

# Addressing post-conflict situations through confidence-building measures

## I. In brief

Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) constitute the operational support to the political dialogue the international community strives to facilitate in post- or frozen- conflict areas. The Council of Europe is the oldest European Organisation, with 47 member States, including those located in particularly sensitive regions such as the Balkans and the Caucasus. Created in 1949, its core activities concentrate on the respect of human rights, the rule of law principle and democracy. Both its mandate and its geographical span thus make it particularly well suited for the implementation of CBMs. It provides a neutral and expertise-based framework for the implementation of CBMs acceptable to all parties involved.

## II. Background

Devised as a tool to establish bridges between population groups to consolidate stability, CBMs belong to the democracy pillar of the Council of Europe work programme. The thematic content of these activities spread over the entire work programme and cover a range of topics from human rights to education, social and media issues. They follow-up and complement the work of the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe, as well as the political debates held within the Committee of Ministers and PACE.

Many regions of Europe suffer from the consequences of recent or frozen conflicts. After the ceasefire, entire countries need to be rebuilt, not only as far as infrastructures are concerned but also in terms of society: notably political, educational, media, cultural and social

institutions need to be redesigned to provide a framework where reconciliation of society can take place and democracy truly work. This reconciliation can only take place if a sufficient level of mutual trust is created between those parts of the population which were formerly opposed.

Confidence Building Measures designed and implemented by the Council of Europe are carried out with the full backing of the country(ies) concerned and aim at creating this required level of mutual trust, by addressing concerns common to the entire population and pointing at their common future rather than emphasising their divided past.

## III. Comparative advantages and added value

The Council of Europe through its intergovernmental work among the 47 member States elaborates conventions and other legal texts which define numerous human rights and rule of law standards, to which member States are bound. A variety of monitoring mechanisms follow up the compliance by member States with these standards which constitute the basis for European democracies. These standards and the recommendations by the relevant monitoring mechanisms constitute the benchmarks used for the implementation of the CBMs programme.

The major and most relevant Conventions in the context of CBMs are:

- The European Convention for Human Rights
- The European Social Charter
- The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
- The Charter for regional and Minority languages
- The Convention for the prevention of torture and inhuman or degrading treatments
- The Biomedicine Convention

- European Charter on Local Self-Government

The Council of Europe has wide knowledge of the situation in the regions at stake, notably because of the long-standing membership of the states involved and of the presence in their capitals of a Council of Europe Office.

The shortcomings identified through the monitoring mechanisms are addressed through bilateral assistance programmes: CBMs are one of these programmes.

Not only do the experts involved in the technical assistance projects have extensive international experience, they often have local knowledge of the area in which the assistance is carried out. They are briefed before and during the project and keep in constant contact with the Council of Europe's secretariat or, in some cases, are accompanied by a member of the secretariat during their mission. This allows the control and sustainability of the projects to be maintained. The projects may also be implemented by local Council of Europe staff in the field offices.

Moreover, the Council of Europe's Schools of Political Studies' have proven their ability to deliver confidence building measures through their activities within individual countries and through bilateral and regional activities.

#### IV. Geographic contextualisation

**The Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova:** The armed conflict of the early 90s and the resulting separation of the Transnistria region from the rest of the Republic of Moldova had serious negative consequences on the effective exercise of human rights by the population on both sides of the river Nistru/Dniestr. In addition, the twenty year separation adversely affected contacts and exchanges between the population on both sides and hence the level of mutual knowledge, trust and cooperation. At the request

of the Moldovan authorities, the overall objective of the programme is to establish a dialogue between different components of the population on both sides of the river Nistru/Dniestr, namely professional groups, decision makers or pressure groups and to increase awareness of European and international standards in the region.

Since 2008, the Council of Europe has been implementing a series of CBMs between the two sides of the river Nistru/Dniestr in the areas of media, education and civil society. The programme relies on a strong partnership with governmental institutions in Chisinau, as well as the facto authorities in Tiraspol, and local NGOs, identified because of their specific experience and their previous cooperation record with the CoE. Equality, transparency and dialogue are the three principles on which the implementation of CBMs is based.

Another important objective of this programme is to increase awareness and better knowledge of international and European standards in the fields of human rights and rule of law as a basis for the development of policies and practices in line with European standards.

The main target groups are professionals from both sides of the river Nistru/Dniestr, civil society especially small local NGOs active in the social field, local authorities and Human Rights institutions. The ultimate beneficiary is the entire population of Moldova. The local project partners will be the Ministry of Reintegration, the de facto MFA in Tiraspol and other de facto authorities as identified by the de facto MFA, local NGOs on both sides of the river, media professionals, the ombudsman offices in Chisinau and Tiraspol.

**Programme on the consequences of the 2008 conflict in Georgia:** The negative consequences for the human rights of the population in Abkhazia and South Ossetia of the 2008 conflict has been a main concern of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe who instructed the Secretary General to submit a report every six months on this issues, including proposals for

CBMs. In November 2010 in Istanbul (Turkey) the first activity was implemented for journalists on the balanced coverage of politically sensitive events and was followed in June 2011 in Kyiv (Ukraine) by a second capacity building seminar with a more concrete, Georgia related approach. In September 2011 in Kyiv (Ukraine), a training seminar for higher education teachers on the use of new technologies for intercultural education was held and follow-up in September 2012 in Lvov (Ukraine) by a second seminar for teacher trainers on training of teachers for an intercultural. In 2011, a set of seven human rights related texts were translated into Russian, Georgian and Abkhaz, and distributed to a dozen of libraries and information centres in Abkhazia. In August 2012 in Sinop (Turkey) a meeting between young artists was held to prepare a possible common exhibition in 2013. Other activities planned include a seminar for health practitioners on patients' rights, a training of NGOs working with young people on drug prevention, the elaboration of a programme for the joint rehabilitation of a cultural heritage site.

**Cyprus:** Young leaders with a high multiplier potential coming from both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities were brought together to discuss questions of common interest for the island, such as water supply, migrations, media or youth. Each year for three years, a group of forty young leaders was chosen according to criteria to ensure representation of all the different political trends in their respective community, to attend a cycle of four seminars. At the end of the project 120 young people had attended and were brought together at two alumni meetings, one in Athens and one in Istanbul to discuss Europe related topics. This programme was jointly financed with the EU.

**South East Europe:** A series of multi-ethnic summer camps for children or young people have been organised since 2009 to foster inter-ethnic dialogue among participants from particularly sensitive areas like Srebrenica/Bratunac, 18

different municipalities in Kosovo\*, and from several locations in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". The camps offered both sport and art activities over a period from one to two weeks. The main aim of the camps is to fight social pressure and stereotypes not only concerning ethnicity but also gender, to support the rights of young women.

## V. Contacts

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\* All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.