



Policy Association for an Open Society

PRESS RELEASE

A network of policy centres in
Central and Eastern Europe and
Central Asia

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EU should "reform civil service grantmaking rules, and prioritise flexible democracy assistance funding," highlights PASOS research

Two PASOS policy briefs examine EU funding of democracy assistance - European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) - and the aspirations of the Visegrad Four countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovak Republic) to emerge as effective players in international democracy assistance.

Brussels/Prague, 16 June 2008– The European Union (EU) can take credit for preparing central European countries for EU integration, but it "continues to be hesitant to invest in democracy and human rights under authoritarian rule and at critical stages of transition," argue the authors of a new PASOS policy brief, ***Is the EU ready to put democracy assistance at the heart of European foreign policy?***

"A values-based approach to human rights must be combined with flexibility and strong support to civil society at all stages of the democratisation process," argue Jeff Lovitt, Executive Director of the Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS), and Vera Řiháčková, Research Fellow, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, Czech Republic. The Visegrad governments, they write, "should support flexible funding initiatives, including the European Foundation for Democracy through Partnership (EFDP), and opt for more flexible, less bureaucratic, and more hands-on European-level approaches to democracy assistance".

The brief's recommendations include the introduction of "substantive changes in the civil service culture" of the EU, and the reform of staff rules to replace the current situation where civil servants have to "choose between the competing goals of budget transparency and flexibility, especially in support to human rights activists working in conditions where strict confidentiality is required". The recommendations also call on the European Parliament to conduct a mid-term evaluation of the effectiveness and utility of the new European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), with a focus on qualitative rather than purely financial evaluation.

Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS)

Chair: Vita Terauda

Executive Director: Jeff Lovitt

PASOS promotes and protects open society values, including democracy, the rule of law, good governance, respect for and protection of human rights, and economic and social development, by supporting entities that individually and jointly foster public participation in public policy issues at the European Union level, in other European structures, and in the wider neighbourhood of Europe and Central Asia.

PASOS is a not-for-profit association registered in the Czech Republic.

EU and Visegrad Four countries should prioritise flexible democracy assistance funding - PASOS press release, 16 June 2008, page 2 of 2

As active new donors in international democracy assistance, the Visegrad Four countries have limited financial resources, but their fresh transition experience brings advantages over the practices of more established European democracies, according to a second PASOS policy brief, ***New kids on the block***, by Jeff Lovitt and Jacek Kucharzyk, Research Director of the Institute of Public Affairs, Poland.

Visegrad governments' democracy assistance budgets have more than doubled in recent years, and have a comparative advantage, argues the report, in assisting neighbouring countries in the European integration process. The Visegrad Four "should continue the peer pressure on target-country politicians for further democratisation, and in the western Balkans and Ukraine remain advocates of the respective countries' European aspirations," according to the report.

The authors argue that Visegrad governments and Visegrad non-governmental organisations should build sustainable partnerships with local actors in target countries of their democracy assistance, provide matching funds for grants from larger donors, including the EU, and consider setting up a Visegrad Democracy Fund to operate on national or regional level.

New kids on the block includes a set of general recommendations for the Visegrad countries, and specific recommendations for Visegrad governments and Visegrad non-governmental organisations' practices in four target countries, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cuba, and Ukraine, the four target countries of the PASOS research project, *Evaluation of the Democracy Assistance Policies and Priorities of the Visegrad Countries*. This project involves the PASOS members: EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, Czech Republic, Center for Policy Studies at the Central European University, Hungary, Institute of Public Affairs, Poland, and Institute for Public Affairs, Slovak Republic.

PASOS is a network of 36 independent think-tanks spanning 23 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

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The full policy briefs are available for download at www.pasos.org

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