

# ICPS newsletter<sup>®</sup>

## A country's ethnic diversity can be a development asset

***Achieving the harmonious coexistence of diverse peoples should not mean forcing minorities to follow the tune of the majority. Good diversity management can help everyone, minorities and majorities alike, reap the full benefit of living in a society made up of many different kinds of people. If a government is to manage diversity well, it must overcome discrimination and prevent marginalization. The new issue of Local Governance Brief coming out next week aims to raise awareness of the principles of good diversity management and highlights some successful practices in the field***

Over the past few years, the notion of diversity has taken on new significance. Across the globe, it is linked to fears of instability, conflict and terrorism. In the former communist states, discord between diverse groups has fueled wars and other violent acts. Yet, when managed properly, diversity is an asset.

Diversity management involves more than just addressing the violence that makes headlines. Recognition, participation, transparency, integration, and other strategies of good governance, can encourage a peaceful, diverse society while also increasing trust in the legitimacy of government.

Every country in this region is dealing with the challenge of improving the way diverse groups live together, and much of this work is focused on the local level.

The Autumn issue of *Local Governance Brief* addressed how local governments and public administrations can develop strategies to reduce the problems that can emerge from diversity and thus turn it into a source of community strength and vitality. Effective diversity management at the local level helps everyone enjoy the positive aspects of the various cultures that make up their society.

Alongside articles about the principles of diversity management, *Local Governance Brief* includes interviews with minority activists, who talk about their experience putting these principles into practice. The publication also presents case studies of different approaches to diversity management, including decentralization, special language rights, training for public administrators, and the use of an ombudsperson.

Coping with diversity is a key managerial competency, and one that is especially important for local governments. The local level is where minority and majority communities have the most contact with government—and with each other. The local level is also where it can most easily be seen that equality is in the interest of both groups. By combating discrimination and ensuring inclusion for all groups in society, local actors can help turn diversity into an asset that contributes to the political and economic development of the community and the nation.

### Rejecting myths about diversity

In its 2004 Human Development Report, a regular report that uses empirical evidence from around the world to measure development, the UNDP chose to focus on the theme, "Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World."

A key conclusion reached by the report is that cultural liberty—where culture is broadly understood to include ethnic, racial, religious, or linguistic identities—is essential to human development. In advocating freedom for everyone to enjoy their own culture, the report rejects five myths about diversity that have had a negative influence on policymaking:

- *Myth 1: Ethnic identities compete with people's attachment to the state.* Religion, race, ethnicity, language, and citizenship are not mutually exclusive. Individuals have multiple and complementary identities. National cohesion does not need the "imposition of a single identity." In fact, Belgium and Spain constitutionally recognize multiple identities.

- *Myth 2: Ethnic groups are prone to violent conflict with each other in clashes of values.* Studies show that cultural differences are not the cause of conflicts. Although cultural identity may drive political mobilization, the root causes are usually inequalities, struggles for assets, and political, socioeconomic, or cultural exclusion.

- *Myth 3: Cultural liberties involve defending traditional practices, so they are incompatible with human development priorities.* Cultural liberties are about expanding choices, not conserving cultures. These liberties allow "people to live as they choose, with adequate opportunity to consider other options."

- *Myth 4: Ethnically diverse communities are less able to develop.* There is no evidence to support a direct link between diversity and development. Still, diversity is sometimes blamed for "poor political decision-making that followed ethnic, not national interests."

- *Myth 5: Some cultures have inherent democratic values and ability to thrive economically, while others do not.* There is no evidence to support this belief, which disregards "the fact that, while there can be a great continuity in values and traditions in societies, they are rarely homogeneous," and all of them undergo "shifts in values."

According to the report, development requires policies that reject these myths and promote cultural liberty. This report is available on-line at: <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004/>.

### Ten steps to fight discrimination

A European Union report that highlights successful techniques for combating discrimination proposes 10 basic principles of good practice. Produced by the European Anti-Discrimination Exchange Project, the guide is based on the experiences of eight European partner municipalities that experimented with various policies and projects. The principles below, outlined in

the 2001 guide, are recommended to any municipality that wants to go beyond a limited conception of equality. They can also help municipalities take a proactive approach to the EU Equality Directives of 2000.

**1. Incorporating new legislation.** Complying with EU anti-discrimination legislation involves non-discrimination in recruitment, promotion, and training opportunities for local government staff, as well as non-discrimination in service delivery. Local governments can get help with this from local specialist agencies. Examples include partnership with local anti-discrimination offices in Barcelona, Spain, and the Complaint Bank in Antwerp, Belgium.

**2. Promoting equal opportunity policies.** This principle can be followed through policies aimed at removing obstacles to employing members of vulnerable groups.

It can also be accomplished with efforts to increase employment of these groups in public organizations and private companies by setting targets and outreach advertising or by imposing non-discrimination through contract compliance. One example is the targeted recruitment campaign for ethnic minorities in The Hague.

**3. Disseminating information and raising awareness.** Municipalities have a duty to publicize and explain the scope of the directives to all of their staff and to citizens and organizations. For example, at the municipal help-desk in Malmo, Sweden, staff can give information, guidance, and services in more than 12 of the languages used by the local population.

**4. Including the perspective of discriminated groups through dialog, consultation, and partnership.** This inclusion should be encouraged at all stages of policy development, for it has real bearing on policy responsiveness. In Spain, Barcelona's six advisory councils, for example, are considered key elements in facilitating the social participation of vulnerable groups. The councils have a say in all stages of social policy development.

**5. Promoting participation and empowerment.** It is worth noting that inclusion of different discriminated groups is difficult to achieve with a uniform policy. Participation must involve empowerment of these groups. In Britain, the Birmingham community auditors are a good example of a mechanism intended to ensure the effective delivery of the community agenda to different municipal forums, which jointly work on developing plans to modify service provision and delivery in light of race equality.

**6. Documenting discrimination issues and promoting better understanding of anti-**

## Political Commentary, March 2005

Viktor Yushchenko began his presidency with the arrest of the murderers of Georgiy Gongadze and announcements that sale agreements for the country's largest assets were going to be declared void. In this way, Ukraine's new President is indicating determination to live up to his campaign slogan about honest government. The problem is that his team still does not have any concrete plans as to how it will institute the much-promised democratic and market reforms. The Party of the Regions, together with the Communist Party and the SDPU (o), has gone into the opposition under a pro-Russian, socialistic banner. In response, Mr. Yushchenko decided to consolidate his supporters into a single party prior to the next Verkhovna Rada elections.

The EU has signed its Plan of Action to 2007 with Ukraine, which contains a stronger commitment to negotiate the setting up of a Free Trade Area and to ease the visa regime. In response, Ukraine has become more realistic about the idea of immediately applying for membership. The US responded calmly to Ukraine's declaration that it would be gradually moving its peacekeepers out of Iraq and offered its help in joining NATO. Russia is looking on with concern as Ukraine's new leader indicates his desire to reconsider

discrimination work. A mechanism for documenting direct and indirect discrimination will help in developing effective remedies. An example from Newcastle, England, is the Special Investigation Unit of the Northumbria Police, which deals with victims of domestic violence and racist incidents.

**7. Encouraging positive leadership.** Local-level political commitment and leadership are essential for effective anti-discrimination work, so administrators need to know they are fully supported. In Belgium, Antwerp's political leaders did this with a positive policy statement on equal opportunities.

**8. Promoting training in anti-discrimination work.** Municipal workers and others need training. A good example is the Municipality of Bologna training course on intercultural mediation for foreign women of nine different nationalities. The course was organized within the social welfare and health care services, and participants managed pilot projects.

**9. Monitoring.** Although collecting data on people's religion, ethnicity or sexual preferences may be sensitive in some countries, such data is essential to understanding discrimination and to

participation in the CEA and to revive GUUAM.

The decision to withdraw Ukraine's contingent from Iraq fulfills yet another of Viktor Yushchenko's campaign promises. The start of a movement to reduce the number of state committees looks like a substitute for much-needed administrative reform. The Government is pushing for a wide-scale review of major privatizations and is dropping tax exemptions that had been granted to individual corporations. However, because there is not enough money in the Budget to pay out the pensions that the previous Government had raised, the current Cabinet is being forced to borrow money. This looks fairly negative against a background of accelerating inflation and slowing economic growth.

*Political Commentary is a monthly publication by ICPS that facilitates investor assessments of political risks in Ukraine.*

*If you would like to subscribe to the Political Commentary, contact Andriy Starynskiy by telephone at (380-44) 236-4477 or via e-mail at [marketing@icps.kiev.ua](mailto:marketing@icps.kiev.ua).*

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monitoring anti-discrimination policies. Malmo, Sweden, for example, monitors the ethnic make-up of local government staff and surveys those receiving services.

**10. Mainstreaming anti-discrimination work.** Mainstreaming, according to the guide, "involves the systematic integration of diversity, equality and an anti-discrimination perspective into all areas of policy at all organizational levels and at all stages of policy development. It goes hand-in-hand with transparent procedures." ■

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**icps newsletter** editor Yevhen Shulha ([shulha@icps.kiev.ua](mailto:shulha@icps.kiev.ua)). Phone: (380-44) 236-4477.

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