

Political Parties and Democracy Assistance

**An overview of the support provided by
Swedish party associated organisations for
democracy development in developing countries
and countries in central and eastern Europe**

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Sida Evaluation 05/11

**Department for Democracy
and Social Development**

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Översyn av stödet genom svenska partianknutna organisationer till demokratiuppbyggnad i u-länder och länder i Central- och Östeuropa. (Sida Evaluation 2004:31)

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Foreword

Support through Swedish party associated organisations (PAOs)¹ was introduced as a series of pilot activities in 1995 and became permanent through a government decision adopted in 2001². In the decision, Sida was assigned to prepare an overview of the support given, including economic conditions, in the first six months of 2004. The approach and conclusions of the report do not necessarily reflect Sida's opinion. This overview has been submitted to the government which is responsible for its dissemination and further use. In October 2004, Sida, in collaboration with the Collegium for development studies at Uppsala University, organised a seminar on the support given to political parties and the party system for Swedish partisan organisations. The seminar also makes up part of the overview. A report from the seminar was published at the start of 2005.

Democracy support by party associated organisations was the subject of the overview together with an evaluation of two previous cases. An overview of what were then still pilot activities commissioned by the reference or consultation group, which had overall responsibility for quality assurance of this form of assistance, was conducted in 1997. The overview concluded that the pilot activities would continue until 2000. In the government's decision of 05-03-1998 which was based on the overview, Sida was assigned to arrange in 2000 a detailed evaluation of the pilot activities. The evaluation, which was conducted by the Department of Government at Uppsala University, was presented in September that year, with the result that the trial period was extended for a year while new guidelines were prepared. Aspects of the support structure were also dealt with in an internal project for method development by the Division for Democratic Governance – "Political institutions", 2002.

Support is given to all parties represented in parliament. The amount is SEK 400,000 a year in the form of a basic contribution per party plus SEK 90,000 per parliamentary mandate. In addition, partisan organisations can receive funding for joint projects. In the financial year 2004, the total budget for support was SEK 37,600,000, of which 24,100,000 was supplied by the funds for the Global Development Programme (64.1 percent) and 13,500,000 from the funds for eastern Europe and central Asia (35.9 percent). SEK 3,390,000 of the total budget was earmarked for joint projects.

The aim of the assistance as laid out in the government's guidelines is "through the efforts of Swedish party associated organisations, to assist the development of a well-functioning party system in developing countries and countries in central and eastern Europe with the aim of promoting a representative democratic form of government in these countries." The underlying rationale is that a well-functioning party system is a prerequisite for a representative democracy to be able to meet its most important purpose, i.e. to build channels between citizens and political decision-making institutions.

In accordance with the government's guidelines of 2001, Swedish party associated organisations decide for themselves which countries they work for. The guidelines however recommend a balance of developing countries and countries in central and eastern Europe should be sought, since the funding is supplied in equal amounts from the assistance fund and Östsamarbete [Eastern Cooperation]. This distinction between the funds was abolished with Parliament's adoption of Joint Responsibility – Policy for Global Development. The requirement for a geographical balance however remains.

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¹ The form of support was preceded by the report *Demokrati kräva dessa partier* (Ds 1994:63). The report proposes that a special fund be set up as part of the assistance budget for parliamentary parties wishing to participate in democracy-promoting assistance. The objective comprised the somewhat general wording of "to assist the development of stable, democratic societies in developing countries and countries in central and eastern Europe". It was honed three years later to "to assist the development of a well-functioning and pluralistic party system and democratic societies in developing countries and countries in central and eastern Europe" (05-03-1998).

² UD decision 2001/1426/IC of 01-11-2001

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Summary

A representative democracy requires political parties able to represent the people's views and preferences, present options at election time and, generally, act as channels between the state and society. The party system must also be inclusive and pluralistic to the extent that different views are given room in public debate, as well as functioning such that people are able to choose by election a governing body which can act in a powerful and effective way, checked by an active opposition.

Since 1995, organisations associated with the Swedish parliamentary parties have worked together with parties in developing countries and in eastern and central Europe. The support is financed by Swedish aid and was run as a pilot project until 2002, when the activities were made permanent. At the same time, the funds distributed as support were doubled (SEK37.9 million in 2004).

From studies of existing written material and interviews with the parties concerned (not the recipients or end beneficiaries of the support, however), we have sought in this overview to find ways in which the existing support structure can be reformed to make the support more effective, and we have also identified areas in the system which work well and which should not be changed. The aim of the overview has not been to evaluate the effects of the activities.

We believe that the support from the Swedish party associated organisations in establishing democracy in developing countries and countries in central and eastern Europe plays a positive role by helping such development in many countries. In several respects, the support has been developed in a positive way since the activities were introduced almost ten years ago. Its strength lies in its direct link to the political processes in the countries where the activities are in operation. The political nature of the support also means that it is a sensitive issue, and Sida finds it difficult to administer it in way that guarantees full control of the tax funds used. Party Associated Organisations (PAOs) also report that they are unhappy about the way in which the support is administered at present, for example with respect to how long the review of applications takes, and the dissemination of information from Sida to PAOs. We think that, despite its advantages, the existing system is impaired by certain weaknesses, and, in this overview, we have tried to put forward different ways in which these can be minimised.

The issues we have looked at include the objective of the support and how support for non-democratic parties should be viewed. We have also studied a number of possible reforms of the body responsible for the support and how the activities could be coordinated with other development cooperation. In addition, we considered the preparation process, including the time spans of agreements. Finally, we have looked at the issue of how the effects of the support can be evaluated.

Summary of recommendations

We believe that the existing support structure can be perceived as a positive complement to other Swedish democracy assistance, but that improvements can be made which would result in the support becoming more effective.

A number of these recommendations would require a decision to be made by government or parliament in order for them to be implemented. It is our opinion that the objective of the support should also continue to be discussed, since there is still a discrepancy between the overall objectives of the support and many of the schemes being implemented. We also think that more funding should be allocated to joint projects, without reducing the amount given to the individual partisan organisations. It should also be noted that the director of the support has the authority and responsibility to refuse

initiatives which involve support for political parties in other countries which promote a clearly non-democratic political system. The matter of appropriate types of collaborative parties should be discussed regularly by the support's reference group.

With regard to responsibility for the support, there are considerable problems with the present system. They mainly concern the unclear roles in the system of the various players and, in some cases, dual roles; the political nature of sister party support; and the fact that, at present, a formal review is made of applications, which in practice does not guarantee the projects' quality. Different systems of responsibility have different advantages and disadvantages, but we recommend a model in which the current support is shared so that responsibility for mandated support for individual partisan organisations is separated from that for joint projects. Individual initiatives would then be transferred to parliament or UD (the Ministry for Foreign Affairs), which, however, would not conduct any factual review of the applications, while joint support would remain with Sida, which would be given more room to control these activities. The quality of the activities would be reviewed by means of a traditional economic audit and regular evaluations.

We also think that the coordination of the organisations' own projects principally with other development cooperation is best achieved through the exchange of information, while joint projects could be coordinated more actively with other democracy support. The agreement period for the activities should also be extended. We recommend the introduction of two-year agreements, possibly with the option for two one-year extensions, in order to tie in with parliament's mandate period. Party associated organisations must have the option to add to their applications during the agreement period, although such an option should not be unlimited. Specific guidelines need to be drawn up for joint initiatives. Finally, it is important that criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the activities be drawn up and that a general evaluation of the results be carried out before 2010.

1. Introduction

60 years ago, Schattschneider wrote that “modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties”³. The truth of such a statement has not lessened over the years. It is difficult to imagine how a representative democracy could function without political parties to represent the people’s views and preferences, present alternatives at election time and, generally, act as channels between the state and society. The party system must also be as inclusive and pluralistic as to allow different views to be voiced in public debate, as well as being such that people are able to choose by election a governing body which can act in a powerful and effective way, checked by an active opposition.

The development of democratic political parties and a well-functioning party system is a slow and complicated process, which is, and should be, controlled principally by internal factors and players in each country. It is also impossible to impose a democracy unless the right conditions already exist in the country. This type of development is also sensitive to backlash, which varies widely from one country to the next. Other states can however support these processes through cooperation with political parties and other organisations.

International interest in this type of support has grown sharply in recent years. In addition to the countries which have traditionally worked with these issues, such as Germany, the USA and the UK, a number of other countries have recently launched programmes. Norway and the Netherlands have recently set up institutions for party support, and Finland and Canada are among those expressing an interest in doing so⁴.

Sweden has been involved in activities of this kind for some time. Since 1995, organisations linked to the Swedish parliamentary parties have cooperated with parties in developing countries and in eastern and central Europe. The support was financed with Swedish funding and run as a pilot project until 2002, when the activities were made permanent. At the same time, the funds distributed as support were doubled (SEK 37.9 million in 2004).⁵

In accordance with the government’s decision to develop the initial programme of activities into a permanent support structure, an overview of its operation was to be carried out. Work on the overview was started in June 2004, with the majority of the work being carried out in September and October, and completed with this final report in November.

Background

The current support structure originated in Hadar Cars’ report “Democracies need these parties!” in 1994. The author pointed out a number of problems associated with parties in new democracies – limited financial resources, clientage, elite dominance and ethnic orientation – and documented experiences from similar forms of support in countries such as Norway, the UK and Germany.

³ Quoted from Lipset (2000) page 48. See also Gershman (2004) page 29.

⁴ Activities run by certain other countries are described in Appendix 2.

⁵ Government decision of 1 November 2001. The partisan organisations are the Centre Party’s International Foundation (CIS, Centre Party), Fund-raising Foundation Green Forum (GF, Green Party), Olof Palme’s International Centre (OPC, Social Democratic Party), Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation (JHS, Moderate Party), Christian Democrats’ Council for Democracy and Development (KrDU, Christian Democrats), Swedish International Liberal Centre (Silc, Liberal Party) and the Left’s International Forum (VIF, Left Party). From a total of SEK 16 million in 2001, support was allocated a total of SEK 38 million in 2004. Ugglä et al (2000), SPM Consultants (2004).

Cars' proposal was to establish a support structure, the aim of which would be "to help set up stable democratic societies in the Third World and eastern Europe. ... The assistance should support popular commitment to parties and associated groups, with the will and ability to develop political alternatives, and to seek a democratic mandate for them".⁶

Cars proposed that support should be given in a relatively flexible form. Support for political parties should, therefore, be permitted in accordance with the current rules governing support for individual organisations (in other words, by means of the usual application to Sida, undertaking to contribute 20 percent themselves and receiving the remaining 80 percent from the assistance body). Cars however also proposed establishing the current support structure by setting aside funds for party cooperation based on the Swedish parties' mandate in parliament. This proposed support, which would be oriented towards "soft" forms of cooperation (knowledge transfer, advice etc.), would be administered by UD, which would be responsible for overseeing and receiving annual reports from the partisan organisations (PAOs). It was also proposed that a consultation committee represented by UD, Sida, PAOs, and "other experts" be appointed to "be responsible for any coordination and exchange of experiences between the organisations that is warranted".⁷

The result of this report was the creation in 1995 of a support structure which largely followed Cars' proposal. In this way, the parliamentary parties were given the chance, at their partisan organisations' expense, to apply for support to build a party system in eastern Europe and the Developing World. The support was allocated on the basis of the number of mandates each party had in the Swedish parliament. Cars' proposal was however modified to put the administrative side of the support under the aegis of the reformed assistance body, Sida (i.e. its Department for Cooperation with NGO's, Humanitarian Assistance and Conflict Management, SEKA), and that the planned consultation group simply became a forum for debate between Sida (SEKA and the Division for Democratic Governance, DESA), UD and PAOs.

The first overview of the support was conducted in 1997, just over two years after its introduction. SPM Consultants studied 120 projects and prepared a general overview of the support, outlining several experiences of similar forms of support in other countries. In their conclusions, SPM highlighted a number of points. They believed that there was a potential discrepancy between the character of the sister party cooperation, which took priority in the support scheme, and the overall objective of supporting democracy in a wider sense; that the Swedish contribution was often limited to financial initiatives; that the majority of initiatives implemented were thought to be in keeping with the aims of the scheme; that it was doubtful whether Sida should administer these activities at all, given its principally unregulated character; and that the assessments of the effects of the support were problematic. "The connection between the individual activities (courses, exchange visits and training programmes) and the effect on democracy is both vague and, at best, very long-term".⁸ The report, therefore, concluded with the recommendation that the support structure should, to a greater degree, be controlled in such a way as to ensure that the effects were positive, through clearer formulation of the support's structure and orientation, and by giving the consultation group a stronger, more institutionalised role.

The results of SPM's recommendations were limited. Funding was allocated equally between subsidies for eastern Europe and the developing countries. The formulation of the objective was also clarified somewhat: the guidelines attached to the first government decision stated the objective as being to "assist in the building of stable, democratic societies in developing countries and countries in central

⁶ Ds 1994:63, page 97f.

⁷ Ds 1994:63, page 101.

⁸ SPM Consultants (1997) page 15.

⁹ Appendix to government decision, 21-06-1995.

and eastern Europe”.⁹ This formulation was refined in 1998 to “assist in the development of a well-functioning and pluralistic party system and democratic societies in developing countries and countries in central and eastern Europe”.¹⁰ At the same time, more emphasis on women’s participation was included.

In 2000, the Department of Government at Uppsala University carried out a major evaluation of the support structure.¹¹ The conclusions drawn were largely similar to those put forward by SPM: The evaluation pointed out that the support took the form more of sister party support than support for a party system as a whole; for example, a large part of the support went to very small parties, which in many cases could result in the fragmenting of the party system in the partner country. The report believed that the support showed a lack of coordination and professionalism, as well as a lack of overall approaches and coordination of initiatives. The support structure was certainly popular among the PAOs’ partners, but its relevance with respect to the general objectives was questionable.

Its recommendations were also similar to the previous study. It recommended that knowledge of the recipient country ought to be collected from a broader circle than from just the cooperation parties; that the support structure should be coordinated with other Swedish democracy assistance to a greater degree; that the opportunity to run joint projects should be promoted by allocating separate resources specifically for this purpose; and that some form of overall authority should be introduced with the aim of strengthening quality assurance, and the amount of knowledge possessed by the support structure. The accounting procedures should also be refined.

These two overviews formed the basis for the reworking of the guidelines for the support implemented by UD in 2001, which turned the support structure, until then technically only a pilot programme, into a permanent structure. The new guidelines comprised a number of changes: The formulation of the objective was modified yet again and was now oriented towards developing democracy by strengthening the “party system”, in other words, the individual parties and the overall party system; the description of the support design was made somewhat clearer; stricter requirements were placed on the content of the plans and feedback; part of the funding was made available for information drives in Sweden; phasing-in and phasing-out mechanisms were put in place for cases where a party won or lost its seat in the Swedish parliament; the reference group was given a generally formulated mandate which aimed at assuring quality; and funds were assigned for joint projects. At present, funding for joint projects makes up 8 percent of the total budget. Immediately after the new guidelines were introduced, the support structure was also transferred from Sida/SEKA to Sida/DESO (DESA), which was considered to be better equipped at handling politically oriented support.

A number of the central components of the support structure were also retained: the model which based allocations on the number of mandates in Sweden’s parliament was kept; the support structure would continue to rest, for the most part, on individual partisan foundations; and Sida was not given a substantial mandate to evaluate the activities. Overall, the new guidelines accorded with the viewpoints put forward by PAOs before the overview.¹² With this, the support structure took on a permanent structure, although the choice of structure is still the matter of debate.

Over the next three years, Sida commissioned SPM Consultants to prepare annual summaries of the support structure.¹³ The details contained in these memoranda provide a picture of the orientation of the support over the past few years. The picture is of movement, albeit slight, towards more work with

¹⁰ Appendix to government decision, 05-03-1998.

¹¹ The evaluation reviewed almost 500 projects based on a large number of variables, held several interviews with representatives from PAO and conducted field studies Estonia, Poland, South Africa and the Ukraine.

¹² UD(2001b).

¹³ These memoranda were based on the annual applications from PAO, and, therefore, constituted an ex ante summary of the activities without actual opportunity for either an evaluation or statement of operations.

parliamentary and democracy institutions on the system level rather than exclusively with sister parties. Likewise, the reviews show a fall in the support for building contacts and a corresponding rise in training initiatives; and that “the objective to strengthen parties at the basic level is becoming much clearer”.¹⁴ All these changes are in line with earlier recommendations concerning the support structure. As in previous overviews, it can also be concluded that PAOs differ in terms of priorities and working methods. This means that it is also sometimes difficult to give an impartial, overall picture of PAOs’ activities.

Recurrent in these summaries, however, are specific serious criticisms which feature widely in all evaluations of the support structure. The main criticism is the lack of link between particular initiatives in the programme and its general objective. Since SPM’s reports are not based on results, they are not able to say anything about the fulfilment of objectives in this respect. Instead, they point out the lack of clear linkage right from the initiation phase of the support projects and that PAOs, in their annual plans, generally “do not make any attempt at describing the connection between activities, results and overall objectives”.¹⁵ (However, the reports also establish differences between PAOs in this respect.) The reasoning is fully laid out in the latest report: “Several PAOs show a clear tendency to view these connections as obvious, in other words, a certain type of effort on the part of a PAO, is expected to have a positive effect on the recipient environment. You could ask why something so obvious cannot be described more clearly”.¹⁶ These overviews also highlight a number of problems linked to the reporting of the support, especially when it comes to reporting the administration costs.

In summary, previous studies show a number of problems which could be said to be typical of initiatives of democratic assistance, particularly with regard to the difficulty in substantiating the effects with respect to both indicators and causality (this will be discussed later in this evaluation). However, they also point to an aspect which further obstructs this fact: In addition to the fact that controlling outcomes is virtually impossible, the opportunities for more process-oriented forms of support (via clear guidelines, standard evaluation templates etc.) are also limited, since the support is allocated on the basis of criteria which are completely independent of Sida assessments and because the agency lacks the authority to regulate this.

This evaluation

The task of conducting the overview was given to the Department of Government at Uppsala University (following tendering for the assignment), which also carried out the general evaluation of the support in 2000. Those involved in carrying out the work were Dr. Magnus Öhman and Viktoria Åberg, together with a reference group comprising Professor Barry Holmström and Doctors Shirin Ahlbäck Öberg, Fredrik Uggla and Helena Wockelberg.¹⁷ The overview involved collating written material from PAOs, Sida and UD, as well as information on how support functions in other countries. Reference was naturally made to earlier evaluations and reports on this support structure. In addition, a series of interviews were conducted with PAOs, Sida and UD, as well as other parties with knowledge of this or similar forms of support. We would like to thank everyone who offered their help during the course of the work.

The formulations of the objectives of this support structure required its focus to be on the effectiveness of the support structure in assisting democratic development in other countries by supporting the development of a democratic party entity, i.e. both individual parties and a healthy party system

¹⁴ SPM Consultants (2004) page 8.

¹⁵ Ibid page 7, also SPM Consultants (2002) & SPM Consultants (2003).

¹⁶ SPM Consultants (2004) page 7.

¹⁷ Fredrik Uggla had very little involvement due to a change to his working brief.

characterised by open dialogue and respect for those with different opinions. In line with this, we would like to stress that access to Swedish assistance funds cannot be considered a right for any Swedish organisation, PAO or other body; rather, allocation should be based on the knowledge that the activities being implemented are likely to help meet the stated objectives.

The main issues discussed in this overview were stated by Sida in the description of the commission (see Appendix 1). At a meeting held on 28 October, criticism was levelled by several PAOs at these main issues, since the assigned commission was seen to be outside the government's remit for the overview, and it was not considered the right time to conduct an overview of the forms of support, since these were only formalised a few years earlier. The PAOs were generally happy with the existing guidelines and directions, which they did not believe needed reviewing at this stage. We have however been obliged to adhere to our remit for the overview. We would also like to point out that, for reasons of time and space, we have not been able to deal with all the questions which the main issues of the overview have raised. It was not the aim of the overview to evaluate the impact of the activities.

2. The objective of the support structure

Support for parties and the party system

The government's decision requires the objective of the support structure to be as follows: "through the initiatives of Swedish party associated organisations, to help develop a well-functioning party system in developing countries and countries in central and eastern Europe with the aim of promoting a representative, democratic form of government in these countries". This wording, while still quite general, is clearer than the original formulation, which simply stated that the support should "help develop stable, democratic societies in developing countries and countries in central and eastern Europe".

Sida's directions, go on to say that:

Fundamental to a well-functioning party system are political parties with a functioning internal organisation and structure, with an active membership and an internal democracy, as well as the ability to address the interests and demands of society. Likewise, a functioning party system depends on the parties' reciprocal relationships, which should be tolerant, pluralistic and open to mutually agreed solutions and new alternatives. It should also be able to generate stable governments and an effective opposition.¹⁸

The party associated organisations are relatively happy with the current formulation of the objective for support and see it as their role to achieve the stated objectives wherever possible. It should be added that PAOs, in their day-to-day work, do not usually appear to relate their work to the wording of the objective. Sida, for its part, believes that it is time for a rewriting of the formulation.

There continues to be a marked difference between the general spirit of the formulation and the sister party activities which, in practice, have dominated the schemes. The evaluation carried out by the Department of Government in Uppsala in 2000 established that "even though a party system naturally prefers strong and functioning parties, support for individual parties does not necessarily have to result in a well-functioning party system" and that "assistance for sister parties, run in close and often personal

¹⁸ Sida (2002a) page 2.

relationships, cannot automatically be expected to be the most relevant factor in strengthening the party system and democracy in a particular country”.¹⁹

Our own interviews, in addition to comments made by the party associated organisations (PAOs) after the earlier evaluation and in connection with the production of new guidelines, show that PAOs see support mainly as a way of supporting political parties in the recipient countries.²⁰ The annual reports on this support structure indicate that the activities have mainly kept their character of support for individual parties and that the discrepancy between the overall objectives and the activities, as established in the evaluation, remains.²¹ It should, however, be pointed out that the various PAOs involved in this issue differ in terms of their activities, to such an extent that some of them, in principle, only offer support to sister parties, while others have a clearly more diversified support structure. The share of the support which went to sister parties in 2003 varied between 16 percent and 74 percent.

In their comments the partisan organisations stated that, through the support structure, they “are strengthening our sister parties which is a good thing since it strengthens democracy in these countries”.²² We would like, however, to reiterate our view, as stated in the 2000 evaluation, that this connection is not automatic. It has been established that an “explanation of why PAOs find it so difficult to describe the connection between the activities and the overall objectives... is possibly the discrepancy between the objectives and the orientation of the activities to which [the evaluation conducted in 2000] draws attention”.²³

It is also important to state that the work of PAOs is in line with the guidelines’ recommendation that the method of support “helps to strengthen our sister parties which is to the good as it assists the democratic development in the partner country”.²⁴ We consequently do not think that the PAOs are contravening the existing rules, but believe that we should discuss how the support should be structured in future.

There is a considerable risk that the support in the partner countries is perceived as prejudice and, hence, unfair support for certain parties. This problem does not only apply to Swedish support. Kumar pointed out the seriousness of this problem, saying that “there is a need for complete transparency and a set of agreed criteria for selecting the parties for assistance. Both fairness and the appearance of fairness are required”.²⁵ It could be stressed in this context that in the German system for party support, which possibly has the most in common with the Swedish system (support is implemented by partisan organisations), direct (cash) support for individual parties is no longer permitted.²⁶ One of the main reasons for this was public criticism that the German cooperation was being used as secret support for different parties in other countries, including regimes in various dictatorships.²⁷

PAOs have often put forward the argument that the problems surrounding partiality can be resolved by different PAOs supporting different parties in the partner countries, thereby creating a balance. Evidence from the actual initiatives, however, reveals such an argument to be questionable.

¹⁹ Ugglå et al (2000) pages 29 & 35.

²⁰ See inter alia UD(2001a).

²¹ SPM Consultants (2002), (2003) & (2004). In the report which analysed the applications for 2004, it was established that this part of the support had diminished in relevance in recent years, but that “the change has been slow and cooperation forged directly with sister parties continues to account for more than half the projects”. SPM Consultants (2004) page 6. Between 2002 and 2004, the share which goes directly to cooperation with other political parties fell from just over 60 percent to just over 50 percent.

²² UD(2001a).

²³ SPM Consultants (2003) page 7.

²⁴ UD(2001b) page 1.

²⁵ Kumar (2000) page 197.

²⁶ Hauck (2002) page 124, see also Pinto-Duschinsky (1991), Phillips (1999) page 83 and Mair (2000) page 142.

²⁷ Van Gennip (2002) page 178.

Applications show that, of the countries in which partisan organisations ran specific projects in 2004, in 76 percent of cases only one or two PAOs were involved (in 43 percent only one PAO was active).²⁸

We would like to stress that support for individual parties can have a considerable positive effect, and that PAOs run many projects to address various key problems in countries where democracy has not been firmly established. Cooperation between individual political parties in different countries can create close contacts and enables education which would be difficult to achieve in any other way.²⁹

The Swedish political parties have experience which could help make the activities relevant and effective. Their involvement in these activities could also increase the interest in democratisation issues and democracy assistance in the Swedish parliamentary parties, as well as providing increased understanding of the complexity of these issues. Given the existing formulation of the objective, there is, however, a need for further discussion on how this can be achieved in a more effective way. As Mair pointed out:

Party cooperation is – as democracy promotion in general – an intervention in sensitive political processes, probably the most delicate one. It requires informed choices, reliability and persistence. Norm-based and bi-partisan cooperation can meet these requirements more convincingly than a multi-partisan cooperation. But bi-partisan cooperation is also the most intrusive form of interference whose effects have to be weighed again and again against the overarching goal of democracy promotion.³⁰

The existing reference group is a suitable body for such discussion, if experts not directly connected to the support are also brought in. Alternatively, the formulation of the objective could be modified again to adapt it to the existing activities, but we think that this would be detrimental if the objective of the support was only to support individual parties. In our assessment, it is the link between parties and national democracy which gives the support its legitimacy. At this stage, we would hesitate to propose any change to the formulation of the objective, but we do think that the overall objective of supporting democratic development must remain part of the objective in the future.

As mentioned above, a formulation increasing women's participation was introduced in 1998.³¹ We do not have any clear data on how this is reflected in the PAOs' work, but on the evidence of the applications and our interviews, the organisations appear to perceive this as an important task. SPM Consultants also stated in their report on the project applications for 2004 that the "orientation of or the regard given to women's political participation is totally clear."³² The success of this work, now and in the past, can only be established by a more in-depth evaluation of the effects.

Supporting a party system

It also seems to be unclear how support for the party system which does not consist of cooperation with individual parties can work. The support guidelines state, as mentioned above, that "a functioning party system depends on the parties' reciprocal relationships, which should be tolerant, pluralistic, and open to mutual understanding solutions and new alternatives. It should also be able to generate stable governments and an effective opposition".³³

²⁸ Calculated by SPM Consultants (2004). The situation appears to have been almost identical in 2003. SPM Consultants (2003). In this context, it should be remembered that other countries may be carrying out development cooperation which could reduce or increase this partiality.

²⁹ See inter alia Carothers (2004a) page 9f and Ugglä et al. (2000).

³⁰ Mair (2004) page 134.

³¹ See also Ugglä et al. (2000).

³² SPM Consultants (2004) page 8.1

³³ Sida (2002a).

This part of the party entity is usually what is known as the party system. Some PAOs have sometimes claimed that support organisations cannot work for the party system. This is incorrect and the majority of PAOs already carry out such work by themselves and/or as part of a joint initiative, although they do not use this terminology. The party associated organisations are generally positive towards the idea of running joint projects, but see them as an addition to their individual initiatives, which, in their view, are the most important part of the support. They do not see joint projects as a better way of fulfilling the objective of the support, and stress that should the resources for joint support be increased, this should not be at the expense of individual initiatives.

Generally speaking, the party system tends to be discussed in terms of fragmentation and polarisation.³⁴ The first factor refers to how splintered the distribution of mandates between different parties in parliament is. In some countries, a very high number of parties are represented in parliament (36 parties in Ethiopia following the 2000 election and the coalitions that won seats in the Ukraine's parliament in 2002 comprised 29 parties). This can lead to difficulties when it comes to forming a government and, then building a stable, executive body. An extreme variant of this is the large proportion of members of parliament in some countries who do not belong to a party at all (over 70 percent of the MPs in Belarus following the 2000/2001 election and 44 percent in Kazakhstan).

There are, however, many examples of countries in which the party system is not fragmented at all, but where parliament is totally dominated by one political party (the government party in the relatively democratic country of Namibia won over 70 percent of the seats in the 1999 election).³⁵ Sometimes these two phenomena are combined to such an extent that one party occupies a large share of the seats in parliament, while the opposition is splintered between lots of different political parties. It is not unusual for government parties to actively seek to splinter and divide the opposition in a variety of ways so as to reduce the risk of their own party losing its privileged position. Mexico under the PRI regime is a clear example of this, but there are also many other countries in which the regime has successfully managed to consolidate its position in this way. In March 2004, the second biggest party had less than 15 percent of the seats in over half of Africa's parliaments.³⁶ In this situation, the chances of achieving a pluralistic political system are radically reduced.

Development work aimed at confronting these problems can be used, for example, to create a dialogue between political parties with a similar ideological persuasion (the objective does not necessarily have to be to get these parties to merge, since parliamentary cooperation can have the same effect). Such support could help strengthen the party system in those cases where it is highly fragmented.

The question as to whether PAOs should commit themselves to working against such an over-dominance by one political party in various countries, or whether they should support parties which are considered to be democratic as opposed to parties considered to be non-democratic is a sensitive one. In purely non-democratic states, this can be the only meaningful form of working with this support structure (support for the opposition in Serbia under Milosevic's rule is a good example and support for the ANC during Apartheid is a useful parallel). Even though this may be important in certain cases, it can often be seen as an unfair influence on the internal affairs of a country and also tends to depend a lot on one's own perception of democracy. Most countries which conduct this type of development cooperation themselves prohibit foreign financing of their political parties (Sweden is an exception). It has also been claimed that it is only in very special circumstances that support for this type of "electoral revolution" is effective.³⁷ Specifically, there needs to be an opposition devoted to democracy,

³⁴ Compare NIMD (2004) page 14f.

³⁵ Freedom House classifies Namibia as a "free country". See www.freedomhouse.org.

³⁶ Öhman (2004) page 86, note 1.

³⁷ Carothers (2004b) page 53ff.

which is very rarely the case. The development in Zambia, where a non-democratic regime lost power in an election to an opposition which then proved itself to be rather undemocratic, is an example of this. To try to create an effective and democratic opposition where one does not exist is always difficult and often impossible. A large number of countries in the world can also be classified as partial democracies, where it is often very difficult to point out political players who can be seen as representatives of a democratic form of government.

One way of looking at it would be for PAOs to work towards creating a level playing field, in other words, for all political parties in the country to take part in elections on equal terms.³⁸ Initiatives can then be aimed at reducing the uneven distribution of capacity and knowledge. The idea is that the position obtained by a party in a country should depend on the popular support the party has. Small political parties without popular support would then not be given significant contributions which would result in them obtaining a position that does not correlate with their popularity in the country. This risks increasing the fragmentation of the party system (especially among the opposition), which, as has been pointed out, is a problem in many countries. On the other hand, an objective of the support would be to reduce the risk of popular parties (and in the relevant cases, potential parties) not being able to progress due to stifling by the incumbent regime.³⁹

The degree of polarisation refers to how far apart different political parties are from each other in terms of ideology, their views on various points of issue and also how they are seen by other parties in general. In established democracies, it is sometimes claimed that the polarisation is too slight, which means that the voters cannot see any difference between the various parties and feel less motivated to activate themselves politically. In many countries where PAOs are active, polarisation between parties is, however, very great. Sometimes, parties represent different groups which have previously been involved in armed fighting between each other. The party systems in Mozambique, Bosnia and Sri Lanka are such examples. In countries with this form of party system, initiatives aimed at dialogue and increased understanding between the political parties can be highly relevant. Angola and the Baltic states are also examples. We can happily say that PAOs, either on their own or jointly, are running or have run a number of projects with the objective of achieving such effects.

We would like to stress that the aim of work of this type is not for political parties in other countries to stop being political opponents. The essence of a political party is simply for it to present candidates in an election to compete against candidates presented by other parties. In this way, voters are given the opportunity to vote for those they want to dominate the legislative and executive bodies in the country, and for the policy they want the elected leaders to pursue. This is where the essence of democracy lies. In some countries, too, the political parties cooperate too much, thereby restricting the voters' freedom to choose between different alternatives. Our point is rather that such a political struggle should be fought by peaceful and democratic means which help create a constructive debate, rather than hostile disputes. Unfortunately, this is not the case in many political systems today. In countries such as Iraq and the Ivory Coast (both countries where PAOs are active), the political temperature scarcely needs to be raised.⁴⁰ Where various PAOs work together in some of the many countries where polarisation is very great, the effects can be considerable.

³⁸ See inter alia Carothers (2000) page 219.

³⁹ Working towards creating a level playing field can, however, also be politically sensitive, if, for example, it is not carried consistently. See Carothers (1999) page 147.

⁴⁰ Reilly has emphasised both the importance of trying to dampen such conflicts through national political parties and the difficulties involved in such work. Reilly (2003).

Additional comments on the direction and objective of the support

Relatively few projects include cooperation between PAOs and the different political parties and organisations in a number of recipient countries, even though there is considerable variation between the various partisan organisations. Even though most PAOs run projects of this type, they tend to concern only a limited number of their activities. The earlier report, prepared before the support structure was introduced, pointed out the importance of this type of “south to south” or “east to east” support.⁴¹ Even though Swedish parties have very good knowledge of how party organisations and activities work in their own country, it is often difficult to judge how much of this knowledge is relevant in completely different situations.⁴² It is more likely that parties in eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia or Africa will be able to relate to and learn from each other than be able to benefit from the experiences of Sweden’s parties, many of which are over a hundred years old. In this respect, we look positively on the work carried out with a focus on cooperation between different cooperation organisations and countries. We therefore invite the PAOs to learn from the projects being run in this area and to try to increase such contributions in their activities. It is also important that participants from the various partner countries do not just participate as listeners, but that they also participate in, or take full control of the planning of such activities. In this respect, the Swedish PAOs can effectively act as financiers (and inspectors) of the initiatives.

In discussing this we should also remember that support for a country’s party system can concern the framework of that system. Many new initiatives in the area of support for political parties concern this type of work. For example, the legislation surrounding parties, general elections and representation can play a crucial role for the party system and support initiatives connected to these can play an important role. To lessen the importance of vested interests (or “administrative resources” as the same phenomenon is called in Russia) is highly crucial in many countries if the party entity is to be able to fulfil the role it is considered to need in an established democracy. Support for parliament and parliamentary groups may, in some cases, be necessary for the parties to be able to represent the electorate in a meaningful way.⁴³

Initiatives concerning the framework of the party system must, of course, be adapted to the local context.⁴⁴ A discussion needs to take place within Swedish support concerning the extent to which PAOs should work in this type of area, possibly with support from, or together with, other players. It is important to realise that such initiatives often require considerable resources and knowledge, and that it can be simpler for PAOs to try to resolve minor, more tractable problems. Nevertheless, in some situations it is necessary to tackle the larger problem areas. Smaller problems may be the symptoms of structural weaknesses, thus taking initiatives which aim to solve these smaller problems may be ineffective in the long run.

In summary, we do not doubt that support for individual political parties in developing countries and eastern and central Europe can have a marked effect on democratic development in these countries. The fact that Swedish organisations are involved in these activities also means that we can offer alternative political models to those which exist in the USA, Germany etc., not necessarily because the Swedish solutions are better, but because cooperation parties in other countries then have access to informa-

⁴¹ Ds 1994:63, page 95.

⁴² Carothers (2004a) page 8f. These types of activities are often uncommon in other countries active in this type of support, too.

⁴³ This is in line with a number of the subjects concerning democracy support presented in UU (2004). Another issue concerns the financing of political parties. See International IDEA (2003).

⁴⁴ Carothers (2004a) page 28f. Gillespie and Whitehead warn, in particular, that strategies which aim at creating a functional democracy quickly (what they call a “big bang approach”) risks creating a system which fulfils the formal requirements we place on democratic states, but without enabling popular participation in practice. Gillespie & Whitehead (2002) page 198ff. See also Zakaria (1997) and Carothers (2004b), chapter 16.

tion about different systems.⁴⁵ This support is not enough, however, if the overall objectives of the support structure are to be achieved, especially as regards the parties' mutual relationship, which is mentioned specifically in the support structure directions.⁴⁶ Consideration must also be given to the political situations in the country concerned, for example which other political parties exist and the relationship between the parties. As was established at a recent conference on the subject of party assistance; "context is crucial".⁴⁷ At the same time, it can be said that the total amount of money available for the support is fairly limited. If PAOs are to tackle new areas there should be a marked increase in resources.

3. The support structure and non-democratic parties

The principal thinking behind the support structure is for the state to give Swedish parliamentary parties funding through which they can support the development of parties and the party system in developing countries and countries in central and eastern Europe. This means that the recipient parties abroad must have such a structure that cooperation with them can be assumed to support democratic development, and that the Swedish parliamentary parties believe democracy important. The link between assistance and the democratic requirements placed on the cooperation parties is complicated, in terms both of this specific support structure and of assistance in general.

It is conceivable that political parties which do not support the working of the support objective and the idea behind it, may in future be elected into Sweden's parliament and thereby have access to the support funds. However, we feel that this cannot be resolved by refusing such a party or parties access to these activities. The Swedish people must have the opportunity to vote for the parties they want in parliament and be able to trust that all parties are treated equally by the state administration. This view is also shared by the majority of the actors within the support structure.

We think that the best way of ensuring that money from this support structure is not used in ways that contravene its basic principles is to regulate which partners the PAOs can work with. In a number of other countries with similar support structures, there are rules which prevent support being given to political parties which do not meet certain democratic criteria.⁴⁸ These rules are, however, seldom specific, but open to various interpretations.

A rule which forbids in detail support for non-democratic parties may be difficult to implement. Apart from a few very clear examples, it is often an issue of interpretation as to whether an individual political party should be seen as democratic that someone has to make such a judgement. It is also debatable whether the important issue in this context is for political parties to represent democratic values outwardly, or whether their internal activities and organisation conforms with democratic norms. Swedish assistance funds should not be used for cooperation with political parties which promote the illegal use of violence or a non-democratic form of government. On the other hand, it could be claimed (as several PAOs have done) that cooperation can play a role in reforming the internal processes in parties with which the PAOs are working. Parties which are clearly under one person's control could naturally hardly qualify for consideration.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Schraeder believes that Nordic democracy support is built on an humanitarian interest which is different from the incentive for similar support from other countries. Schraeder (2003) page 34ff.

⁴⁶ Sida (2002a) page 3.

⁴⁷ Wilton Park (2004) page 3. See also e.g. Ottaway & Chung (1999) page 103ff and Schraeder (2003) page 28.

⁴⁸ See for example USAID Political Party Assistance Policy, USAID (2003). See also the discussion in Mathisen & Svåsand (2002) page 21.

⁴⁹ This assumes that the situation is considered permanent or long-term.

The existing guidelines state that cooperation should be pursued with parties or organisations associated with them “which work towards a democratic government and provide equal opportunities for women and men, which show respect for human rights and tolerance towards minorities and different opinions and which seek to bridge over religious and ethnic opposition, where this exists”.⁵⁰ This is a clear indication that cooperation with non-democratic parties should be avoided.

We think that the existing formulation gives the responsible body relatively clear grounds for intervening in cases where a party associated organisation is looking to start cooperation with parties which clearly represent a non-democratic political persuasion. We see this as positive, since it is highly inappropriate for Swedish assistance funds to go to cooperation with decidedly non-democratic parties. In the existing system, the responsible body therefore has an opportunity to “apply the emergency brake” where such situations arise. Although a decision not to permit funding for this reason is inevitably to a certain extent a political decision, the responsible body must be responsible for ensuring in such cases that Swedish taxes are not used in a way which obviously contravenes the Swedish view of democracy.⁵¹ The exception is if this responsibility lies with parliament (see next section). In that case, we think this task should fall to the UD.

Our discussions with partisan organisations reveal that they are aware of the problem, but that they do not see it as an immediate problem. Most PAOs do not see a need to change the current wording in the guidelines with respect to this matter. They think that the activities are for the most part self-regulating, to the extent that the organisations do not want to risk attracting criticism.

Given the unclear position of the responsible body in the current situation, and the difficulties involved in drawing up detailed rules in this matter, problems may arise when doubtful cases appear. In these cases, an open and public dialogue within Sweden’s borders about the sort of political parties which should receive Swedish support may help prevent funds being used in contravention of the basic principle underlying the activities. For this to happen, the activities need to be run in an open and transparent way at all times. The issue of appropriate cooperation parties should continue to be the subject of discussion, and we think that the reference group is a suitable forum for such discussion, although the debate should not be limited to the few meetings held by this group.

It should be stressed that even though support for clearly non-democratic political parties should be prohibited, it is not just the level of democracy within a party that determines how appropriate it is as a cooperation partner. Support for a highly democratic party with minimum support from the electorate risks at best being a waste of money, and at worst meaning changes to the party system which do not correlate with the parties’ support among the electorate. In the same way, support for influential parties with doubtful internal democracy could be effective, if the way in which these parties organise themselves and function could be changed. In other words, there should be discussion of whether the support should be used to reward democratic parties, irrespective of their popular support, or to reform influential but less democratic parties.

In summary, we do not see any immediate risk of this support structure being used to support parties in other countries which do not promote basic democratic values. In cases where the situation arises in which a PAO wants to support an obviously non-democratic party, it is the job of the responsible body to apply the existing guidelines and refuse the application. A discussion on which types of cooperation parties PAOs should work with must be kept alive at all times, and the reference group should be a channel for such dialogue.

⁵⁰ UD(2001b) page 1.

⁵¹ For example, the second chapter of the Constitution could be used as a guideline.

4. Responsibility

Introduction

A very central question regarding all forms of development work is who should be the responsible body for the support. The allocation of responsibility signals not only the degree to which the Swedish state takes responsibility for the detailed use of resources, but also the expectations we can have of the strict use of the resources and follow-up. By way of introduction, it can be said that within this support structure there is no common view as to how responsibility should be allocated. While PAOs, as a rule, set great store by their autonomous position and flexible ways of working, Sida sees problems with the current solution. The special character of the support structure means that the authorities find it difficult to administrate. PAOs also report problems with the way the support is currently administered. We will, therefore, discuss the most central alternative solutions, as well as their respective advantages and disadvantages.

The current support to promote parties and party systems in other countries is unconventional in design. Sida is the body formally responsible for the support, but the special organisations put together by the Swedish parliamentary parties have the real control over the funds, and are the only ones who can use the subsidies. The allocations are not influenced by the degree of success or the results of the PAOs, but instead divided between the parties according to their level of mandates in parliament (in addition to a basic contribution), i.e. along similar lines to domestic party support. The support structure can, therefore, be seen as largely independent of results.⁵² The support structure organisation can be compared to the recently introduced Norwegian system, the guidelines for which state that “it is not natural to divide the funding into ‘party pots’”.⁵³ This shows a marked difference to, for example, Sida’s support for non-governmental organisations (EOs), whereby Sida itself decides which organisations the body is to start and end a cooperation with, and what resources are to be allocated to the organisations.

Sida’s task is to examine the project applications within the support structure, and it is of the opinion that PAOs, with just a few exceptions, have been willing and open to inspections of the activities they conduct. The reason why Sida sees its role within the support structure as problematic arises rather from the fact that the body, as part of its activities, has to follow the objectives set with regard to assistance and Sweden’s Policy on Global Development (PGU). Where the support structure discussed here is concerned, it is not just the advance allocation of funds, but also the fact that the body is expressly forbidden to influence PAOs’ choice of country, and the formulation of the guidelines and directions also give the PAOs considerable freedom in their choice of cooperation partners and projects. This means that Sida is supposed to examine all project applications (in contrast, for example, to EO support), but is quite limited in its ability to influence them. Whether projects are successful or not does not affect the continued allocation of funds, therefore. Nor does the allocation depend on the activities’ compliance with the PGU, the national strategies decided by government, Sida’s general guidelines or other policies and control documents.

Since the support structure was introduced, there has been discussion of Sida’s capacity to refuse an application. Sida is instructed, for example, to judge whether applications “are clearly linked to the objective set by the government for these activities”.⁵⁴ However, this is often quite a difficult judgement

⁵² Sida (2002b) page 3.

⁵³ Norsk Senter for Demokratistøtte (Norwegian Centre for Democracy Support), the Council’s criteria for allocating funds according to the guidelines. See www.senterfordemokratistotte.no/kriterier.asp.

⁵⁴ Sida (2002a) page 8.

to make, given the complex relations between the various political structures and processes. As far as we can see, Sida has not yet in practice turned down an application since the new guidelines were introduced in 2002. Today, it could be claimed that Sida's main function within the support structure is to legitimise.⁵⁵ It could be claimed that if the authority cannot really influence or control the activities, it should be released from the responsibility for doing so.

The administrative organisation of the support leaves a lack of clarity as to whether, and how, support activities can be audited in the way customary for public activities. In a democracy, the opportunity to hold the management accountable for their actions is an important mechanism for the people to be able to exert their influence. How well elected civil servants and others in decision-making bodies and authorities fulfil the objectives formulated by parliament, and how public funds are used, are some of a modern democracy's most central questions. The fact that Sida arranges funds for the activities now under discussion, but that the actual executor is the political parties which lie outside public administration, makes it more difficult for influence to be exerted on how these public funds are managed. The administrative organisation of the activities suffers, therefore, from a follow-up deficiency, which can obstruct demands for accountability and create legitimacy problems in the public debate.

The party associated organisations, therefore, have a unique position compared to other non-state organisations through which Swedish development support is arranged. We think that the partisan organisations are highly suited to pursuing development cooperations with political parties in other countries, given the PAOs close connection to Swedish party activities. The same, however, could be said about women's organisations and assistance for strengthening the position of women, human rights organisations and assistance to support human rights etc. Even if a certain type of organisation suits a certain type of development cooperation well, this does not mean that these organisations should automatically have a free hand in arranging assistance funds without an actual overview and connection to other assistance activities. It is also possible that other types of organisation may be able effectively to pursue activities aimed at achieving parts of the support structure objective which go beyond pure support for sister parties.

Sida's role in the relationship with the parliamentary parties and PAOs

The fact that there is also a mutual dependence between the political parties (i.e. parliament) and the state body, Sida, is somewhat problematic in terms of who takes responsibility. Examining parliamentary parties' activities is a very sensitive job for a state authority. The parties are distributors and executors of resources, while the state authority is responsible for the outcome of the activities, although there is no real scrutiny of the projects. It can give rise to speculation and apprehension: could it be counter-productive for the state authority, Sida, to be too "fiscal" in its relationship with the parliamentary parties, since it is parliament that ultimately grants Sida funds, for example? Even though none of the players currently concerned would describe such a dependence problem in the current structure, it is important that potential problem forms a starting point when alternatives to the existing organisation are discussed.

The relationship between political parties and interest organisations, on the one hand, and state authorities, on the other, has historically found different expressions. In corporate decision-making models, representatives of (mainly) labour market parties have been given management roles in the administrations of authorities. Parliament has also decided to view MPs as particularly suitable as "laymen" in authority administrations. It is also common for the confidence shown in the special competence of the various players in an area to be put forward as an argument to give this very group influence over the implementation of political decisions. Irrespective of why an activity is entrusted to someone, the

⁵⁵ Whether Sida should have the authority to refuse applications has been a matter of debate since the support's infancy. Sida (1995).

opportunity to demand accountability from that person should, however, be safeguarded. The basic rule is that the person with the power also has the responsibility.

The complicated structure of overlapping roles can be illustrated by the fact that there are a number of people who sit on the administration for more than one organisation, who ultimately decide who receives the support (Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs: UU), who administer the support (Sida) and who implement the support (PAOs). One person is represented on all three bodies, while four of the UU's members and deputies are also represented on the administration of a PAO (as of October 2004).⁵⁶

PAOs have also levelled criticism at the way in which the assistance scheme is currently administered. They believe that Sida has failed to show sufficient interest in factors which could make PAOs' activities and the work with applications and reports easier, and that Sida's administration has caused significant delays in the activities. It is obvious that there is a considerable lack of confidence in Sida today on the part of the PAOs, and that the communication between the various parties is not working well.

One example is that the internal annual reports written by SPM Consultants on the support have not been shown to the PAOs. We believe it important that material which may be beneficial for those active in the support structure be disseminated to these parties. Sida is responsible for ensuring that this is done.

Our proposal – a two-part administration

The work carried out during this overview has shown that there does not appear to be any optimum solution which would satisfy all parties. In our opinion, there are two principal approaches to how this support structure should be administered, and these are not particularly compatible. According to the one view, the activities are a part of Sweden's regular development cooperation work, albeit implemented by party associated organisations. This approach advocates treating the support in the same way as other development work, with regular overviews and control of the Swedish assistance authority, Sida, which should be able to influence the choice of partner countries, initiatives etc. This interpretation appears to be in line with the overall objectives of the support structure.

The other approach stresses instead the political nature of the support. The majority of funds are used by organisations close to the Swedish parliamentary parties to support political parties with a similar ideological orientation in other countries. This makes the support politically sensitive and difficult to administer by a Swedish authority. This interpretation finds considerable support in the emphasis in the guidelines: "The projects should be structured such that it is clearly shown that the organisation referred to is responsible. Confusion over Sweden's relationships with the recipient country should therefore be avoided".⁵⁷ A natural consequence of this view is that the support should not be controlled by Swedish authorities, but instead handled to the greatest possible extent by the PAOs themselves, who also should clearly have responsibility for the activities. Coordination in the sense of disseminating information could still continue; we will return to this later. PAOs also believe that their autonomy is an important part of the effectiveness of the support.

If the support structure is not to be controlled by state authorities, then there is no real reason for them to examine project applications etc. A solution of this kind, however, would not mean that the support structure would not be subject to an overview. Annual economic reporting must be conducted according to generally accepted accounting practice. As regards the inspection of the activities' effectiveness, the most appropriate procedure would be to carry out overall evaluations of the PAOs' activities, the

⁵⁶ This type of overlapping is not unusual in the Swedish administration (see e.g. the Swedish Agency for Administrative Development (2004) page 135ff), but is nevertheless questionable.

⁵⁷ UD(2001b) page 1.

results of which could have different consequences for the various PAOs' initiatives. This matter is discussed further in the section on evaluations below.

These different approaches have become apparent from our study of written documents and from conversations with the various parties involved in the support structure. The tension between the view of the support structure as part of the regular assistance, and as a political activity explains a considerable number of the problems in finding a form for the administration of the support scheme which will satisfy all parties. We would like to point out, however, that this distinction should be qualified on one important point, and we believe this is crucial for how the support is to be administered.

Today, we can see that the support primarily consists of two types of initiatives, which in many ways differ widely from each other. On the one hand, there are the initiatives which individual Swedish PAOs direct at a party or a party associated organisation in a developing country or a country in central or eastern Europe. On the other, there are the joint projects in which the support is impartially directed at several parties in various countries. In 2004, around 55–65 percent of initiatives were directed at sister party support (to this should also be added some of the 35 percent which are directed at partisan organisations etc.), while joint projects made up around 8 percent of the funds. This more general type of project is often referred to as very valuable in discussions on support for parties and party systems.⁵⁸

The issue of a responsible body for the support is, as we see it, closely linked to this distinction, in that the tension between the various views presented above essentially only concern the PAOs' individual initiatives, with a focus on the initiatives directed at individual parties and their associated organisations. While, as indicated above, the majority of PAOs see sister party support as the most important element of the support (it comprises the majority of their activities), this element is viewed with considerably more scepticism by Sida. It is the sister party support which makes this support structure politically sensitive for the responsible body (some parties in a partner country, but not others, are supported by Swedish assistance funds); moreover the connection between these activities and the overall objective of the support structure is perceived to be deficient. It also appears to be mainly this element of the support which the PAOs think would be damaged by a greater involvement of the responsible body.

We therefore think that it would be valuable to divide the current support structure. The joint projects are not politically sensitive, and can, in our view, be integrated more closely with Sweden's policy for global development. In contrast to the individual initiatives, we find it difficult to see how a confusion between this type of initiative and official Swedish policy would present any appreciable problems.

It is important to point out that Sida already has a unique position with regard to the joint projects. While the allocation of funds to the various PAOs follows the number of mandates the party has in parliament, it is Sida which makes the decision when applications for joint projects are submitted which exceed the existing funds.⁵⁹ A certain lack of clarity in this area was revealed when the total number of applications for 2004 exceeded the budget limits by a small amount. Even though the existing rules clearly state that Sida is responsible for judging competing applications, there is currently a lack of clear guidelines for such judgements. We will return to this later in the discussion of the preparation process. We think that if Sida was given a clearer mandate to manage that part of the support, the activities would be coordinated with the general activities administered by Sida in a clearer way than they are today.

One other advantage of the joint support remaining under Sida's supervision is that Sida can then assume the role of supporting and facilitating the joint projects, something currently called for by the

⁵⁸ See inter alia Hauck (2002) page 131.

⁵⁹ The guidelines say that Sida "can" seek guidance from the support structure's reference group. UD(2001b) page 4.

PAOs. The responsibility of planning and implementing projects would, however remain with the organisations. The partisan organisations would be able to apply for funds jointly from this allocation, as they do today. One variant would be for the PAOs to create a joint framework organisation which would apply for funds from Sida. This latter solution could facilitate the administration of the activities, but could potentially decrease the flexibility of different constellations of PAOs being able to work together on different projects.

Another solution would be to create a common council in which the PAOs would be jointly responsible for the general administration of this part of the support structure. With such a system, the Swedish support would be similar to the British solution in which the support goes via the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, which, through the parties, implements joint projects and which also distributes money to British parties for sister party cooperation.⁶⁰ The problem with this solution is that a new administrative organisation would have to be created, which may not be ideal considering the limited resources available. We cannot really see how another solution could be better than allowing Sida to continue administrating the joint initiatives.

To make a two-part solution meaningful would involve increasing the resources for joint support (this would apply particularly if a solution with a separate council were chosen). Although joint activities increased in 2004, they represented only SEK 3 million, which means there is a risk that the initiatives implemented may not acquire the developed character and permanence often needed for these types of activity.⁶¹ The majority of PAOs have expressed a clear opinion that they would like to see the resources for joint projects increased provided the money is not taken from the funds allocated to PAOs for their own individual initiatives. Those responsible at Sida look positively on the idea of joint projects, although they believe that the hitherto limited extent of the activities have made it difficult to assess this work in depth. Considering the importance of the party system for democratic development, we would find an increase in resources for joint projects aimed at supporting the party system in developing countries and in countries in eastern and central Europe reasonable.⁶² Every PAO, bar one, has expressed the view that the total funding for support (including the mandate-related funds) should be significantly increased. Given the lack of an evaluative study of the effectiveness of the activities and the degree to which they have achieved their objective, we refrain from expressing an opinion on this matter.

The proposed sharing of the support structure's administration also raises the question of whether joint projects aimed at supporting several parties in other countries should, in future, also be limited to Swedish party associated organisations, or whether other types of organisation can be found which can put forward valuable initiatives relating to the party system issue. Organisations which are active within areas such as conflict resolution and civil education could, for example, be brought into the discussion.

Alternative forms for the administration of individual initiatives

If the responsibility were shared as described in the proposal above, it would raise the question as to how PAOs would administer their individual initiatives. The crucial factor is the degree to which the

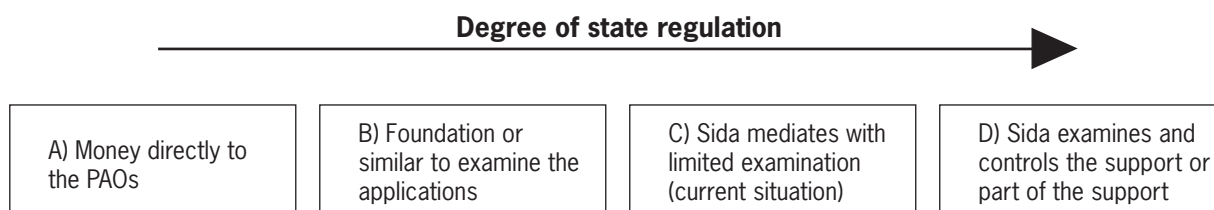
⁶⁰ www.wfd.org. British support comprises around SEK 60 million a year. Of this, half goes directly to the British parties, while the rest goes to joint party initiatives and also to other support for the civil society. Irrespective of the administrative solution, two-part support, like in alternative A below, must include a discussion on how to refuse support for obviously non-democratic parties.

⁶¹ SPM Consultants (2004) page 3f. The need should be greatest among small PAOs which have very limited resources available to them.

⁶² At present, the budget for joint support comprises that part of the support structure's total allocation which is not distributed according to basic contributions and share of mandates. To increase the budget for joint projects would, therefore, mean increasing the total allocation.

support structure should be regulated by the Swedish state. We can perceive four main ways in which this support structure could be organised (of course, these could always be varied or combined).⁶³ Common to all options is that certain values must be maintained, such as the effectiveness, relevance, flexibility and openness of the support. The future role of the reference group must also be discussed irrespective of the decision reached about responsibility. In discussions concerning the various types of reform, it should also be borne in mind that the change process itself would almost certainly need a considerable transition period, considering how long it has taken for all parties to adapt to the current system.

Figure 1. Alternative ways of organising the individual initiatives



Option A If money is paid directly to the PAOs without any prior assessment by the relevant body, they should certainly have the flexibility to initiate the support initiatives which they consider most suitable according to the description in the guidelines' objective. The PAOs themselves would be fully responsible for implementation of the support. It would not mean that the risk of the funds being mismanaged would increase, since an annual economic report would be drawn up in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice. We think that, in this respect, the UU's view that "the support could be structured to be considerably more flexible in terms of reporting and accounting than is currently the case, without compromising the strict economic accounting requirements" could be realised.⁶⁴ The management audit would be conducted through regular assessments, in which it could be clarified whether the funds are being used for the intended types of activities, and whether these activities fulfil the set objectives effectively.

The administration of the support based on this solution would be strictly fiscal, and could, therefore, as pointed out by SPM Consultants in their 1997 overview, be carried out "in principle anywhere".⁶⁵ One solution would be for the administration to be brought under the control of parliament. The procedure would then be similar to that followed for normal party support, with the obvious difference that the money would be earmarked for activities based on the existing guidelines. Applications would be submitted to the party contributions committee or a similar organisational form, and the support paid out by the parliamentary administration.⁶⁶ There would be no examination of the various project applications. With this solution, the responsibility for examination, besides the customary audit, would be included in the work conducted by the national audit.⁶⁷ This authority decides independently how and when evaluations of activities are carried out, and cannot be influenced by other players. However, there is nothing to stop parliament itself from initiating more in-depth evaluations of the support structure.

⁶³ Options A, C and D are similar to those presented in Sida (2002b) and the discussion has also been linked to that put forward in Ds 1994:63 page 85ff.

⁶⁴ Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs report 2003/04:UU3 based on the PGU.

⁶⁵ SPM Consultants (1997) page 11.

⁶⁶ Act (1972:625) on state support for political parties.

⁶⁷ The party contributions committee comes under the control of the parliamentary administration which, according to the Act (2002:1022) on the auditing of state activities etc. is inspected as part of the national audit.

One possible disadvantage of placing the support under parliament's control would be the risk of the activities ending up outside the debate on democracy support being held between the PAOs, Sida, the UD etc. (even though this debate is limited at present). The PAOs have expressed a definite wish for information and experiences to be exchanged with other parties active in similar areas (see also the section on coordination). Another problem is that the distinction between these funds and normal party support could, over time, be erased. It should, however, be stressed that the funds are not allocated to parliamentary parties themselves, but to the party associated organisations.

A significant advantage of this solution is that it is a "pure" model which differentiates these activities from Sweden's official relations with other countries much more clearly than any other solution, which is an expressed objective and an important principle. The responsibility would clearly lie with the PAOs, which we have no reason to think would be a problem. The PAOs have often stressed that the attention paid to their own activities and the party they represent brings about considerable self-regulation of the work. This would assume, of course, that documents would continue in future to be made as public and accessible as possible extent.

Alternatively, the support structure's administration could be managed by the UD, which has the most experience in politically sensitive activities. The UD would then be responsible for the fiscal audit of the support structure, in which case, the management inspection could be charged to the future, independent evaluation body for development work (see also the section on evaluations below). In addition, the administration would function in much the same way as if the support structure were under the control of parliament.⁶⁸ Some PAOs have put forward the view that if the support were placed under UD's supervision, there could be an increased risk of the PAOs being pressurised to subordinate themselves to the guidelines for Swedish foreign policy, which would decrease the flexibility of the support structure. The UD representative also believes that the administration of these types of project application is not in line with the other work of the UD. We think that both these problems would be lessened if the UD acted as a pure administrator of the support, with evaluations being conducted by another unit.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the risk of the activities being confused with Sweden's international relations would be greater with a solution which gave the administration of the support to the UD than if the activities were placed under parliament's control.

It is also conceivable that Sida could continue managing the activities, but without having to examine project applications. The administration would then resemble, in certain respects, the framework agreements concluded between Sida/SEKA and NGO's, whereby project applications are examined randomly. Compared to administration via parliament, the risk of confusion with Swedish policy would, however, be greater. This would also result in Sida continuing to be responsible for potentially politically sensitive activities over which Sida would, in principle, lose all control. In contrast to the framework agreements concluded with EOs, it would not be up to Sida to decide whether to terminate an agreement, or determine the size and orientation of the support. If this type of activity is to remain under a state body, it would be more reasonable for the management to lie with the highest administrative level. At present, there is a negative effect on the administration due to the position of dependence on political parties in which Sida finds itself, given their role in Sida's management and in parliament. From Sida's perspective, it is also thought that administration of this type would mean a departure from the authority's basic working method and normal preparation. In general, there is a fairly marked difference in how the PAOs and Sida view this form of support.

⁶⁸ The mandate of the national audit is, on its own initiative, to examine activities, irrespective of whether these are administered via parliament, the UD or Sida.

⁶⁹ Another opportunity would be for the administration to be placed under the control of an existing organisation outside the state, such as Forum Syd. However, it is doubtful as to whether this type of organisation is suitable for handling the PAOs' more political activities, even though the administration would be purely fiscal.

Irrespective of the solution, Sida could be mandated to assist the PAOs with information and training to the extent resources permit. Sida produces a lot of information which the PAOs should be able to study. It could well be easier for Sida to take on this role if the time-consuming administration and responsibility for the current, politically sensitive support were removed. UD personnel could also be more involved in the exchange of information concerning the support structure and the countries in which the PAOs work.

It should be pointed out that the risk of individual initiatives being perceived as a part of official Swedish assistance would probably not disappear altogether, and Swedish authorities would not have any control over the activities. It is doubtful whether players in partner countries and in Sweden not directly involved in the support scheme would see it as separate from official Swedish activities, considering the money would still come from the state coffers. However, this is difficult to avoid no matter what the form of organisation, since Sweden's parties are financed by state funds to such a large extent. The tension surrounding the orientation of the existing support vis-a-vis the overall objective would not be resolved through this solution.

Finally, it should be stressed that a solution in which only a fiscal examination of the project applications is made would not entail much of a departure from the current situation, since the examination currently conducted also involves information about amounts to be invested in projects, although this is essentially a formality. It could be conceived that this type of review, conducted in recent years by SPM Consultants under commission of the PAOs' projects, will also continue in future, as support for the PAOs' work.

Option B Another method would be to have a body independent of the Swedish state administer the assistance structure, including the examination of proposed projects. Such a body could consist of representatives of the parliamentary parties, in a similar way to the systems which exist in the Netherlands, Norway and the UK. It could be seen as an expanded role for the reference group already involved in the support structure.

Combining such a system with the cooperation between Swedish parties and sister parties in other countries could be complicated. The organisation of the recently launched Norsk Senter for Demokratistøtte [Norwegian Centre for Democratic Support] however allows for parties to sit together on its administration, together with independent experts in the areas of development, democracy and human rights.⁷⁰ Yet applications mainly concern cooperation with individual parties. It should, however, be stressed that since this support structure has been in existence for less than two years, no actual evaluation of the support has yet been carried out.⁷¹ The British system functions in a similar way, in that the administration of its party support body, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, includes representatives from the political parties and from other sectors of society. In addition to its own activities, the Westminster Foundation also distributes funds to the British parties (according to their mandate in parliament), who support sister parties in other countries.⁷² In the UK, too, the administrative body does not undertake any major examination of the various projects.

A system in which a body of this type is not represented by the political parties could also be possible. Such a system exists in the USA, where the neutral National Endowment for Democracy (NED) distributes state assistance funding to the American party institutes. The NED is a non-state organisation controlled by an administration which is not put together along party lines. It should be pointed out that party-related work makes up only a small part of the activities financed by the NED, and that

⁷⁰ See also www.senterfordemokratistotte.no.

⁷¹ The Norwegian support structure comprises pilot activities to be evaluate in 2005.

⁷² Division for Democratic Governance (2002) page 10.

in 2004 the organisation had a budget of around SEK 300 million. A Swedish version of such a council could bring together representatives from various types of organisations, research groups etc.

Irrespective of how such a body would be organised, the degree of control over the activities could lie at different levels. The activities could be steered more precisely towards the existing overall objective of the support, provided the body is given the authority to examine and approve or refuse applications. It is appropriate that impartial representatives with a good knowledge of democracy support and party assistance be included in such an organisation, in order to help assure the quality of the activities (otherwise there could be problems if the party associated organisations de facto examined themselves).

With this model, the activities would not be so closely linked to regular Swedish development work, and the risk of claims of partiality could be reduced, even if it did not disappear altogether. As with option A, the Swedish authorities would not have the opportunity to influence projects which they consider damaging to Sweden's contacts or the perception of Sweden abroad.

As stated in the report which preceded the introduction of the support structure:

The intention of a special fund... would be to give it a large share of the responsibility of organising its own work. This would result in separating it from the state executive, which could simplify the decision-making processes, stimulate the development of specialist expertise and underline the independence of the activities from the government. The fund would report on its activities to the government/UD and/or parliament.⁷³

If a body independent of the state were to be given much of the authority to control activities, some of the problems described in option D would possibly arise, especially the reduction in the flexibility of the support, and therefore potentially also the parties' interest in participating. We also see a major disadvantage of this option to be that a completely new administrative organisation would need to be created to administer the support. Since such an organisation would be likely to include the PAOs themselves, these administrative activities would be a drain on the PAOs' already often tight resources in terms of money and in particular, time. Several PAOs have expressed considerable doubt in such general changes.

Option C The current situation is dominated, as we mentioned above, by the tension surrounding whether the existing support structure should be seen as a part of regular development cooperation work or as politically-oriented support from the various party associated organisations. Because of this, a marked rift has grown up between the PAOs and the body responsible for the support given. There are currently various apprehensions about the role Sida plays as the body responsible. Those who do this work at Sida perceive their role as unclear. One of the factors is Sida's relationship with the parliamentary parties who, as indicated above, both purchase and implement the support through parliament and the PAOs, as well as having a decision-making role with regard to the authority's activities through the Sida administration.

This situation can be illustrated by the examination of the project applications. As pointed out above, Sida has not yet turned down any project for which individual PAOs have applied for funding (around 150 projects a year).⁷⁴ Most PAOs believe, however, that Sida's extended examination procedures, especially in cases considered dubious, delay the application process. The PAOs can see a distinct lack of continuous contact and follow-up, causing a long waiting period for decisions and concern among the PAOs and the recipients. The PAOs tend to see this as one of the biggest problems of the support structure at present. It has been proposed that a 60-day time-limit from receipt of the application to a decision be introduced. It is thought that this would enable the PAOs' work to be carried out more

⁷³ Ds 1994:63, page 85.

⁷⁴ SPM Consultants (2003) page 10, SPM Consultants (2004) page 13.

effectively. It should, however, be noted that the time spent on this at Sida/DESA currently only makes up about 15 weeks a year or a third of the work of two people.⁷⁵ We can say that the current administration of the support appears to be suffering from a lack of resources available to Sida for its management. Even with more resources, the situation still remains that Sida must examine activities, the design of which it has only limited freedom to influence under the current guidelines.

Option D With this model, we imagine a position for the responsible body which goes beyond, for example, the existing support for individual organisations.⁷⁶ If Sida were given greater control over the support structure, this could be integrated with other Swedish development work within the framework of existing national strategies in a more effective way than is currently the case. The quality of the activities could also be further assured in that the contents of the applications would be scrutinised and contributions could be based on earlier successes, rather than simply on the parent party's electoral progress.

We believe, however, that this option has considerable problems. The main one has been indicated above, i.e. if Sida took on greater responsibility for the support structure, it would be more strongly linked to the Swedish state, which is a problem given the somewhat sensitive nature of the support. On Sida's part, it has been clearly shown that even with today's system "such a distinction... is impossible to maintain in practice both with respect to recipient organisations, governments in the countries in which party activities receive Swedish support, and with respect to the Swedish public and the media".⁷⁷ Nevertheless, this problem would probably be worse if the support were to be linked more closely to Sida, and the responsible body had greater opportunity to ensure that the support did not deviate from official Swedish assistance policy, as expressed in the support structure's guidelines and directions.

Sida would end up in a position where, in practice, it would examine organisations closely linked to the political parties which control Sida's activities through parliament. It has been pointed out that "any assessment of the activities' quality would also scarcely be possible in future, according to Sida, because of their party-political character".⁷⁸ According to the same document, the responsibility should lie with the PAOs and "possibly another body" (see option B above). If the responsibility were given more directly to Sida, it could mean that, in future, the authority would be given the task of deciding which sister parties the PAOs should work with, which would be a strange situation for all parties.

Another major problem with this option is that much of the flexibility and use of the party associated organisations' special expertise and experiences could be lost if the organisations were only seen as executors of Sida-controlled projects. The party associated organisations themselves underline their autonomy with respect to the responsible body as one of the main advantages of the support. The evaluation of the support structure conducted in 2000 also stressed that the partner parties often emphasise the importance of personal contact with their counterparts in other countries.⁷⁹ This effect of the support would definitely be seriously undermined if the support were to be controlled a lot more strictly by the responsible body.

There is also the risk that the PAOs would quite simply lose interest in this support structure, if it were placed under Sida's complete control. As was expressed in the report which preceded the introduction of the support structure: "If the opportunities for the parties to choose different donor strategies were

⁷⁵ Altogether, DESA manages initiatives to a value of around SEK 1.7 billion a year. Sida's administrative resources make up 6.5 percent of the total transfer subsidies and this is falling.

⁷⁶ It is not usual for Sida to operate activities regulated to the extent intended here.

⁷⁷ Sida Director General (2002) page 2.

⁷⁸ Sida (2001a) page 1.

⁷⁹ Ugglä et. al. (2000) page 23ff.

⁸⁰ Ds 1994:63, page 84.

to disappear, the activities would run the risk of stagnating”.⁸⁰ Similar views have been expressed by several PAOs who emphasised the advantages to be gained in terms of effectiveness and cost-effectiveness if the support were to be operated to a significant extent by volunteers within the parties. These volunteers are seen as an important part of the existing support structure.

Our proposal – administration by parliament or the UD

There is no uniform line among the PAOs with respect to how they see the responsibility for the support structure in the future. Five out of seven PAOs think that the support should remain with Sida. The others think that there should be a transfer to, for example, the UD. We should, however, also add that even the PAOs who think that the support should remain with Sida have been very critical, and there is a lot of variation in their views as to what role Sida should play. In general, there is a wish for clearer rules, increased contact and more help from Sida in cases where the activities are unclear. On the other hand, the PAOs want to retain full freedom when it comes to choosing initiatives.

We think that, given the various problems with the existing situation, there is a basis for changing the responsibility for individual initiatives. Increasing Sida’s control over these activities would heighten the risk of confusion in Sweden’s relations with partner countries. It would also put Sida in a position where it has to make a decision on an activity which, for the most part, has been determined by the parliamentary parties’ international contacts, as well as putting at risk the flexibility of the PAOs’ work. Creating a new organisational structure to administer these initiatives could increase the support structure’s autonomy, but would mean that a new administrative unit would have to be created, which could entail a lot of extra work for the PAOs. We believe that the advantages of this solution presented by the original report (see above) could be achieved through less in-depth administration by an existing body.

We think the most reasonable solution would be for the individual initiatives in future to be administered in such a way that the initial examination would be more limited than it is today, and that the examination would be included in the annual economic report in line with generally accepted accounting practice, while the need for a management audit could be satisfied by regular evaluations. The risk of confusion in Sweden’s relations with other countries could thereby be reduced. The implication of this would be that the activities would not undergo an initial in-depth examination, but instead be examined as part of larger evaluations. In simple terms, we propose less initial paperwork, and a more thorough examination and evaluation later. The main option we have identified is to place this fiscal administration under the control of parliament, the UD or Sida.

Of these options, we believe Sida to be the least suitable, for reasons we have discussed above. Factors such as Sida’s complicate position with regard to Sweden’s parliamentary parties, and the departure from the authority’s basic role, working methods and normal preparation which this type of administration would entail, would make it advantageous to move the responsibility to another body.

The solution which would most clearly minimise the risk of confusion between this support and Sweden’s relations with other countries, while clarifying the PAOs’ flexibility and responsibility for the activities they conduct within the frameworks of the guidelines, would be to place the administration with parliament. The potential problem with this solution would be that the activities would end up outside the “environment” which in some respects exists in the democracy support programme, and that the distinction with the party support received by the parliamentary parties would become less clear.

The final option would be to place the support under the supervision of the UD. This is what was proposed in the report which preceded the introduction of the support.⁸¹ The UD has the most experi-

⁸¹ Ds 1994:63.

ence in managing politically sensitive issues, and this solution would also facilitate examination by a future independent evaluation body for Sweden's development work. One possible disadvantage would be that the risk of confusion in the Swedish relationship with other countries would be greater than if the support were managed by parliament. We propose that the responsibility for the PAOs' individual initiatives financed with mandate-related funds be placed, in future, under the control of parliament or the UD.

5. Coordination with other forms of assistance

An important point arising from most of the discussions surrounding development work, especially in the area of democracy, is the importance of coordination and that the various support initiatives form part of greater whole. Assistance bodies are often accused of focussing on their own work without looking at the bigger picture of which their work is a part.⁸² This is the basic idea behind the new initiative regarding the Policy on Global Development (PGU).⁸³ As already mentioned, the problems which the parties in many countries have are a part of a greater set of problems, which the players in the activity programmes must remember. This is made worse by the fact that the sets of problems vary from country to country.

In an international overview of support to political parties, the Swedish (and the German) model are highlighted as cases in which there is a "low level of cooperation and co-ordination between the different national actors both abroad and domestically".⁸⁴ It should, however, be pointed out that the Swedish PAOs meet regularly to exchange information. Also, the PAOs tend to exchange considerable amounts of information with parties abroad that are close to them ideologically, and with organisations operating similar activities. We see this as very positive.

Several PAOs have reported in a number of contexts that they seek tighter coordination between this support structure and other Swedish assistance.⁸⁵ This means that, in general, PAOs want more information and guidelines, but without this involving greater control on the part of the state. The discussion should, therefore, differentiate between coordination in the sense of information and coordination in the sense of the activities being controlled by the responsible body with the aim of ensuring that different activities are placed under existing objective formulations for the PGU etc.

It should be stressed that at least some of the unregulated flexibility which characterises the support structure would disappear, should controlling coordination increase. Several PAOs think Sida has expressed an implicit desire to control activities more than at present, which the PAOs believe would be disadvantageous to the effectiveness of the support. Sida considers it a problem that the activities do not necessarily fully follow the policies and national cooperation strategies which apply to the Swedish policy for development work.

One example of a change in this direction would be if it were decided that the initiatives should take into consideration the government's national cooperation strategies (planning instruments), where such exist. The party associated organisations are strongly against such a solution. Use of the PAOs' own contacts, at Internationals and other events, would not be so great if the controlling coordination were

⁸² The coordination of assistance has long been discussed in Sweden, including in the assistance report commissioned in 1972. SOU 1994:19 page 32.

⁸³ The government bill put forward that "Sweden's policy for global development should be based on an holistic view of the development's driving forces and of the measures required to achieve fair and sustainable global development worldwide. It should comprise all policy areas." Bill of 2002/03:122 page 17.

⁸⁴ Mathisen & Svåsand (2002) page 13.

⁸⁵ See also inter alia UU (2004) section D, 1.

increased. A possibly even stronger argument against greater control is that a conflict could easily arise with the above principle that “confusion with Sweden’s relations with the recipient country should, therefore, be avoided”.⁸⁶ The risk is that Sida (or another responsible body of the state) with greater control will be seen as responsible for individual parties in other countries.⁸⁷

The discussion of the coordination of this support structure with other development work should be linked to the issue of responsibility for the support. With option A above, coordination in the sense of control would, in practice, not exist, while option B and especially D could increase the opportunities for this compared to the current situation. In our proposed two-part model, the controlling coordination would be decreased with respect to individual initiatives, but increased for joint projects. In the case of the latter, the responsible body would, for example, be able to limit the support to certain regions or certain types of initiatives considered to be of particular value.⁸⁸

Irrespective of how one views the issue of responsibility, improvements can be made which could increase the coordination with other assistance. An important case in point is the existing reference group’s role in the support structure. According to the government’s guidelines, the reference group should “promote coordination between the support structure and other Swedish democratic support”. As things stand, the reference group does not fulfil the role. The group seldom meets (to date, just once in 2004), and the PAOs see the group in itself as a good idea, but feel that in practice it does not function particularly well: meetings are poorly planned and not given particular high priority by anyone. A desire has been expressed for closer cooperation with administrators at the UD with the same geographical area of interest and more practical, hands-on support. It would be good to be able to call someone who can answer specific questions.

In order for the reference group to be able to promote coordination with other assistance and assure the quality of the activities, the role of the group must be clarified. It is also important that the roles to be played by the UD and Sida as well as the PAOs and parliamentary parties in this reference group are made clearer. We see real potential for a group of this kind to make considerable contributions to existing activities. For example, the desk officer of the UD (and his or her counterpart administrator at Sida) could report on the situation in various countries and Sweden’s policy with respect to these countries, and the PAOs could provide information to the relevant personnel at Sida and the UD about their activities. In addition, the reference group should include external individuals with a solid knowledge of democracy and support for political parties. These people could help the parties involved (executors as well as administrators) raise their eyes and see the activities in a wider perspective.⁸⁹ Even with these changes, however, the group could be seen as quality-raising rather than quality-assuring, in the light of its current mandate. Its role is to help coordination in the sense of information exchange.

There is also a link between the coordination of this support structure with other assistance and the PAOs’ choice of countries in which to operate. We have already mentioned that the number of countries in which the PAOs operated in 2004 is 50, compared to 43 the year before. By way of comparison, the American PAOs, the NDI and IRI, implemented party projects in 30 countries between 1990 and 1995 with money from the NED, on a budget considerably greater than the Swedish one.⁹⁰ The seven parties in the Netherlands operate (jointly) in eleven countries, and have local offices in two of these.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Sida (2002a) page 7.

⁸⁷ As noted above, this is also a problem in today’s situation, but increased coordination in the sense of control would risk further exacerbating this problem.

⁸⁸ As pointed out above, Sida already has the task of prioritising between different applications based on these types of criteria.

⁸⁹ The reference group which exists in the Norwegian support structure is structured in this way, for example.

⁹⁰ USAID (1999) page 50.

⁹¹ www.nimnd.org. In the recently introduced Norwegian support, activities are limited to Norwegian partner countries (currently around 22 countries). www.senterfordemokratistotte.no.

The support structure's existing guidelines expressly state that it is the PAOs themselves who decide in which countries they work. Nevertheless, we would like to point out that this form of support can be seen as unusually dependent on being implemented jointly with other initiatives in order to be effective. Individual parties and also whole party systems are parts of a greater political context, and if isolated initiatives were directed at minor problems (or at symptoms of greater problems) without being combined with other projects, there would be a risk that the effects would be negligible.

The large number of countries (each PAO works on average with just over 10 countries, although the number varies considerably) also makes it more difficult for those involved to familiarise themselves with the situation in the country in question (the PAOs generally have only a few personnel who are involved in the activities continuously).⁹² This further increases the risk of the support not being adapted to the local context in a satisfactory way, and the connection between the problems of that country's parties and those of national democracy not being clearly illustrated. As pointed out above, the spread of the activities also means that it is only in exceptional cases that several PAOs work together with different parties in the same country. In this context, we could mention that the UK is currently revising its assistance via the Westminster Foundation, and has decided that, where its joint work is concerned, the number of countries in which work is undertaken be limited to "demonstrate continuity of work and more impact than with small project work".⁹³ In Sweden, the responsible body and the reference group can play a crucial role in creating an holistic view and disseminating information on where the PAOs are implementing their initiatives, with the aim of promoting greater coordination.

The overview has shown that the exchange of information between the PAOs and Sweden's embassies in certain countries is often lacking, although there are considerable difference between the PAOs in this respect. This is attributable in certain cases to the PAOs themselves, but, in other cases, to what some PAOs see as a lack of interest among embassy personnel, who often do not work with these or related issues. This situation needs to be improved, and this would benefit the PAOs, the UD and Sida. In some cases, the embassy personnel can share or receive information on the political situation in the country. At the very least, the embassies should be informed when personnel from a PAO visit the country, where there is some risk to the safety of the personnel. We believe it to be important that the UD and Sida ensure that Swedish embassy personnel actively take part in the exchange of information with PAOs which contact them in a particular country, although we realise that the embassies' duties in some cases do not cover the areas in which the PAOs are working.

Finally, we think that this support should be supplied in future in closer contact with other assistance providers and relevant players. Relevant parties for inclusion in the discussion would be International IDEA and the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights, as well as other organisations and researchers working with these issues.⁹⁴ We would also like to stress the importance of the existing contact between the PAOs and parties and party associated organisations in other democratic countries operating similar activities. A discussion should continue as to how this contact, and the existing contact with the various Internationals, could be further exploited to increase the coordination of the support. Sida and the UD should facilitate this information exchange.

In summary, we believe it to be important that all parties involved remain aware that initiatives in this area should not be seen as isolated from democratisation processes and other democracy assistance. The PAOs should be able to access necessary information in order to ensure that their individual initiatives complement other activities which make up the collaborative development programme as

⁹² As already pointed out, however, most PAOs use party activists on the regional and local level in their activities.

⁹³ Communication with Carla Welch, Programme Manager, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 19 October 2004 (email). In next few years, the WFD will operate its activities in around six countries.

⁹⁴ See www.idea.int and europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/eidhr.

much as possible. It is also important to maintain the flexibility of the support and to avoid increasing the risk of criticism of Swedish involvement in other countries' internal affairs. Therefore, individual initiatives should be coordinated primarily through the exchange of information. If the administration of the joint initiatives were separate, the responsible body would be better able to ensure that these activities were in more direct line with the Swedish policy for global development. Furthermore, the role of the reference group in coordination of the support should be made clearer, and expert personnel not directly involved in the support structure should be brought in.

6. The preparation process

We have also studied the extent to which the existing preparation process could be reformed in order to create more effective support for party entities in developing countries and in eastern and central Europe. It could first be noted that, as indicated above, most of the PAOs are generally happy with the existing guidelines and directions. With respect to the preparation process, however, they believe there is considerable room for improvement. The existing process is seen as time-consuming and the fact that agreements are drawn up on a one-year basis also forces the PAOs and their cooperation partners to think in the short term. Some PAOs also think that the existing process is unclear and non-transparent, and that it entails an unnecessary focus on details. Several PAOs also think that time-wasting assessment procedures often cause their work to be significantly delayed. The responsible personnel at Sida agree that the preparation process could be improved. From their point of view, they feel that more time and resources could be freed up for other activities in the support structure if less attention needed to be paid to conducting formal annual examinations of new applications, often concerning already ongoing projects. These resources could, for example, be used to increase the contact between Sida and the PAOs, whereby Sida could offer the PAOs more support, training etc.

How the preparation process for the support would function depends largely on how the issue of responsibility is seen. If option A above were chosen, the preparation could be fairly simple. The money allocated to the PAOs and control over the funds would be limited to the customary financial audit. If the responsibility were shared according to the proposal above, a similar situation would be created for the PAOs' individual initiatives, and the joint activities would be inspected more closely by the responsible body.

Length of agreement periods

If it is decided that Sida should continue to administer the support, changes to the existing preparation process could still be relevant. A central issue is the length of agreements between Sida and the PAOs (currently one year). It has been claimed that the present system has a number of disadvantages.

For example, it is thought that there is uncertainty in the planning and implementation of the activities, and that this risks compromising their long-term nature and quality.⁹⁵ This often also affects the PAOs' cooperation partners. Moreover, the PAOs and the responsible personnel at Sida are forced to spend a lot of time drawing up and examining applications, rather than concentrating on their actual activities.

There is apparent agreement among the parties involved that longer agreement periods could facilitate existing work considerably. All the PAOs have expressed a desire to introduce longer agreement periods

⁹⁵ Sida Director General (2002).

of between two and four years. The responsible personnel at Sida would also like to see the agreement periods extended.

Disadvantages which such a change would entail could concern the degree of supervision of the activities. This risk would be reduced if the activities were to be subject to a formal annual audit. Longer agreement periods could also free up time which could be used for more in-depth inspection.

The flexibility of the PAOs could also be compromised if they had to plan their activities for up to four years in advance. This is because the organisations would need to include more long-term planning in their future projects. One way of overcoming this would be for agreements to contain projects to be specified at a later date (this option already exists in today's preparation system). More details are given below.

Given that the allocation of resources is currently determined by the distribution of mandates in Sweden's parliament, longer agreement periods would have to be adjusted to parliament's mandate periods. General elections to parliament take place every four years, which would possibly mean that longer agreement periods would be either two or four years in length. Some PAOs have opined that agreements with the responsible body should run for the whole mandate period. In view of the factors discussed above, there is, however, cause to think that four years is too long a period, and that the support might lose some of its flexibility. A possible alternative, however, would be for agreements to be drawn up for three years with the option of a one-year extension.

Two-year agreement periods (possibly with the option of two one-year extensions) would considerably reduce the time the PAOs and responsible body would need to spend writing and processing applications. At the same time, a flexibility would be maintained in the system, which is necessary because of the difficulties the PAOs have in planning their activities far in advance. The current guidelines give the organisations the opportunity in "exceptional cases" to submit applications that include unspecified projects.⁹⁶ With longer agreement periods, it would be important for this opportunity to remain, and even be formalised to a certain extent. A system in which the PAOs could make additions to a large number of projects at any time would, however, require considerable administrative resources from the responsible body, which would then reduce the advantages of such a reform markedly, and increase the risk of delay in administration. The guidelines should regulate the proportion of the allocated funds which could be applied for subsequently, and in which situations this could be done.

At present, these unspecified funds are paid after a standard project plan has been submitted at some point during the agreement period. Whether this would continue to be the case would possibly depend on the view of the responsibility for the support structure. If a more unregulated organisational structure were chosen, the examinations of these projects could take place post facto by way of evaluations. Economic reporting should, however, continue to take place on an annual basis to satisfy the requirements for transparency and financial control.

Guidelines for joint projects

Several PAOs have said that even though the current guidelines from the government and instructions from Sida have contributed to a noticeable improvement in the support structure organisation, there is one important exception. This concerns joint projects. A lack of regulation is seen to exist in several areas, which makes the activities more difficult to administer and less effective than they ought be. This view is also shared by Sida, which has also pointed out that it is unclear which parts of the guidelines and directions should be applied to the joint support.

⁹⁶ Sida (2002a) page 8. At present, this part receives maximum 25% of the total budget.

We think that specific guidelines need to be produced for this part of the support. In producing these guidelines, consideration should be given to which cooperation parties should be involved. At present, there is no distinction in this respect in the guidelines or directions, other than that the guidelines state that “projects which affect a broad group of cooperation partners should be given precedence”. This should be investigated further, since there is reason to think it would be beneficial for joint projects to involve different types of partner.

There is currently no doubt that it is Sida which should decide between different applications, if, together, they exceed the budget frameworks for joint initiatives.⁹⁷ If the support were to remain with Sida, it would be worth reviewing the criteria on which Sida assesses the various competing project applications. The relationship between the PAOs in connection with joint projects would also need to be discussed, since some quite complicated structures can arise when up to seven different organisations work together on a project. Questions surrounding the budget process and the role and financing of the project managers are important in this context. Another issue which should be addressed is which rules and guidelines would apply for the appointment of personnel in the partner country (this has been seen as a problem in the joint project in Guatemala). Finally, the guidelines should also regulate the length of agreements for joint projects, where these need to be differentiated from agreements between the PAOs and responsible body. The PAOs should play an active role in producing such guidelines, as they did in the production of new guidelines for the whole support structure which were brought in 2002. It should be possible to implement specific directives for joint initiatives in 2006.

Evaluation

Support for democracy is a very important activity. Activities implemented in this area must be subjected to examinations to determine the extent to which the activities will achieve, or at least help achieve, the objectives set. In this respect, it is important to differentiate evaluations from regular examinations which ensure the funds are being handled correctly. Regular examination is conducted of project applications and reports which are submitted annually. Also, as mentioned above, SPM Consultants has been given the task for the past several years of summarising the applications received. The aim here is rather to determine how the effects of the activities can be evaluated (in relation to the existing statement of objectives). These evaluations could be of considerable help to the partisan organisations, given their very limited resources to conduct wider analyses of the effects of the activities themselves.

Evaluating assistance is always complicated. Evaluating the degree of democracy in another country is always difficult. Combining these two areas is particularly demanding. Many researchers reject the exclusive focus on measurable goals which has come to dominate at least parts of the democracy assistance programme, believing that it causes those involved to seek “a technical solution to a political problem”.⁹⁸ It is therefore important for evaluations of this support structure to be very thorough. This might mean that they could only be done at relatively long intervals.

Another problem concerns “the causal conundrum”, or how it can be shown that particular initiatives have achieved results, if there has been a demonstrable change in the dependent variable (democracy). As we indicated above, democracy is a phenomenon which is difficult to measure, and also an area in which it is unusually difficult to make connections to other factors, let alone to individual assistance projects. To evaluate the effectiveness of the support structure, those involved must therefore study its development on several levels. This fact makes democracy assistance more difficult to evaluate than, for example, assistance for education, but as Carothers pointed out: “the differences should not be over-

⁹⁷ UD(2001b) page 4 and Sida (2002a) page 10.

⁹⁸ Crawford (2003) page 1.

drawn”.⁹⁹ It has also been claimed that “clearly there is a shortage of systematic learning and review in this area”.¹⁰⁰

The system audits which SEKA, a department within Sida, has latterly been undertaking with respect to its cooperation partners (Swedish NGO's) could provide methodological inspiration for such evaluations.¹⁰¹ These system audits entail a general evaluation of the organisations' activities, and last in some cases for the best part of a year. The examination is conducted by an external consultant, and focuses on the organisation's procedures and system. Evaluation of political party support must, however, also address the difficult question of determining the extent to which the activities can be said to be effective given the objectives of the support structure (in SEKA's terminology this is called a capacity study). Evaluations of the support by PAOs, irrespective of how they are implemented, must involve a considerable amount of end user participation, encompassing both the PAOs' partners and the voters these parties work for. The various PAOs should be invited to take an active part in the production of this evaluation model, although the responsibility should lie with an external party.

In producing Sweden's new policy for global development, a need was identified for an independent evaluation body for the development work, and the preparations for such an authority are now under-way.¹⁰² This authority would be an appropriate body to take charge of evaluations of the PAOs' activities as part of this support structure, whether the responsibility lay with the UD or Sida in the future. The authority will have ample capacity for evaluations and its structure will also make it independent from Sida and the government offices, which is ideal in this context. The proposed 2005 state budget states that these offices should also be able to examine development work administered by the government offices, which would mean that this body could evaluate the effects of this support structure even if the UD were made the responsible body.¹⁰³ On the other hand, this could not happen if the activities were brought under the control of parliament. The activities would then be examined by the national audit, which would itself decide on when and how the examination would take place. In such a case, parliament would have to set up outcome oriented evaluations to supplement the national audit examination.

According to the report conducted on behalf of the UD, and to information from the UD, the new evaluation authority should start work in the second half of 2005, although it would not be fully operational until the financial year 2008 or 2009.¹⁰⁴ In order for this body to be able to conduct evaluations in this area, it would need to bring in personnel with a solid knowledge of democratisation and political parties.

In order to be meaningful, the evaluations would need to produce recommendations on how the PAOs' organisation and activities could be improved. The degree of sanctions, in cases where these recommendations are not followed, should be discussed. One option would be to view them as advice for PAOs, which would then decide the extent to which they should be followed. At the opposite end of this scale, it would be possible for the support's responsible body to break off cooperation with a PAO which flagrantly flouts the support scheme's basic principles.

To summarise, we would like to stress how important it is for the support structure to include a developed system for examining the outcomes of the initiatives and for learning from previous experiences in a consistent way. The PAOs should be involved in the process of designing this evaluation system.

⁹⁹ Carothers (1999) page 285.

¹⁰⁰ Carothers (2004a) page 15.

¹⁰¹ This system used by SEKA is relatively new and has not yet been evaluated.

¹⁰² Molander (2004).

¹⁰³ Bill of 2004/05:1, section 3.8.7.

¹⁰⁴ Molander (2004) page 65.

Resources must be set aside for developing such evaluation and development activities. Participation from the support's target groups and an holistic approach must constitute important aspects of the evaluation system, which should also draw on the experiences of other countries. Once such a system has been developed, the first evaluation can be carried out. It should be stressed that such an evaluation must be directed to study the effects of the support in a more focused way than was the case with the evaluation carried out in 2000, when the outcomes of the support were only one of several factors to be considered. Ideally, such an evaluation could be carried out before 2010, fifteen years after the start of the support and ten years after the earlier evaluation. By then, the results of the support structure should be discernible. The evaluations could create an important knowledge base for future activities and a bank of ideas for possible ventures.

7. Recommendations

The objective of the support structure should be discussed further

The existence of this support structure has brought about many worthwhile cooperation initiatives between Swedish party associated organisations and political parties in developing countries and in eastern and central Europe. The sister party support facilitates close and personal cooperation, which would be difficult to achieve through other forms of initiative.¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether the current activities entirely fulfil the overall objective of the support structure. Simply supporting an individual party in another country may have limited effect, especially since, as this evaluation shows, it is only in exceptional cases that more than one or two PAOs operate in the same country at the same time. Well-functioning parties are necessary but not enough in themselves to create a functional party system. There is also a risk that the support would be accused of being partial, or, at worse, of distorting the party system, putting parties in a position which does not relate to the support received from their own electorate.

One way of supplementing the sister party support is through joint initiatives, in which the PAOs work together for several partners in another country. This element of the support was introduced when the support structure was made permanent in 2002, although it makes up just a small proportion of the funds allocated to the activities. We think that additional funds should be provided for joint initiatives, helping to create competitive but peaceful relations within the party system in various developing countries and in eastern and central Europe. We do not however think that these funds should be taken from the allocation provided to the PAO (funds which, to varying extents, are also used for other purposes than sister party support). Instead, additional funds should be provided. Additional funds should also be provided if the PAOs are to be expected to work in new areas such as the legal framework of the party system.

We also think that there should be further discussion of the formulation of the support structure's objectives and how these are to be achieved. The existing reference group is an appropriate body for such discussion, if expert personnel not directly connected to the support were to be brought in. At this stage, we do not propose any change to the formulation of the objective, although we do think that the general objective of supporting democratic development must continue in the future.

¹⁰⁵This was emphasised *inter alia* in Ugglå et al (2000).

Support for non-democratic parties should not be permitted

We believe it inappropriate for Swedish tax funds to be used for supporting political parties in other countries which represent a non-democratic view of society. On this basis, and in line with existing guidelines, we think that the support's responsible body should have the authority and responsibility, in clear cases, to refuse such cooperation within this support structure (an emergency brake). The formulation which exists in the current guidelines gives, in our opinion, sufficient guidance for such a decision (detailed regulation would hardly make it any easier to arrive at correct judgements). Even though a decision to disallow support on such grounds would inevitably entail a decision that is to some degree political, the responsible body (or the UD if the responsibility lay with parliament) must ensure in such a case that Swedish tax funds are not used in a way which clearly contradicts the Swedish view of democracy.

We also believe that it is often difficult to draw a clear distinction between democratic and non-democratic parties. This applies especially to developing countries and countries in eastern and central Europe. The matter is further complicated if regard is given to the extent to which cooperation partners are internally organised according to democratic principles. It is important for the support structure not to be limited to cooperation with "flawless" political parties, since this may then miss the point altogether. Initiatives aimed at making politically influential parties more democratic in their organisation and policy should be one of the main objectives of this support structure. Discussion should continue as to which types of cooperation partner are suitable, and we think that the reference group is an appropriate forum for this.

Responsibility should be reallocated

The current situation as regards responsibility for the support structure has some major problems. One of the most serious is the lack of clarity in Sida's position, where the authority is currently responsible for activities which it has little opportunity to influence, together with the fact that the people implementing the support are very closely associated with the parliamentary parties which have influence over Sida's activities. The PAOs also see problems with the current model, including what they see as unnecessary bureaucracy and disinterest from Sida. Many of today's difficulties are to do with the political sensitivity of sister party support, while the situation is less problematic as regards joint initiatives.

In this overview, we have discussed various ways in which the responsibility could be organised, all of which have their own advantages and disadvantages and none of which can be seen as optimal. The solution we find most satisfactory is to adapt the support structure into a two-part system, so that sister party support is moved away from Sida, although joint initiatives would remain with the authority and it would be given greater opportunity to control them. Sida would then have the job of providing those who are implementing joint initiatives with better support and information, while remaining able to choose between competing applications.

With such a solution, sister party support would be administered in a way that allowed purely fiscal examination of the activities to be undertaken on a regular basis (including economic reporting in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice), and the work would be examined thoroughly at a later date through outcome oriented evaluations. As earlier reports indicated, with this option it is less crucial who handles the administration. We consider that Sida's complicated position vis-a-vis Sweden's parliamentary parties, and the departure from the its basic working methods and normal preparation which this type of administration would entail, make it preferable for the responsibility to be moved to another body.

The risk of confusion with Sweden's relations with the partner country would be minimised if the support were brought under the supervision of parliament. In this case, the administration would be carried out by the party support committee or a similar institution. With this solution, the activities would certainly benefit less from the relevant information and debate available in the Swedish international development sphere. Nor would the independent evaluation institute for development work be able to examine assistance under the control of parliament. Parliament could, however, make decisions regarding other evaluations. If the independent evaluation body is to evaluate the support, these activities should instead come under the control of the UD, which is also the body most used to handling politically sensitive activities. The UD would, therefore, not conduct any management examination of the activities, but simply provide the allocated funds once an economic audit had been carried out. Nevertheless, the risk of confusion with Sweden's international relations would be greater than if the support were under the control of parliament. We think that in view of this evaluation of the various relevant factors (autonomy, experience of handling politically sensitive matters etc.), decisions regarding this part of the support should be handled either by parliament or by the UD.

Provided the necessary funds are made available, Sida could also take responsibility for supporting the PAOs' sister party activities to the extent that Sida would arrange training, provide the PAOs with necessary information etc. Irrespective of the decision regarding responsibility for the support structure, the existing function of the reference group should be revised. At present, it does not fulfil the quality assurance role recommended in the guidelines. It is also likely that increasing the personnel resources of the responsible body would reduce some of the current problems.

Coordination with other assistance should be increased

Supporting democratic development in another country is a complex undertaking, and for the activities to be effective, it is often necessary for bodies to work with different types of initiative in a coordinated way. In this context, it is important that this support is not seen as isolated from development work in general. We have observed that there is still a need for coordination of the activities with other Swedish development work. In this respect too, however, we can see a marked difference between the PAOs' individual projects and the joint activities. It is important for the sister party support not to be linked so closely to the regular assistance that its flexibility is put at risk and Sweden is open to criticism of its involvement in other countries' internal affairs. Where this part of the activities are concerned, the best solution would be for coordination achieved mainly through the exchange of information. The responsible body should be given the clear task and sufficient resources to provide the PAOs with necessary information. Joint initiatives are not so politically sensitive, and be coordinated positively with other democratic assistance in a clearer way than is currently the case.

We also think that there should be a discussion on the value of PAOs being active in so many countries, since this reduces the opportunity for deeper understanding and local adaptation. Since the geographical spread means that it is only in exceptional cases that several PAOs are active in the same country, this also increases the problem that some parties in a country receive assistance, while others do not.

It is also clear that the existing reference group does not fulfil the guidelines' requirements to "promote coordination between the support structure and other Swedish democratic support". The future role of the reference group should depend on the structure of the responsibility, but we generally think that the group's role in coordination of the support structure should be more clearly regulated. We also think that the reference group should include expert personnel who are not directly involved in the support structure. The PAOs should also be given ample opportunity to exchange information with personnel outside the support structure who are experts in democratic support, and the organisations should also

have access to relevant information on the countries in which they operate, including any other democratic support the country in question may be receiving.

The agreement period of activities should be extended and guidelines drawn up for joint initiatives

With today's system, agreements are drawn up between Sida and PAO on an annual basis, although projects often run for a longer period. This gives rise to unnecessary uncertainty in planning the activities and an unnecessary amount of work for both the PAOs and those responsible at Sida for drawing up and administering annual applications. If an administrative structure similar to the one currently in existence were maintained, we think that the agreement period between the PAOs and the responsible body should be extended.

The most reasonable length for agreements would probably be two years. Such two-year agreements could possibly be extended one year at a time over the mandate period (i.e. twice). This solution would considerably reduce the time the PAOs and responsible body would have to spend on administering the support. At the same time, the system would retain its flexibility, which is necessary because of the difficulties the PAOs have in planning their activities far in advance. Given the personnel resources available and the often unstable situation in partner countries, it would be impossible for most PAOs to submit applications covering all their activities over a complete mandate period (four years).

The current guidelines give the organisations the option "in exceptional cases" to submit applications containing unspecified projects. With longer agreement periods, this option should still be available and even formalised to a certain extent. A system in which the PAOs could add to a large number of projects at any time would, however, place considerable demands on the administrative resources of the responsible body. Economic reporting should also continue on a yearly basis in order to guarantee transparency and accountability.

We also think that specific directives should be drawn up for joint initiatives as soon as possible. This part of the activities is made difficult at present owing to the lack of guidelines and support for how the activities can and should be structured. The PAOs should play an active role in producing such guidelines, as they did when the new guidelines for the whole support programme were brought in 2002. It should be possible to implement specific directives for joint initiatives in 2006.

A model for evaluating the effectiveness of the support must be drawn up

In all public activities, it is important to learn from previous experience so as to be able to continue activities that are functioning well and discontinue those that do not work. For this to happen within the support structure, evaluations of the effects of the activities on the democratic structure in developing countries and countries in eastern and central Europe need to be introduced.

Assessing assistance is difficult, and assessing development work aimed at supporting democratic development in other countries is even harder. It is important for evaluations of the support structure to adopt an holistic view of democratic development processes, and to look at the effects the support has on the democracy in the widest sense in the countries where the activities operate, and not just at the political parties involved. Given that major evaluations of such activities in an international context are also rare, it is important that thorough preparatory work is undertaken to produce instruments and criteria for success for evaluations of this support structure. The PAOs should be given the opportunity to participate actively in this process. With the holistic approach needed for these evaluations, they could not be carried out particularly often, nor would it be necessary.

We think that the independent evaluation body for development work which is due to start its activities in 2005 could be a suitable implementer of such follow-ups, should the responsibility be given to the UD or Sida. The first evaluation of the PAOs' activities in the support structure could possibly take place when the evaluation body starts operating fully in 2008 or 2009. If the responsibility were given to parliament, it would then have to make sure initiatives were taken. Whichever body ends up with the responsibility, the national audit would be mandated to examine the activities on its own initiative.

For these evaluations to be meaningful, they must also be able to have some impact on the activities. Any discussion of responsibility for the support structure must include consideration of action the responsible body could take if a PAO does not operate in line with the support structure's objectives or show proper regard for the results of the evaluations.

In conclusion, it can be said that all PAOs, bar one, have expressed the view that the overall funds for the support (including mandate-related funds) should be increased significantly. Since there is no evaluation which studies the effectiveness of the activities and their compliance with the objective, we would prefer to refrain from expressing a view on this matter.

Interviews

20 August 2004, Sida

Mikael Boström, Coordinator, DESA

Helena Bjuremalm, Programme Officer, DESA

6 September 2004, International IDEA

Roger Hällhag, Head of Programme

Per Nordlund, Senior Programme Officer

Maja Tjernström, Project Manager

10 September 2004, Sida

Svante Sandberg, Unit Manager, SEKA-EO

13 September 2004, GF

Eva Goës, Chair

Sven-Olof Tuvlind, Board Member

14 September 2004, JHS

Margaretha af Ugglas, Chair

Bertil Persson, Board Member

Peeter Luksep, Board Member

Eva Gustavsson, Head of JHS

15 September 2004, CIS

Åke Pettersson, Chair

Siv Ramsell Westberg, General Secretary

Lisa Sandberg, Administrative Official

16 September, 2004, Norsk Senter for Demokratistøtte

Kathrine Raadim, Chair

Eva Langslet, Deputy Head of Secretariat

16 September, 2004, Chr. Michelsen Institute

Lars Svåsand, Professor

21 September 2004, KrDu

Henrik Ehrenberg, Chair

Helen Richard, Administrative Official

David Kärnerud, Administrative Official

21 September, 2004, VIF

Anita Persson, VIF Board Member

Marianne Eriksson, VIF Board Member

Ann Berglund, Secretary

22 September 2004, OPC

Sanna Johnsson, Assistance Manager, OPIC
Ann Linde, International Secretary, Social Democrats
Susanna Lif, Coordinator for Party Support, OPIC
Liselott Olsson, Coordinator for Party Support, OPIC

11 October 2004, SILC

Erik Jennische, General Secretary
Gunilla Davidsson, Project Leader

15 October 2004, IDEA

Ingrid Wetterqvist, Head of Planning and External Relations, formerly Deputy Director of UD-IC

2 November 2004, UD

Gabriella Fredriksson, Departmental Secretary, Unit for Global Development

3 November 2004, Sida

Britt Sjöstedt, Programme Officer, DESA (telephone interview)

8 November 2004, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs

Berndt Ekholm, Member of Parliament

In addition to these interviews, we have taken into account written comments from CIS, GF, KrDU and Silc, as well as shorter comments from several of the other PAOs. We also took part in a workshop on development work with political parties, organised by DESA and the Collegium for Development Studies at Uppsala University, held in Hammarskog on 13 October. We arranged meetings with the PAOs to discuss a draft of this report (28 and 29 October, and 2 November). We discussed various issues in this overview with Per Molander, Mapsec and Carla Welch, Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

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Appendix 1, Description of the assignment

Description of the assignment: overview and reporting of the support through Swedish party associated organisations for the creation of democracy in developing countries and countries in central and eastern Europe

1 Background

Since 1995, Sida has managed the assistance for Swedish party associated organisations aimed at supporting the creation of democracy in developing countries and countries in central and eastern Europe (PAO Support).¹⁰⁶

In the government decision UD 2001/1426/IC of 01-11-2001 regarding this support, Sida was assigned to conduct an overview of the support, including economic conditions, in the first half of 2004. In addition to this, Sida was assigned in the 2004 appropriation document to report on the allocation of the support to organisations and regions which was to show clearly what constitute assistance activities (ODA). This support has been administered since 2002 by DESO/DESA, having been administered by SEKA for the first seven years within the support structure. DESA, therefore, is principally responsible for the execution of these assignments.

Democracy support through party associated organisations was the subject of an overview and evaluation on two earlier occasions. In 1997, an overview was conducted of what were then still pilot activities, commissioned by the reference or consultation group with overall responsibility for quality assurance of this form of assistance. The results of the overview proposed that the pilot activities should continue until 2000. In the government decision of 05-03-1998 based on the overview, Sida was assigned to organise in 2000 a thorough evaluation of the pilot activities. The evaluation, which was conducted by the Department of Government at Uppsala University, was presented in September the same year and resulted in the pilot period being extended by a year in anticipation of new guidelines being drawn up.

In the government decision of 01-11-2001, the support structure was made permanent and the guidelines were adopted. These have applied from 1 January 2002. Sida has prepared more detailed directions based on the guidelines. The directions were adopted in the Director General's decision of 2003 (GD 13/03). It should also be mentioned that aspects of the support structure were dealt with as part of an internal project for method development – "Political Institutions" 2002.

The support is provided to all parties represented in parliament. This amounts annually to SEK 400,000 in the form of a basic contribution to each party plus SEK 90,000 per parliamentary mandate. In addition to this, partisan organisations can receive funds for joint projects. In the 2004 budget year, the total budget for this support was SEK 37,600,000, of which SEK 24,100,000 was allocated from the fund for the Global development programme (64.1 percent) and SEK 13,500,000 from the fund for eastern Europe and central Asia (35.9 percent). SEK 3,390,000 of the total budget was earmarked for joint projects.

The objective of the party associated assistance, as stated in the government guidelines, is "through initiatives of Swedish party associated organisations, to help develop a well-functioning party entity in developing countries and in countries in central and eastern Europe with the aim of promoting a

¹⁰⁶The support structure was preceded by the report entitled 'Democracy needs these parties' (Ds 1994:63). This report proposes that a special fund be set up as part of the assistance budget for parliamentary parties wishing to participate in pro-democracy assistance. The formulation of the objective comprised the fairly general wording to "help in the development of stable democratic societies in developing countries and countries in central and eastern Europe". This was refined three years later to "to help in the development of a well-functioning and pluralistic party system and democratic societies in developing countries and in central and eastern Europe" (1998-03-05).

representative democratic form of government in these countries.” The underlying understanding is that a well-functioning party system is a prerequisite for the representative democracy to be able to achieve one of its most important aims, that is, to create channels between the citizens and the political decision-making institutions.

In addition to Sida’s administrative follow-up, the government’s guidelines state that a reference group must monitor the support. This reference group comprises representatives from each partisan organisation, a representative from each parliamentary party and representatives from Sida and the UD. The group is headed by the Secretary of State for Assistance, with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry with the Responsibility for Cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe as his deputy. The group must have a “general responsibility for the assurance of quality of the form of assistance in accordance with the guidelines, and promote coordination between the support structure and other Swedish democracy support. Furthermore, the group should monitor the activities’ regional distribution and the extent to which the support meets the democratic needs of the region in question.”

According to the government’s guidelines, the party associated organisations themselves decide which countries they wish to work in. A balance between developing countries and countries in central and eastern Europe should, however, be sought, since the funds are provided equally by the assistance fund and Östsamarbetet (Eastern Cooperation). This distinction between funding was abolished with parliament’s adoption of Shared Responsibility – The Policy for Global Development. The requirement for geographical balance remains, however.

2 The assignment

2.1 Issues the overview must address

There are a raft of issues surrounding PAO support, arising partly from the continuous follow-up of this support and partly from earlier overviews and evaluation.

2.1.1 The objective of the activities

The first issue concerns the objective of the activities in general and the distinction between support for individual parties and support for the party system in particular. Even though a country has individual parties, the party system itself can be dysfunctional, especially if it contains a high degree of splintering and polarisation. In new democracies, parties can also often be power structures and not primarily the bearers of ideas. External support for individual parties also carries the risk of distorting the political balance in a country. One effective way of supporting the party system can therefore often be to provide support outside the parties themselves. What is needed may include: changes in the law; the promotion of political pluralism; expansion of the room for political manoeuvre; or changes in the distribution of the seats in parliament.

2.1.2 Administering support for organisations which do not embrace democratic values

Another issue discussed in this context concerns the right of a party associated organisation to receive funds to support parties and party associated organisations which clearly do not embrace democratic values. According to the current guidelines, there is nothing to stop a PAO from using state funds to support “non-democratic” sister parties in the east and south – providing that the party to which this PAO is linked has passed the four percent threshold in the Swedish parliamentary election.

2.1.3 Responsibility

A third issue concerns responsibility. The current arrangement is problematic to the extent that Sida, as the responsible authority, is forced to strike a difficult balance between activities that are largely unregulated in content, but strictly regulated in terms of administration. A consequence of the guidelines is

that Sida has very limited freedom to examine and assess the contents of an organisation's plans and requests and, therefore, cannot exercise its powers as well in this assistance area as in others.

The reference group which is responsible for the quality assurance of this assistance also has a difficult and unclear role since the implementers themselves form part of the reference group. The reference group has become a forum for general dialogue about this support rather than an inspector of the quality of the projects undertaken by the PAOs.

The issue of responsibility is further complicated in that the parliamentary parties with which the PAOs are associated not only sit in parliament and decide on the awarding of funds for these activities, but also examine Sida's activities each year as part of the annual budget process. Within the current structures, it can therefore be argued that parliament in many cases has double or even triple roles – as decision-makers, examiners and implementers of the same assistance activities.

2.1.4 Relations with other development work

A fourth issue concerns the relationship between this support structure and other development work. Swedish development work is mainly controlled by policies and guidelines set by government, including national and regional strategies which are produced as far as possible in unanimity with governments and other central players in the relevant partner country. Under the current arrangement for PAO support, there is no means of ensuring this support conforms to the objectives of these steering documents. It is therefore quite possible that the choice of country, contents and orientation of the PAOs' activities in some cases does not follow, or may even run counter to, what the government has decided in another context. This raises important questions concerning the holistic perspective, priorities, coordination and control of the assistance.

2.1.5 The preparation process

A fifth issue concerns the preparation process, including the appropriateness of the guidelines and directions and the length of the agreements. The current provision exclusively for one-year agreements between Sida and the relevant partisan organisation creates major deficiencies in the long-term planning for the latter, and for cooperation organisations "in the field". With a longer planning horizon, the PAOs could direct their work at more difficult countries, or countries in which activities have hitherto not been operated.

2.2 The aim of the assignment

The work of the consultant is aimed at conducting the overview of the support ordered by government, including the economic conditions. The overview will mainly concern the forms of the support.

The consultant must review, analyse and propose any changes with respect to the following sub-areas:

- The objective of the support structure
- The lack of bars to supporting parties which do not embrace democratic values
- Overall responsibility: the distribution of roles and responsibility in general, and with particular regard to powers of scrutiny, including the reference group's role and mandate
- The relations between the support structure and other development work with an emphasis on the policies and guidelines, including national and regional strategies decided by parliament, government and Sida
- The preparation process including the appropriateness of the guidelines and directions and current lengths of agreements.

For all issues, comment must be made on parliament's opinion with respect to democracy support via party associated organisations, as expressed in the UU's report on Sweden's policy for global development (2003/2004 UU:3).

2.3 Scope and method of the assignment

The overview must be based partly on a review of existing documents (relevant laws, official reports/department communications, bills, reports, government decisions, Sida decisions, previous evaluations etc.), and partly on interviews with all players concerned in the party associated organisations, their parent parties, the UD and Sida etc. The list of personnel to interview was compiled in consultation with Sida. The overview should also include a comparison with the Norwegian model adopted to support the creation of party systems and contact made with the Norsk Senter for Partistøtte.

The assignment must be linked to the research projects partly financed by Sida/DESA concerning the issue of international support party system headed by Tom Carothers of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. As part of the research project, a “State of the Art Paper” must be presented to Sida and the PAOs in October. The existing draft of the Carothers report presented at the seminar in October must act as an important reference for the overview.

The total working time spent on the assignment must be no more than 8 man weeks including participation in the above seminar and any other meetings/seminars at Sida/the UD.

2.4 Timetable

According to the government’s mandate, the overview must be conducted in the first half of 2004. This has been interpreted as meaning that it must have commenced and be well under way in the first half of 2004. The overview must begin no later than 28 June 2004 and be completed by no later than 12 November 2004.

3 Reporting and documentation

An introductory sub-report must be submitted no later than 23 August 2004, focussing on the review of previous documents. Sida must submit any comments within seven days.

The draft of the final report must be submitted no later than 19 October 2004. Sida must submit any comments within fourteen days.

The final report, comprising no more than 40 pages (excluding appendices) must be received by Sida no later than 12 November. The report must contain a brief summary of the results, proposals and recommendations of the overview.

4 The consultant profile and personnel requirements

The assignment must be carried out by a group of no more than three people, one of whom must have the responsibility of group leader. The consultancy group must comprise the following expertise:

- good knowledge of democracy assistance in general;
- good knowledge of the political environment in which the support for the party system/parties is active – both in Sweden and the partner countries;
- good knowledge of the support given through Swedish party associated organisations and the terms of this support;
- very good knowledge of the Constitution of Sweden and administrative law;
- good knowledge of Sida’s mandate, role and working methods.

5 Budget

The ceiling for remuneration is SEK 250,000. The ceiling for reimbursements is SEK 30,000. Reimbursements include travel costs, subsistence and accommodation, communication and postage.

Appendix 2, International comparisons

As noted in the introduction, Sweden was one of the first to support parties and party systems in other countries via her own parties (or, to be more precise, party associated organisations).¹⁰⁷ Over the years, several other countries have joined Sweden in gaining experience of this type of work. Interesting comparisons can be made with the arrangements which exist in Germany, the USA, the UK, the Netherlands and Norway. Similar organisations also exist in countries such as Spain, France, Australia, Greece and Austria, and, as noted above, Finland and Canada are working towards introducing activities of this kind.¹⁰⁸

Germany

Germany was the first country to introduce activities in this area in a systematic way. The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) was formed as early as 1925 and the Friedrich Neumann Stiftung (FNS) in 1958. It is important to realise that even though these organisations work with party development, it is not one of their foremost areas of activity. Some of the organisations run a large number of activities; in 2002, FES had a budget of just over EUR 110 million and 560 employees (this includes considerable activities in Germany). The much smaller Heinrich Böll Stiftung, linked to Die Grünen (The Greens) had a budget of EUR 38 million in 2002, half of which was used outside Germany.¹⁰⁹ Like the Swedish party associated organisations, the German foundations base their work on their own ideologies and work with sister parties in many countries, even though initiatives often also embrace several different parties in the recipient country. As noted above, cash support for parties abroad is forbidden, following considerable negative media attention. According to Mair, the German foundations hesitate to establish cooperation with political parties in Africa, in part because these are not considered to have profiles that are sufficiently ideological to make sister party cooperation worthwhile.¹¹⁰

The USA

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) were formed in 1983 and 1984 respectively, and therefore clearly have longer institutional experience of this type of assistance than the Swedish organisations. They are also considerably larger; the IRI has around 250 employees while the NDI has over 50 field offices. These organisations rely mainly on state funds distributed via the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a non-government organisation led by an impartial administration, which, in turn, is mainly financed by the American state.

One difference between this and the Swedish and German systems is that both organisations, despite their (informal) links with the American parties, undertake their work mainly on a non-partisan basis. The primary focus is therefore not on parties in the recipient countries with equivalent ideology. There are, however, exceptions, such as the IRI's support during the presidential election in Romania in 1992 and the NDI's work in Russia. The two organisations' support programmes must be approved by NED's administration.

It should also be pointed out that American development work with political parties is not limited to the two partisan institutes. The support which the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) gave for campaign training to all political parties in Mozambique before the 1999 election can

¹⁰⁷This text is based partly on Uggle et. al. (2000) page 35ff.

¹⁰⁸A preliminary discussion on the process in Canada can be found in Axworthy & Campbell (2004). The UNDP also works to support political parties, e.g. in Timor Leste. Reilly (2003) page 24.

¹⁰⁹It is, however, unclear whether a significant part of these funds went to initiatives related to political parties in other countries.

¹¹⁰Mair (1997).

be cited as an example. It is especially interesting that USAID participated in this project together with the Netherlands, Switzerland and Sweden, at a total cost of around SEK 13 million.¹¹¹

The UK

Support for individual parties via the country's own parliamentary parties has also existed in the UK for quite a long time. There is a specific body to administer the support; the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, founded in 1992 as a "non-departmental public body". The organisation's administration is appointed by the British Foreign Secretary, and comprises representatives from the three biggest parties, as well as outside researchers. Altogether, British support comprises SEK 60 million a year. The foundation has two tasks, one of which is to distribute money to the country's own political parties to be used for international support, as in the Swedish programme. Distribution is similar to that in Sweden, based on a principle called "Short Money Allocation".¹¹² Support for sister parties can also include technical assistance as well as equipment such as writing material and computers.

The foundation also runs its own activities in the political sphere. Work within the foundation is non-ideological, the aim being to support political parties and pluralistic democratic institutions around the world, including work with NGOs, the media etc. Support is often provided through series of seminars and suchlike, in which all parties in a country are gathered together. The support's geographical orientation, which is determined by the foundation's administration within a framework set by the Foreign Office, lies mainly in eastern and central Europe and in the former British colonies in Africa. As mentioned above, it has recently been decided to limit the activities for joint initiatives to six countries.¹¹³

The Netherlands

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) was formed in the Netherlands in 2001. The institute works in a "strictly impartial and inclusive way" and is financed by the country's foreign ministry.¹¹⁴ The institute is led by an administration comprising representatives from seven of the Netherlands' parliamentary parties. There is also an advisory body which likewise consists of representatives from the various parties. The total budget in 2004 was SEK 68 million.

Projects are run in cooperation with and between the various Dutch parties, and usually include a broad spectrum of cooperation partners. A number of methods are used and a project "usually includes elements of cross-party initiatives, bilateral cooperation with parties individually and facilitation of activities aimed at reinforcing multi-party democracy".¹¹⁵ Local organisations not linked to the political parties (NGOs and/or research institutes) are also often included in the work. Cash funds are also distributed through NIMD to parties in countries where this is legal. The money must be used for defined projects and distributed in accordance with set criteria, although it is recognised that the system has sometimes been criticised, for example by the smaller parties in Tanzania. The work also includes projects targeting the party system framework, such as election and party laws.

Although the institute has only been in existence for a few years, a number of result-oriented evaluations of various initiatives have been carried out by external personnel, and these evaluations are available on NIMD's website. There is also a short handbook for development work with political parties which the institute published in 2004.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ USAID/Mozambique (2000).

¹¹² The name "Short" comes from Edward Short MP, who initiated the initiative to support British opposition parties with state funds.

¹¹³ Communication with Carla Welch, Programme Manager, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 19 October 2004 (e-mail).

¹¹⁴ www.nimd.org.

¹¹⁵ www.nimd.org, italics in the original.

¹¹⁶ NIMD (2004).

It can also briefly be mentioned that several of the Dutch political parties have linked themselves with organisations which undertake political development work outside NIMD, including, in some cases, work for political parties. These organisations are financed by the foreign ministry in the Netherlands through the ‘MATRA programme’, aimed at projects in eastern Europe and Eurasia.¹¹⁷

Norway

Activities similar in many respects to those in Sweden were introduced in Norway in 2002. This system is so new that its structures are still somewhat unclear. Support is administered by the “Norsk Senter for Demokratistøtte” (NDS), which is controlled by a council comprising representatives from seven of Norway’s parliamentary parties as well as external experts from various research institutes.¹¹⁸ It should be pointed out that the budget is a fairly modest five million SEK a year.

The aim of the support is to promote the growth of multi-party democracies based on free elections. The support guidelines stress the importance of democratic parties and of a democratic party system, and the centre encourages cooperation between the Norwegian parties to run projects of “cross-political character”.¹¹⁹ So far, however, most of the support has taken the form of sister party support, even though several of the parties have as yet got no further than setting up a number of preliminary projects.¹²⁰ Support is primarily aimed at Norway’s seven main partner countries, although the parties can also receive funds for work in the other 18 countries identified as Norway’s partner countries.

The funds are not distributed according to the parties’ mandates in parliament. Instead, applications submitted are examined by the council which also comments on the projects’ suitability. Decisions on the allocation of funds are then made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which, however, does not make any assessment of the content of the applications. No procedure for prioritising projects has yet been developed, since the applications have not yet exceeded the total budget for the support structure. On the other hand, a number of applications have been refused on the council’s own initiative, as they were not considered to comply with the guidelines.

As with the Swedish support, the Norwegian parties must report on the results of their projects. The report template includes the demanding requirement that the parties must “if applicable, give an analysis of how the project has influenced overall development on macro-level”. Another similarity with Swedish support is that initiatives in connection with elections and material support must be avoided.

Comparison with the Swedish system

Each country has created its own system for these activities, and these differ from each other in a variety of ways. While the majority of countries focus on sister party support, in the Netherlands only joint activities are operated, and the American organisations tend not to limit their activities to parties that are ideologically close to them. In Norway, the allocation of funds is not based on the party’s share of the parliamentary mandates, while the budget for organisations in countries such as Germany and the USA far exceeds Swedish support.

In summary, these examples show that there are several different ways of administering support to parties and party systems in other countries. The German and Norwegian systems are the closest to the Swedish system, although cooperation with sister parties does not predominate in the former, and the latter is limited to a smaller number of countries. The American and Dutch organisations do not work specifically with parties that are ideologically close to them; and in the UK, the activities are operated partly through partisan organisations and partly directly from a central institution. To the extent that

¹¹⁷See also van Wersch (2004).

¹¹⁸The exception is Kystpartiet, which won a mandate in the 2001 election. See www.senterfordemokratistotte.no.

¹¹⁹Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (not dated) page 2.

¹²⁰A joint cross-political project is currently being run in Malawi.

states give assistance to individual parties, this mainly concerns informal support (an exception being the Swedish state’s support of the ANC and SWAPO during apartheid).

Figure 2: Various models for party support

		Providers	
		Party	Central administration
Recipients	Individual party/sister party	Sweden, Germany, Norway, the UK	(Unofficial support)
	All parties	The USA	The Westminster Foundation, NIMD

It is important when developing the Swedish support structure in the future that lessons are learnt from other countries’ experiences. It is also important to study the evaluation techniques used in countries now working to develop similar support structures. There should be ample opportunity for exchange of information between the relatively large group of countries now active in supporting the creation of democracy in developing countries and in countries in eastern and central Europe through the support of parties and party systems, not least with regard to how these activities should be evaluated.

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