPR recommendations can take place within federal States that participate in the mechanism.

**“Federated entities often have the power to address economic, social or cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights raised in UPR recommendations directly”** Federalism provides people with the opportunity to actively participate in political affairs within smaller political units.<sup>1</sup> Federated entities often have the power to address economic, social or cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights raised in UPR recommendations directly. Within the scope of federalism and human rights, countries have set up innovative cooperation mechanisms, vertically – between the centre and the constituent units – and horizontally – between the units themselves.<sup>2</sup> As shown in the text, all countries considered in this study have established some form of mechanism for the coordination of international human rights reporting. A number of examples are given to illustrate how they function.

The added value of federalism in the establishment of coordination structures and processes at federal and regional levels is also highlighted. These structures can help identify areas of collaboration between the federal level and the level of the federated entities, while allowing the necessary flexibility to implement UPR recommendations at each level in a concrete manner. The coordinated approach to implementation of UPR and human rights recommendations within federal systems and at all levels can also serve as a vehicle for more systematic follow-up by governments at all levels.

Moreover, the text highlights the opportunities that federalism offers in terms of implementation and positive replication effects as an innovative form for reproducing policies, politics and norms within federated entities by establishing communication procedures. The outcomes of these reproduction results will nonetheless be specific to the competences of each implementing authority and the needs of the local population, thus bringing the UPR closer to those whose human rights situation it aims to improve.

The prime focus of the study is on analysing the official human rights coordination, monitoring, and implementation structures at the governmental levels. To further this context-specific implementation process within federal States, the role of other stakeholders and their engagement is showcased by providing some examples of good practices. In particular, attention is drawn to the role of human rights agencies, cities and local governments, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and parliaments during the implementation process of UPR recommendations within federal States. Some concrete examples of how their role within the UPR can advance UPR implementation are also given.

The report ends with a summary of the main challenges encountered during the UPR process. Among other challenges identified, the need to further improve the systematic follow-up of UPR and other human rights recommendations is, to varying degrees, common to the studied subjects. Finally, the last section presents a series of recommendations to address these challenges and hopefully improve the UPR process within federal and unitary States with a view to the upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> UPR cycle.

<sup>1</sup> Alain-G. Gagnon and José-Maria Sauca (eds.) (2014) *Negotiating Diversity, Identity, Pluralism and Democracy*. *Diversitas [Online]*, available at: <https://www.peterlang.com/view/title/50951> (accessed: 27 July 2021), pp. 105-106

<sup>2</sup> Michael Reating, *for Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA) (2007) Federalism and the Balance of Power in European States, France: OECD*, available at: <http://sigmaweb.org/publications/37890628.pdf> (accessed: 27 July 2021), p. 12

## Methodology

During the last trimester of 2020, a questionnaire was sent to several governmental levels, human rights institutions and bodies in the target federal States soliciting information on the implementation of UPR commitments within the country. Questions focused on coordination, collaboration, data collection and reporting related to the implementation of UPR recommendations. Surveys were sent to NHRIs, academia, all layers of the respective governments and civil society. Responses were then followed up with online interviews to dive deeper into issues addressed in the questionnaires. To complement the data collection, desk-based research on secondary sources was conducted. The outcomes of the present research are derived mostly from the interviews. Stakeholders from all nine target countries were approached and given the opportunity to provide information either through a questionnaire and/or by interview. Finally, during the last stages of drafting, the content was sent to the interviewees for their validation. The final product does not fully represent the structure of the given countries and the absence of examples for some countries does not imply a lack of good practices.

## Note on terminology

The use of certain terminology may lead to confusion, as may be the case with the term “government”. In Europe, “government” refers to the executive branch, the administration or the “cabinet”, whereas outside of Europe, it refers to what Europeans would call “the State”, i.e. it is not limited to the executive branch. For the purpose of this study, we have used the European term of “government”, thus denoting the executive branch at the various levels (the federal level, federated entities and other local sub-national entities) to avoid confusion with the term “state”, which in Mexico, Malaysia, Australia and the USA designates federated entities.

Federal systems do not always use the term “federal” to describe themselves. For example, in Australia, the term “Commonwealth” refers to the federal level of government. Within the framework of this research, the federal level refers to the national government<sup>3</sup> of a federal country.

The constituent units of a federal State are named differently in the countries considered in this research:

Federal level	Federated entities (constituents units of a federal State)	Other local sub-national entities <sup>4</sup>
<b>Federal government</b> <b>Commonwealth</b> (Australia, Canada) <b>The Confederation</b> (Switzerland)	<b>States</b> (Mexico, USA, Malaysia, Australia) <b>Provinces</b> (Canada, South Africa) <b>Territories</b> (Canada) <b>Regions</b> (Belgium) <b>Communities</b> (Belgium <sup>5</sup> ) <b>Länder</b> (Germany) <b>Cantons</b> (Switzerland)	<b>Municipalities, municipal level</b> <b>Local governments, local level</b> <b>Communes</b>

<sup>3</sup> HarperCollins Publishers, Collins English Dictionary, available at: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/federal> (accessed: 22 July 2021).

<sup>4</sup> This level of government is usually based in a city, town or district.

<sup>5</sup> In Belgium, regions and communities are both federated entities, but they overlap territorially.



These differences in the terminology of the federated entities do not necessarily correspond to specific formal models of federalism, nor to the specific distribution of powers.<sup>6</sup> This means that the same term does not necessarily designate the same competences or powers. In addition, some federated entities have all three branches of government (legislative, executive and judicial) and some have their own Constitution. For the purpose of this research, the terms “federated entities” and “level of the federated entities” are used to designate all the above-mentioned constituent entities of the federal State. They have particular powers whether or not conferred by the federal Constitution.

## 1. Introduction

Established in 2006 by a resolution of the Human Rights Council, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) aims to improve the human rights record of all United Nations Member States. Its universal character means all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be addressed during the interactive dialogue in which recommending States formulate recommendations to guide the State under Review in the realisation of human rights.

**“The analysis examines the way federal systems coordinate with their sub-national entities throughout the UPR cycle and how federated entities implement the recommendations specifically and identifies good practices”**

This research explores how federal systems work with respect to the implementation of UPR human rights recommendations. The uniqueness of the structure tied to federal levels in human rights implementation has prompted UPR Info to analyse this process through a set of States from across five continents. The analysis examines the way federal systems coordinate with their sub-national entities throughout the UPR cycle and how federated entities implement the recommendations specifically and identifies good practices. While acknowledging the importance of all stakeholders in the UPR process, this paper mainly focuses on the governmental structures of federal States. To limit the scope of the research, nine States, across different regions of the world, were examined, namely Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Malaysia, Mexico, South Africa<sup>7</sup>, Switzerland and the USA.

When countries receive recommendations from the UPR, they have four and a half years to implement the received recommendations. This implementation process differs greatly in unitary and in federal States. Bearing in mind that federalism adds organisational layers with respect to monitoring and implementing human rights commitments, this study aims to analyse that process by pinpointing good practices.

Some of the good practices highlighted in the text take into consideration existing human rights structures put in place within the countries studied that, although used for human rights processes, might not be fully exploited for UPR purposes.

The UPR was created in a spirit of universality and collaboration. Member States gather in this forum not only to encourage the improvement of human rights of their peers, but also to learn from one another. It is in that vein of cooperation that the research has been developed.

<sup>6</sup> Elliot Bulmer (2017) *Federalism, International IDEA Constitution-Building Primer 12*, Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), p. 8. URL: <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/federalism-primer.pdf> (accessed: 20 July 2021)

<sup>7</sup> Although there is no consensus on whether South Africa is a federal or quasi-federal State, the South African governance system shows hallmarks of a federal system. Its nine provinces have specific responsibilities and have legislative and executive authority over their territories. Therefore, it was considered suitable for inclusion in the study.

## 2. National human rights frameworks in federal States: an overview

This chapter briefly outlines the various mechanisms and tools that the States considered in this research have put in place as part of their engagement with the UPR mechanism: coordination and reporting mechanisms, legal framework and action plans. Specific features linked to the federal structure of these countries are also highlighted.

*“Shared competence with respect to a human rights matter requires a coordinated approach within and across the federal level and the level of the federated entities”*

Since the UPR covers all human rights issues, UPR recommendations **create responsibilities at different levels of government** in federal States, through exclusive or shared competences. In federal States, responsibility for implementing the recommendations depends on the competences allocated to the levels. These are often linked to specific thematic areas. For instance, shared competence with respect to a human rights matter requires a coordinated approach within and across the federal level and the level of the federated entities. On the other hand, exclusive competence of a federated entity (a province or canton, for example) with respect to a human rights matter means that the matter will be dealt with by each federated entity. Due to this complexity of federal States and the fact that UPR recommendations are addressed to the country as a whole, including its federated entities, **an even greater degree of coordination** between federal and federated entities is required in order to report on, monitor and implement the UPR recommendations, while **taking into account their different human rights situations**.

All countries considered in this study **have established standing intergovernmental<sup>8</sup> or governmental mechanisms/committees for the coordination of international human rights reporting<sup>9</sup>**. Those are used in the framework of the UPR, in particular to coordinate the drafting of the national report, to prepare the intervention at the review stage and to provide a response to the recommendations received. In addition, federated entities are consulted and take part in the reporting procedure in a systematic way and, in some cases, through an institutionalised process or coordination mechanism. In general, these standing committees are considered to be effective for reporting and preparing the review, but the UPR is generally not a permanent item on their agenda.

**A qualitative improvement in consultation and coordination mechanisms** can be observed in most countries considered in this study, but these are mainly in charge of reporting and are rarely responsible for coordinating the follow-up and implementation of UPR recommendations. Processes are clear when it comes to consulting and involving federated entities in the reporting, compilation of data, providing a position on recommendations and preparing for the review, but are less well-defined when it comes to the implementation phase, i.e. once the country has given its position on each recommendation (supported or noted).

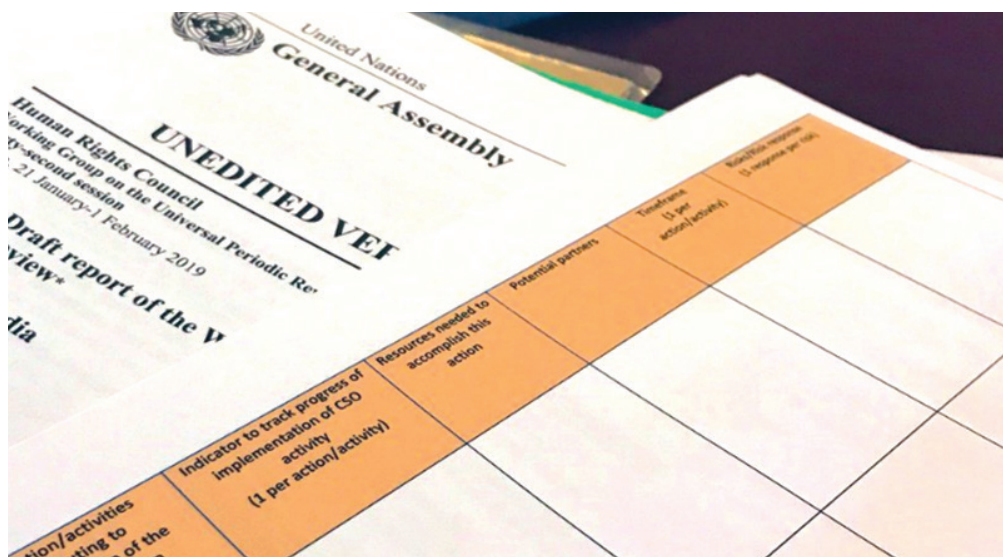
<sup>8</sup> Between the federal government and the governments of federated entities.

<sup>9</sup> See Annex 1 for the list of coordination structures.



As detailed below in the case of Mexico and Australia, the development of a database or an on-line tool compiling UPR recommendations and corresponding information on implementation status can be helpful in ensuring that the UPR remains on the agenda at all government levels and in clarifying responsibilities.

In addition to coordination mechanisms, another important element of the national human rights framework is the legal framework. A distinctive feature of federal States is that **laws protecting human rights and protection mechanisms may vary from one federated entity to another**, depending on competences, rights protected under the Constitution of the federated entity and the specific sensitivities or problems encountered in the federated entity. This autonomy allows federated entities **to go further in the protection of a right, or to set up additional protection mechanisms as the need arises, based on international law and standards**. For example, in Australia, Canada and the United States, federated entities have their own human rights legislation, human rights bodies and/or complaints mechanisms, some of which comply with or go beyond international human rights laws and standards. The same is true for sectoral or thematic laws and protection mechanisms, such as those found in Swiss, Belgian and German federated entities. Although there are no specific laws or mechanisms dealing with human rights in general, federated entities have developed sectoral/thematic laws and mechanisms related to a specific set of rights.



Finally, **action plans** are another tool developed by States to guide the measures they take in the field of human rights, including the implementation of UPR recommendations. Human rights action plans can contribute to the compliance of a State with its human rights obligations.<sup>10</sup> In the context of federal States, action plans are developed jointly by government levels concerned with the topic at issue. Action plans covering a wide range of human rights (such as in Mexico and Malaysia) are developed in collaboration between the federal government and the governments of federated entities, since implementation of the plan will be endorsed and managed by federated authorities. Federated entities also develop their own **sectoral/thematic action plans** (as can be seen, for example, in Belgium, Germany and Switzerland), covering issues related to health, migrants and persons with disabilities, to name a few.

<sup>10</sup> National Liaison Officer Working Party on National Human Rights Action Plans, FRA (2019) National human rights action plans in the EU Practices, experiences and lessons learned for more systematic working methods on human rights, Vienna: FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights URL: [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/2020\\_outcome-report-wp-national-human-rights-action-plans.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2020_outcome-report-wp-national-human-rights-action-plans.pdf) (accessed: 22 July 2021)

### 3. Good practices in UPR implementation in federal States

This section aims to showcase good practices in coordination, monitoring and implementation by governments at different levels and other stakeholders within the UPR process.

#### 3.1 Coordination and implementation structures and processes

##### Coordination structures and processes established by the federal government

While the vast majority of countries considered in this study have established ad-hoc<sup>11</sup> reporting and implementation mechanisms, **Australia and Mexico have a permanent “standing” mechanism**. Such a structure allows for more efficient and coherent follow-up and reporting on international obligations and commitments, as well as sustainable engagement of government agencies, while offering an organised and formalised relationship with other stakeholders<sup>12</sup>. The benefits of such a mechanism lie in the facilitation of communication, coordination and sharing of good practices between the federal level and federated entities.

*“A particular feature of both the Australian and Mexican systems is that they each have a standing mechanism”*

A particular feature of both the Australian and Mexican systems is that they each have a standing mechanism (ministerial/ interministerial) at the federal level that only has seats for that level. However, both countries are organised in such a way that the **federated entities have their own consultative bodies** (SCOT<sup>13</sup> for Australia and national conferences of governors/ congresses and procurators for Mexico) that **are consulted by the federal standing mechanism**.

Both standing mechanisms have also developed a public online database on UPR recommendations.<sup>14</sup> These are significant examples of coordination, collection and access to data as they compile the information from the federal level and federated entities, including in the period between UPR reviews.

Although Canada does not have a permanent standing mechanism for reporting and implementation, coordination efforts have nonetheless been undertaken, **using the existing inter-governmental coordination bodies in place** (see the table in Annex 1), while clarifying roles and responsibilities of each body. The federal government and twelve provincial/territorial governments recently **developed an Engagement Strategy on Canada’s International Human Rights Reporting Process**<sup>15</sup> (hereinafter, the strategy) and a **Protocol for Follow-up to Recommendations from International Human Rights Bodies**<sup>16</sup> (hereinafter, the Protocol). These new documents establish a framework for collaboration on the implementation of international human rights commitments. **That framework identifies areas of collaboration between federal, provin-**

<sup>11</sup> In the context of this research, ad-hoc means that the mechanism for reporting and implementation is operational only when a UPR review is forthcoming and there is no information collected, in any form (consultations, intergovernmental meetings, database with updated information), between reviews.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2016) *National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up. A Practical Guide to Effective State Engagement with International Human Rights Mechanisms*, New York and Geneva: United Nations, pp. 4-9

<sup>13</sup> The Commonwealth-State-Territory Standing Committee on Treaties (SCOT).

<sup>14</sup> For further information, see section 3.4.

<sup>15</sup> Government of Canada (2020) *Engagement Strategy on Canada’s International Human Rights Reporting Process*, available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/about-human-rights/engagement-strategy-human-rights-reporting.html> (accessed: 22 July 2021).

<sup>16</sup> Government of Canada (2020) *Protocol for Follow-up to Recommendations from International Human Rights Bodies*, available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/about-human-rights/protocol-follow-up-recommendations.html> (accessed: 27 July 2021).

cial and territorial levels, while allowing the necessary flexibility to implement these commitments in a concrete manner at each level. This approach takes into account the local contexts of provinces and territories. The objectives of both the Protocol and the strategy are to ensure **more systematic follow-up by governments at all levels**, as well as a **common approach among them** in considering and responding to international human rights recommendations, such as those of the UPR. The strategy also provides for increased consultation on implementation with civil society, as well as indigenous representatives and groups.

### Coordination structures and processes established by federated entities

Federated entities are responsible for monitoring, implementing and reporting on UPR recommendations falling under their jurisdiction. To do so, federated entities like Québec, Wallonia and Flanders have developed coordination mechanisms. Sometimes, these structures share similarities in terms of their *modus operandi* and composition with interministerial committees established at the federal level.

---

#### QUÉBEC'S INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The *Comité interministériel sur les droits de la personne*<sup>17</sup> plays a dual role at the provincial, national, and international levels. First, it **ensures coherent and concerted participation** of the government of Québec in consultations and other processes taking place at the national and international levels. Second, it is dedicated to **internal coordination (at the provincial level) and exchange of information between various ministries and agencies** on human rights issues. For example, the Interministerial Committee determines the actions and measures to be prioritised to effectively implement Québec's international human rights commitments and drafts Québec's contributions to reports submitted by Canada to United Nations (UN) mechanisms.

**Independent provincial human rights bodies**, such as the Human Rights and Youth Rights Commission and the Québec Ombudsman may be invited by the Committee to participate in meetings, depending on the topics discussed. These independent bodies are also consulted by the Interministerial Committee during preparation of the government of Québec's contribution to the reports submitted by Canada and during the monitoring of the implementation of international human rights commitments.

---

#### INTERNAL COOR- DINATION ON INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTING: THE CASES OF WALLONIA AND FLANDERS

The external relations services of Flanders and Wallonia<sup>18</sup>, two Belgian federated entities act as **focal points between the federal level and their administration**. Considering that UPR recommendations cover a wide range of topics, the external relations service usually needs to liaise with many different departments within the federated entity in order to:

1. Compile information on implementation;
2. Prepare the oral interventions at the review; and
3. Prepare the answers to questions asked in advance and concerns to be raised at the review.

<sup>17</sup> The Interministerial Committee on Human Rights, established in 2018 and chaired by the Ministry for International Relations and Francophonie of Québec. It is composed of 16 Québec ministries and agencies.

<sup>18</sup> In Flanders, external relations are managed by the Flemish Department of Chancellery and Foreign Affairs. In addition, community and regional competences have been merged, meaning that the Flemish government is responsible for both entities' competences. In Wallonia, the external relations of the three Belgian French-speaking federated entities are run by Wallonie-Bruxelles International (Wallonia, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and the French Community Commission of the Brussels-Capital Region).

To do so they **developed a specific coordination procedure**. For all three steps mentioned above they use a system of focal points within each department concerned. Information from focal points is then consolidated by the external relations services and sent to the federal level for inclusion in the national report. In Flanders, the system of departmental focal points is institutionalised in the form of a consultation platform called SOIA<sup>19</sup> (Strategic Consultative Body for International Affairs), which is composed of different working groups. The Working Group on Human Rights provides information on the implementation of UPR recommendations falling under the exclusive or shared competences of the federated entity. Consolidated contributions are then validated by the respective political cabinets of the ministries.

This internal coordination procedure for the compilation of information within the federated entities **shares some similarities with the Swiss cantons**. Indeed, the external relations services of cantons are also in charge of coordinating the compilation of data from their respective cantonal departments in order to prepare the contribution of the canton to the national report. Political validation is performed through approval of the cantonal executive. However, unlike Belgian federated entities, cantonal external relations services send their contributions to the Conference of Cantonal Governments (CCG)<sup>20</sup>, which then liaises with the federal government. Swiss cantons are represented at the federal level and during the review stage by the CCG.

---

## INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION OF FEDERATED ENTITIES

A special feature of Belgium is that federated entities are responsible for external affairs<sup>21</sup> that fall within their exclusive areas of competence (e.g., education) and shared competences (e.g., health, social and economic affairs). They develop and disseminate their own human rights commitments and thus, **have their own delegations<sup>22</sup> to the United Nations in Geneva** and other international intergovernmental organisations. Delegations are in charge of representing the governments of the federated entities on issues which fall under their jurisdiction, and they can **answer questions or discuss issues related to their competences**, for example, on a UPR recommendation.<sup>23</sup> In addition, they also **take part in Belgium's reviews in the framework of the UPR** and other international human rights mechanisms of the UN.

---

## PERIODIC EVALUATION OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS IN THE CANTON OF GENEVA

Article 42<sup>24</sup> of the Constitution of the Republic and Canton of Geneva (revised in 2012) states that the realisation of fundamental rights is subject to periodic independent evaluation. This **mirrors the UPR process at the cantonal level**, evaluating the realisation of fundamental rights<sup>25</sup> enshrined in the Constitution. Unlike the UPR, the evaluation must be carried out independently. Moreover, the constitutional provision does not indicate the modalities and frequency of the evaluation. To initiate the application of this Article, a network of Geneva-based civil societies<sup>26</sup> conducted the first evaluation. The report<sup>27</sup> of this assessment was then submitted to the Pre-

---

<sup>19</sup> Strategisch Overlegorgaan voor Internationale Aangelegenheden

<sup>20</sup> For information about the role of the Conference of Cantonal Governments in the UPR, see example on the CCG.

<sup>21</sup> According to the principle of *in foro interno, in foro externo*, if a Belgian federated entity is competent internally for a specific topic, it also automatically becomes competent externally. Therefore, federated entities have been granted the right to send their own diplomatic representatives to multilateral organisations. Source: David Crikemans (2010) *Foreign Policy and Diplomacy of the Belgian Regions: Flanders and Wallonia*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael

<sup>22</sup> The General Delegation of Wallonia-Brussels in Geneva ensures the diplomatic presence of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Wallonia and the French Community Commission of the Brussels-Capital Region (COCOF). The General Representation of the Government of Flanders to the United Nations in Geneva represents the Flanders region and community.

<sup>23</sup> This is done on the basis of instructions from their respective governments, in consultation with the federal government within the Multilateral Coordination (CoorMulti), which brings together the federal and federated authorities of the Kingdom of Belgium.

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/1846\\_fga/fr#art\\_42](https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/1846_fga/fr#art_42)

<sup>25</sup> Constitution of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, Title II (Articles 14-43)

<sup>26</sup> Network REGARD compiled the information from 27 Geneva-based civil society organisations for the evaluation <https://www.regardge.ch>

<sup>27</sup> Available at: [https://302f247a-0344-4d7e-bb82-5a0ce5e18ba6.filesusr.com/ugd/8dccb\\_45613dbcd3d545f3a00b4db675838480.pdf](https://302f247a-0344-4d7e-bb82-5a0ce5e18ba6.filesusr.com/ugd/8dccb_45613dbcd3d545f3a00b4db675838480.pdf)  
*Évaluation Périodique Indépendante (EPI) des droits fondamentaux à Genève – Contribution de la société civile*



sident of the State Council of Geneva and to the Mayor of the City of Geneva to initiate an open and participatory process for implementation of Article 42 of the Constitution. This was done in order to open a discussion on the modalities for the application of this Article.

The creation of this provision recognises that the **system of periodic evaluation of rights can be effective in guiding policy, promoting human rights and in fostering accountability of the cantonal government.**

### Positive replication effects

*“Successful measures can be replicated in other federated entities that benefit from the experiences of their peers”*

Federated entities are autonomous in deciding how to implement their human rights obligations, policies and the enactment of laws. By allowing federated entities to develop their own policies to meet their own needs, federalism can trigger innovation and experimentation in policy and/or programme development, allowing them to initiate **innovative human rights policies** that would not be politically sustainable at the national level.<sup>28</sup> Successful measures can be **replicated in other federated entities** that benefit from the experiences of their peers. In this spirit, on the issue of racial profiling by police, the Canton of Zurich was a forerunner in establishing the obligation for each police officer to justify each arrest using a specific questionnaire. The Zurich experience serves as a good **reference** point and has led other cantons to reflect on the feasibility of such or similar measures to mitigate the problem. When facing common challenges, governments can build on the experience of their counterparts.

Similarly, the federal and federated levels can collaborate to address a common matter, such as combating discrimination in Belgium and migrant integration in Switzerland.<sup>29</sup> The Belgian anti-discrimination law is a good example of a positive replication effect within federated entities. The federal level proposed a **law to combat discrimination which has been taken up by all the communities and regions of the country.** The law provides for 19 discrimination criteria (instead of seven as in the European directives). In addition, Belgium has an independent public institution, Unia, which acts as a supervisory body for the anti-discrimination law. Unia has inter-federal<sup>30</sup> competence for 17 of the 19 discrimination criteria.

### Coordination among federated entities

Four types of intergovernmental cooperation can be found in federal States:

Between federal level and federated entities		Between federated entities	
<b>institutionalised structure</b> (e.g. Canada, Australia, Germany (thematic) and Belgium))	<b>informal cooperation</b> (e.g. Malaysia)	<b>institutionalised structure</b> (Switzerland and Mexico)	<b>informal cooperation</b>

Many countries considered in this research have more than one intergovernmental cooperation mechanism.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Elliot Bulmer (2017) *Federalism, International IDEA Constitution-Building Primer 12*, Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), p. 9. URL: <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/federalism-primer.pdf> (accessed: 20 July 2021)

<sup>29</sup> See example on cantonal integration plans for more information.

<sup>30</sup> It is active and competent at the federal level, as well as at the level of the regions and communities.

<sup>31</sup> See Annex 1 for a list of institutionalised mechanisms per country.

States that were part of the study, such as Switzerland's Conference of Cantonal Governments (CCG), or Mexico via its National Conference of Governors CONAGO, have established a coordination body among federated entities. While not uniquely pertaining to human rights, the coordination bodies of federated entities serve **as a vehicle to discuss human rights and share good practices**. These coordination bodies already existed to facilitate the work of federated entities on matters falling under their competences, but they are also being used in the context of their engagement in the UPR. The following paragraphs will focus on that last point.

In Switzerland, the **Conference of Cantonal Governments** (CCG) is the coordination body for the cantons, notably for reporting procedures, including the UPR. It gathers all 26 cantonal governments to represent the interests of the cantons at the national level and has a permanent secretariat. Sectoral cantonal conferences<sup>32</sup> are gatherings of heads of the various cantonal departments for the coordination of specific thematic areas under their responsibility (e.g. the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education). A particular feature of the conferences (either the CCG or sectoral) is that **a common position for all cantons regarding UPR recommendations is sought**, which is then conveyed to the federal level. The CCG represents the cantons in all stages of the UPR process:

- as a member of the Swiss delegation during the actual review of Switzerland
- within the interministerial body on human rights at the federal level

During **preparation** of the UPR National Report of Switzerland, the CCG/sectoral conferences (depending on the topic at issue):

- › coordinates the collection of information from cantons
- › disseminates the questionnaires, drawn up by the responsible federal department, to the cantonal administrations
- › sends the aggregated cantonal information to the federal level, once the relevant information has been collected from the cantons.

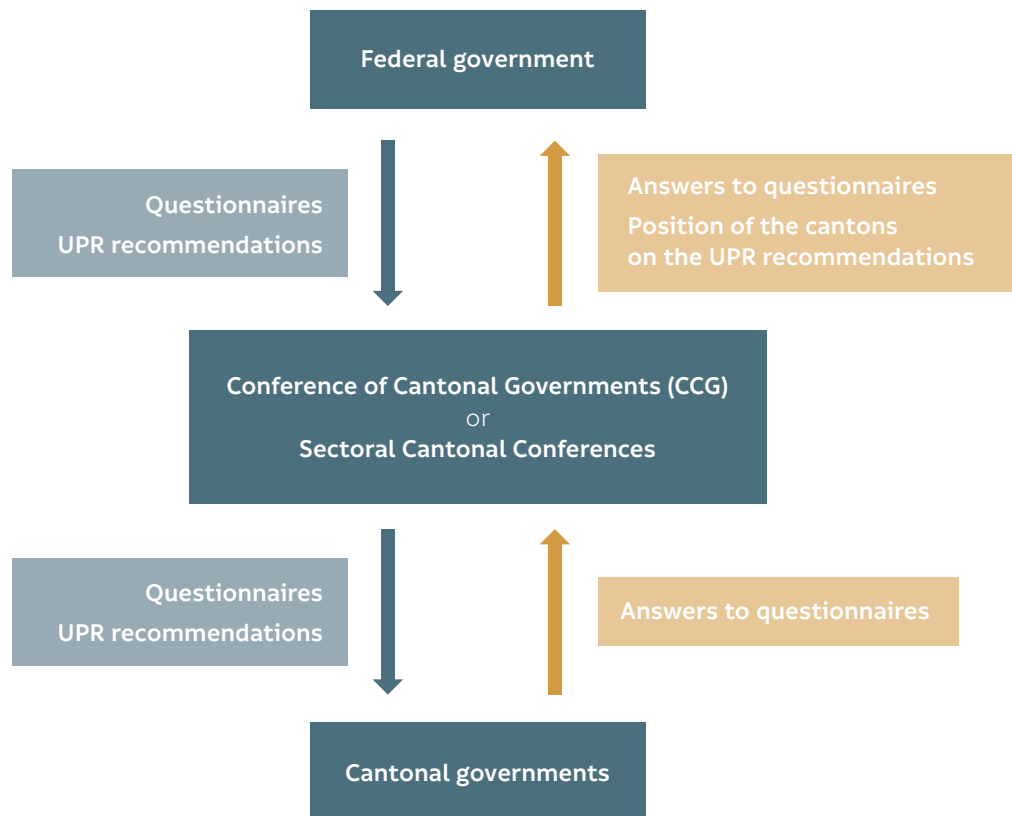
**In the UPR Working Group**, a representative of the CCG joins the Swiss delegation for the review.

After the UPR Working Group:

- › The recommendations received are sent by the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs to the CCG, which again is used as a platform to discuss the content of the recommendations and ensure common understanding of the recommendations among all cantons;
- › When receiving the recommendations, the sectoral conferences take over in their respective fields of competence;
- › The CCG requests that the cantonal administrations provide their position (supporting or noting) on each recommendation falling under the cantonal jurisdiction;
- › If a qualified majority of at least 18/26 cantons decides to accept a recommendation, the recommendation is considered to be accepted by the cantons and the CCG sends the position of the cantons to the federal level.

---

<sup>32</sup> The sectoral conferences are independent of the CCG. The CCG deals with transversal issues, whereas sectoral conferences deal with specific themes.



*“An important part of the work on UPR recommendations is already performed through the CCG and the sectoral cantonal conferences”*

The coordination and work undertaken by the CCG in the framework of the UPR facilitate the workflow not only for the cantons, but also for the federal level. Indeed, the federal agencies and departments use the CCG as a focal point to acquire information concerning UPR implementation within the cantons or to find out the position of cantons on UPR recommendations, without having to contact the cantonal administrations separately. In the same vein, the cantonal administrations do not need to establish direct contact with the federal departments with respect to the UPR and can discuss the UPR recommendations either within sectoral cantonal conferences or the CCG. The CCG facilitates the work of the cantons by conducting an initial screening of recommendations that fall under their jurisdiction. In addition, an important part of the work on UPR recommendations is already performed through the CCG and the sectoral cantonal conferences, which lightens the workload for the cantons to submit their contribution and position. This is particularly important given that not all cantons have the same resources and services to provide their responses and contribution when it comes to the UPR.

Like Switzerland, **Mexico has an institutionalised structure between federated entities.** The Mexican National Conference of Governors (CONAGO) ensures compliance with international human rights standards in the federated entities and reviews progress in the fulfilment of international commitments. Furthermore, it promotes the implementation of human rights programmes in the federated entities through exchanges of successful practices, raises awareness, and builds capacity of officials in the field of human rights. CONAGO has an inclusive approach, whereby it monitors issues brought up by the human rights protection agencies and holds regular consultations with a wide range of stakeholders.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> For example, NHRI, the Supreme Court, civil society organisations, and international stakeholders such as UNESCO and the German Bundesrat.

## Institutionalised structure between federal and federated governments

Countries like Belgium, Canada, Australia, Switzerland and Germany<sup>34</sup> have institutionalised structures for coordination between federal and federated governments.

### INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION THROUGH COORMULTI, BELGIUM

In the framework of Belgium's engagement in multilateral organisations (e.g., the United Nations), the federal government established a consultation platform called CoorMulti (Multilateral Coordination Unit) in order **to enable consultation and take into account the position of federated entities** on matters falling under their exclusive or shared competences, such as human rights.

In the context of the UPR, the federal government and the governments of federated entities use this platform, chaired by the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs, to prepare the review, answer questions asked in advance, and examine recommendations (to support or note them). After the review, UPR recommendations received are channelled to the federated entities through CoorMulti. In case further coordination between governments is necessary, **specific working groups can be created by the CoorMulti**. It is also used to consult with civil society organisations and independent institutions with a mandate to protect human rights.

It is worth mentioning that **Germany** also has a coordination mechanism between federal and federated entities, but that is thematic-specific. To name a few, there are thematic working groups involved in combating human trafficking and extremism and violence.<sup>35</sup> Their role is dedicated to **facilitating exchange, cooperation and coordination between the various ministries**. They are also composed of civil society actors engaged in this process and focus on transferring successful projects and possible solutions among municipalities across regions of Germany. The results of their work and how they relate to UPR recommendations are later compiled and presented in the German Human Rights Report.<sup>36</sup>

## 3.2 Human rights action plans and sectoral action plans

In addition to the various intergovernmental and internal coordination mechanisms, **action plans** are tools for **organising implementation** and **establishing priorities and responsibilities**, which is of particular importance in the context of federal States.

An action plan defines measures that will be taken by the government (at all levels) to achieve specific goals. Human rights action plans or sectoral (thematic) action plans are valuable tools to plan the implementation of human rights obligations, including UPR recommendations, to guide actions in a coherent manner among all relevant entities and to clarify responsibilities.

Given the complex network of competences and responsibilities in federal States, developing action plans can help **build ownership of international obligations and accountability** of all relevant government entities. The development and implementation of the plan should take into account the different competence levels. It is therefore essential to involve all relevant levels of government in the design and implementation of the plan.

<sup>34</sup> For specific thematic issues.

<sup>35</sup> Gerd Oberleitner, Klaus Starl (series eds.), *Human Rights Go Local Publications Series, Volume 1* (Graz: HRGL Publishing, 2020). European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy. <https://trainingszentrum-menschenrechte.uni-graz.at/en/>

<sup>36</sup> Federal Foreign Office (2020) *Fourteenth Human Rights Report of the German Government Reference period: 1 October 2018 until 30 September 2020*, Berlin: Federal Foreign Office. <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2422644/3f981cf30f610babfd16d0eb63ee542c/201202-mrb-14-download-data.pdf>



The following paragraphs highlight good practices in developing and implementing a national human rights action plan (in Mexico) and a sectoral human rights plan (in Switzerland).

---

### MULTILEVEL NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION PLAN, MEXICO

In the design and elaboration of its National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP 2020-24), Mexico **conducted two phases of consultations**. The first phase included 14 thematic forums in eleven states and included the participation of a wide range of stakeholders.<sup>37</sup> This was followed by a technical phase encompassing 31 working groups<sup>38</sup> aimed at **identifying authorities and agencies responsible for the implementation and follow-up** of defined actions as per the goals of the NHRAP. The document is intended to guide stakeholders at different levels in the achievement of implementation of international human rights commitments. Conducting these two rounds of consultations helped identify responsibilities as per competences, build ownership at all levels and guide sustainable implementation.

It is worth noting that one of the main objectives of the plan is to **remedy the fragmentation of public administration** by establishing regulatory provisions that divide responsibilities according to the objectives pursued by each of the public institutions.<sup>39</sup>

---

### CANTONAL INTEGRATION PLANS (CIPs) IN SWITZERLAND

Migrant rights is a shared competence of all levels of governments. Federal, cantonal and communal laws regulate this issue. A 2010 report<sup>40</sup> identified potential improvements in migrant integration policy, as well as the need to better define **responsibilities between municipalities, cantons and the federal government**.

To do so, the cantonal and federal governments agreed on a package of measures and strategic objectives. **Each canton specifies in its integration plan how it intends to achieve the commonly agreed objectives** and, based on the existing cantonal services, **formulates the need for additional measures**. This allows for a coherent integration policy at the national level, while considering different situations in each canton and their respective responsibilities. Integration programmes are financed by both the federal and cantonal governments. In addition, a set of indicators<sup>41</sup> based on the commonly determined objectives on migration integration has been developed and is reported on by each canton. Monitoring of the CIPs is conducted by the State Secretariat for Migration (federal agency) and the cantonal authorities.

The development, implementation and follow-up of the Cantonal Integration Programmes can be considered a good practice for addressing a human rights issue that falls under the responsibilities of several tiers of government. Indeed, the development of the CIP has improved migration policy coherence, clarified responsibilities, ensured a follow-up of the efficiency of measures and secured co-financing. Strengths of the CIPs lie in the efficient collaboration between federal and cantonal agencies, the **flexibility of the instruments for refining integration measures** adapted to each canton's situation, as well as learning from cantonal experiences.

<sup>37</sup> 2,383 public servants from the three levels of government, civil society, international organisations, academia, indigenous communities, experts and representatives of the private sector.

<sup>38</sup> With participants from federal agencies, experts, academia and CSOs.

<sup>39</sup> Secretaría de Gobernación (SEGOB) (10.12.20) National Human Rights Programme 2020-2024, available at: [http://doj.gob.mx/nota\\_detalle.php?codigo=5607366&fecha=10/12/2020](http://doj.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5607366&fecha=10/12/2020) (accessed: 26 July 2021).

<sup>40</sup> In spring 2010, the Federal Council adopted a comprehensive report on the development of the Confederation's integration policy in response to two parliamentary interventions. The report provides a comprehensive overview of the current situation and shows how the federal government's integration policy can be improved.

<sup>41</sup> Confédération suisse, Secrétariat d'Etat aux migrations (2021) Suivi et indicateurs, available at: <https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/fr/home/integration-einbuergierung/integrationsfoerderung/kantonale-programme/monitoring.html> (accessed: 26 July 2021)



### 3.3 Good practices of engagement of other stakeholders

The first two sections (3.1 and 3.2) focused on practices and collaboration established by governmental stakeholders from federal and federated entities. This section explores good practices in terms of UPR engagement and collaboration between actors other than the executive branch of the federal and federated governments: human rights bodies, national human rights institutions, parliamentarians, cities/municipal governments and academia.

## Human rights bodies and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)

Human rights bodies and NHRIs form an important part of the human rights framework within a country. They are established by their respective governments and have a mandate to promote and protect one or several human rights either at the federal level (generally the NHRI) or at the level of the federated entity (human rights bodies). In the case of federal States, NHRIs have a legal mandate to protect human rights falling under the competence of the federal government.

Human rights bodies operating within the different federated entities and at the federal level also developed cooperation across all levels. In Canada, Australia, Belgium and the USA, **these human rights bodies discuss human rights issues and share experiences** through an association; the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA<sup>42</sup>), the Australian Council of Human Rights Authorities (ACHRA<sup>43</sup>), the Human Rights Platform (Belgium) and the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA<sup>44</sup>),(USA). Although not performed through a formal association or structure, the National Human Rights Commission of Mexico leads an informal coordination of human rights commissions in the country. These human rights agencies within the same country are usually quite diverse in terms of mandate, size and resources. Additionally, their engagement with international human rights mechanisms such as the UPR varies greatly. In most cases, the national human rights institution is the human rights body that is the most engaged at the international level.

These cooperation structures allow for **information flow on the regional and international human rights mechanisms** (including the UPR) among all human rights bodies in the country. They provide a space for human rights bodies to discuss thematic issues and **to develop strategies on how to engage in a given mechanism**.

---

### COLLABORATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS BODIES IN CANADA

In Canada, human rights bodies and human rights legislation exist at all levels. Most provincial and territorial governments have human rights bodies, in the form of a Commission. One of their mandates is to promote and protect human rights at the provincial level. Each Commission has its own characteristics and mandate.

Thirteen human rights bodies (one federal and twelve provincial) interact, collaborate, and share information on a regular basis on human rights matters, through the **Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies** (CASHRA). This platform is used to open a discussion on their role, their contribution to the implementation of human rights commitments, including the UPR recommendations, and to share experiences. For example, provincial and territorial human rights bodies receive UPR information through CASHRA. Members also discuss how to tackle matters of mixed competences. Human rights bodies across Canada use CASHRA to make collective decisions on lobbying their respective governments, as they have done, for example, to ensure the collection of data on incidents of racial hatred within each federated entity.

<sup>42</sup> <https://cashra.ca/>

<sup>43</sup> ACHRA comprises the state, territory and federal human rights, equal opportunity and anti-discrimination authorities.

<sup>44</sup> IAOHRA is a private non-profit corporation composed of human rights agencies. <https://www.iaohra.org>



---

## BELGIAN HUMAN RIGHTS PLATFORM

Established in 2014, the Human Rights Platform is a **forum for consultation** between independent **federal, regional and community institutions**.<sup>45</sup> The platform meets every month in order to discuss specific issues that each of the institutions may encounter and that require a common view on the topic of fundamental rights.

The platform lends itself as a discussion space for Belgian institutions active in human rights across all regions and communities, where concerns, as well as good practices are shared. Some members of the platform participate actively in the reporting process to international human rights mechanisms such as the UPR, using this platform to compile data, and sharing their experiences with international mechanisms.

*“National Human Rights Institutions have a distinct and well-recognised role in the UPR”*

National Human Rights Institutions have a distinct and well-recognised role in the UPR. In federal States, this specific role also extends to human rights bodies operating within the federated entities, as the majority of human rights issues fall under the exclusive or shared competences of the federated entities.

The extent of the obligations/commitments can be burdensome for all levels as considerable resources are required to compile, summarise and manage the information related to their implementation.

**Specialised human rights bodies**, at federal and federated entity levels, can therefore play an important role in:

- **Raising awareness** on human rights issues deriving from international commitments and obligations such as the UPR recommendations among federal and federated governments;
- **Linking the UPR recommendations** with the relevant governmental department in charge at the federal/federated entity levels;
- **Translating international obligations into measures or actions** for their implementation at the federal/federated entity levels.

As an example, the Malaysian NHRI played a key role in raising awareness of UPR recommendations within federated entities.<sup>46</sup> The human rights bodies of New Brunswick and British Columbia in Canada contributed to the ownership of international commitments, such as the UPR recommendations, within their respective provinces.

---

<sup>45</sup> It brings together the Federal, Walloon and Brussels Federation and German-speaking Community Ombudsmen, the High Council of Justice, the General Delegate for Children's Rights, the Kinderrechtencommissariaat, the National Commission for Children's Rights, the Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities UNIA, the Federal Migration Centre Myria, the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, the Standing Committee for the Supervision of Police Services, the Central Council for Prison Supervision and the Belgian Anti-Poverty Network.

<sup>46</sup> The federal government also holds biannual consultations with federated entities. See more OHCHR (June 2021), Study on Emerging Good Practices from the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/UPR/Emerging\\_UPR\\_GoodPractices.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/UPR/Emerging_UPR_GoodPractices.pdf)

---

**THE NHRI OF MALAYSIA AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL, FEDERAL AND STATE LEVELS**

The A-Status NHRI of Malaysia, SUHAKAM, often organised consultations on the UPR with the state governments of Sarawak, Sabah and Peninsular Malaysia. In 2019, a year after Malaysia's third review, SUHAKAM briefed state government officials from Sarawak and Sabah<sup>47</sup> on the UPR process and initiated a discussion on the implementation of supported recommendations within those two states. In order to bridge the gap between the federal and state governments, representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Legal Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department were invited to discuss the implementation strategies that they had developed at the federal level. These consultations convened by the NHRI enabled a **constructive dialogue on UPR obligations during the implementation phase**, thus taking the intergovernmental discussion beyond the stage of data collection for the national UPR report. This bridging role, as well as the awareness-raising activities carried out by the NHRI on the UPR recommendations, contribute to the ownership of the recommendations by all levels of government.

---

**THE NEW BRUNSWICK HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, CANADA**

The Canadian province of New Brunswick has a Human Rights Commission (NBHRC) that works on compliance and education mandates. It is the governmental agency responsible for the administration of the New Brunswick Human Rights Act, a provincial Act that overlaps with the UN Declaration of Human Rights, notably on questions related to equality and non-discrimination.

Within the scheme of its mandate to promote both understanding of and compliance with of the Human Rights Act, it has launched a project called the "International Framework Project" (IFP). It **identifies relevant obligations based on UPR recommendations and connects each recommendation with** the responsible **branch/department of the government of New Brunswick, including the NBHRC**. This illustrates how provincial and international obligations can be bridged. It contributes to better understanding and promotion of human rights across the provincial government. This holistic approach also benefits the NBHRC, as it allows international obligations to be taken into account when creating educational programmes targeted at specific provincial government groups or operations. Over the long term, the IFP could be used as a monitoring tool to assess the government of New Brunswick's compliance with the UPR recommendations.

---

**BRITISH COLUMBIA'S OFFICE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER, CANADA**

The province of British Columbia has newly re-established (2019) its independent<sup>48</sup> Human Rights Commissioner (BCOHRC), which has authority under the BC Human Rights Code<sup>49</sup>. It is responsible for addressing inequality and discrimination by revisiting laws, policies, practices and cultures. Its mandate to protect and promote human rights in the province, which includes **promoting compliance with international human rights obligations at the provincial level**, is unique in Canada. Once fully established, the BCOHRC will regularly provide submissions in relation to international conventions, treaties and other international instruments.

This integrated approach<sup>50</sup> allows for a less fragmented approach to human rights within the province, taking into account international obligations which fall under its jurisdiction.

---

<sup>47</sup> The states of Sarawak and Sabah enjoy greater autonomy than the other (peninsular) states making up the Malaysian Federation.

<sup>48</sup> Draws on Paris principles.

<sup>49</sup> [https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96210\\_01#section47.12](https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96210_01#section47.12)

<sup>50</sup> To have the same body in charge of promoting and monitoring international and provincial human rights obligations.

## Role of parliamentarians in the UPR process

Federated entities are usually represented in one of the Chambers of Parliament. One of the most common ways in which parliamentarians engage in the UPR is by engaging on recommendations formulated during the review of their country by reviewing legislation with a human rights angle, by adopting a position on human rights issues or the ratification of an international instrument. **In monitoring public policies**, they are prompted to **ask questions about the status of implementation** of a particular (group of) recommendation(s), or **about the process of governmental coordination and collaboration** (whether at the federal level or at the level of the federated entities) on the UPR. In the case of federal States, these questions arise especially when UPR recommendations fall under mixed jurisdictions. Indeed, the majority of recommendations fall under the competence of several governmental levels, while the main interlocutor of the United Nations and the OHCHR remains the federal government.





For example, in Switzerland, parliamentarians from the Federal Assembly have used *interpellations*<sup>51</sup> (which can be followed by a debate) and *questions* to request information from the federal government on UPR-related matters, for all three consecutive cycles<sup>52</sup>. Questions address the process of acceptance, follow-up and implementation of the UPR recommendations, and more specifically, how the **federal government ensures that the division of competences between the federal and cantonal levels is taken into account in the acceptance, follow-up and implementation of these UPR recommendations**. One of the parliamentary interpellations specifically addresses measures taken to **improve** collaboration on the implementation of international human rights commitments among federal, cantonal and municipal levels.

Similarly in Belgium, a member of the Senate (federal level) submitted a *written question*<sup>53</sup> about how Belgium handled the implementation of UPR recommendations, given that these pertain to matters that fall under the jurisdiction of both federal and federated entities.

**“Parliamentarians in federated entities can use the UPR to achieve advances in matters falling under their competence”**

Parliamentarians in federated entities can use the UPR to achieve advances in matters falling under their competence. For example, in the canton of Vaud, a Swiss federated entity, a parliamentarian used a 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle UPR recommendation on establishing an independent complaints mechanism for victims of police violence<sup>54</sup> to push for legislative action at the cantonal level.

Beyond the fact that questions from parliamentarians contribute to follow-up on these recommendations and hold the government accountable, they can also:

- **Provide an incentive for discussions and debates on how to improve collaboration and coordination among different levels of the government** concerned by UPR recommendations and international human rights commitments;
- **Raise awareness** about the UPR among Members of Parliament;
- **Advocate** for action towards implementation of UPR recommendations;
- Lead discussions on human rights issues pertaining to the competences of federated entities, the ratification of international human rights instruments or the revision of legislation.

Parliamentarians of the federated entities can also raise awareness with respect to UPR recommendations and ask follow-up questions to their government, especially on matters related to the competences of the federated entity. UPR recommendations can be used as a form of leverage to advocate for action or legislation to be implemented at the level of the federated entity. Implementation in other federated entities could potentially strengthen this leverage effect by setting positive precedents.

<sup>51</sup> An interpellation is a procedure used by Council members, a majority of the members of a committee, or a parliamentary group to request information from the Federal Council on important domestic or foreign events or on federal matters. The Federal Council normally responds before the next session. The author of an interpellation may express their level of satisfaction with the answer and can also demand a debate on the answer. In practice, a debate of this type is only held in the Council of States; the National Council only debates interpellations that have been declared urgent.

<sup>52</sup> Accessible here: <https://www.parlament.ch/fr/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20175622>, <https://www.parlament.ch/fr/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20173596> (Avis du Conseil Fédéral du 23.08.2017), <https://www.parlament.ch/fr/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20124151> (Avis du Conseil Fédéral du 13.02.2013), <https://www.parlament.ch/fr/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20123065> (Avis du Conseil Fédéral du 09.05.2012), <https://www.parlament.ch/fr/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20093834> (Avis du Conseil Fédéral du 18.11.2009)

<sup>53</sup> Accessible here: <https://www.senate.be/www/?Mval=/Vragen/SVPrint&LEG=6&NR=2033&LANG=fr>

<sup>54</sup> Grand Conseil, Canton de Vaud (2018) Bulletin du Grand Conseil, Législature 2017-2022, Tome 4, Lausanne: Bulletin des séances du Grand Conseil p. 452

## Participation and representation of cities and towns in human rights discussions at the national level

Local authorities are close to citizens' everyday needs and their daily work could amount to implementation of human rights. In the case of federal States, municipalities or local governments are the third level of government (the smallest political unit). They have their own competences, often related to the management of public property and the local community. The participation of this level of government in human rights discussions, including the UPR, is therefore necessary to ensure that all human rights and obligations are covered, and to compile comprehensive information on human rights implementation<sup>55</sup>. In many countries considered in this research, local governments have established networks, unions or launched initiatives to share good practices and discuss human rights matters at their level. Examples of this good practice include the South African Local Government Association, the USA's Human Rights City Alliance and the Swiss Union of Cities and Towns.

In the United States of America, human rights are being mainstreamed into local administration through initiatives such as *Bringing Human Rights Home*<sup>56</sup>. This initiative includes a coalition of cities that raise awareness of human rights. They also have working groups on reframing local concerns as human rights issues and reporting on local compliance with human rights treaties through participatory governance.

---

### THE SWISS UNION OF CITIES AND TOWNS (SUCT)

The Swiss Union of Cities and Towns promotes the interests of urban areas in politics, including topics related to human rights. It offers a platform for the **exchange of experiences and networking** among its 130 members, notably with regards to certain **human rights issues relevant to the cities' administrative services**. The SUCT has established several Working Groups<sup>57</sup>, in which issues such as the rights of migrants, education, elderly persons, accessibility for persons with disabilities and various social services are discussed.

The SUCT uses several channels to **convey the position of cities and towns** to the federal level:

- Sharing of position papers with the federal level to explain the position of cities on a certain topic (on social policy, for example);
- Participation in hearings of parliamentary commissions;
- Having **a seat in various working groups or committees at the federal level**.

Every year, the Swiss Union of Cities and Towns responds to some 60 consultation procedures on issues of particular importance to cities. **This gives cities and towns the opportunity to become directly involved in the legislative process at the federal level, through the Union**. The SUCT may also be consulted by the federal level when it comes to the drafting of a report (e.g. UPR, Council of Europe). In that case, the SUCT provides the federal level with a consolidated contribution from the cities on a specific topic, such as national minorities<sup>58</sup> or linguistic minorities.

In 2019, SUCT, together with the communes, cantons and the federal level, organised a conference on human rights to promote the exchange of know-how<sup>59</sup> between all levels of governments and to discuss questions relevant to human rights, in particular UPR recommendations.

<sup>55</sup> Role of local government in the promotion and protection of human rights - final report of the human rights council advisory committee - A/HRC/30/49 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/174/88/pdf/G1517488.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>56</sup> Columbia Law School, State and Local Implementation of Human Rights, available at: <https://web.law.columbia.edu/human-rights-institute/human-rights-us/state-and-local-implementation> (accessed: 23 July 2021).

<sup>57</sup> Some working groups are directly linked to human rights issues, such as the working group on City Integration Officers and the working group on preventing and combatting radicalisation and extremism.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example: <https://rm.coe.int/168070cZee>

<sup>59</sup> [https://www.skmr.ch/frz/domaines/questions-institutionnelles/nouvelles/conference\\_droits\\_humains\\_suisse.html](https://www.skmr.ch/frz/domaines/questions-institutionnelles/nouvelles/conference_droits_humains_suisse.html)

## Academia

It is worth noting that academia has been playing an increasing role in the protection and promotion of human rights, particularly, in:

- building the knowledge of the public and other stakeholders with respect to human rights;
- creating data on human rights;
- providing advice on international recommendations and their potential impact at the regional and local level;
- analysing implementation opportunities while considering resources, capacities and jurisdictions of different federated entities;
- identifying and sharing good practices on human rights programmes/measures; and
- guiding implementation.

This role is well demonstrated in the USA, where academia and the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA) have joined forces to suggest **how local authorities could implement human rights recommendations** based on their own broad consultations with diverse authorities. In the case of Mexico, its national university (UNAM) provides specific feedback during national consultations carried out by the State and has acted as a moderator on thematic panels, raising regional considerations. The Swiss Centre of Expertise in Human Rights (SCHR), as well as some Swiss universities (such as the University of Lausanne<sup>60</sup>, UNIL), have published reports and guides on the implementation of human rights in Switzerland, including obligations stemming from international mechanisms. These publications often contain specific recommendations addressed to federal and cantonal governments and other stakeholders on how to improve the effectiveness of processes for the implementation of recommendations from UN human rights monitoring mechanisms.

---

### ROUNDTABLES IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Columbia Law School's Human Rights Institute, the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative, the Border Network for Human Rights and the Human Rights at Home Campaign used their convening power to host a roundtable<sup>61</sup> on **integrating human rights at the state (federated entity) and local level**. At this event, state and local government representatives, as well as human rights advocates, shared their perspectives on the benefits and challenges of using strategies for partnering towards the realisation of human rights.

<sup>60</sup> For example, *The Good Practice Guide: a promising tool for the implementation of human rights in cantonal legislation*, accessible here: [https://serval.unil.ch/resource/serval:BIB\\_59B892009F15.P001/REF](https://serval.unil.ch/resource/serval:BIB_59B892009F15.P001/REF)

<sup>61</sup> Prepared by the Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute for the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (2016). *Human Rights Recommendations to the United States: A Desk Reference for State and Local Human Rights Agencies*, New York, USA: Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute.

### 3.4. Monitoring

Monitoring is key to successful implementation of UPR recommendations as it allows stakeholders to identify progress and define the way forward to address remaining challenges. An efficient monitoring system facilitates reporting since information on human rights implementation is collected and analysed in a systematic manner.

*“All levels of governments concerned take part in their development to ensure that the monitoring will accurately reflect the human rights situation in all entities”*

Good practices in the monitoring of UPR recommendations include the **development of human rights indicators** that set targets to achieve better rights protection. All levels of governments concerned take part in their development to ensure that the monitoring will accurately reflect the human rights situation in all entities. Including all tiers of governments in the development of indicators allows for **clarification of responsibilities** in compiling information to feed the indicators.

Another good monitoring practice includes the creation of an **online platform** that not only provides indicators, but also collects inputs from all levels of government and other stakeholders on their actions towards implementation.

Malaysia (National Recommendations Tracking Database, NRTD<sup>62</sup>), Mexico (SERIDH<sup>63</sup>) and Australia (Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department website<sup>64</sup>) **have developed digital platforms that facilitate data collection, consultation processes and monitoring of implementation**. These platforms host publicly available information on implementation efforts from both federal and federated entities. In some cases, they assign indicators and responsibilities to implementing authorities.

---

#### **MEXICO'S SYSTEM FOR MONITORING OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS RECOMMENDATIONS (SERIDH)**

The Mexican federal government developed a digital tool, SERIDH, which classifies all international human rights recommendations made to the country from 1994 to 2021. It incorporates the **actions undertaken by different authorities to implement these commitments, linking both the recommendations and their implementation with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. In this way, the status of Mexico's compliance with its international human rights commitments is documented.

A new version of SERIDH is currently being developed, and will incorporate several improvements, including the possibility for Mexican authorities from all levels to report actions in response to recommendations directly via the platform. Indicators to evaluate compliance with the recommendations will also be integrated with the platform.

<sup>62</sup> Study on emerging Good Practices from the UPR - §40 [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/UPR/Emerging\\_UPR\\_GoodPractices.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/UPR/Emerging_UPR_GoodPractices.pdf)

<sup>63</sup> Gobierno de México SERIDH, Sistema para el Seguimiento y Atención de Recomendaciones Internacionales en materia de Derechos Humanos, available at: <https://seridhsre.gob.mx/publico> (accessed: 26 July 2021)

<sup>64</sup> Australian Government, Attorney-General's Department, Recommendations, available at: <https://www.wag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/human-rights-and-anti-discrimination/united-nations-human-rights-reporting/universal-periodic-review-monitoring/recommendations> (accessed: 26 July 2021).



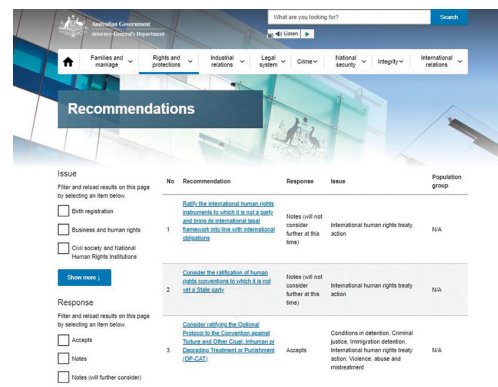
GOBIERNO DE MÉXICO Trámites Gobierno

[Ver más detalles.](#)

<p><b>Entidad emisora</b> Consejo de Derechos Humanos (MEPU)</p> <p><b>Acciones Reportadas</b> 1</p> <p><b>ODS</b> Objetivo 5      Objetivo 10</p> <p><b>Derechos Humanos</b> Derechos Civiles y Políticos</p> <p><b>Temas</b> No discriminación</p>	<p><b>Acción solicitada</b> Acciones legislativas</p> <p><b>Acción solicitada</b> Acciones legislativas</p> <p>Objetivo 16</p> <p>Derechos de Grupos y Personas Específicas</p> <p>Seguimiento a compromisos internacionales</p>	<p><b>Población</b> Personas en general</p> <p><b>Autoridad</b> Cámara de Senadores Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación</p>
--	--	--

[Ver más detalles.](#)

The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department website (Australia) is very similar to the current SERIDH in Mexico. It contains UPR recommendations and their corresponding implementation measures by the federal government, as well as **links to further information on implementation measures by federated entities**. This website serves as a basis for consultations organised by the federal level.



The Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has recently undertaken the implementation of a National Recommendations Tracking Database (NRTD<sup>65</sup>). It is built as a digital implementation plan for recommendations stemming from all international mechanisms. The MFA is working closely with OHCHR and the United Nations country team in Malaysia to populate the database with indicators, in consultation with implementing agencies from both the federal level and the level of federated entities. The database incorporates technical input from the NHRI (SUHAKAM) and civil society organisations.

Indicators and databases provide an overview of **implementation actions and responsible authorities** at all levels. Therefore, they can trigger ownership. If made publicly available and used by all government levels, such tools can increase transparency and accountability in human rights implementation.

<sup>65</sup> NRTD is a tool developed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and which can be customised by States.

## 4. Addressing challenges

This section aims to provide an overview of the main challenges faced by federal countries within the UPR framework. It should not be assumed that all the challenges can be associated with the countries reviewed. Bearing in mind that challenges are a reason for evolving, this section attempts to provide ways of addressing these challenges in view of the upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> cycle.

### 4.1 Before the review

Most countries start the preparation process approximately a year before their next UPR. The preparation of the national report requires coordination between the federal level and its federated entities on the compilation of data and consultations with relevant national stakeholders.

One of the most common challenges federal States face at this stage is regarding **communication and data collection**. The difficulty of collecting data from the federated entities or delays in providing the information can result in missing information in the reports. These reports require time and resources, especially due to differences among federated entities in terms of implementation measures and progress, which need to be addressed in the report. Indeed, synthesising information on the action taken in each federated entity on a particular topic is a complicated task, especially within the tight word and time limits associated with UPR reporting.

The **lack of attention to the federal structure by the UPR mechanism** represents another challenge. Indeed, when a federal State presents its national report, Recommending States often raise concerns and questions about the lack of uniformity in implementation across all federal entities. This is generally interpreted as incomplete implementation.

Within this preparatory process, in some instances, federated entities receive many questionnaires that are time-consuming and repeat other human rights mechanisms reporting procedures. It becomes tedious to restart the reporting process on similar topics as per the deadlines and requirements of the different mechanisms. As a result, the amount of preparation is often multiplied and not optimised for all the mechanisms. One way to address this particular obstacle can be to develop an integrated database listing all recommendations/human rights commitments and their level of implementation. This platform could be accessible at all times by all levels of governments and thus be continuously updated and used for various types of reporting and monitoring purposes. National Human Rights Institutions or other human rights bodies could also play a key role in compiling and clustering international human rights recommendations stemming from different mechanisms, paving the way for a more integrated approach to human rights reporting.

## 4.2 After the review and before the adoption stage

After the review, the State under Review has approximately five months to provide its position on all recommendations (supported or noted). Then, the UPR outcome report is formally adopted at the plenary session of the Human Rights Council. This interval between the review and adoption allows the State to consult with all parties involved. In the case of federal States, it serves as an opportunity to seek the position of federated entities and other stakeholders before providing a response to each recommendation.

Although most of the countries considered in this research have established coordination mechanisms that are responsible for, *inter alia*, **providing a coordinated response to the recommendations received**, difficulties persist in some cases. First, time can be relatively short when multiple consultation processes have to be conducted in order to provide a response to a recommendation. For example, in the case of an exclusive or shared competence of federated entities, each entity has to provide its position. Second, the formulation of recommendations or the integration of several topics falling under different competences pertaining to a single UPR recommendation creates additional challenges during the decision-making process. In some cases, it is difficult to determine what concrete actions/measures are needed to implement the recommendation and to assign them to specific agencies, which complicates the decision process. Finally, a lot of time and resources are required to analyse and respond to the large number of UPR recommendations received, many of which overlap with one another.

*“All entities concerned are aware of the recommendations and can start their internal consultation and decision-making processes”*

Given the limited time to consult all relevant governmental stakeholders and other stakeholders, as well as the high number of recommendations to be examined (200+ on average), it is important to establish a system of **clustering and dissemination of the UPR recommendations to the federated entities as per competences**. In some cases, this has been facilitated by a national human rights institution, by a department at the federal level or by an institution gathering all governments of federated entities. Therefore, all entities concerned are aware of the recommendations and can start their internal consultation and decision-making processes. In addition, leaving all recommendations pending when proceeding to the adoption of the draft UPR report (two to three days after the review takes place), as well as ensuring the participation of representatives of federated entities in the review might also help in overcoming challenges related to dissemination and knowledge of recommendations and to decision-making processes. Consultations with different stakeholders at this stage can trigger ownership and facilitate engagement in the implementation phase.

## 4.3. Implementation

Once the report has been adopted at the Human Rights Council, States start the implementation phase of the received<sup>66</sup> recommendations. Within the third cycle, further focus has been placed on this lengthy phase. As shown by this research, there is a collection of good practices that pertain to federal States throughout the full UPR process.

Improvements have been made in reporting through the establishment of coordination mechanisms. However, in most cases, these mechanisms **are not used in a consistent manner throughout the UPR implementation phase**, as they are mainly used for reporting procedures when a review is due. As a result, there is a lack of regular discussion on the implementation of UPR recommendations, which makes it easy to lose sight of them once they have been adopted. Furthermore, there is **no specific body mandated to monitor the implementation of the**

<sup>66</sup> Supported and noted recommendations

**UPR recommendations**, either at the federal level or at the level of the federated entities. This results in unclear responsibilities for follow-up, a lack of overview of the whole implementation process and a lack of both human and financial resources to conduct the monitoring and implementation work.

A solution to overcome the challenge related to consistent follow-up is to organise **regular cross-governmental and multi-stakeholder discussions**, either on UPR recommendations or by human rights themes (integrating relevant UPR recommendations). In some countries considered in this research, such meetings have been beneficial in identifying interlocutors at different government levels and in sharing best practices in implementation.

*“Databases that are regularly updated by governments at all levels are a highly effective tool for identifying gaps in implementation”*

As mentioned, the monitoring of implementation of UPR recommendations is eased when a database is set up, hosting information on recommendations and corresponding measures taken to implement them. Databases that are regularly updated by governments at all levels are a highly effective tool for identifying gaps in implementation, and can provide a basis for consulting with other actors on human rights issues.

On the structural level, an option would be to establish **permanent human rights/UPR focal points within the federal government and governments of federated entities** to facilitate communication on the implementation of human rights, share best practices and preserve institutional memory. Moreover, **developing implementation plans** is helpful in clarifying responsibilities, since they outline how to achieve the recommendations and who is in charge of both the implementation and monitoring of measures. It is a good practice to develop any implementation plan in consultation with relevant stakeholders at all levels, in order to trigger ownership and facilitate monitoring of the plan.

## 5. Concluding remarks and recommendations

The Universal Periodic Review represents an opportunity to support States consolidating democratic governance by bolstering citizen participation in the decision-making process and anchoring human rights at the heart of all governmental actions. The federal States system offers an interesting practice that can inspire other States with a decentralised structure to promote the respect of human rights at all territorial levels so that the rhetoric of fundamental rights becomes living reality for all segments of society.

The division of competences between the federal government and the federated entities may increase the complexity of their engagement with the UPR, but also, if well-coordinated, make the voices of all stakeholders heard, from the national to the local level, the closest and most accessible to citizens. Furthermore, the federal system of government enables the sharing of experiences among federated entities, mirroring the learning experiences that take place among UN Member States through the UPR.

The following recommendations are suggested to reinforce the engagement of all levels of governments in the UPR process:

- It is key that **federated entities are involved throughout the UPR process to create ownership** and ensure effective implementation of the recommendations formulated during the interactive dialogue.
- Given the exclusive or shared competences system, it seems essential to create/use a **human rights coordinating body that brings together federal and federated governments**, and/or to establish a **formal consultation procedure between intergovernmental bodies**.



- To realise their full potential, these coordination mechanisms should not be used exclusively during the reporting phase of the UPR and when deciding on which recommendations to support. They should **remain active throughout the UPR cycle on a regular basis** so that federal and federated governments can use them to **follow up on recommendations** between reviews.
- **Developing implementation plans, whether thematic or general**, can facilitate ownership, since responsible implementing and monitoring authorities are designated at all levels. The same applies to databases of recommendations.
- **Integrated databases can foster transparency, accountability and monitoring.** These public systems improve the delivery of policy and measures aimed at improving the human rights situation as per UPR recommendations by clearly identifying interlocutors and responsibilities at all levels.
- Non-governmental stakeholders such as **human rights bodies, NHRIs, academia and civil society organisations** are instrumental in compiling data on human rights, in relaying the voice of civil society, monitoring the implementation of human rights obligations or commitments and sharing good practices, as well as in providing guidance on implementation measures at all levels.
- **A multi-stakeholder approach to implementation and monitoring** can help in the inherent **development of ownership** of the human rights issues tackled. As shown, other stakeholders such as parliament, academia, NHRIs and human rights bodies are key partners in the UPR process, especially when providing guidance on implementation.
- **Regional human rights bodies with a legal mandate** can facilitate the local anchorage of the UPR recommendations. Their role, as highlighted in the text, is key in federal systems as they can also **contribute to the compliance of local measures with international commitments.**
- The model of human rights cities can be an innovative way of engaging in the process at the local level, thereby building ownership and encouraging civic participation.
- It is vital to build the **capacity of all governmental stakeholders with respect to international human rights instruments**, the UN human rights monitoring mechanisms to create local ownership of the State's human rights commitments. Guiding principles on local government and human rights could be a useful tool to inform the work of federated entities.
- The allocation of **financial resources is key to ensuring smooth implementation of the UPR** recommendations.

The upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> UPR cycle is an opportunity to learn from the previous cycles in order to further improve the effectiveness of the mechanism and consolidate existing processes. The UPR offers a platform to share experience on implementation to promote inclusive respect for human rights. Enhanced dialogue, with and across States and stakeholders at the national and international level, would facilitate information on implementation and follow-up of UPR recommendations.

Annex 1 - Coordination structures dealing with human rights, by country

Structures including governments from both federal and federated entities
Structures including federal government only
Structures including governments of federated entities only
Associations of human rights bodies

Country	Name of structure	Members
<b>Switzerland</b>	Core Group on International Human Rights Protection (KIM)	Federal government and governments of federated entities
	Conference of Cantonal Governments (CCG)	Governments of federated entities
<b>Canada</b>	The Continuing Committee of Officials on Human Rights (CCOHR)	Federal government and governments of federated entities
	Senior Officials Committee Responsible for Human Rights (SOCHR)	Federal government and governments of federated entities
	The Forum of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Human Rights (FMHR)	Federal government and governments of federated entities
	Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA)	Human rights bodies from the federal level and level of federated entities
<b>Belgium</b>	CoorMulti	Federal government and governments of federated entities
	The Human Rights platform	Human rights bodies from the federal level and level of federated entities
<b>Australia</b>	The Commonwealth Inter-departmental committee (IDC)	Federal government
	The Commonwealth-State-Territory Standing Committee on Treaties (SCOT)	Federal government and governments of federated entities
	Australian Council of Human Rights Authorities (ACHRA)	Human rights bodies from the federal level and level of federated entities
<b>Mexico</b>	National Governors' Conference (CONAGO)	Governments of federated entities
	General Directorate for Human Rights and Democracy (DGDH)	Federal government
<b>Malaysia</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Federal government
<b>South Africa</b>	Inter-Departmental Committee on Compliance with Treaty Obligations (IDC), including the Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs (COGTA)	Federal government and governments of federated entities
<b>United States of America</b>	U.S. Department of State	Federal government
	International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA)	Human rights bodies at the level of federated entities
<b>Germany</b>	Federal Foreign Office	Federal government
	The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany <sup>67</sup>	Governments of federated entities
	Thematic Working Groups	Federal government and governments of federated entities

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.kmk.org/kmk/information-in-english/standing-conference.html>





UPR Info  
3, rue de Varembe  
1202 Geneva  
Switzerland

[info@upr-info.org](mailto:info@upr-info.org)



@UPRInfo