



COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS – COMMISSAIRE AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME

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Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, and the European Union start a training programme for national human rights structures

Strasbourg, 03.04.2008 - Human rights protection could often be better ensured at national level while it is becoming increasingly difficult for the international control bodies to deal with it in a timely manner. Improvement may come from more effective domestic action and better interaction between international and national mechanisms. In order to promote this process, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, and the European Union (EU) today launched a two-year programme aimed at setting up an active network of independent non-judicial bodies in Council of Europe member states, with a special focus on non-EU countries.

This Joint Programme, or “Peer-to-Peer Project”, aims to empower national human rights structures (i.e. ombudsmen and national institutions) to help prevent and find solutions to human rights violations more effectively. Through a series of training programmes, peer review activities and exchanges of good practices, specialised staff members belonging to national structures will strengthen their own human rights competences and increase their awareness of the possibilities for co-operation with international mechanisms.

“In addition to the courts, national non-judicial structures are key actors for the protection and promotion of human rights and the rule of law. Their effectiveness is of paramount importance for the implementation of human rights standards,” said Commissioner Hammarberg. “They benefit significantly from the exchange of experiences with their colleagues in other countries, and from sharing information about how international human rights norms can be best applied.”

The programme also foresees the possibility of providing technical assistance to establish new independent and effective human rights structures at the domestic level. “Realisation of human rights is a question of political will,” continued the Commissioner. “It is not enough just to endorse European and international norms: these standards must also be translated into a practical reality at all levels. Authorities should promote and protect the existence of non-judicial mechanisms for independent monitoring.”

The Commissioner for Human Rights has a long-standing tradition of co-operation and information sharing with national structures. The “Peer-to-Peer Project” has been designed to better respond to the human rights priorities identified both by national structures and the Commissioner. The funding for the project amounts to 900,000 euros to be provided on an equal basis by the European Union and the Council of Europe.

Media contact

Stefano Montanari (tel. +33 3 88 41 35 38; stefano.montanari@coe.int).

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