



Accreditation as a National Human Rights Institution:

Questions and Answers

In August 2021, the Scottish Human Rights Commission was accredited as an A-Status National Human Rights Institution for the third time. This Questions and Answers Briefing explains more.

Who accredits National Human Rights Institutions?

Accreditation takes place within the United Nations human rights system. The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) awards National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) accredited status, under the guidance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The accreditation process is carried out by GANHRI's Subcommittee on Accreditation (SCA). This Committee is composed of four members, one from each of the GANHRI regions – Africa, the Americas, Asia Pacific and Europe. Each member must be an NHRI who is already accredited with A-status.

The SCA also has a number of permanent observers including the OHCHR.

What does the process involve?

Accreditation takes place against criteria set out in the Paris Principles, a set of detailed standard endorsed by the United Nations in 1993.

[The GANHRI Sub Committee on Accreditation Manual](#) sets out the accreditation process in more detail. All NHRIs are required to submit evidence for re-accreditation every five years.

When applying for accreditation, NHRIs must prepare a Statement of Compliance, detailing their compliance with the Paris Principles.

The NHRI must also submit:

- a copy of its legislation or other instrument by which it is established in its official or published format;
- an outline of its organizational structure;
- its annual budget; and
- a copy of its most recent annual report or equivalent document in its official or published format.

As part of the accreditation process, the SCA also considers submissions from civil society organisations working in the NHRI's country.

What are the Paris Principles?

The Paris Principles are criteria that the United Nations adopted in 1993 to establish the standards that A-Status NHRIs must meet.

The Paris Principles require A-Status NHRIs to:

- be given the power to promote and protect human rights and have as broad a mandate as possible;
- have a foundation in national law;
- have autonomy from the government with independence guaranteed by statute or constitution;
- have a mandate based in universal human rights standards;
- demonstrate pluralism and independence in the selection and appointment of members;
- have adequate resources and adequate powers of investigation; and
- have a responsibility to work with both civil society and the state.

What does “A-Status” mean?

A-Status is the top rating that can be given to a NHRI. It means that the Commission complies with the Paris Principles.

A-Status NHRIs are able to vote and hold governance positions within GANHRI, and have speaking rights at the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Achieving A-Status demonstrates and secures the Commission’s independence, authority and status within the international human rights system. It enables us to promote and protect all international human rights in Scotland with authority and in line with international legal standards.

What recommendations did the accreditation Committee make?

The [Committee’s accreditation report](#) commends the Commission’s work to promote and protect human rights.

It also recommends increases to the Commission’s resources and changes to its underpinning legislation to strengthen its operations. The Commission will now address these recommendations.