Human rights in the world. Annual report 1999-2000

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This report sets out an overview of the activities in the protection of human rights and democracy funded by the European Commission in external relations between 1996 and 1999. It examines the major thematic priorities and the regional strategies of such action, and provides an analysis of some procedural aspects. In addition, an assessment of the performance of the Commission in this field is included. It is the fourth report of its kind, and describes the main lines of action followed in the use of resources available in the financial years 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999 under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) (Chapter B7-70 of the EU budget). During the period assessed by this report, approximately EUR 300 million were allocated to human rights and democracy projects from this part of the budget alone. This report is complementary to the EU Annual Report on Human Rights, adopted by the Council in October 1999. While the present document deals with activities funded under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights by the European Commission from 1996 to 1999, the EU Annual Report on Human Rights has a wider remit. However, both reports share the same goals: to enhance the transparency, coherence and consistency of the Union's human rights policies. The present report sets out a detailed financial breakdown of where and how the money was spent. Furthermore, by highlighting individual projects as examples, the report illustrates the concrete action facilitated by Community finance. Ths survey also highlights that a major priority for the Union has been the development of its partnership with non-governmental organisations and civil society. NGOs are the principle implementing partners for projects under EIDHR. With regard to the development of activities between 1996 and 1999, it can be seen that funding has increased dramatically in certain areas. For example, the priority attached by the Union to promoting awareness and professional competence in the field of human rights is illustrated by a large increase for projects concerning human rights and education. Similarly, enhanced assistance for strengthening legal systems reflects the growing emphasis on institutional-building and the rule of law. Where certain activities are marked by an apparent decline in resources in 1999, such as those projects described contained in the section on 'target groups', this represents an evolution of projects which focussed on specific categories of individuals towards instruments which better ensue their protection through larger, thematic programmes. Lastly, this report can make a significant contribution to the dialogue on human rights issues and activities between the Commission and its partners. Above all, it demonstrates that the EU will always face a demand for assistance in the human rights field which will outstrip its ability to fund worthwhile projects. However, with the help of reports such as this, the EU will be better able to establish a strategy to make best use of its resources.