

Guidelines for Sida's Support to Human Rights and Democracy Projects in the Western Balkans

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November 2000



Sida

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COOPERATION AGENCY

Department for Central
and Eastern Europe

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1. Introduction and purpose

1.1 What is the purpose of these directions?

This document reflects Sida's views on human rights and democracy in the Western Balkans (Croatia, FR Yugoslavia and Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Macedonia). Together with the general guidelines in the relevant background documents (see 1.5), the purpose of these directions is to provide guidance for all organisations and partners in co-operation that implement human rights and democracy projects in the region with funds provided by Sida.

The directions are not intended to define what can be classified as support for human rights and democracy, but to indicate the types of projects that can receive support from Sida East's budget for this type of support. Sida-East has a relatively open mind in its assessment of what can be classified as support for human rights and democracy. Hitherto it has included support to independent media, non-formal educational programmes in democracy, research into democracy, conferences and round-table discussions, actions designed to create a dialogue, information, programmes for young people, programmes for equality, actions against trafficking in human beings, cultural support, etc. Sometimes it is difficult to draw a clear borderline between support for human rights and democracy and, for example, support for health programmes¹. Some projects can be difficult to justify from a pure human rights and democracy perspective, but have nonetheless been regarded by Sida as having considerable value. At the same time there are projects in the human rights and democracy sector that do not receive support.

1.2 Definition of support for human rights and democracy

The overall goal of Swedish international development co-operation is to reduce poverty in the world. The democracy goal contributes to the achievement of the overall poverty goal by adding the political dimension². Democracy is a concept that is almost impossible to define. It is not a system that embodies all democratic ideals, but a system where these are represented in reasonable measure³. With this definition of support for democracy, almost all Sida-financed projects in the Balkans can be regarded as being related to human rights and democracy. The integrated area programmes⁴ are among

¹ One example of this is projects against trafficking (smuggling of and trade in) of women, who are forced into prostitution. These are primarily human rights projects but also contain elements of medical care for the women affected.

² Swedish policies in this area were developed in the Government's paper: *The rights of the poor – our common responsibility*, SKR 1996/97:169

³ Arend Lijphart: *Democracy in Plural Societies*, Yale University 1977, p. 4

⁴ Sida's reconstruction programmes are characterised by several components: in addition to giving house-owners material assistance to rebuild their houses, Sida and its implementing organisations work with infrastructure (e.g. water and electricity) and work-creation programmes (e.g. micro-credits or farming), in order to give the returnees a real possibility of living in their homes when they have returned.

the most prominent human rights projects. They make it possible for refugees to return home at the same time as they promote co-operation and reconciliation over ethnic borders⁵. Likewise the many public administration programmes supported by Sweden can be classified as democracy projects since they all promote the rule of law and democratic participation. Even support to cultural projects are of great importance, since culture is something that people can identify with as well as providing a possibility for free expression and free thoughts. The gender equality aspect is very important and Sida is attempting to introduce gender equality considerations into all projects.

1.3 A few words on human rights and democracy in development co-operation

The overall goal of Swedish international development co-operation is to “raise the standard of living of poor people in the world”. Contributing to “democratic development in society” has been a sub-goal since 1962. Today we interpret poverty in a somewhat wider sense of the term than merely material needs. It is also a case of power/powerlessness, empowerment and opportunity. The broader definition includes a political dimension that does not exist in the narrower material definition. The point of having poverty as the overall goal is, however, that support for democracy shall also focus on those who are most vulnerable (materially, socially and politically).

Human rights appeared on the development agenda after the fall of the Berlin Wall. They constitute a normative framework, a point of departure of what we want to achieve with our development efforts. They can be summarised in the expression “the right to a life in dignity” – and here once again it is possible to see the link to the broader concept of poverty. The human rights conventions and the reports that stipulated in the conventions can also be used as a tool in co-operation, as a point of departure for dialogue and as a means of identifying neglected areas.

Democracy solves the problem of how the values described in the human rights conventions can be transformed into reality. Democracy is a system for collective decision-making and a system that distributes power on the basis of one person/one vote. Once again, this is a parallel to the principle of the rights of individuals in the human rights texts. A formal democracy exists on paper and respects, in its legislation, certain principles in respect of regular elections, the division of power, the balance of power, accountability and so on. A real democracy meets these formal criteria with content – a democratic culture. This is permeated by attitudes and values such as tolerance, dialogue, inclusiveness, consultations, respect for minorities, acceptance and support, representativeness and so on. We do not consider a formal democratic system that violates minorities to be a real democracy.

⁵ Those who return and rebuild their houses are “forced” to co-operate with their former neighbours, often with another ethnic background, and thereby struggle together with them for the achievement of common goals. Experience has shown that the most successful “reconciliation projects” are those where people have common interests and must co-operate in order to realise these interests. In the returnee programme these can be economic interests or common problems in respect of security, water supplies or mines.

The public administration is the executive arm of the political system. It does not need to be democratic itself (the democratic impact takes place rather in the decision-making process that precedes the execution of the decisions). The public administration shall be characterised by good governance, i.e. serve a democratically elected regime with an efficient and economical use of scarce resources, respect for democratic decisions, openness in its processes/decisions/follow-up, transparency and accountability, access of the citizens to the administration, and rule of law. There is a risk that public administration contributions that are not subjected to a qualitative analysis and an assessment of the political system will promote regimes/exercise of powers that are not democratic, i.e. that are counterproductive to our overall goals. Therefore there are risks associated with a one-sided focus on efficiency.

In our assignment of contributing to democratically governed societies, we impart values. This is done best if we practise what we preach and if we are able to take part in discussions on values whenever we are given the opportunity.

1.4 Measurability and causal relationships

Working with human rights and democracy is a difficult subject area in development co-operation. Among other things the Government states in its Communication on human rights and democracy in Sweden's development co-operation (SKR 1997/98:76) that "it is important to remember that development co-operation to promote human rights and democracy is basically concerned with influencing values and attitudes. It may be hard to see immediate, concrete results since the links between measures and outcomes are often complex and indirect. There are many factors involved which can affect the outcome."⁶ By influencing values we can achieve changes in behaviour.

This applies in the highest degree to the work in the Western Balkans. Nonetheless, it is desirable that the projects and the project goals are made as concrete as possible. The projects must be designed in such a way that the goals are measurable, preferably with both qualitative and quantitative indicators. Reports shall provide a picture of whether the project has contributed to the achievement of the overall goal and not merely, in the absence of concrete results, comment on the activities. The organisations making applications should also make conflict impact assessments, i.e. report on how the planned contributions affect, and are affected by, (the risk of) armed conflicts.

1.5 Background documentation

Sweden's work with human rights and democracy is based on the Government Communication, SKR 1997/98:76. However, this document does not primarily take up Central and Eastern Europe but concentrates on Sweden's co-operation with developing countries in the South.⁷ In addition to this, Sida has

⁶ Government paper, SKR 1997/98:76. Democracy and human rights in Sweden's international development co-operation, Stockholm, 1998, p. 87.

⁷ Ibid, p.9

produced an action programme for peace, democracy and human rights⁸. This action programme points out the ways in which Sida can facilitate and stimulate the work being done in developing countries to build up democracy and protect human rights.

On the proposal of Sida, the Government has approved country strategies for Bosnia and Herzegovina, FR Yugoslavia (with a separate strategy for Kosovo), Albania and Macedonia. These strategies and programmes lay down the general guidelines for Sweden's development co-operation with each country or area. This has the effect that Croatia is the only country in the region without a country strategy of its own.⁹

1.6 These directions replace earlier directions

Sida has previously published *Directions for Sida's support to NGOs' activities for democracy and human rights in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia* (May 1997). These directions replace the earlier directions where the focus of the work is concerned. For concrete details in respect of applications, assessments and contracts, NGOs are referred to Sida's *General conditions for Sida's grants to non-governmental organisations* (June 1999) and, in appropriate parts, to *Directions for Sida's grants to non-governmental organisations for humanitarian assistance and conflict prevention* (Sida/SEKA/HUM, July 2000) and *Directions for Sida's support to NGOs' development co-operation programmes in Central and Eastern Europe* (Sida/SEKA/EO, September 1998)¹⁰. Swedish companies, institutions, consultants and agencies are referred to *Co-operation in the Western Balkans, Information to external parties* (1999). This paper (in English only) also contains relevant information for NGOs and international organisations.

1.7 Who can apply for grants?

Two basic factors are considered by Sida in its assessment of an applicant organisations: the organisation's development co-operation know-how and its capacity. Sida/SEKA's directions (see under 1.5) contain a specification of the basic principles for assessments of organisations as well as the formal criteria organisations must meet. All organisations, Swedish, foreign and international, that meet these criteria can apply to Sida for grants for human rights and democracy projects in the Western Balkans. Where foreign partners in co-operation are concerned, Sida expects that them to be conversant with Swedish development co-operation and Sida's work in the region.

In exceptional cases, local organisations can also apply directly to Sida for grants. However, in general Sida requires that local applications should be

⁸ Justice and Peace – Sida's programme for peace democracy and human rights, Stockholm 1998.

⁹ This was true at the time of writing. The country strategy for Croatia was approved by the Swedish Government in 2001.

¹⁰ Applicable sections of SEKA/HUM's directions are 4.1, 4.2, 5 and 6. However, the humanitarian perspective (disaster perspective) should be replaced by a human rights and democracy perspective. Applicable sections of SEKA/EO's directions are chapters 1 and 6. Where so-called frame organisations are concerned, sections 3.1 and 3.2 also apply. However, media organisations shall be added to those organisations that may receive support.

channelled through Swedish organisations. This necessitates that the Swedish organisation has close co-operation with the implementing organisation, and does not merely channel the funds to this organisation. Sida wants to have as few intermediaries as possible between the financier and implementer.

1.8 Time perspective

These directions are planned to cover the period 2001-2002. Since working conditions in the Western Balkans can change rapidly, and since political upheavals can make parts of the directions or the entire directions out of date, they can be amended before the end of this period.

2. Strategic issues and conditions

2.1 Review of the political situation in the region

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the situation in the Western Balkans has been characterised by war and oppression. This has had the result that human rights have been disregarded in many places. Even in those countries that have not been affected by war (Albania and Macedonia), the respect shown for human rights has left a great deal to be desired. Ethnic tensions have been a characteristic of the conflicts and many of the crimes against human rights have had an ethnic background. People have been driven away from their homes, forced to leave their native countries, lost their lives etc. Almost all the human rights mentioned in the UN's Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) have been seriously violated on one or more occasions.

At the same time, the region is undergoing a process transition from communism (one-party state, planned economy) to a form of political pluralism and a market economy. This process of transition has caused major upheavals, both political and economic. Many problems have been accentuated by the wars in the region but the underlying structural changes are themselves reason enough to cause serious social problems. However, during the last few years, some of the countries have made greater progress on the road to democracy than others. In certain cases it is even possible to talk about consolidation of democracy.

The complicated situation makes great demands on the organisations and individuals that implement projects in support of human rights and democracy. The projects must be adapted to the situation in the country in question and be relevant to the particular phase of development the country happens to be undergoing at that point in time. Projects that are extremely relevant in one country can be quite irrelevant in another. At the same time this situation makes it possible to use experience gained earlier in one country in another when the latter reaches the same level of development. One example of this is the election monitoring activities of the NGO coalitions Glas 99 and GONG at local elections in Croatia, which were then "exported" to Yugoslavia.

2.2 A regional approach

The Western Balkans is a composite region. The main factors that link the countries together are their largely common history and the considerable linguistic similarities. Many of the problems that now threaten the region are also similar and are based on ethnic, political and economic tensions. Even if there are considerable differences between the different countries in the region, it seems reasonable to use a regional approach and to aspire towards collaboration between the authorities in the different countries. The ultimate objective is to get the countries in the region to co-operate with each other to solve their common problems. This approach is used in the Stability Pact for South East Europe, which promotes a regional approach where external co-operation with the countries in the region is concerned. Many donors, including Sida, are trying to apply a strategy of this type in order to achieve synergy effects, wherever possible.

2.3 Problems with regional assistance

Despite the fact that the region has much in common, there are still considerable differences: there are three religions, two alphabets and, apart from the Serbian/Bosnian/Croatian language system, several other different languages. Of these, Albanian does not even belong to the Slavic language group. Some countries have made relatively good progress on the road to democracy, others are still in the process of extracting themselves from dictatorships and, in certain areas, there is not even a state structure, but the area is governed externally as a protectorate. These differences have the effect that it is not possible to treat the region as a homogenous area and to have a general strategy for the entire region. It also leads to a situation in which the criteria for sustainable development co-operation can be different in different countries or in different areas in the countries. Through collaboration and the exchange of experience between different implementing organisations, Sida intends to encourage an open dialogue on these criteria to enable the organisations to adapt their strategies to achieve the highest degree of sustainability in their projects.

2.3.1 Similarities and differences between the countries

The similarities are naturally mainly a result of the fact that, between 1919 and 1991 (with an interruption during the Second World War), the countries in the region (with the exception of Albania) have been part of the same state. They therefore have a common political culture and a modern cultural heritage. All countries in the region (except Albania and the majority of the people in Kosovo) also speak one or more Slavic languages. Historically there has always been a great deal of contacts between the countries – sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile. Territories have been exchanged¹¹, people have migrated between the countries, and ethnic groups have mixed with each other.

¹¹ One example is the old lady living in Ivanjska outside Banja Luka, who was born at the beginning of the 1900s. Without moving from her home village, she lived in six countries during her lifetime: the Ottoman Empire up to 1908, Austria-Hungary to 1919, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS)/Kingdom of Yugoslavia up to 1941, the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) to 1945, Socialist Yugoslavia to 1992 and Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992.

Despite this, there are considerable differences. There are three major religions in the area and a number of smaller religions, two alphabets, a number of different cultural heritages¹², geographical differences, differences in economic growth and in political cultures. These differences must naturally be taken into consideration when programmes are implemented. Even if one of the goals of the support is the aspiration to extend contacts between the different groups, caution must be observed to ensure that one group is not favoured at the expense of another, or that these extended contacts or rapprochement are not regarded as an intention to eradicate a culture or to diminish its value.

2.3.2 Experience of regional support

Some previous experience can be used throughout the region. Sida is, for example, uncertain about the value of the seminars and round table talks that have been held (but rarely with support from Sida). If these are part of a wider context or a long-term strategy, support can be justified; but when they have been individual projects they have rarely provided results that have been possible to document and thereby justify further, general support. Often these activities attract the same people and few new recruits join the target group. However, small-scale seminars can have a value, particularly in the starting-up phase of new projects. The applicant organisation must be able to demonstrate that the participants disseminate the experience they have gained when they return to their daily lives.¹³

Training programmes in human rights and democracy must be linked to concrete measures and be part of a larger strategy. Experience from Bosnia and Herzegovina shows, for example, that the reconciliation projects that have succeeded best are those in which the people have striven together towards common, concrete goals.

2.4 Prerequisites for partnership

In most cases there are few possibilities of genuine partnership at bilateral level. None of the countries in the region participates actively in the formulation of contributions and there are no bilateral agreements in the development co-operation field (apart from the procedural agreements which have now been signed with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Albania). On the other hand, Sida's Swedish and international partners in co-operation can naturally enter into partnerships with their local counterparts. This is supported by Sida. Sida also encourages the Swedish partner to participate actively in the planning and implementation of the projects and, whenever possible, to establish a presence of its own locally. This has proved to be very successful in facilitating coordination locally, the speed of reaction and the feedback of experience to the

¹² While the Croatian coast is part of the Mediterranean cultural sphere, the northern part of the country and large parts of Yugoslavia are extremely central European in their character and have inherited a great deal from the Austrian period. The Turkish influence can still be seen in large parts of Bosnia, Macedonia and Albania, and so on

¹³ Compare section 1.4 on quantitative *and* qualitative analysis.

Swedish organisation. Above all, it is important in areas where the local organisations are weak. However, where implementation is concerned, it is important that the Swedish or international partner does not take over the management of the project, but functions as a resource, providing advice. What is most important of all is that genuine co-operation is established.

It is also important to build networks between international implementing organisations and between local organisations. International and local organisations work in different ways and have different contact networks. Through close co-operation, both groups can become more effective. Through co-operation, international organisations can also reach recipients more effectively and the local organisations can obtain access to the resources of the international organisations.

3. Priority contributions

3.1 What does Sida want to achieve with its support?

The objective of all Sida's work on human rights and democracy is to strengthen the prospects and capabilities of people to live in peace, and to participate in and develop the democratic process. A further objective is to promote respect and observance of human rights¹⁴. To achieve these objectives, the processes that promote change for peace, democracy and respect for human rights must be strengthened. In many of the countries in the region, the state apparatus is weak or undemocratic. Here, development co-operation must focus on supporting civil society. Whenever possible, support shall also be given to the public administration and institutions. In such cases, particular importance shall be attached to contributions that improve the openness, legitimacy and accountability of the public administration: good governance¹⁵. The possibility of providing support of this type to their central administration appears to have improved in several of the countries in the region during the last twelve months. As far as possible, this support shall be linked with support via NGOs to civil society by allowing NGOs to work with their own, specific methods in the central government sector. This promotes pluralism and the emergence of democracy.

Although the last authoritarian regime in the area has now fallen¹⁶, there are still warning signals for new conflicts in the area (that do not necessarily need to result in open war). Projects concerning human rights and democracy should take this into consideration and have a conflict-solving perspective – and make a thorough risk analysis.

¹⁴ *Justice and Peace – Sida's programme for peace, democracy and human rights*, Stockholm 1998, p.10

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 16.

¹⁶ The democracy of the present regimes can of course be discussed – however, the earlier Serbian and Yugoslavian regimes were striking examples of totalitarian government.

Naturally, the physical reconstruction of houses and infrastructure is necessary. However, in order to achieve sound economic growth and stability, a well-developed civil society, together with independent media and reliable police and legal structures, is just as important as physical reconstruction¹⁷. NGOs are often well suited to work with contacts between people since they often have access to groups and organisations that are responsible for the ethnic tensions¹⁸. Government organisations do not have the same contacts at grass root level where these people are to be found. Therefore NGOs can often supplement projects implemented by government organisations. This co-operation contributes to creating a pluralistic society by mixing together different parties in project design and implementation. NGO projects are often based at grass root level and therefore complement bilateral programmes that tend to focus on governmental issues¹⁹. Sida has a positive attitude towards co-operation between NGO projects at grass root level and government organisations. Among other things they tend to increase the legitimacy of the content of the project among local decision-makers. Thereby sustainability is facilitated, as well as a possible local takeover of the project in the future.

3.2 Regional

There are minorities in all countries in the region whose rights are often threatened. The ethnic group that is in the majority in one country is often in the minority in another. Often minority groups have been driven from one country to another and now, at best, a process is taking place in which these people are returning to their homes. The return of these people should be supported, above all through local initiatives that have the support of the government agencies responsible. Otherwise there is a risk that the international community may push for the acceptance of initiatives that are basically unsound. The Roma constitute an ethnic group without a "homeland" of their own. Their situation is extremely serious. It is important to strengthen the role of the Romany people in society and to improve the understanding of their problems. The ethnic and religious perspective has been exploited by the politicians, despite the fact that the underlying cause of tensions in the region is really political and economic. This should be taken into consideration in all projects that concern conflict prevention.

Recently attention has been given to the trafficking in human beings in the region. Often the victims of this trafficking are young women from Eastern Europe (particularly Moldova). These women are promised work in Western Europe or are even kidnapped and then transported to the Balkans where they are forced into prostitution. The problem is particularly serious in Kosovo (on account of the massive international presence) and Albania (since it is a transit country to the

¹⁷ Joost Lagendijk: *Stability Pact: Time for Action* in Focus Balkans, Issue 2, May 2000.

¹⁸ cf Paul van Tongeren: *Exploring the Local Capacity for Peace – The Role of NGOs*, <http://www.oneworld.org/euconflict/guides/themes/pp3a.htm>

¹⁹ VOICE: *The Essential Role of NGOs in the Reconstruction of War-torn Countries: The Case of Former Yugoslavia*, Brussels, 21 September 2000.

EU), but has rapidly developed into a regional problem. This is a sector that Swedish support should concentrate on, in particular by supporting initiatives that cover the whole region or parts of it, and are not restricted to specific countries.

The role of women in the region is complicated. During the communist era considerable efforts were made in many of the countries to improve the educational levels of women and to promote their participation in public life. At the same time the southern parts of the region are strongly characterised by very traditional, patriarchal values that counteract the participation of women in civil society. In addition to the problem of prostitution, special attention should therefore also be given to the problems of women and the role of women in society. However, special projects that focus on women must be adapted to prevailing conditions in the country concerned. Every project shall be subjected to a gender assessment in which the project's gender perspective shall be reported on. Sida mainstreams gender issues. This means that a gender perspective shall be included in all projects. If a project does not have a special gender perspective, this shall be noted and reasons given.

Sida also intends to link women's project to the integrated area programmes. This has already been done in Kosovo and is being discussed specifically in connection with the return of refugees to Bratunac and Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Pilot projects with links of this type are also underway in Croatia. In general, equality projects should be linked to other concrete projects. Expert assistance may be necessary.

Projects for and with young people should also be regarded as a priority area. Even if this work does not fall under the classic human rights and democracy definition, it has been shown that working with young people is of great importance for development in the region. Many young people feel that they do not have a future in their own countries and therefore move to other countries. The Balkans is thus being affected by a "brain drain", which is extremely dangerous for the future development of the region. This trend must be reversed by giving young people the opportunity to create a future in their own country. Projects of this type vary in content. They can include theoretical and practical training, leisure time activities, financial projects and so on. It is important that young people are stimulated to participate actively in the implementation of the projects. Projects for young people are projects of the type that can well be implemented regionally, with extensive co-operation between countries in the region. One example of this can be IT.

Perhaps the Internet is the most democratic of all forms of communication. Through the Internet everyone with access to a computer or to so-called Internet cafés can rapidly obtain information from all parts of the world. The Internet has already been used in exciting dialogue projects between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs²⁰, and it offers immense possibilities. The great problem

²⁰ The Belgrade-based news agency, Beta, had a project together with the Kosovo-Albanian newspaper Koha Ditore, in which leading Serbian and Albanian intellectuals debated topical themes over the Internet. The project was very interesting and was one of the few "meeting places" where intellectuals from both sides could present their arguments. Unfortunately the project was put in mothballs during the war in Kosovo.

with the Internet is that there are still so few people who have access to it. Therefore priority should be given to concrete projects that increase access to the Internet or that provide interesting information via the net. The wary attitude of the local governments towards freedom of information is having the effect that the entire region is in danger of falling hopelessly behind in Internet developments.

The media, and the exploitation of the media by the regimes in the region, have been a major contributory factor to the conflicts in the Balkans. Therefore support to free, independent and objective media is of great importance. However, the media situation is not identical everywhere in the region, and therefore the support must assume different forms in the different countries. These different forms can include training programmes for journalists or training in management, and careful consideration should be given to the type of support provided, i.e. whether grant aid or credits should be used.

In the earlier directions (23 April 1997) emphasis is also given to research in the fields of human rights, democracy and the media. The results of the research projects hitherto have not been pioneering and, even if the standard of the programmes has been good, the research has not been of decisive importance for the promotion of human rights in the region. Sida will therefore not give priority to research projects in the future.

Sida does not work in the education sector in the Western Balkans. However, grants may be approved for projects in the fields of adult education and informal education. In such cases, projects of this type shall be directly related to one of the sectors in receipt of support.

One fundamental prerequisite for economic and social development is job opportunities. However, where Sida is concerned, projects of this type should refer to the private sector. It is important that projects intended to create job opportunities are also financially sound and do not merely constitute “artificial respiration” and are dependent on external support. One effective way to deal with this issue is with the aid of micro-credits.

It is important to realise that project proposals often cover several sectors. Sida is positive to an expansion of projects of this type, and its assessment will be based on a holistic picture of the project.

3.3 Croatia

The presidential and parliamentary elections in Croatia in 2000 contributed to creating major changes in the Croatian political landscape. The former opposition party has now taken power, and the former party of government, HDZ, has been forced to make a number of internal reforms. Croatia has expressed willingness to co-operate with the Hague Tribunal (ICTY) and seems to be sincerely striving towards regional co-operation and integration with the rest of Europe. Even if a change of this type cannot take place overnight, there is a great deal that indicates that developments for the better are taking place, in any case at national level. The situation is different at the local level in rural areas, but even there it is possible to discern certain signs of change. The return of

refugees has accelerated, and the Croatian government has actively tried to encourage the Serbs that fled from Krajina to return to their old homes. The security situation for these returnees has improved drastically and, in certain areas around Knin, the Serbs are once again in the majority locally²¹.

This trend has opened a window of opportunities that should be utilised before too much time has passed. Contributions that promote the return of refugees should therefore be given priority. In this respect it is important to ensure that the returning refugees do not enjoy extra privileges that can arouse envy among those who did not flee. These contributions should also include minority groups that remained in Croatia and should promote co-operation over ethnic borders. Pure reconciliation projects should have a practical component linked to the programme – courses and seminars alone rarely offer a perfect solution. Even if the Croatian government is now working actively for the return of refugees, the former governing party, the nationalistic HDZ, is still in power in many places locally and can still block the return of these people.

Despite this and a number of other positive events, the human rights situation is far from satisfactory in Croatia. However, there is no longer the same general need of human rights contributions as there was before. Therefore independent media can no longer count on receiving the same type of support as before. Now that a free media market is emerging, foreign donors cannot enter the picture and distort the market by providing selective support. Instead support to the media should be arranged in the form of credits, preferably in co-operation with MDLF (Media Development Loan Fund) or similar organisations which, in addition to credits, also assist with training in management and company cultures. However, special support can still be given to media in areas where refugees are returning.

Projects with a social focus on women are still of great importance. Above all, these should strengthen the influence of women in society and politics. It is also important that young people have a place in society and are given the opportunity for training in democracy. Projects to strengthen the Croatian public administration can also be considered. These projects should contribute to democratic development in the public administration and, at the same time, make it more efficient.

In the prevailing economic situation in Croatia, it is important to protect workers' rights and to reduce social tensions in the country. Concrete co-operation with trade unions and other socially aware institutions is therefore desirable.

Sectors that cannot count on general support are media (see above), research and formal education.

3.4 Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter referred to as Bosnia) is characterised by a strong (if diminishing) international presence and a number of major internal human rights and democracy projects (e.g. the Open Broadcast

²¹ Information from UNHCR and LWF after visits to Korenica and Knin in May 2000.

Network – OBN, Radio FERN, OSCE's election-related projects etc.). At the same time there is an abundance of local NGOs with more or less concrete programmes. Great importance has been attached to theoretical reconciliation programmes, but the success of these programmes has been relatively small. Sida's strategy for Bosnia states that there is still a need of support for democracy, human rights, culture and gender equality, and that democracy and respect for human rights shall be one of the four overall goals of Sweden's work there.²²

Ever since 1995, one central focus of Sida's work in Bosnia has been the integrated area programmes. The return of minorities finally started in 2000 and several of the organisations that are implementing the reconstruction programme on behalf of Sida have rapidly adapted their programmes to cater for the new flows of migrants. Human rights projects, which address the problems arising from the return of these people in a concrete manner, should be given priority. One movement of people that is less desirable is the trafficking in human beings, which is a serious problem in the Balkans. Bosnia is affected by this problem and projects to counteract trafficking in human beings are also desirable there.

An efficient and democratically based public administration is of great importance for a democratic society. Sida's strategy for Bosnia wants to see a strengthening of public administration capacity at the central administration level and at the canton and municipal level.²³ In this respect the legal system, the Commission for Real Property Claims (CRPC), and training of the police force have been mentioned. These all are of relevance for human rights. Projects implemented by Swedish agencies or consultants can often be supplemented by the work of NGOs. However, it is important that all projects are carefully coordinated. In this respect Sida's offices in Stockholm and Sarajevo have an important role to play. Organisations that implement projects must avoid duplication of effort to the greatest extent possible, for example by checking with Sida and relevant bodies in Bosnia.

Sida has financed many media projects in Bosnia as well as in the other countries in the region. The media will also be a priority area in the future, both in the Federation and in Republika Srpska. Above all, local media should be supported, perhaps at the expense of the major international projects. The Office of the High Representative (OHR) has announced that its goal is that Bosnia shall go over to digital land-based TV in a few years time.²⁴ This first step in this process could be OBN's transition into a nationwide PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) network. Sida has doubts about this policy since it does not seem very likely that this will lead to increased viewing. Experience in Sweden, for example, shows that the general public hesitate to purchase new, digital equipment, even if it is almost free. A reduction in the availability of neutral media increases the dependence of the general public on the media

²² Strategy for Sweden's development co-operation with Bosnia and Herzegovina, p.8.

²³ Ibid. p.12

²⁴ As stated by Chris Riley, OHR, at a meeting in April, 2000.

that have a nationalistic orientation, which OHR wants to limit. At the same time it is important that the media in Bosnia cover the entire country. Media projects should be monitored closely and their effects documented. In general, the Bosnian media market is still not ripe for a transition to credits but, as soon as this is possible, support for the media should be channelled through credits, for example via MDLF.

Reconciliation projects should be linked to concrete work. Round table talks and seminars are not always as effective as desired. On the other hand reconciliation aspects should be incorporated into other projects as often as possible, for example in reconstruction and public administration projects. In the future a great deal of the Swedish support will be allocated for public administration contributions and it is important that these also promote reconciliation and contacts over entity borders.

Sida-East does not support party political work. On the other hand, support should be given to political programmes that strive towards inclusion, reconciliation and that look to the future. It is important that the people feel included in the political life and that a certain degree of political maturity is achieved.

3.4.1 Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina

Relations between Bosniacs and Croats are of special importance for work in the Federation. Even if people have started to return to their homes in many places, there are still areas where the return of refugees is impossible. It is in these places in particular that points of contact are created and that the process of returning home is put into a human rights perspective. Serbs have started to return to the Federation during the year and hopefully this process will accelerate considerably in 2001. Therefore there must be a state of preparedness for this situation – both in the integrated area programmes and in the human rights work.

3.4.2 Republika Srpska (RS)

Sida must accept that there is a great regional difference in Bosnia in respect of projects it is possible to implement and how it is possible to implement them. The same demands cannot be made in respect of results (or even reports) in, for example, Višegrad or Foča as in Banja Luka and Sarajevo. Therefore Sida must approach its assessments of projects in a flexible manner, particularly in eastern RS and western Herzegovina.

3.5 Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

3.5.1 Serbia

After the elections in September 2000, the situation in Serbia changed more or less overnight. The former opposition politicians are now ministers in the federal government and within a month of the elections Yugoslavia was admitted to both the Stability Pact and the UN. The situation for human rights projects has also naturally changed, but it is still too early to say whether the changes are permanent.

Formerly, great importance was attached to providing support for independent media in Serbia. This support must continue for the foreseeable future, but its focus must change. Yugoslavian journalists must now learn to adopt a critical attitude towards all government authorities in order to develop real independence. At the same time, many of the former opposition newspapers will have problems on a free market since the former government-controlled press is now competing for the same readers. Donors must be aware of this to ensure that they do not give away large sums of money to media that have no possibility of survival after a period of transition. At the same time we should not “burn our boats” – we have no guarantees in respect of what the situation will be in the future.

The Serbian NGO world is fragmented. Many NGOs have a bad reputation and this makes their work difficult. This is mainly an indication that the former regime was successful in its efforts to smear the important work done by the Serbian organisations, but there are also other reasons for this, for example internal fragmentation, personal ambitions, and pure mistakes in the work of some organisations. The split between non-nationalists, pro-Serbs and “Yugo-nostalgics” in both the political and NGO world has led to inefficiency in the sector. International NGOs tend to have a better reputation, even if they have also been subjected to the former regime’s smears.

Co-operation with local NGOs should focus on involving the people, preferably through genuine grass root movements. In addition contacts should be promoted with local NGOs in other former Yugoslavian countries, particularly Bosnia and Croatia. Priority should be given to projects and organisations that work with young people and that involve young people in the implementation of projects. Now there is also an opportunity for projects that provide information on the work of the Hague Tribunal.

Serbia will be the subject of interest for some time to come and astronomical sums will be invested there. There is a risk that Serbia and its representatives will be “suffocated by assistance” by the western world. Therefore it is important that Sida and its partners do not lower their strict requirements in respect of project quality. Human rights organisations must, like the media, assume a critical role to human rights violations in all places.

Support to municipalities will continue (the Szeged process within the framework of the Stability Pact). It is important that concrete improvements are made in the country as soon as possible and therefore Sida should co-operate directly with the municipalities, as it did prior to the elections in 2000, with simple and visible projects that benefit the local population. Sweden is also investigating the possibilities of continuing co-operation with individual municipalities through the *Association of Free Municipalities in Serbia*. This can lead to municipal co-operation between Sweden and Serbia in one form or another.

As soon as the new authorities are established at the various levels (federal, republic and local), there will be opportunities to consider co-operation in the fields of institution building and public administration. However it will take some time before projects of this type can be implemented on a large scale.

3.5.2 Montenegro

The situation in Montenegro is not the same as in Serbia. The wide range of NGOs that can be found in Serbia do not seem to have spread to the small Yugoslavian republic. The media have better prospects of standing on their own feet and media that are critical of the regime are not affected by reprisals of the type that could earlier be seen in Serbia. Here there is a possibility to work with credits. However, consideration must be given to the large regional differences between north and south in Montenegro. In the northern parts of the country the media situation is much more difficult than in the south.

There are potentially strong ethical tensions in Montenegro, where Montenegrins, Serbs and Albanians are the largest ethnic groups. Projects that counteract developments similar to those that have taken place in Kosovo and Bosnia (and partly Macedonia, depending on how the situation develops there) should receive support.

Even if the political leadership in Montenegro is more open and democratic than in Serbia, there is a great deal to do to increase transparency and strengthen the culture of democracy.

3.5.3 Kosovo

The ethnic tensions in Kosovo are stronger than in most other parts of the Western Balkans. Here concrete projects that promote co-operation over ethnic borders should be given priority. One major problem is the fact that the future political status of Kosovo is still unclear. Therefore project proposals should be independent of the political future. As far as possible, contacts should be created between the different ethnic groups and incentives provided to get them to co-operate on concrete matters.

Young people are a key group, even more in Kosovo than in other places in the region. The population of Kosovo is very young and it is important to give young people the incentive to stay there and to work for the future. Women's projects should also be given high priority – the patriarchal structure, which is still more prominent in Kosovo than elsewhere in the Western Balkans, contributes to making the situation difficult for many women, particularly in rural areas. The problem of trafficking in human beings, which can be found in the entire region, is particularly prominent in Kosovo, mostly due to the large international presence. At the moment there are only two examples of women who have been smuggled *out* of Kosovo, but this is probably just the tip of an iceberg.

The media situation is unusual. There are a large number of daily newspapers and small, local radio stations. None of the seven major daily newspapers could survive without external assistance. Large parts of the media in Kosovo are closely associated with political parties and this excludes them from receiving support from Sida. If contributions are to be made to the media, it is of great importance that the media concerned do not indulge in malicious propaganda. Above all, support should be given to politically neutral media for minorities. Sida is hesitant to give support to RTK (Radio Television Kosova), which in its present form (October 2000) is an expensive project with

limited range. However, negotiations are taking place with the EU and DFID on improving the design and cost-efficiency of the project and Sida can consider giving support to RTK if these negotiations show good results.

In the short term, the situation in Kosovo requires special attention. As recently as 1999, no more than five Kosovo Albanians were allowed to participate in a meeting at the same time. The newly gained freedom and the ready access to foreign funds have had the effect that a large number of local NGOs have emerged. In particular it appears to be easy to obtain support for media and women's projects. The Swedish support should be balanced against the total flow of support and ensure that serious and well-established organisations are not suffocated. Sida's partners in co-operation should invest in creating stable local organisations by training them in organisational forms, finance and relevant law.

Many of the organisations that are present in Kosovo are in Pristina, as are many of the better-known local organisations. It is important therefore that support is not limited to the capital alone, but that projects also take place in rural areas.

3.6 Macedonia

The ethnic balance in Macedonia is extremely fragile, a situation made difficult by the fact that several of its neighbouring countries have more or less explicit territorial claims on Macedonia. The Macedonian Albanians, who are mostly to be found in the western parts of the country and are in the majority there, are regarded by ethnic Macedonians as a threat to the Macedonian nation state. In turn, the Macedonian Albanians do not want to be integrated in a Macedonian nation state. Therefore projects that promote co-operation between the different ethnic groups in Macedonia should be given priority. Projects that have the aim of improving the rights of minorities can also come into question. However, it is important that projects of this type counteract tensions, not increase them. In a report dated 2 August 2000, the ICG (International Crisis Group) refers to a "window of opportunities" for projects at the present point in time. In the report the ICG also states that the issue of what the ethnic Albanians are striving for in Macedonia is currently one of the most sensitive issues in the southern Balkans. The Roma are not regarded as a threat to Macedonian society, but their situation is extremely difficult. Projects with the Roma have proved difficult to implement, mainly due to internal conflicts between different groups of Roma. The work with the Roma therefore requires a great deal of knowledge about the situation and good local partners in co-operation.

According to information received, the Albanian group in Macedonia have even stronger traditional and patriarchal views on the role of women in society than other groups in the Balkans. Therefore it is important to support projects that focus on women and promote their participation in public life. The problem of trafficking, which was mentioned above in connection with Kosovo and Albania, is also serious in Macedonia. Efforts should be made to create regional interventions against trafficking in women and in this respect the work in Macedonia will be important.

The Macedonian public administration should be the recipient of contributions for good governance. This applies in particular to the local administration, but central structures could also be included. It is important to develop a democratic culture in Macedonia, which does not exist to any great extent at the present time. Contributions should be linked to NGO projects for democratic forms of government and participation. It is particularly important that ethnic minorities are included in the democratic work.

The media situation in Macedonia is complicated and support should continue to be provided to private media. One major problem for the private media is that competent journalists are often recruited as translators by international organisations, through offers of high wages. In addition the training of young journalists could be encouraged. The quality of journalism in Macedonia is often very low and the journalists appear to have problems in seeing their role as critical examiners of society.

3.7 Albania

Many of the structures that Sida normally co-operates with in human rights and democracy projects do not exist in Albania. The state is very weak and an NGO world of any significance has only emerged in recent years, and then largely due to the fact that people consider it as a career opportunity to start an NGO in a sector where there is a great deal of money to apply for, for example in the fields of human rights and democracy. Corruption is extremely widespread at all levels in society.

There are serious human rights organisations in Albania that are prepared to co-operate with Sweden. However, this would require meticulous preparations on the Swedish side and at present there is no Swedish NGO in the human rights and democracy field with a permanent presence in Albania. Fields in which Swedish support could possibly be provided are training programmes in democracy and the training of journalists. This does not need to be regarded as support to the education sector, but rather as consolidation of democracy in society. The problem for the media in Albania is not so much a lack of freedom of expression as low levels of journalistic quality and the media's dependence on business interests.

Sida has worked with the problem of trafficking in human beings. This is a considerable problem in Albania. There are professional organisations that work with these matters (e.g. the International Organization for Migration, IOM). Sida intends to continue to make contributions in this field in the future, preferably in a regional perspective. Support to the central administration in the country can also come into question.

Sida is giving priority to the Korça region in south-east Albania as a pilot area for projects, for example in the field of agriculture. There are also advantages in concentrating Swedish human rights projects to this area: there is an existing NGO world in Korça; there is a university with, among other things, a school of education; and Korça once had a democratic tradition, which it is still possible to see traces of.

4. Applications

4.1 Time periods

Sida-East does not have special dates for applications. Applications can be submitted at any time of the year.

4.2 LFA principle

Applications shall be structured on the basis of the LFA (Logical Framework Approach) principle. Information on how this shall be done can be found in *Directions for Sida's grants to non-governmental organisations for humanitarian assistance and conflict prevention* (Sida/SEKA, July 2000). Sida regularly arranges courses in LFA for its partners in co-operation, both in Sweden and in the field. Participation in these courses is strongly recommended.

4.3 General rules

Detailed rules for NGOs can be found in Sida's *General conditions for Sida's grants to Swedish non-governmental organisations* (June 1999). Moreover, Sida's Department for Co-operation with NGOs and Humanitarian Assistance (SEKA) has produced *Directions for Sida's grants to non-governmental organisations for humanitarian assistance and conflict prevention* (Sida/SEKA, July 2000). These directions are mainly intended for work in disasters and are therefore not entirely applicable to long-term support. Pending uniform rules for Sida's different departments, reference is made to appropriate parts of these directions. Swedish companies, institutions, consultants and agencies are referred to *Contributions in Central and Eastern Europe – Information for Swedish parties* (Sida-East, September 1999, is available on Sida's website www.sida.se.)

4.4 Framework agreements

Organisations that have many projects in the region are urged to submit collective project applications. After co-operating for a period of time in this way, the organisation can apply for a three-year framework agreement with Sida. This framework agreement makes it possible for the organisation to plan for the future in a coherent way with no loss of flexibility. For more information on framework agreements see *Directions for Sida's support to NGOs' development co-operation programmes in Central and Eastern Europe* (Sida/SEKA/EO, September 1998), chapters 3 and 4.



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