Informal Session with Civil Society Organisations on the 2018 EIDHR Global Call for Proposals
- Brussels, 24 May 2017 -

The objective of the meeting was to discuss and exchange in an informal manner the potential focus areas and criteria of the planned global call of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). This feedback will be considered in the drafting and adoption of the final Guidelines of the call to be published in 2018.

The invitation was shared with representative civil society organisations active in the field of human rights, democracy and development cooperation and their network.

The meeting was organised in three parts:
1. General session for all participants with overarching remarks about the planned EIDHR calls;
2. Breakout sessions per lot of the Global Call for Proposals as follows:
   - Lot 1: Support to LGBTI human rights defenders and their organizations working in areas where LGBTI persons are most at risk of discrimination.
   - Lot 2: Supporting the fight against the death penalty.
   - Lot 3: Supporting civic activism and participation by leveraging digital technologies.
3. Presentation and discussion on the foreseen Human Rights Defenders Mechanism Call for Proposals

**General Session – Introduction and General Remarks**

Please see the attached presentation.

After the delivery of a short presentation by DG DEVCO, a number of issues were raised and discussed, including the following:

- A question was raised on restricting participation of local partners to one application only (whether as lead applicant or co-applicant) and the consequences for the local partners.
- The issue of whether it would be possible to include advocacy and sharing of information also within the EU was discussed.
- A question related to the amounts and size of projects was raised. At the moment DG DEVCO cannot provide the exact amount allocated to each lot, the indicative proposed budget is the following:
  - LOT 1 - LGBTI: 10 M
  - LOT 2 - Death Penalty: 7 M
  - LOT 3 - Civic Activism: 5 M
LOT 1: Supporting LGBTI Human Rights Defenders

During the discussion, participants brought up the following issues and recommendations:

- Need for support at the community level, as LGBTI movements and self-organized activists are growing but funding is lacking. Important to support movements on community building to create horizontal links and consolidate active citizenship.
- Engage new allies: health specialists, journalists etc. to bridge social change by strategic communication, creating new language and narratives.
- Capacity building, security and protection needs to be addressed, such as by organising safe places to meet and by risk assessment and planning, for better resilience and response to crisis. Overall, there is a higher need of immediate protection and self-care since the intensity of attacks and online aggression on LGBTI persons are very strong, and there is a high risk of burnout with LGBTI activists. LGBTI activists face different threats than other groups, eg. threats from non-state actors.
- Supporting litigation activities and challenging homophobic laws is important.
- The risk planning for LGBTI persons must be addressed separately, and security training for LGBTI persons shall take place separately from other groups. This is for two reasons: separate needs and also visibility concerns.
- Need for capacity building on digital security, and on how to manage online aggression.
- Protection and advocacy on the Police Force, to better handle cases of discrimination.
- Address better transgender and intersex movements that are under resourced and have lower levels of possibilities to apply for funding. Many transgender persons face difficulties to have formal employment. Recommendation to support their income.
- The shelters experience more and more applications, also from within the EU. Most applicants are in real need of quick relocation, urgent and speedy process. After they have rested and regained strength, people go back and really make a change. Regional shelters are in some cases difficult for LGBTI human rights defenders.
- Important not to forget LGBTI HRD in conflict and post-conflict situations, peacebuilding.

Modalities:

- EIDHR flexibility should continue with support to a wide range of organizations, natural persons etc., in all contexts, interpreting the sustainability criteria in a realistic way (understanding what can be expected in sensitive context on HRDs).
- Recommendation for multi-country or single country action (for the latter if duly justified). No geographic limitation.
- At least the same applicant should be allowed to apply as both lead applicant once and co-applicant once.
- Having the restriction on at least one local organisation is seen counter-productive by some CSOs as the real global impact is not possible, but it is important for the ownership of projects by the local (co-)applicants.
- Duration – the longer the better, 48 month duration is seen as sufficient.
- The recommended size of the grants depends on the amount of countries included in one project. Minimum ceiling / project would be € 300.000 (single country for instance),
maximum ceiling could be around €1.5 or 2 million to encourage multi-country actions. The smaller the grants are accepted, the more it increases accessibility.

- Possibility for sub-granting is relevant.

**Lot 2: Supporting the Fight Against The Death Penalty**

**Objectives:**

- The global objective is to be in line with the EIDHR Regulation, EIDHR Strategy and EU Guidelines on the death penalty and focused on achieving abolition.

**Current trends/issues worth to be addressed:**

- The risk of reinstatement of the death penalty in countries where it had previously been abolished.
- The use of death penalty combined with shrinking space for civil society: keeping people on death row is increasingly being used as a political tool.
- The link between terrorist offences and death penalty when capital punishment is used to counter terrorism.
- The link between death penalty and blasphemy laws, in particular when it comes to online blasphemy.

**Geographical scope:**

- Relevant to keep giving priority to countries were the death penalty is most in use, as foreseen in the 2015 call.
- Suggestion to give priority to countries facing a risk of reinstatement of the death penalty as well as countries where real impact can be expected (for instance "swinging countries" where the abolition of capital punishment may be within reach).
- Suggestion to allow for single country projects, multi-countries projects but also global projects intervening on the international level.

**Activities:**

- The type of activities suggested by participants included educational activities targeting the youth, awareness-raising targeting new actors such as private sector, activities targeting parliamentarians, political parties, and governmental authorities, as well as international advocacy targeting UN, international or regional mechanisms.

**Technical aspects and eligibility criteria:**

- A suggestion was made to make international and regional networks and platforms of local organizations eligible.
It was recommended to allow cooperation with natural persons such as single individuals, politicians, parliamentarians.

A maximum duration of 48 months was recommended by participants.

A question was raised on the possibility to increase the amount of the contingency reserve to adapt to unexpected changes of contexts.

Participants mentioned challenges in terms of accountability and responsibility in case of sub-granting.

The number of countries of intervention and the number of co-applicants was discussed. A suggestion was made to allow for no limitation and not to oblige applicants to have a local partner in every country of intervention.

The limitation on the number of applications per applicant was discussed and more flexibility requested. A suggestion was made to allow a local organization to be a co-applicant in at least two applications.

**LOT 3: Supporting Civic Activism And Participation By Leveraging Digital Technologies**

Key issues and challenges mentioned by DEVCO B1:

- The importance of projects of global and regional relevance;
- Innovative approaches and piloting of activities;
- Connectivity, including inclusivity and protection of rights;
- The promotion of the right to Know in accessible formats;
- Fighting misinformation and disinformation and promoting transparency;
- Supporting accountability.

General comments made by the participants:

- The scope of the guidelines should be broad. However, it should establish which type of activities cannot be financed under the EIDHR Global Call Lot 3, e.g. activities with only national relevance, activities that fall under the Global Call on Human Rights Defenders, activities that require strong bi-lateral collaboration;
- The Call should not have geographic limitation but a minimum number of countries can be established in the eligibility criteria (2-3);
- The participants welcome the support for innovative approaches and piloting;
- The participants also supported the idea of allowing "constructive failure”, experimentation, innovative M&E in non-OECD manner;
- The importance of replicability was underlined;
- The participants suggested the guidelines clarify whether focus is on democracy support or crisis/most difficult situations.
During the discussion, participants mentioned the following indicative activities:

- Development of applications or websites that will deliver information digests in a user-friendly, understandable way for CSOs and citizens;
- Use of technology for mobilization, advocacy, and organization of campaigns;
- Development of libraries of software and platforms for citizens;
- Facilitation of the communication between MPs and their constituents in order to share information and updates;
- Use of technology in the field of anti-corruption, e.g. to support budget transparency;
- Offer assistance to strategic litigation, e.g. collecting documents;
- Supporting use of technologies to reach out to people who are isolated/remote – refugees, undocumented people, and home workers;
- Any application or software should be open-source to facilitate dissemination, as well as to make a political point that open-source should be the norm;
- It was also suggested that the guidelines do not mention indicative activities, but rather focus on activities that should not be included, in order to leave more space for innovative ideas.
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- Brussels, 24 May 2017 -

The objective of the meeting was to discuss in an informal manner the upcoming call for proposals for the human rights defenders (HRD) mechanism. Based on the experience of the current mechanism (ProtectDefenders.eu), participants exchanged views on what has been working well and what could be improved. The discussion focused on themes of work that the future HRD mechanism could address and its functioning modalities. This feedback will be considered in the drafting and adoption of the final Guidelines of the call to be published in the autumn of 2018.

The following issues/suggestions were raised:

- Effectiveness of the approach supported by the EU in addressing vital needs and issues pertaining to HRDs at risk worldwide through an organised and multifaceted civil society response.

- Given the deterioration of the human rights and HRDs situation, there are increasing requests for assistance.

- The need for quality psychosocial support to HRDs was highlighted.

- Keep a major focus on helping HRDs to survive and to continue operating - which is a resource-intensive effort – through various forms of assistance and activities.

- An integrated mechanism operating through one consortium composed of several specialised organisations appears to be more suitable. Use the lessons learned from the experience of the current mechanism ProtectDefenders.eu for the way forward.

- Important to ensure flexibility regarding the components of the future mechanism, i.e. have less prescriptive ceilings to allow organisations to serve best the HRDs needs through the available forms of assistance. Essential to use all possibilities to enable HRDs and their organisations to continue working safely, before using last resort measures, such as relocation.

- The link and possible divide between relocation activities and the establishment of shelter capacities was discussed. The build-up and maintenance of shelters requires significant work. Beyond the use of individual relocation grants in this respect, it may be opportune to assist shelter initiatives as such. Flexible approach is needed as the length of relocation is difficult to predict in some cases. Important to embed the return phase in relocation strategies.

- The need to find more sustainable ways to support HRDs and their work was discussed. Many of them face recurrent difficulties to operate and to access funding because of existing restrictions. There should be a continuous reflexion on concrete ways to address these needs, notably on the ground, thanks to reinforced interaction and coordination of efforts between NGOs and the EU, including at level of Delegations.