



DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS ASSISTANCE

Introduction / Methodology

OSCE/ODIHR PROGRAMMES FUNDED THROUGH
EXTRABUDGETARY CONTRIBUTIONS

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Introduction

The 1992 Helsinki Document established the mandate of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to: assist participating States to ensure full respect for human rights; abide by the rule of law; promote principles of democracy; build, strengthen and protect democratic institutions; and promote tolerance throughout society. The Office's mandate has subsequently been re-confirmed and expanded in a variety of decisions and action plans including through specific tasks.

As the OSCE's main institution concerned with the human dimension, ODIHR fulfils this mandate through a number of core-funded activities. These include regular interaction with the OSCE's 56 participating States on the political level through the Permanent Council (PC) in Vienna, as well as providing expertise on human dimension issues to participating States and their relevant institutions. ODIHR supports the implementation by participating States of their commitments and assists them as they follow up on ODIHR recommendations. This is done in particular through the regular human dimension meetings – the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, Human Dimension Seminar, and Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings – which can be attended by all participating States and Partners for Co-operation as well as other organizations and civil society representatives.

ODIHR carries out its core mandate through main programmes on elections, democratization, human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination, and a Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues. These programmes are described and justified in the annual Programme Outline and Unified Budget documents. They form the basis for ODIHR's operations and are supplemented by additional activities funded through extrabudgetary contributions, which enhance and expand these mandated activities.

Such enhanced activity is built on the various OSCE commitments, action plans and specific recommendations emerging from human dimension meetings and Summits. Activities are conducted either on the basis of memoranda of understanding¹ or upon mutual agreement through a consultation process with host country partners and involving, where applicable, OSCE field operations. In engaging with participating States, the Office seeks to strengthen mutual assessment efforts in order to ensure support in remedying shortfalls.

Appropriate ODIHR's expertise and assistance can also be offered to counterparts from the OSCE Partners for Co-operation in line with ODIHR's mandate and agreed modalities. Extrabudgetary contributions allow ODIHR to put its accumulated expertise at the disposal of both Governments and civil society in their search for resources that shed light on different options and experiences relevant for democratic development. Such support may prove particularly valuable and timely when Partners for Co-operation are undergoing fundamental political and social transformation at a rapid pace, as is now the case in North Africa.

¹ Memoranda of Understanding have been signed with participating States, including Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan on specific programmes or on general co-operation.

ODIHR's Methodology

The need for more consistent long-term engagement in these fields of activity has been addressed by ODIHR over recent years. ODIHR's multi-year, programme-oriented approach is by now well established. Its office-wide comprehensive planning methodology includes regular review of developments and results. ODIHR takes particular care to consider progress in all fields of engagement alongside each other. This reinforces the complementary and enhancing effect of voluntary contributions. Thus ODIHR is well placed to acknowledge and respond to the needs of OSCE participating States as they evolve. This year programmes continue to focus on targeted policy advice, institution- and capacity-building programmes; where appropriate, shorter-term activities and projects are included to provide a rapid response to emerging needs. In planning its activities and programmes, ODIHR takes into account a number of factors:

- **Transferring good practices within the OSCE region**

A wealth of knowledge and experience exists across the OSCE. With its regional mandate ODIHR is uniquely placed to identify relevant experiences and share them proactively with other interested participating States. ODIHR complements the work of local OSCE field operations and reaches States where no OSCE field operation is present. Effectiveness is maximized through co-ordination with relevant international actors, including the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe and United Nations Special Rapporteurs, etc.

- **Raising awareness of relevant policy and legislative issues**

Many issues which seem clear in one part of the OSCE are far less well understood in others. ODIHR can bridge this gap by keeping an issue on the agenda where it needs to be addressed.

- **Creating a platform for discussion and closer co-operation**

Many stakeholders are ready to engage on a particular issue relating to OSCE commitments but need a point of focus to galvanize them into devoting the required time and resources. ODIHR's convening power allows them to fix their attention on the issue at hand and gain access to knowledgeable regional networks.

- **Mainstreaming human rights into specialized areas**

ODIHR is a centre of excellence for many human rights issues and has established mechanisms to secure the OSCE as a whole benefits from it in project work. Past experience from all aspects of ODIHR's work are regularly fed into the design of new activities, including those of field operations and other OSCE structures. Efforts are also made to mainstream gender considerations into all ODIHR's activities: women's rights are human rights.

- **Responding to requests**

As an intergovernmental organization the OSCE works with its participating States as partners. By responding to their requests, ODIHR underpins a participating State's intention to improve compliance with its commitments on a certain topic. The Office responds with tailor-made programmes and policy suggestions, amending its programmes promptly in accordance with emerging requirements.

- **Targeting state authorities and civil society together**

ODIHR was set up to benefit all OSCE participating States, state authorities and civil society alike. ODIHR pays attention to promoting constructive relationships between civil society and governments, reaching out equally to government officials, specialized communities (e.g. legal, think tanks), political parties, religious or interest groups acting at local, national,

international, working or political level, trade unions, advocates of reform, etc. ODIHR is ready to assist them all in build their expertise and analytical skills so that all stakeholders can contribute to policy debate and bring participating States closer to fulfilling their OSCE commitments in the Human Dimension.

- **Combining theory and practice**

The combination of comparative research, practical tools, sharing national experiences in workshops and dissemination of OSCE products, is more sustainable than many other approaches because it permits concrete learning, better co-operation and co-ordination between local, national and international stakeholders to implement agreed principles.

- **Strong local ownership**

Participating States are responsible for implementing their commitments. ODIHR's flexible approach strengthens the role of stakeholders within States, encourages their ownership, responsiveness and responsibility in the process, and makes programmes more sustainable.

ODIHR has tried and tested various tools over the years:

- Assessments of the political, policy, legislative and practical landscape
- Multi-lingual specialist handbooks/publications/materials
- Expert Panels/Groups
- Expert and/or peer review and policy recommendations
- Legislative guidelines
- Reviews of legislation
- Legal digests
- General and specific training using generic, modular or tailored materials
- Internet based information centres
- Dedicated events (roundtables, conferences, seminars)
- Broad networks of partners

Thanks in large part to flexible multi-year funding from its donors, ODIHR has maintained its ability to react to changing needs and new challenges in the field. This document continues to serve as a "living text," which guides ODIHR's assistance work and is updated and adjusted based on continuous monitoring and regular evaluation of results. ODIHR presents here a short and accessible summary of the various sorts of assistance the Office can offer to participating States. (More detailed documentation is available on specific topics of interest).

Finally, ODIHR would like to take this opportunity to thank all its donors for their many and generous voluntary contributions to these programmes. These continue to allow the Office to deliver assistance comprehensively and in a flexible, effective and timely manner.