Human rights and democratisation: role of the Union in third countries

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This report sets out an overview of the activities in the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy funded by the European Commission in external relations in 2000 under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), Chapter B7-70 of the EU budget. It examines the major thematic priorities and the regional strategies of such action, provides an analysis of procedural aspects and includes an assessment of the performance of the Commission in this field. During the period covered by this report, over EUR 97 million from this part of the budget alone was allocated to 142 human rights and democracy projects. It is the fifth report of this nature, published pursuant to the 1991 Council Resolution on human rights, democracy and development.4 It addresses only those activities funded as part of the external action of the Community under Chapter B7-70 of the EU budget, and does not therefore cover the use of other budgetary instruments, which also make a significant contribution to the observance of human rights and democratic principles, such as external development cooperation and assistance to particular countries or regions, including the ALA, MED, TACIS and OBNOVA programmes. It is important however to emphasise the complementarity of human rights and democracy activities funded under these different instruments with the initiatives supported under EIDHR. Similarly, the report does not examine the full scope of EU action on human rights and democracy issues within the Union, or in multi-lateral fora, although reference is made to relevant EU policy and action throughout this document. In their Annual Report for Human Rights for 1999, the Parliament also called for full details of the human rights projects funded through Chapter B7-70 of the EU Budget, because ·the importance of placing full information on the public record should not be overestimated·. Complementary to the EU Annual report, this Commission report on the use of EIDHR funds fulfils exactly that role. Together with an analysis of EU human rights and democracy policy in particular areas, it allows for the ·panorama of funded activities to be checked against overall strategic objectives.· Furthermore, in its explanation of procedural matters and in the detailed region breakdown, the report clarifies the different budget channels of EIDHR through which funding for democracy and human rights is made available. With regard to the implementation of EIDHR actions in 2000, the report states that the year 2000 has been a transitional year for the Commission in its delivery of assistance for the promotion and protection of human rights and democratic values. For the first time, the human rights and democratisation unit of the External Relations Directorate General assumed world-wide responsibility for all 11 human rights and democracy budget lines under EIDHR, all of which are now also under the remit of a single Commissioner for External Relations, Chris Patten. In May, the Commission launched an ambitious reform package for the management of external assistance programmes. It provided for a ·radical overhaul· of programming, the integration of the project cycle with a single body in charge of implementation (EuropeAid), the extensive devolution of project management to Commission delegations, and measures to deal with old and dormant commitments. Programming priorities for the use of funds in 2000 were set out as support for: - The fight against torture, the death penalty and racism and xenophobia - Human rights education and freedom of expression - Economic, social, civil and political rights -The protection of vulnerable groups, especially children -The promotion and protection of the rights of women -The promotion of democracy and the rule of law Reflecting the commitment of the EU to build a stronger partnership with civil society organisations and NGOs, who are important partners in the implementation of EIDHR, over 80% of the funds were channelled through such organisations. The Commission has also increased its cooperation with international organisations, in particular the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which received over EUR 5.9 million for different projects. Lastly, this report examines actions from both a thematic and geographic point of view, and includes chapters on procedural matters in the management of EIDHR, and an overview of assessments and evaluations of this work.