



Norwegian  
Helsinki Committee

## **Review of a Norwegian Helsinki Committee project in Eurasia QZA 17/0260**

Documentation, accountability measures, and capacity building of civil society actors

### **Terms of Reference**

2020

## **1) Background**

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC) has received support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) since the 1980s. The current agreement with the MFA on project support in Eurasia is for the period 2017-2020. The overall budget for the whole period of the project is NOK 35 910 000 (app. 3 500 000 Euro). The agreement states that the NHC shall undertake an end of project evaluation.

The main beneficiaries of the review are NHC's donors (MFA), the NHC board and NHC staff.

The purpose of the review is 1) to assess the implementation of the project and to what extent it has led to the effect/impact and outcome formulated in the agreement and the application and 2) to provide recommendations for adjustments and improvements for future projects, both in terms of goals and approach.

The theory of change and baseline attached to the original application will serve as useful tools to measure progress and results.

The NHC is seeking an inclusive and participatory process that involves engagement and interaction with NHC and NHC's local partners in the project, as well as other relevant stakeholders.

## **2) About the NHC**

The NHC is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) working to ensure that human rights are respected in practice. Its main methods are documentation, advocacy, teaching and democracy support (i.e. capacity building of civil society organizations).

The NHC bases its work on international human rights instruments adopted by the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the Organization on Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE), including the 1975 Helsinki Final Act.

The NHC is registered as an association under Norwegian Law and was founded in 1977. It is a not-for-profit NGO. A council of 50 prominent persons forms its highest organ. The Council elects a Board, which oversees the work of the Secretariat. The Secretariat has about 25 professionals employed. The organization has about 200 support members.

The NHC cooperates with a careful selection of NGOs based on an assessment of their relevance and competence in the OSCE-region, i.e. Europe, Central Asia and North America. In some countries we cooperate with well-functioning Helsinki Committees based on the same assessment. The NHC is a member of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), The Civic Solidarity Platform, the International Coalition for International Criminal Court (CICC), the Norwegian NGO Forum for Human Rights, and the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE). It serves as the secretariat for the Norwegian NGO Forum for Human Rights and the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB).

NHC projects are supported by domestic and international public and private donors, of which the Norwegian MFA is the largest contributor. The NHC regularly receives support from members and occasional gifts from individuals and organisations. Its annual financial turnover is about 45 mill NOK. NHC's financial management and reporting is subject to audit by PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

According to its statutes, the NHC shall promote respect and protection of international human rights. It shall document violations of human rights, influence authorities to respect human rights, run and promote human rights education and support human rights organizations.

Based on its historic origin in the Helsinki Final Act, the NHC shall promote human rights in North America, Europe and Central Asia. When addressing issues of relevance to other regions of the world, the NHC may have activities related to these regions.

An important part of NHC work methods, is to co-operate with and strengthen local organizations and groups which wholly or partly have the same purpose.

The NHC Strategic Plan 2017-2021 states that the NHC will particularly focus on the following main topics and activities: 1) Documentation and work against impunity, 2) the promotion of democratic elections and democratic rule, 3) basic freedoms, with a particular focus on freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion or belief and the situation for human rights defenders and whistle-blowers, LGBTI-activists and women human rights defenders.

The NHC has extensive competence on the human rights situation in the Eurasia region including Russia. It has followed the situation in Russia closely since the 1970s and has a vast network of partners and contacts over the whole region.

In addition to the project in Eurasia, the NHC runs projects and/or activities in other countries in Eastern and Central Europe, Turkey, Norway and a global project IPPFoRB.

### 3) About the project

The project "Support to civil society in Eurasia" is a three year agreement with the Norwegian MFA for the period September 2017 – September 2020, following consideration of the application submitted by 30 March 2017. The overall budget for the whole period of the project is NOK 35 910 000 (app. 3 500 000 Euro). The grant agreement of 29 November 2017 lays out the conditions for the project.

The overall goal of the project is to strengthen engagement and knowledge of the population when it comes to demanding state accountability for human rights and democratic principles. An important way to reach this goal is to work long term with partner organizations to strengthen civil society activities related to fundamental human rights in their respective countries.

The long term desired effect, **impact**, of the project is *increased awareness and sensitivity of society in the programme countries of the human rights situation. A more informed population is more engaged and is able to demand state accountability for human rights and democratic principles.*

The **outcome** for the target groups is that *a supportive environment is improved in the programme countries for more effective protection of human rights and respect of fundamental freedoms.*

The most central planned **outputs** of the project are that *1) Groups and individuals vulnerable to human rights violations, including human rights defenders and other civil society actors, have access to and make use of adequate programs for preemptive measures and victim support; 2) Reliable, accountable and evidence-based documentation/information about the human rights situation in the program countries is available to national and international actors; 3) Authorities and institutional representatives in the program countries are held accountable to their fundamental human rights commitments by national and international state and non-state actors; and 4) Strengthened capacity of civil society groups and human rights activists in the area of protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.*

The intended **target groups** of the project are 1) *human rights defenders, civil society actors, media representatives and lawyers*; 2) *groups of society that are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and human rights violations, such as LGBTIQ, ethnic and religious minorities, and women*; 3) *public institutions and decision makers*; and 4) *the general public*.

The NHC has followed the situation in Eurasia closely since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and has thorough experience and understanding of which organisations and activists do the most relevant and efficient work on different issues in different parts of the region. The NHC staff are professionals in human rights, have extensive experience from working on human rights in the region, know many of the languages, travel to and meet regularly with various stakeholders in the region, Norway and elsewhere, have representative offices in Kazakhstan and Geneva (then Kyiv), monitor social media and keep abreast on relevant publications and research from and on the region. NHC monitors elections and other major events and follow trends regarding public assembly, court proceedings, development of legislation, and follows geopolitical developments.

The NHC's theory of change is that long-term support to and close cooperation with carefully selected civil society actors is the best way to foster respect for human rights and democratic principles in the respective countries in the long run, despite a generally deteriorating situation in the short run. We are convinced that change occurs in the crossing point between action on concrete cases and long-term efforts.

Based on our values, goals and method, we aim to create change in a long term perspective by:

- 1) strengthening the justice system and democratic institutions through i.a. support to legal aid, witness protection and the creation of triangular enforced cooperations between lawyers, journalists and human rights activists, in parallel with cooperation and advocacy with core international institutions;
- 2) counteracting propaganda and impunity by documentation of violations and developing instruments for documentation in cooperation with partners, i.a. in connection with election observation and data bases such as the Nataliya Estemirova Documentation Center, a unique database of documentation of violations in North Caucasus and innovative tool against impunity;
- 3) improving the situation of vulnerable groups through systematic work on freedom of religion or belief, violations of the rights of LGBTIQ persons and gender based persecution, and we strengthen women's rights by cooperating with women human rights defenders/role models;
- 4) strengthening our work on election observation through our role in networks such as the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE) and International Elections' Studies Center as well as cooperation with local organisations;
- 5) maintaining our focus on human rights – and peace education through the transmission of knowledge on peaceful conflict resolution and crosscultural understanding to select groups able to contribute to conflict resolution and democratic development; and
- 6) increase the awareness of human rights challenges through communication both widely and targeted to the Norwegian and European public, from Norwegian press to meetings in the EU parliament.

The work of our partners in the field is strengthened by the NHC's comparative advantages in terms of extensive knowledge of human rights and the programme countries; our wide network among civil society activists as well as decision makers; our inclusive work methods and platforms for cooperation; genuine partner relationships based on trust, respect and understanding; and dedicated and skilled NHC staff.

#### **4) Purpose and scope of review**

The purpose of the review is 1) to assess the implementation of the project and to what extent it has led to the planned effect/impact and outcome as stipulated in the agreement and the application. The theory of change and baseline attached to the application will serve as useful tools to measure progress and results; 2) to provide recommendations for adjustments and improvements for future projects, both in terms of goals and approach; and 3) to assess the added value of the NHC.

The review should, with the agreement, application, baseline and theory of change in mind, specifically assess the issues listed below and provide an analysis on how the current situation compares to the situation at project start, and how the work of NHC might have added value even in cases where the situation for civil society and human rights is deteriorating on a general level.

#### **Relevance, effectiveness, impact, outcomes and sustainability**

- Relevance: to what extent is the project, as designed and implemented, suited to the needs of the cooperation partners and the context in the cooperating states?
- Result effectiveness: to what extent is the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?
- Outcomes: Assess to what extent the programme has contributed to the improvement of a more supportive environment for effective protection of human rights and respect of fundamental freedoms in the programme countries.
- Impact: Assess to what extent the project, as designed and implemented, is likely to contribute towards long-term impact at the societal level.
- Sustainability: to what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, contributed to developing more professional civil society actors and network for future work, and to what extent would local partners be able to carry on work without support from NHC?
- How NHC and partner organisations have been able to deal with bureaucratic and other obstacles to human rights work, such as legislation restricting fundamental freedoms, harassment, threats of violence, violence, and other forms of obstruction in the programme countries.

#### **Administrative issues, risk management and cooperation with other stakeholders**

- Assess the NHC's follow-up of agreed conditions vis-à-vis partners and donors.
- Assess NHC systems for risk management (agreement paragraph 6.2), particularly related to financial risk (mismanagement, corruption).
- Carry out cost-benefit analysis of the NHC representative office in Central Asia, including the organisational arrangement of the office. Assess added value of NHC staff abroad with respect to experience from Geneva and Berlin, and Kyiv for the last part of the programme period.

- Analyze NHC and partner organizations' communication and outreach related to the project. Assess whether the project has been able to reach the wider public and which channels have proven most effective.
- Assess the programme's ability to include a selection of civil society actors in the programme countries assumed to be the most effective in promoting human rights.
- How does NHC cooperate and coordinate with other major stakeholders, i.a. the Human Rights House Foundation. Cooperation and complementarity.

## 5) Methodology

The methodological framework is mainly desk review, and meetings where possible. It should consist of the following elements:

1. Introductory meeting with the Section for Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Regional Organizations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
2. Interviews, meetings and possible group discussions with NHC staff.
3. Interviews, meetings and possible group discussions with representatives of 11-12 local partner organisations that receive support from the project.
4. Some of the local partners that have received support previously may be engaged in discussion about the long-term effects of their cooperation with the NHC.
5. Interview with relevant international stakeholders, such as human rights organizations and campaigns, relevant staff of international organizations, staff of various relevant embassies in programme countries, and experts on support to human rights defenders etc. Also, staff in relevant sections of the Norwegian MFA and Norwegian embassies in programme countries.
6. Interview with NHC's auditor and financial management staff, particularly relevant for the assessment of systems in place for risk management, mentioned above.
7. Review of selected project products, such as reports, statements, website material, social media accounts, and other relevant material;
8. Quantitative assessment of number of readers of social media accounts; news sites; participants at public meetings and seminars, etc.
9. Review of reporting to MFA and its compliance with agreement conditions.

NHC will make relevant material available for the review, such as applications, narrative reports, and strategic plans. Interviews and meetings may be conducted in person or by conference calls, skype, etc.

Taking into consideration the rapidly changing situation with regards to the COVID-19 virus we expect the contractor to carry out conference calls and desk review rather than meetings in person and travels at the current stage, although we might discuss this at a later stage.

## **6) Reporting**

Review results should be presented in a report. Main findings should be summarised in a PowerPoint-presentation.

The report will be in English and should not exceed 30 pages (excluding appendices). It should, inter alia, include an executive summary, conclusions, and recommendations and be available in both printed and electronic formats.

A final report should be presented electronically to the NHC no later than 1 October 2020.

## **7) Team**

The review should be conducted by 2-3 people. A contact person for the review should be appointed by the reviewing agency. The NHC would prefer a team that consists of people with extensive work experience and relevant language skills from Eurasia. The NHC would look positively on a gender-balanced team.

### **Qualifications needed:**

- Fluency in English and for at least one team member also in Russian;
- Demonstrated competence in human rights work and NGO organisational development;
- Extensive experience with results framework, evaluation, including of human rights projects;
- Experience with reviewing grant management.

## **8) Time frame and budgets:**

The review process should start in the end of May 2020 and an inception report should be submitted to the NHC two weeks after the start date.

The first draft of the report should be submitted to the NHC no later than 1 September 2020.

Written comments to the draft report by the NHC should be provided no later than 15 September 2020.

The final report should be presented no later than 1 October 2020.

The NHC has a budget for the assignment, including covering related costs.

The budget is 300 000 NOK.

## **9) Tender/bids**

Tender/bids should be submitted to Lene Wetteland, Head of Eurasia Department, [lw@nhc.no](mailto:lw@nhc.no), and copied to Marion Godager Tveter, Head of Programmes, [mt@nhc.no](mailto:mt@nhc.no), by 4 May 2020.

The documentation should include budget, timeframe, a brief statement of qualifications and motivation. In addition, a CV of each team member should be included, as well as general information of relevant competence and experience of the reviewing agency.