

## **2005 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

**Key-note speech by Ms. Cordula Wohlmuther, Senior Programme Officer**

**OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine**

**Working Session 11: Discussion on human dimension activities (with special emphasis on project work)**

Field missions, centers, and other presences are the heart of our organization. They represent a wealth of knowledge and experience. And missions are one of the primary mechanisms for ensuring that the OSCE responds to the real needs of real people. As the OSCE has evolved, those needs are increasingly being met through the design and implementation of technical assistance projects.

Over the past decade, the OSCE has evolved to meet new challenges, and it has grown exponentially. And today, we are faced with the challenge of building sustainable and effective institutional mechanisms for planning and cooperation that do not compromise the flexibility and sensitivity to local conditions that are the heart of this organization. How do we cooperate and plan with our host nations and partner organizations, and even with each other? What institutional mechanisms should we build, and how many have emerged that we need to identify and strengthen?

The office of the OSCE PCU is one of the only field presences in the OSCE devoted solely to projects. We have no political mandate. By sharing with you our office's approach to the design and implementation of technical assistance projects, I hope to communicate how we've balanced cooperation and planning with flexibility, and generally discuss the ways we've used projects to increase the frequency, intensity and duration of cooperation and coordination with Ukraine, Ukrainian civil society, and other international stakeholders. Finally, I hope to hint at several mechanisms that might increase coordination without comprising our added value, and harvest the wealth of mission information for long-term and short-term planning. I hope that our experience has the potential to inform your work.

In 1999 Ukraine and the OSCE signed a new memorandum of understanding, closing the existing mission, and creating the Project Coordinator in Ukraine. According to its mandate, the OSCE PCU is tasked only with the planning, implementation, and monitoring of projects between relevant authorities of Ukraine and the OSCE and its institutions. "Between the OSCE and its institutions." Let's keep this phrase in mind as we move on.

We have found that projects are an excellent tool for increasing cooperation between ourselves and our partners, specifically our host nations, and they remain a viable mechanism for addressing needs quickly and effectively. Since our founding, we have implemented numerous projects in all three OSCE dimensions, many of them of a cross-dimensional nature, in conjunction with multiple international partners, including OSCE institutions and missions.

Where do these projects come from? All projects carried out by our office reflect concrete needs or shortcomings in the host country, meaning that needs assessments are a critical part of our work. Our projects are not designed "out of the blue" but are developed in close cooperation with our Ukrainian counterparts, firmly grounded in OSCE principles, and are targeted towards assisting our host government in meeting its reform agenda.

Close planning with your host nation relies, of course, on good relationships, and in this regard, our relationship with the Ukrainian government, particularly with MFA, our principle partner, has been flexible and unproblematic. Constant and constructive dialogue has forged

an excellent working relationship. As such, most projects are submitted directly to our office on a regular basis by various governmental bodies. Furthermore, each year we develop a number of projects based on the knowledge and recommendations of our staff, based on best practices shared during meetings of OSCE focal points, and direct initiatives from OSCE institutions and other field presences.

I've been asked to highlight the ways in which we, in our project work, make use of OSCE institutions and resources. Constant interaction with OSCE institutions and field presences, in particular with the CPC, the PCC, and ODIHR, provide stability, a backbone to our work.

After a project has been elaborated, we immediately send it to the CPC. They advise on particular projects and activities, alerting us to potential sensitivities, and keep both us and our host nation aligned to OSCE core principles and operating standards. They have been critical in this regard.

The PCC circulates projects among key focal points and institutions, providing expert advice during the planning stage. ODIHR is also critical in this regard as well as being a source of direct initiatives and cooperative projects as are other OSCE institutions, including the Chairman-in-Office.

For example:

1. In the field of anti-trafficking, we used ODIHR's national referral mechanism framework to conduct a needs assessment on Ukraine's national referral mechanism. Based on findings of the needs assessment study and taking into consideration the OSCE Action Plan on the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings, we are currently in the process of assisting Ukraine in creating the position of a National Coordinator on Anti-Trafficking Issues and in the elaboration of a new national action plan.

2. A previous speaker encouraged follow-up projects based on recommendations in ODIHR's final election reports. Based on just those recommendations, the office of the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine has initiated a project supporting Ukraine as it further strengthens the election process.

3. Since last year, we have been implementing an initiative from the OSCE's Economic and Environmental Coordinator's office in Vienna. Their economic empowerment for orphans initiative, which seeks to provide internships and jobs for this vulnerable group, was adapted and localized to the needs of Ukraine. And another initiative, on Human Rights Education for children has come from the Chairman-in-Office, and has already begun training teachers in this new educational program.

Together, they, along with other OSCE institutions, are excellent resources but underused by field presences. We, in turn, must ensure that these operating procedures and structures still meet the needs and reality of the situation on the ground. It is critical to understand and use this relationship, especially in difficult mission areas.

At the beginning of this talk I posed a number of questions about how we can cooperate and coordinate better, without losing our ability to adapt and quickly respond in effective ways to local conditions. While we, as the office of the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine, may be somewhat biased, I am convinced that project work gives us potential answers to these questions. Based on our experience, I would like to suggest several potential mechanisms that might potentially help us increase our capacity without sacrificing flexibility, and help us assist our host nations in, implementing their human dimension commitments:

## 1. Needs assessment as a tool for strategic planning AND cooperation

Needs assessment happens every day. As individuals carrying out our tasks, we identify needs in conjunction with our counterparts, and hear of projects or initiatives from various national and international actors working to address these shortcomings. This is a natural part of our work, and should not be changed. But this natural activity can be strengthened and used more effectively as a tool for cooperative strategic planning that does not limit flexibility.

Every year for the past three years, our office has performed a comprehensive needs assessment by gathering information on nearly every project by virtually every domestic and international actor related to Ukraine's reform agenda. We have compiled it into a user friendly database. I have a limited number of sample copies with me today. It sounds exhaustive, but it's not. And each production cycle becomes more efficient as information sharing becomes, we might even say, institutionalized, creating a culture of cooperation. It is a product small missions could easily produce. Creating and updating this database on a yearly basis has allowed us to perform a detailed needs assessment of gaps and overlaps in service to Ukraine, identify key areas for cooperative partnerships, ensure that our activities do not duplicate existing efforts, and naturally position us as a coordinator for donors and implementers.

## 2. Institutionalized thematic focal point meetings

Earlier I highlighted the fact that our office is responsible for planning, implementing, and monitoring projects between Ukraine, the OSCE and its institutions. Information exchange between missions and institutions has developed during recent years, especially in the field of anti-trafficking, where anti-trafficking focal points from missions and institutions gather and exchange best practices and discuss challenges. Meetings for environmental and economic officers are also becoming more common, and have proved to be very useful.

But this mechanism can and should be further developed, especially in the field of rule of law and democratization. Focal point meetings provide a smaller, more intimate forum that allows for a better exchange of ideas and provides an opportunity for constantly rotating staff to learn about new OSCE priorities and operational standards. I cannot stress enough how helpful such meetings have been for the work of our office.

These meetings are often the only way to give missions in depth knowledge about new priorities which change with each chairmanship. Based on this, missions can adjust their activities to accommodate new priorities.

Such meetings are also an excellent forum to learn about new and effective projects that can then be adapted to local conditions, bringing more uniformity to OSCE's work in general, and greatly reducing the project production cycle.

And they also provide a space where employees can learn about the success and failures of other missions, and receive relevant input from other institutions on best practices, how to handle sensitive issues and where resources can be found.

Regular thematic focal point meetings should be increased and supported by institutionalized, regional and/or thematic strategic planning sessions and trainings in areas like rule of law, democratization and trafficking. Travel funds should be allocated for this, especially for small missions.

### 3. Harvesting Best Practices

Missions contain a lot of experience and best practices. Oftentimes, there is no need to reinvent the wheel, a problem that the OSCE sometimes has. Focal point meetings facilitate information exchange about current events, but what about the lessons of the past? The Balkans missions alone contain a lot of information on projects, best practices, and lessons learned that may be lost through staff rotation. A project database using a unified but functional reporting standard, and searchable by mission and thematic area would lessen the learning curve for new focal points, new programs, and greatly reduce the project production cycle.

In our experience, the bottom line is that projects provide us with opportunities to constructively engage our governmental counterparts, OSCE institutions, field presences, and partner organizations working in our mission areas, and have the potential to help us build the structural mechanisms we need without sacrificing the flexibility that is part of who we are. And most importantly, when projects are well planned, address specific needs, and engage multiple stakeholders, they are an excellent means of supporting our host nation as they implement their human dimension commitments.