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2003 International Policy Fellow
Open Society Institute, Budapest
Title of the Project: Enhancing Effectiveness of the Non-Judicial Human Rights Protection
Mechanisms in the Czech Republic

Final Activity Report (March 2003 – March 2004)

ACTIVITY REPORT

RESEARCH

As regards its focus and sequencing, the work on the project followed the original outline and the time schedule. The major modification concerned the inclusion of a study visit to the Norwegian Human Rights Centre in Oslo. The seven-days-long study trip undertaken in February 2004 was originally not planned. Yet, it turned out to be very beneficial (see below).

Four major research areas have been identified at early stages of the research: (1) international context, in particular the concept and role of national human rights institutions, (2) institutional aspects of the domestic non-judicial human rights protection machinery, (3) non-state sector, and (4) the protection mechanism in action. Research of the areas (1) – (3) has been completed in the first stage. In the second stage, *i. e.* after submitting of the interim report, the work on the protection mechanisms in action, which involved several case studies, led to no sizeable findings. On the other hand, the preliminary results indicated that more attention should be paid to the role of human rights research and the evolving think tank sector. This led to the replacement of planned chapter dealing with case studies by a chapter examining human rights research and policy analysis (universities, Academy of Sciences, role of classical think tanks and new advocacy groups). Since the work on the closely related issue - the establishing of an equality body requested by the EU legislation - had progressed, the issue was also included in the study. Finally, the policy options have been identified and evaluated and a set of recommendations devised.

RESEARCH RELATED ACTIVITIES

Integrating the international dimension into the research was an impetus for developing personal contacts with other researchers working on the national human rights institutions worldwide. This turned out to be particularly fruitful, as the national human rights institutions are new actors on the international scene and consequently, it is also a relatively new and expanding research area. Contacts with some foreign national institutions (*e.g.* Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, the German Institute for Human Rights) and the relevant UN bodies have been established. Several informal interviews with relevant decision makers and informants have been conducted. The visit to Norwegian Centre for Human Rights turned out to be particularly enlightening, as it allowed a better understanding of the nexus between particular societal conditions and the role assigned to the NHRI. In addition, it allowed the completion of theoretical research on NHRIs using the unique human rights library of the Centre.

IPF SEMINARS

I participated in both the March and June 2003 IPF seminars and the 2004 March seminar. I also made full use of the CEU library and research facilities. During seminars, I consulted with Budapest-based mentor Prof. Július Horváth.

PARTICIPATION IN CONFERENCES, SEMINARS

As part of the activities carried out within the framework of the project, I participated in the Sixth International Seminar Democracy and Human Rights in Multiethnic Societies organised by the Institute for Strengthening Democracy in Konjic, Bosnia and Herzegovina on 7 – 11 July 2003. I delivered a paper entitled: Human Rights Protection in the Czech Republic: the Changing Role of the Civil Society. I also chaired one of the discussion panels.

During the fellowship year, I also attended several topic relevant conferences/seminars including:

Seminar on Anti-discrimination Legislation, organised by the Centre for Citizenship, Civic and Political Rights in Prague on 11 February 2003.

Seminar called The Legal Protection of Rights of EU Citizens, organised by the Senate's Committee for Integration in Prague on 20 February 2003.

European Conference against Discrimination “Fighting Discrimination: from Theory to Practice”, organised by the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Milan, Italy, 21-22 July 2003.

Regional Seminar of Experts for Eastern Europe “Implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance: An exchange of Ideas on How to Move Forward”. Prague, 24-26 September 2003.

B. PUBLICATION REPORT

In April 2004, the final Research Paper and the Final Policy Paper were completed and published on the project's web site.

During the fellowship year, I published several articles, which deal with human rights issues: Afirmativní akce: jiná diskriminace anebo cesta k různosti? (Affirmative Action: Reverse Discrimination or the Way towards Diversity? Sociální studia, 10, 2003. pp. 35-52. (Co-author: Pavel Barša)

Citizenship. Published in A Legal Comparative Study of the Migration Project. Prague: Counselling Centre for Citizenship, Civil and Political Rights. 2003. pp. 37-47.

Dvojití státní občanství jako lidské právo v postnacionálním světě. (Dual Citizenship as a Human Right in a Post-National World.) Sociální Studia 9, 2003. pp. 51-64.

Diskuse o dvojitím občanství. (Discussing Dual Citizenship). Literární noviny 31/28 VII.2003

During the fellowship period, I was also involved in writing a legal analysis for the study on the “European Roma Forum” commissioned by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and carried out by IOM, Prague.