

EPLO Funding for Peace Working Group

Response to the presentation by the European Commission of its priorities for the revision of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Strategy Paper (2007-2010)

September 2009

EPLO welcomed the recent opportunity to discuss with the European Commission its proposals for the next EIDHR strategy paper and is pleased to see that the principle of structured consultation with civil society continues to be implemented in practice. We were also very pleased to read in the minutes of the meeting with civil society the following commitment by the Commission: “On the issue of conflict prevention, the COM agreed to re-discuss in particular with EU Member States the possible inclusion of this subject within the new Strategy Paper.”¹

Regarding the content of the new strategy paper, we look forward to:

- the continued inclusion of both “peaceful conciliation of group interests” as an objective and a commitment that the response strategy will be “implemented primarily by civil society organisations”;
- the continued mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity into all activities;
- the continued recognition of the strong link between human rights and conflict prevention as well as continued inclusion of transitional justice mechanisms and international criminal prosecutions;
- the planned increase in allocations to the country-based support schemes (CBSS) under Objective 2²

Whilst recognising these positive developments, we would like to raise again a number of specific issues whose inclusion in the new strategy paper (2011 – 2013) we believe would result in a more coherent and effective funding instrument for democracy and human rights:

- **Overall scope:** While we are aware that there are growing calls for the scope of the EIDHR to be narrowed, we strongly believe that the link between peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict and the promotion of democracy and human rights must be maintained and strengthened in the new strategy paper. In this regard, we believe if the EIDHR is to achieve its overall objectives, including what the Commission describes as “the peaceful

¹ See [http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/cooperation_with_ngo/docs/minutes_ngos_meeting_\(2\).pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/cooperation_with_ngo/docs/minutes_ngos_meeting_(2).pdf), p.3

² Ibid. p. 2

conciliation of group interests”, the new strategy paper must include much more explicit references to peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict throughout.

- **Conflict sensitivity:** In our submission to the consultation on the draft of the current strategy paper (2007 – 2010), we welcomed the inclusion in paragraph 21 of the strategy’s aim to be “conflict sensitive” as well as the references to tackling the “root causes” of conflict and the recognition of the link with the crisis response activities that are foreseen under the Instrument for Stability. We strongly recommend that these references are maintained in the new strategy and that they are fully taken into consideration in future calls for proposals.
- **Objective 1 – Enhancing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in countries where they are most at risk:** In our contribution to the consultation on the 2009 EIDHR Annual Action Programme, we raised concerns about the implementation of the stated focus on “human security”³ into specific activities. Given that violent conflict is a major cause of human rights violations and, therefore, a major threat to human security, we would recommend that peacebuilding activities – which are by their nature aimed at tackling this threat to human rights and fundamental freedoms, should be included as priorities under this objective. In addition, we would recommend that the list of indicators to characterise situations in which human rights and fundamental freedoms are at risk as set out in paragraph 29 of the current strategy should be expanded to include the risk of violent conflict.
- **Objective 2 (Strengthening the role of civil society in promoting human rights and democratic reform, in facilitating the peaceful conciliation of group interests and in consolidating political participation and representation) – Country-based support schemes:** In our contribution to the consultation on the 2009 EIDHR Annual Action Programme, we recommended the inclusion of a specific reference to peacebuilding alongside the reference to the “peaceful conciliation of group interests” in the list of activities to be supported via the country-based support schemes (CBSS). We would, therefore, recommend that the new strategy paper also includes an explicit reference to peacebuilding as an activity to be supported via the CBSS, particularly in conflict or post-conflict countries. In addition, the Commission should provide clear guidance to its delegations that peacebuilding should be included in the list of activities which can be supported via this mechanism when they are launching calls for proposals.
- **Objective 2 – Thematic focus:** In 2006, we welcomed the inclusion of several important activities under the thematic focus of Objective 2, particularly transitional justice, civil dialogue and independent and responsible media. We were encouraged to see that the original reference in paragraph 33⁴ to “democratic oversight of the military” was broadened to include the security sector as a whole and we also welcomed the recognition of the specific role of women in peace processes. Despite the Commission’s recommendation during the meeting with civil society in July 2009 that, “in terms of activity, the current

³ Paragraph 23

⁴ Draft paragraph 34

formulation should be simplified”,⁵ we strongly recommend that the abovementioned activities continue to be supported through the EIDHR.

- **Objective 3 (Supporting actions on human rights and democracy issues in areas covered by EU Guidelines, including on human rights dialogues, on human rights defenders, on the death penalty, on torture, and on children and armed conflict):** In 2006, we welcomed the flexibility of small grants for human rights defenders (HRDs) whilst at the same time recommending that longer-term grants for accompaniment activities should also be eligible for support under Objective 3. We reaffirm our support for EIDHR assistance to HRDs and repeat our recommendation for broadening the scope of activities that are eligible under this priority. In addition, given the scale of the threat posed to HRDs in conflict and post-conflict countries both from armed groups and security forces, we would also recommend that the Commission considers support for this particular group as a specific priority.
- **Objective 5 (Building confidence in and enhancing the reliability and transparency of democratic electoral processes, in particular through election observation):** In 2006, EPLO stated its view that election observation missions (EOM) should be financed through the geographical instruments. Although we maintain this view, we are nonetheless still open to possible co-operation with the Commission in developing appropriate concepts and approaches to EOMs in conflict and post-conflict situations. In addition, given that electoral processes encompass both longer term pre-and post-electoral phases, EPLO encourages a broadening of activities to enable EOMs to contribute to a more comprehensive approach to democracy support. To this end, we encourage the Commission to support the implementation of so-called “complementary measures” contained in Action Fiche 12 of the 2009 EIDHR Annual Action Programme⁶ which include exploratory and post-election monitoring activities complementary to EOMs.

Given the limited amount of funding available for the promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide, it is essential that funding is available to ensure that the commitment included in the current strategy paper that “the response strategy will be implemented primarily by civil society organisations.”⁷ In this regard, we urge the Commission uphold the commitment given during the meeting with civil society in July 2009 that “the ceiling of 25% of the total EIDHR budget for EOM expenditure will be respected.”⁸ Furthermore, we recommend that the Commission considers the possibility of using some of the funding which it currently allocates to EOMs to support the implementation of complementary measures by civil society actors. In this context, it should be noted that NGO-led violence prevention and early warning activities can play a crucial role in contributing to electoral processes in conflict-prone areas and countries.

⁵ [http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/cooperation_with_ngo/docs/minutes_ngos_meeting_\(2\).pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/cooperation_with_ngo/docs/minutes_ngos_meeting_(2).pdf), p.2

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/worldwide/eidhr/documents/aap_2009_en.pdf, pp. 61-64

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/worldwide/eidhr/documents/eidhr_strategy_paper_2007-2010_en.pdf, p. 2

⁸ [http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/cooperation_with_ngo/docs/minutes_ngos_meeting_\(2\).pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/cooperation_with_ngo/docs/minutes_ngos_meeting_(2).pdf), p. 2