



Warsaw, 02.06.2015

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Working Group III: Co:Operation between NHRIs and other actors

NGOs interactions with the National Human Rights Organisations

Cooperation between National Human Rights Institutions and other actors is essential for achieving many of the statutory goals of the NGOs as well as in having impact on the broader public opinion.

Experience of the Open Dialog Foundation, a Polish human rights NGO engaged in advocacy for certain policy reforms, highlights need for a more open attitude of the National Human Rights Institutions to serve as transmission belts between representatives of the public interest and the government – with respect to NHRI's preference to work in a neutral and confidential manner. And in this regards some systemic improvements are very needed.

For obvious reasons parliaments are the main interlocutors when it comes to a debate over a political decision that is to be carried out by the government. The Open Dialog Foundation have multiple times dealt with such situation, when a politically motivated extraditions were underway from Spain, Italy, Czech Republic, or France to Russia, Kazakhstan or other authoritarian country, and it was the government of the EU country who had the final word. It was to analyse the political and human rights weight of the case and decide whether to approve the extradition or not.

In order to raise awareness about the political background of the case, and push the government to measure between the economic interests, which were in favour of extradition (as a mean to show cooperative attitude with the requesting country), and human right commitments, which were against it (it would put person's life at risk), reaching parliamentarian audience is critically important And voice of the NHRIs could potentially, and practically play an important role in this regards.

Other situation ODF frequently deals with is the NGO support for specific reform programme that touches the human right record of the country, such as decentralisation or reform of the General Prosecutor's office in Ukraine.

In both cases it is not only the NHRI, but equally the parliamentarians who have, or should have the interest in exchange of the expertise, experience and knowledge of the subject which is under deliberation of the government, which may lack its proper overview.

For the very practical reasons what should be considered are special budgets for NHRIs that could be used for covering costs of inviting NGOs for consultations, hearings, and for facilitating them meetings with other platforms of exchange of expertise in the respective field.

Other practical need is providing a translation service for the NHRIs in order to assure foreign NGOs' reports and recommendations provided for the authorities of the respective countries are available in the national languages of the MPs and other relevant state institutions.

If confidence between NGOs and NHRIs is built and some practical obstacles are removed, numerous possibly valuable and fruitful initiatives of the NGOs could have a greater impact despite budgetary and technical shortcomings.