



## Press Release

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### Eliminating torture and the death penalty: EU funds “must be better targeted”, say auditors

**EU money spent on projects aimed at eliminating torture and the death penalty around the world needs to be better targeted, according to a new report by the European Court of Auditors. Projects receiving EU support are having an impact, say the auditors. But too often they are not well targeted and have limited scope because funding is thinly spread.**

The EU is strongly committed to preventing and eradicating all forms of torture and other ill treatment as well as to abolishing the death penalty throughout the world. The Union works through diplomatic channels and provides grants to NGOs through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Between 2007 and 2013, there were some 180 EIDHR grants totalling over €100M aimed at fighting torture and abolishing the death penalty.

The auditors focused on how the funding was allocated and whether sustainable results were achieved. They examined 31 projects, with visits to the United Kingdom, Democratic Republic of Congo, Georgia and South Africa and desk reviews of projects in China and the United States. They found that while funding was generally well allocated, the Commission did not take sufficient account of the human rights priorities for each country. Projects were often not well coordinated with other EU action, such as development support and political dialogue. Projects were generally implemented by motivated organisations with good expertise, but their selection lacked rigour.

*“Despite efforts by the international community, torture persists and 58 countries still have the death penalty,” says Mr Klaus-Heiner Lehne, the Member of the Court of Auditors responsible for the report. “EU funding in this area is only modest and is spread thinly around the world, so the money available has to be spent effectively”.*

Although projects were generally cost effective and sustainable, the systems for measuring impacts were rather weak, says the report. Projects providing direct assistance to victims had tangible impacts, but were limited to relatively small target groups. Projects aimed at legislative or policy reform were hampered by unfavourable political contexts. For example, a project that

*The purpose of this press release is to give the main messages of the special report adopted by the European Court of Auditors. The full report can be found at [www.eca.europa.eu](http://www.eca.europa.eu)*

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addressed the death penalty in 17 countries successfully increased public awareness, promoted transparency, enhanced networks and coalitions, and increased civil society capacity. But it was less successful when it came to the more substantial objectives of abolishing the death penalty or at least establishing moratoriums on executions.

The NGOs supported remain very dependent on financial support and only a few projects included activities to make them more self-sustainable.

In their report, the auditors make a number of recommendations covering the targeting of financial resources, better coordination with other EU efforts, selection and improvement of project proposals, performance measurement and the self-sustainability of beneficiary organisations.

### **Notes to Editors**

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) provides support for promoting democracy and human rights in non-EU countries. For the 2007-2013 period the EIDHR has been granted an overall budget of 1.1 billion euro. Most EIDHR funding is disbursed in the form of grants that are awarded to civil society organisations for the purpose of implementing projects. The EIDHR is the main instrument for promoting the prevention of torture, the rehabilitation of victims of torture and the abolition of the death penalty.

### **ECA recommendations in brief:**

1. Target modest resources better;
2. Improve coordination with other EU action;
3. Improve projects' selection;
4. Better use the possibilities for improving project proposals where assessors have identified design weaknesses;
5. Develop the performance measurement framework further;
6. Focus more on improving the sustainability of beneficiary organisations.