

Annex 2: Action Fiche – Belarus 2012

1. IDENTIFICATION

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| Title/Number | Special Measure: Contribution to the European Humanities University Trust Fund CRIS: ENPI/2012/23454 | | |
| Total cost | EU contribution: €1 million | | |
| Aid method / Management mode | Project approach – Joint Management with the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) | | |
| DAC-code | 11420 | Sector | Higher Education |

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Sector context

At the international donors' conference 'Solidarity with Belarus' (Warsaw, 2 February 2011), organised after the aftermath of the Belarusian December 2010 elections, the EU pledged a total of €17.3 million for immediate assistance and increased support to civil society in the mid-term.

The urgent support (€1.7 million) is being provided through the Instrument for Stability (project managed by the Nordic Council of Ministers) to individual victims of the repression and to civil society organizations.

The mid term measures (€15.6 million) cover the period 2011-2013 and include 4 components:

(a) ENPI-funded Open Europe Scholarship Programme (€ 4 million), for which a Commission Decision was adopted in May 2011;

(b) Allocations under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) for the period 2011 - 2013 (€ 2.6 million) complemented by ENPI top-ups (€1 million);

(c) Allocations under the programme Non State Actors and Local Authorities (NSA & LA) for the period 2011 - 2013 (€6 million) complemented by ENPI top-ups (€2.5 million);

(d) Further support to the EIDHR-funded European Humanities University (€3 million) over the period 2011-2013 complemented by ENPI top-ups (€2 million).

The present action covers the ENPI €1 million contribution to the European Humanities University (EHU).

Education is one of the most important areas in laying the foundations for democracy, and the European Union fully acknowledges the key role of Belarusian young people in the democratisation process in Belarus. Since 2005, the European

Union has given sustained support to Belarusian civil society in general and to the higher education sector in particular. The European Humanities University in exile plays an essential role in this regard, in particular given the political context prevailing since the Presidential elections held in December 2010. It is currently the only independent Belarusian university that allows Belarusian students to study such disciplines as Political Sciences and European Studies, Communication and Media, International and European Law (including Human Rights Law), Belarusian studies, Cultural Studies, Democracy and Civil Society, Social and Political Philosophy, Modern Art, etc, without political interference. The political value of the EHU is therefore evident so long as the current situation in Belarus prevails. In coordination with other donors, the European Union has agreed to provide support to the EHU through a dedicated multi-donor Trust Fund, which was set up and is managed by the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). Its aim is to help the EHU fulfil its educational and democratisation mission through financial support with a view to the university becoming self-sustainable in the future. The Trust Fund has become the main mechanism for channelling the financial contributions of the international donor community to the EHU. In addition to the EU and 12 EU Member States, also the NCM, the United States, Norway and the MacArthur Foundation (a private US foundation) give donations through the Trust Fund.

2.2. Lessons learnt

In the increasingly difficult economic and thus social situation that the Belarusian population is facing, more and more young people are recognising the need for obtaining a quality education in order to be able to get a job and thereby sustain their livelihoods.

In this process EHU is becoming increasingly noticed and popular, and as a consequence the number of applicants and admissions for the academic year 2011-2012 has increased significantly (especially for BA programmes).

Despite the growing feeling of fear amongst the general population due to the latest crack-down on any perceived protest against the authorities, EHU students continue to engage in political activities. The regime continues to harass EHU students; several were contacted for questioning during their summer holiday - an indication that the regime sees EHU as a threat and remains opposed to academic freedom and liberal humanities and social sciences education for young people. Students were encouraged by officials to abandon their studies at EHU and were offered places to study at Belarusian universities free of charge.

An important lesson learnt is that continued support to the EHU is crucial in order to ensure the provision of academic quality to Belarusian students. The EHU is developing a strategic plan that will guide its development from 2013 through 2019. It has begun implementation of a long-term campaign to develop a capacity to raise funds independently. While it is unrealistic to expect that private funding can replace governmental support in the near-to-mid-term, the long-term goal of the campaign is to broaden the university's funding base so that it can finance an increasing and substantial proportion of its budget from private sources. The campaign demonstrates EHU's commitment to long-term sustainability and will focus on acquisition and cultivation of mid-to-high-level donors as well as corporate and foundation support.

2.3. Complementary actions

EU Programmes

- Erasmus Mundus Action 1: Joint programmes (masters and doctoral programmes) of outstanding academic quality, including a scholarships scheme. Since the launch of the programme in 2004, 39 Belarusian students have received a scholarship for Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses (6 in 2010 and 4 in 2011);
- Erasmus Mundus Action 2 (previously Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window): partnerships between European and third-country higher education institutions as a basis for structured cooperation, exchange and mobility at all levels. Around 500 Belarusian nationals have taken part in this mobility scheme (2007-2011);
- Tempus, a programme which supports the modernisation of higher education in the EU's surrounding area. Belarus is currently involved in 13 Tempus projects. Tempus supports Belarusian universities to improve their administrative and organisational structures / study programs, promote teacher trainings, student mobility, consultation with entrepreneurial world, cooperation with stakeholders. Through Tempus projects, Belarusian universities develop with the assistance of European experts a number of new Master's degree programs in several fields of study;
- Studies in law, humanities and social sciences at the European Humanities University, the Belarusian university-in-exile in Vilnius, Lithuania, supported by the EU, Nordic Council of Ministers and 15 other donors through the EHU Trust Fund (2.000 students on a constant basis);
- The EU-Nordic Council of Ministers scholarship programme at universities in Ukraine; admission has terminated (currently 29 students still studying);
- Open Europe Scholarship Scheme for young Belarusians to study BA and MA in European universities (implemented by the Nordic Council of Ministers);
- Youth in Action supports cooperation between young people and youth organisations from the EU and its Neighbouring Partner countries by providing non-formal learning opportunities such as youth exchanges, transnational voluntary service and training and networking activities. Each year, several hundred Belarusians are involved in the Youth in Action programme;
- Eastern Partnership Regional Youth Programme. Expected to be launched by end of 2011 or early 2012.

Other donors

- The Polish 'Konstanty Kalinowski Scholarship Programme' at 17 universities in Poland in mainly social sciences (53 Belarusians students admitted in 2010);
- The Visegrad Group Scholarship Programme funded by the International Visegrad Fund, enabling studies in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia;

- Scholarships offered by individual EU Member States.

2.4. Donor coordination

Donor coordination is carried out by the Trust Fund, which ensures consistent support for the EHU by bringing donors' primarily non-earmarked contributions together and which is thus able to identify gaps and avoid overlaps in donors' financing. The Trust Fund is open for financial contributions from all kinds of donors.

An EHU International Board, consisting of donor representatives and other committed individuals, was set up at the initiative of the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) and the McArthur Foundation. The EHU Governance Working Group was commissioned by the EHU International Board in November 2006 to make recommendations on how to establish a Governing Board within the university structure of the EHU. The International Board of Governors was subsequently established in 2007, with the purpose of providing strategic guidance and fiduciary oversight for the EHU. The Board supports EHU management and administration, and works towards maximizing fundraising efforts. An EHU Trust Fund Advisory Committee that will advise the EHU Trust Fund Manager on donor coordination and fundraising is in the process of being established.

In addition, the Commission organises donor coordination meetings on a regular basis both in Brussels and in Belarus. EU Member States, IFIs and other donors such as the US, Canada, Norway and Ukraine take part.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The overall objective of EU support to the EHU Trust Fund is to boost democratic development in Belarus by giving young Belarusians access to independent higher education.

The specific objectives of the project are as follows:

- To give access to higher education to young Belarusians in an environment of academic and political freedom through the EHU;
- To provide education geared specifically to enabling the target group to develop democratic values in Belarus;
- To contribute to the education, housing and subsistence of Belarusian students throughout their studies (max. 4 years);
- To provide sustainable financial support to the EHU by pooling the contributions of the EU and other international donors via a Trust Fund mechanism.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

The project is expected to have the following results:

1. Enable the EHU to provide education and subsistence to Belarusian students deprived of a chance to acquire relevant higher education;
2. Guarantee the long-term sustainability of EHU by pooling the EU funding and the contributions of other donors and encouraging new financial initiatives from the international donor community.

The main activities of the project include running a range of BA and MA degree programmes (spring and autumn semesters in each calendar year) focused on the skills and knowledge necessary for developing democratic institutions, civil society and human rights in Belarus. BA programmes include the following disciplines: social and political philosophy, media and communication, theory and practices of modern art, cultural heritage and tourism, media and visual design, political sciences and European studies, and International law. MA programmes include the following disciplines: International law and European law, Social theory and political philosophy, European studies, cultural studies, democracy and civil society, preservation and interpretation of cultural heritage, comparative history of North-Eastern Europe, public policy, and MBA

3.3. Stakeholders

The beneficiaries of the project are the Belarusian students. The main stakeholders are the EHU donor community (EU Member States, international organisations, NGOs and other countries, including the US), and Belarusian civil society as a whole.

3.4. Risks and assumptions

3.4.1. Risks

- The Belarusian authorities do not officially object to Belarusian students studying abroad, although they do discourage Belarusian students from studying at the EHU. There is a risk that the Belarusian authorities may apply repressive measures, or try to influence the selection of both the students and the Belarusian teaching staff, but this risk has not yet materialised. The EHU has put in place a strict selection procedure methodology which assures that students and staff are able to perform their duties without major obstructions.
- The degrees awarded by the EHU are unlikely to be recognised in Belarus in the current political situation. Therefore, students might face difficulties finding a job related to their qualifications upon their return to Belarus. This risk applies essentially to State-run and institutional organisations; other entities might on the contrary be keen on employing students with up-to-date knowledge and skills. The issue of recognition is mainly linked to political considerations and the fact that Belarus is lagging behind in terms of adapting to the Bologna process standards. It is expected that this gap will be bridged as Belarus moves towards more democratic openness and towards European standards. It is to be noted however that the distance learning section of the EHU allows for several EHU students to study in parallel at Belarusian state universities. Other students take a second degree with the EHU, following a degree with a state university and vice versa. The degrees from state universities can serve as the official degrees when these students apply for work in Belarusian state-run entities.

- The risk of project-funded students not coming back to their home country after they finish their studies is reduced by the fact that they will study in countries neighbouring Belarus, with teaching specific to the Belarusian context and in an expatriate, but Belarusian, environment (staff, academics, etc.). This will enable them to stay in close contact with the home and social networks they had to leave. Most EHU graduates have returned to Belarus and the EHU remains aware of their whereabouts through Alumni and other network systems put in place. The EHU is also able to provide administrative and legal services to (former) students.
- The main challenge in selecting grant-aided students will remain, as sometimes Belarusian students are penalised for political reasons. This challenge is addressed by combining sound political and academic judgment in assessing each applicant, and close cooperation of experts with first-hand knowledge of Belarusian affairs. This will ensure maximum efficiency in selecting the most appropriate applicants.

3.4.2. Assumptions

- Good co-operation within the donor community.
- Appropriate financial contributions from EU Member States, international organisations, other countries and NGOs, politically supporting the EHU.
- Sound and transparent management of donors' funds and transparent flow of information on each donor's contribution.
- Sound and transparent accounts of the EHU.

3.5. Crosscutting Issues

The project will contribute to the development of good governance, human rights and gender equality.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Implementation method

Joint management through the signature of an agreement with the Nordic Council of Ministers in accordance with Article 53d of the Financial Regulation. This international organisation complies with the criteria provided for in the applicable Financial Regulation.

A Standard Contribution Agreement will be used for providing the present ENPI contribution to the Trust Fund managed by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The change of management mode constitutes a substantial change except where the Commission "re-centralises" or reduces the level of tasks previously delegated to the beneficiary country, international organisation or delegate body under, respectively, decentralised, joint or indirect centralised management.

4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures

All contracts implementing the action are awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the relevant International Organisation.

The International Organisation concerned will be required by contract to apply the procurement and grant award principles laid down in Article 43.6 of the Implementing Rules of the Financial Regulation.

4.3. Budget and calendar

The project will have a maximum EU contribution of €1 million for the academic year 2012/2013. The action is envisaged to start in September 2012 for an indicative duration of 12 months.

4.4. Performance monitoring

The project will be monitored according to standard procedures. Project monitoring and evaluation will be based on periodic assessments of progress on delivery of specified project results and towards the achievement of project objectives.

4.5. Evaluation and audit

Evaluations will be based primarily on the full annual report on completion of each academic year, the interim report, and the two audited reports prepared by the Trust Fund for the donors, as scheduled in Article 4.9 of the Terms of Reference of the EHU Trust Fund.

Audits may also be conducted on the systems and procedures used if need be. Audit and evaluation contracts will be concluded by the Commission.

4.6. Communication and visibility

Communication and visibility will be ensured by dissemination activities. A specific communication and visibility plan will be submitted by the International Organisation concerned. Visibility tasks will be carried out according to EU rules and recommendations. They should also be fully in line with the developments in the overall EU/Belarus relations, given the particular politically sensitive context.