



OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2008

Working Session 16: Discussion on human dimension activities
(9th October 2008)

EU Statement

Mr Chairman,

The EU attaches the greatest importance to the OSCE's human dimension activities. We believe that the human dimension engagement of the OSCE's institutions and the field missions is at the core of the work of our organisation. We therefore welcome the key role of the field missions, and other institutions of the organisation, in drafting programme proposals, in putting these in place and in implementing a wide range of project activities. All participating states have an interest in, and a responsibility to assist in, the implementation of such projects and programmes - either through facilitating project implementation on the ground and/or through the contribution of financial, or other, resources. Co-ordination and co-operation with relevant national and international organizations is essential to avoid unnecessary duplication and to create synergies.

Priority should be given to programme activities which focus on those areas which are subject to serious and persistent breaches of commitments in specific participating states.

The EU welcomes the appointment of Ambassador Janez Lenarcic as director of ODIHR and would like to assure him of its support in carrying out the challenging, but extremely important, role he has taken on. It has been rightly said that the methodology of ODIHR represents the gold standard in election monitoring. It is the activity with which the OSCE is most closely associated in the minds of the citizens of participating states. ODIHR has developed a methodology which is both credible and comprehensive and has built up a body of skills and which has repeatedly demonstrated its value.

We should be open to further improvements in election monitoring.

In our view improvements should build upon what has already been achieved, for example by strengthening the role of long term observers, or improving

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the follow-up to the recommendations made by ODIHR's election observation missions, or continuing to pursue diversity of election observers through support of the diversification fund. It is important that the Copenhagen commitments on election monitoring are honoured to the full in the spirit as much as in the letter by all participating states. The assistance provided by ODIHR to the participating states through election observation missions is a benefit of OSCE membership.

The EU welcomes the fact that a majority of OSCE participating states fully cooperate with ODIHR before, during and after their elections, and appeals to all participating states to do so. The EU wishes to stress the importance it attaches to complementarity between the competences of the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and would like to see harmonious co-operation on the basis of the 1997 memorandum.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the agreement on the mandate of the Representative on Freedom of the media. During that period the media landscape has changed in dramatic ways. We have witnessed an astonishing explosion in electronic media, whose consequences are still unclear, but are evidently going to be far reaching. While this will create new possibilities for connections between peoples, it will also throw up new challenges.

What is certain is that, in this new setting, freedom of expression and opinion will remain of fundamental importance. The EU salutes the achievements of this uniquely valuable institution during its first decade and believes that the role of the Representative on Freedom of the media continues to be of great relevance and is deserving of recognition and support.

The EU would also like to underline the importance it attaches to the role and activities of the High Commissioner on national minorities, including in relation to the tragic events which took place in August 2008 in Georgia. These serve to remind us the importance of addressing issues relating to national minorities at an early stage and the vital role that can be played by quiet diplomacy.

Promoting tolerance and non-discrimination has become an integral part of OSCE programmes and activities. The ODIHR's annual report on hate crimes reminds us of the challenges we face in tackling intolerance and discrimination across the OSCE. The EU believes that in attempting this task our focus should be on practical results. Human rights are indivisible and interdependent and there should be no thematic hierarchy in the OSCE tolerance agenda – all forms of intolerance and discrimination should be addressed, regardless of whether based on grounds such as ethnic origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, age or disability.

The promotion of gender equality throughout the OSCE and the promotion of women's participation in political and public life continue to be high priorities for the EU. We attach great importance to the mainstreaming of gender in all

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aspects of OSCE activity and welcome the efforts to develop programmes and projects which reflect this priority.

The EU attaches great importance to the work of the Special Representative and Co-Ordinator for combatting trafficking in human beings. This is an issue which continues to be of concern throughout the OSCE area, in countries of origin, transit and destination. The problem of trafficking spans not only the borders of states, but also the three dimensions of the work of the OSCE. If it is to be tackled, this will require co-operation and commitment on the part of participating states, as well as relevant sections of the OSCE and other international organisations.

Being gravely concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in some OSCE participating states, the EU encourages OSCE institutions and field missions to give priority to the development of programmes and projects aimed at enhancing the protection of human rights defenders and helping to build their capacity.

Referring to the need for coherence and to avoid duplication in the work of international organisations, the EU welcomes the existing cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The EU encourages both organisations to enhance and strengthen their cooperation in all fields possible, especially regarding the human dimension activities.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and Serbia, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Liechtenstein, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

*Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

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