

**Feedback of the HRDN Funding for Democracy and Human Rights Working Group on
the draft Multi Annual Programme 2016-2017 of the European Instrument for
Democracy and Human Rights 2014-2020**

30 June 2015

The Funding for Democracy and Human Rights Working Group of the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN) commends DG DEVCO for reaching out to us to openly discuss the draft summary of the Multi-annual Action Programme (MAP) 2016-2017 of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Please find below a list of key points and recommendations for the further development of the MAP 2016- 2017. We remain available for additional consultations on the draft Action Fiches, once they are released.

- We are concerned about the EU's effective reduction of support for international protection programmes in support of human rights defenders (HRDs) at risk. The HRD Mechanism call was only officially launched in December 2014, and it is unlikely that it will be fully operational before September this year. This reduction coincides with a worldwide increase in attacks on HRDs, and increased demands for the support provided by international NGOs. Programmes aiming to provide international protection to HRDs at risk and carried out through Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) with a proven track record of positive impact in this area should be prioritised in the MAP 2016-2017.
- The current trend of adopting specific themes under Objective 1 (Support to Human Rights (HRs) and HRDs in situations where they are most at risk) for calls planned in 2015 and successive years is rather worrying. The same holds true for the new HRDs Mechanism, which contains specific allocations, with funding tied to specific activities such as relocation or training. In this regard, we would ask the European Commission (EC) to take into account the following:
 - HRDs need support, regardless of the thematic, sectorial or programmatic orientations, in order to reach those that are really most at risk;
 - The prime request of HRDs, in terms of assistance, is programmes focused on their immediate protection and delivered through NGOs they trust. Consequently, we urge the EC to follow up on this request and ensure that the EIDHR concentrates on the protection, defense, and support for HRDs whose lives and health are at risk due to their peaceful and legitimate activities, whatever the area they work on or the main focus of their activities. Therefore, the EIDHR should resist the temptation to be prescriptive and instead focus on effectiveness, practical support with protection and reaching the broadest range of those HRDs most at risk in each and every call.
- We look forward to receiving more details on the breakdown of the calls within Objective 2 (Support to other EU Human Rights Priorities). We understand that the promotion of HRs goes hand in hand with the fight against impunity, the promotion of accountability and the rule of law. In this sense, we understand and welcome the Commission's decision to support CSOs working to end impunity for serious international crimes as one of the priorities for a call for proposals to be launched in 2016. Civil society efforts are crucial to complement the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in promoting the universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute and ensuring that the principle of complementarity works effectively. In addition, civil society has an essential role in advocating for states and international organisations, including the United Nations, to cooperate with the ICC as well as to ensure that the Court is well known and understood by affected communities and the general public. The inclusion of this priority in the 2016 Programme will ensure consistent EU support to the ICC, in line with EU commitments to promote HRs, the rule of law and International Law, and in particular with the 2011 Council Decision on the ICC

- We acknowledge the fact that elections will be covered in a separate AAP. However, the MAP 2016-2017 should place a greater focus on democracy support. Democracy goes beyond elections; to support democratisation in partner countries effectively, it is not sufficient for the EC to rely on only one global call per year.
- With a view to integrating HRs and democratisation, we recommend that the MAP 2016-2017 includes a global programme on mainstreaming democracy support throughout other, more HRs-focused programmes. Both sectors are currently operating with very little interaction. It is important to recognise that facilitating exchanges between the HRs and democracy support communities is, however, crucial for the success of their respective activities. Moreover, successful work on HRs depends to a large extent on factors such as the political system in partner countries and the political will of decision makers, among others. In this sense, the democracy support community has in-depth knowledge and experience on how to address those factors and navigate in contexts of democratic change, and the EU should capitalise on this kind of insight to make HRs advocacy more efficient. We recommend that the EC encourage HRs and democracy support organisations to exchange on challenges and opportunities for collaboration, discuss and analyse country contexts, or even plan joint concrete interventions together.
- The draft summary MAP 2016-2017 foresees global programmes to strengthen political parties and parliaments. We recommend that the EC use grant contracts (rather than service contracts) for this purpose. Using service contracts incites non-profit organisations to partner with for-profit companies in order to be competitive in the selection procedure. As a result, a large part of the funding goes to for-profit organisations that are - in most cases - not specialised in democracy support. Grant contracts are a more appropriate funding modality, as a bigger share of the available resources will be channelled to civil and political society organisations specialised in democracy support, which will in turn improve the support provided to beneficiaries in partner countries. Additionally, using service contracts reduces the amount of funding addressed to civil and political society organisations and poses a risk to their sustainability at times when they have to rely increasingly on programmatic funding (with possibilities to receive core funding diminishing) to implement their activities.
- Regarding the EC support to a global network of universities for human rights and democracy postgraduate education, we recommend that the selection of beneficiary universities is made in an open and transparent way. The composition of the network should ensure that HRs and democracy support are addressed in the respective postgraduate programmes to the same degree.

HRDN Funding for Democracy and Human Rights Working Group members:

Act Alliance EU, CBM, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Coalition for the International Criminal Court, DEMAS, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, European Partnership for Democracy, European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, Front Line Defenders, International Centre for Transitional Justice, International Dalit Solidarity Network, International Federation for Human Rights, International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture, International Rescue Committee, Light for the World, Partners for Democratic Change International, Peace Brigades International, Penal Reform International, Plan International, Protection International, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes International Federation (TDHIF), World Coalition against Death Penalty, World Organisation Against Torture