

Fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination

The fight against racism and xenophobia is an internal and external priority for the EU. The fight against discrimination has been a competence of the European Community since the treaty of Amsterdam entered into force in 1999. An active policy to fight discrimination of all kinds within the EU has been put in place, managed by DG Employment and Social Affairs. In addition, the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights adopted in Nice in 2000 prohibits discrimination on any ground (Article 21), and requests the Union to protect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.

Already in 2001, a general call for proposals was launched with many broad priorities including "Support for measures to combat racism and xenophobia and to protect minorities and indigenous peoples". In 2002 a specific call for proposals was launched on "Combating (i) racism and xenophobia (ii) discrimination against ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples".

Evaluation questions and methodology

This evaluation focuses on the relevance and effectiveness of EIDHR projects running from 2001 until 2004 and dealing with the fight against racism, xenophobia and the promotion of minorities' rights. It does not touch upon the projects dealing with indigenous peoples

A desk study provided the foundations for the evaluation report. A review of the Calls for Proposals (CFP) system for this programme was held separately. The synthesis report is based on a series of 4 reports written after short field visits to 17 carefully selected projects in Asia, the Balkans, Georgia, the Russian Federation and Israel, accompanied by detailed analysis both before and after the visits. This reinforced the team's view of the importance of understanding the local environment and how EIDHR can maximise its potential added value.

The study explores in some detail non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and their capacities, analysing the relevance of the projects, which are the crucial mechanism by which EIDHR meets its objectives, and studies the effectiveness of the projects. Attention was also devoted to NGO and EU communications and funding partnerships.

This evaluation was carried out by Alan Phillips, Anne Bouvier, Berthold Kuhn and Marjorie Farquharson and finished October 2005

Effectiveness, impact and sustainability

It was evident that many of the projects were operating in very difficult circumstances, usually in the wake of a war or where there were high tensions or a low level of violent conflict. Long-term changes of attitudes and approaches are clearly needed to bring about equality, tolerance and peace through processes of change that are sustainable.

Many of the projects could show substantial results, undoubtedly improving the lives of those who are victims of racism and discrimination. The projects are reaching people and communities, who are not reached by governments, and are pioneering initiatives to redress injustices and bring communities together. The Consultants saw that this work can only be undertaken by NGOs that can win the trust of those minorities, who are excluded and marginalized or are victims of direct racist and xenophobic actions. The large majority of projects, almost without exception, are targeted at the most marginalized communities and the most vulnerable within them.

The projects that appeared to have the most impact and the best prospects of sustainability are those with a coherent design, based on a sound in depth analysis of the country situation and that were able to respond to changing circumstances. Those that had good local partnerships, experienced management and a participatory methodology, that understood the local environment and complex inter-ethnic relations, are often better equipped to do this. Linking the local and national was also important. In this area of work people, processes and partnerships are crucial ingredients for success.

It is evident that those projects that consciously used human rights standards and adopted a rights based approach are more relevant and effective in tackling the root causes of racism and discrimination against minorities, and they are likely to have a significant and sustainable impact in the long term. Sustainability is underpinned by long term planning and longer term funding.

Additionally the report shows when projects focused around a single theme they are particularly valuable, while it is important that all projects should

seek to build up the strength of local NGOs and community based organisations (CBOs). It is also recommended that in some circumstances, five rather than three year funding would have distinct advantages.

Other strengths and weaknesses are noted, however the effectiveness of projects needs to be judged over time, when the processes have taken root and the long-term impact and its sustainability can be measured. This may come three years or more after a project has ended, hence the review of the effectiveness of projects must be read with caution, noting the limitations that have been identified.

Mainstreaming gender and children's issues

The programme's insistence on mainstreaming gender and children's issues into projects is rational and sound. However it needs to be strengthened in practice, inter alia more attention being paid to the specific ways in which women, men and children from minority communities are subjected to and have experience of discrimination.

Transform the EU's relationship with NGOs

There are some specific recommendations exploring practical ways of helping to transform the EU's relationship with NGOs from being the recipients of E.U. funds to being a genuine partner combating racism and discrimination together. It also identifies a number of ways in which EU parliamentarians should be involved and suggests means of bringing Commission staff and project staff closer together to strengthen their combined impact.

The funds have given some NGOs the strategic freedom and financial stability to implement innovative projects that often reach out to change the lives of the most marginalized and excluded in society. NGOs were able to pioneer projects and challenge discriminatory policies in specific and effective ways. Their participative methodology and human rights principles add real value and promote trust across ethnic divides, where governments often cannot work.

There was very considerable goodwill by NGOs towards the European Union. Additionally NGOs recognise that EU funding is often crucial in help-

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Information on activities and actions can be found on the EIDHR website:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/eidhr/index_en.htm

The views expressed in this summary do not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission.

ing to support and maintain a vibrant civil society that combats racism and discrimination against minorities. However, some of the procedures, delays, lack of transparency, and lack of flexibility cause immense frustration and limit the effectiveness of crucial work, damaging the E.U.'s reputation and reducing its opportunity to achieve results in this field.

Using this programme strategically

The report suggested that the EU should use this programme strategically. The funds and projects selected should be selected strategically. Different approaches are needed for country based, regional or global projects and different roles for macro and micro projects should be established. They should not be based on short-term pressures. The experience of the projects themselves should be used to inspire EU policies, while the projects' methodology and the rich experience developed by these projects should be embraced by the EU and deployed in other projects that the EU funds in those countries.

Achievements

The EIDHR RXM programme reached some of the most vulnerable members of discriminated communities in some of the most challenging environments in the world. Many important initiatives are being taken supporting dynamic local civil society organisations. The European Union should take pride in these achievements and seek ways to enhance them, inter alia by stimulating a constructive debate on the recommendations of this study and by exploring ways to expand this work.

Review of Calls for Proposal system

This short review of the Calls for Proposal (Calls) system of EIDHR (RXM) for macro-projects emerged as part of the current evaluation. The review does not claim to be comprehensive but it took advantage of field visits to 17 NGO project locations in June 2005, conversations with EC Delegations during these visits and the understanding accumulated from reading the documentation for the wider study. Additionally three collective meetings were held with INGOs based in Europe and a questionnaire was sent to a wide range of relevant NGOs.

The review, primarily focusing on the views of NGOs, may have greatest value when it is read in context with other internal and external studies of Calls for Proposals.

The review highlights the links between existing EIDHR programme policy and the procedures set in place to fulfil them. It has several distinct sections that include the key components of the best projects, how to enhance the initial application stage, how to improve the selection of the best applications and how to share information on the decisions made and the rationale for them. This report continues with a review of programming, partnership concerns and other management issues ending with some conclusions, end notes and annexes.

It became clear that there are serious problems being experienced by many NGOs with the Calls for Proposal system. In 2002, one third of all applications under the EIDHR (RXM) programme were deemed to be ineligible for technical reasons and only 15% of the technically eligible EIDHR (RXM) projects were selected for funding.

The number of days used by human rights staff in NGOs in preparing and processing highly complex applications for projects that were not funded must have been immense. It is not uncommon for several staff to spend much time over a few months in different locations to prepare funding application. It represents a substantial loss to human rights NGOs and the Commission itself. This has demoralised staff and led to tensions that are

harmful for cooperation between the EU and NGOs, who should be natural allies in promoting human rights.

The current system is neither seen to be transparent nor seen to be objective throughout by NGOs. The system unfortunately limits both judgments on the quality of proposals and dialogue between the Commission and potential partners. Many other major donors value the good judgment of experienced staff and their sensitive dialogue with applicants.

It is widely agreed that there is an immediate need for better communications. Beyond that, many NGOs argue for a fundamental reform of the system to help serious, high quality applications that are promoting equity, tolerance and peace rather than a system where most of the EIDHR applications are rejected on minor technicalities.

The current system is failing to meet the ideals of the European Union and the human rights principles it stands for, it is taking resources away from important human rights work and requires a radical new approach. A range of new approaches is identified in the following twenty five suggestions. They could radically improve the system and form the basis of a new partnership between the EU and NGOs on human rights programming.

Suggestions in the following area's were made to make the Call for Proposal system more effective:

- pre-application procedures
- selecting the best applications
- following the selection of the best applications
- innovations in programming
- partnerships
- the role of the EC delegations

The evaluations are carried out in partnership with the Netherlands Humanist Committee on Human Rights and The Danish Institute for Human Rights.

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