

Thematic Evaluation of the European Commission support to respect of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (including solidarity with victims of repression)

Abstract

In many countries, the EC has made *relevant* contributions to promoting the Human Rights agenda at various levels through the use of funding and non-funding instruments. Evidence of results and positive impacts has been identified in relation to both the promotion and protection of human rights. However, a deficit in the EC/EU political commitment towards implementing an effective and coherent human rights policy and a lack of related knowledge, capacities and incentives have been highlighted. As a consequence, the political status of human rights in the EC/EU external action should be upgraded so as to ensure coherent action and increase impact.

Subject of the evaluation

This study assessed how the EC advanced the human rights agenda in different political and institutional environments. It examined to what extent and how the EC managed to: (i) use its political clout to leverage change; (ii) strategically combine various instruments; (iii) mobilise the various actors (states, civil society, regional organisations, UN); (iv) pro-actively promote the mainstreaming of human rights; (v) foster the application of the 3Cs' in the field of human rights and (vi) achieve results and impact. In the process, it took stock of the dilemmas encountered, the innovative practices employed and the lessons learnt.

Methodology

The evaluative approach was specified through *ten evaluation questions* and different methods of data collection, including the analysis of aid flows; a comprehensive desk study; the analysis of **32 questionnaires** from EU Delegations; a review of 40 Country Strategy Papers (CSPs); 6 field missions including Ethiopia, Guatemala, Morocco, Kazakhstan, Vietnam and Jordan (which focused on the participation to the structured human rights dialogue with civil society from the ENP countries); around **100 interviews** in Brussels and in the field (included with HR defenders and governments in hostile environments); attendance to specific conferences and events on human rights; the study of more than **200 documents**, as well as the *analysis of the various instruments* (financial and of public diplomacy) used by the EC/EU to work on human rights.

Main conclusions:

The overall *track record* of the EC in promoting human rights as a 'core value' of the Union in its external action has been *mixed* over the past decade.

In many countries, the EC has made *relevant* contributions to promoting this agenda at various levels through the use of funding and non-funding instruments. Evidence of results (outcomes) as well as (intermediate) *impact* has been identified in relation to both the promotion and protection of human rights:

- At a macro level, the sheer presence of the EU as a global player promoting a human rights agenda has helped to protect and eventually enlarge the space to address human rights issues;

- In several settings (including highly restrictive environments) the EC has been able to intelligently mobilise the different instruments at its disposal with a view to pushing for legal changes or effective application of ratified conventions;
- EU political demarches have helped to prevent a deterioration of human rights situation (e.g. when contributing to halt legislative reforms that would re-introduce the death penalty);
- The EC support to human rights defenders and civil society organisations has repeatedly been described as a ‘lifeline’ for the actors involved;
- Several EC-supported programmes have contributed to promoting joint action between state and non-state actors on human rights;
- EC support to justice sector reforms and the fight against impunity have contributed to improving the overall environment for the protection of human rights;
- Though poorly documented, there is evidence of impact achieved with capacity building initiatives (which consume a large share of EC aid for human rights).

Main recommendations:

As pre-requisites for a more credible, effective and result-oriented EC/EU action, the political status of human rights in the EC/EU external action should be upgraded so as to ensure coherent action and increase impact.

Bold decisions are needed to ensure that human rights can leave the ‘ghetto’ in which they have all too often been relegated. The EC/EU needs to clarify ‘upstream’ how much weight it wants to give to human rights and how it can better reconcile values and interests in this critical area of its external action. It needs to build stronger bridges between human rights and other domains of EU external action.

More specifically, the EU should:

1. Clarify the political agenda of the EU with regard to human rights and translate this in common implementation strategies;
2. Develop a comprehensive strategy to localise human rights;
3. Revitalize the political dialogue on human rights by clarifying its objectives while ensuring an inclusive, iterative and result-oriented approach;
4. Overcome the divide between human rights and development through smart forms of mainstreaming and direct support to human rights;
5. Better use the added value of the EC to support systemic reforms that help realising rights;
6. Deepen the strategic engagement with citizens, civil society political actors and regional organisations;
7. Create an enabling institutional environment for effective delivery of a coherent EC/EU action on human rights.

Donor: European Commission	Region: all regions	DAC sectors: 15063, 15050
Evaluation type: Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact, Sustainability, Coherence, Value Added	Date of report: December 2011	Subject of evaluation: Thematic
Language: English	N° vol./pages : 4 volumes	Author: ADE – Consortium of Particip / ADE / DIE / DRN ECDPM / ODI