

Editors' Preface

With the present series "Comparative Case Studies on the Effectiveness of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities," we are publishing the results of five country studies on Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, Macedonia and Romania of the project "On the Effectiveness of the OSCE Minority Regime. Comparative Case Studies on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) of the OSCE". A comparative analysis on the differing success rates and conditions of the High Commissioner's facilitation and mediation efforts in these countries will follow.

The High Commissioner project was a challenging and fascinating task for several reasons. First, we had to deal with a new instrument of crisis prevention, one of the most innovative developments resulting from the international community's reaction to the shocking and, for most of us, surprising new reality of inter-ethnic conflict and war after the end of the East-West confrontation. When the High Commissioner's mandate was adopted, there was little experience with how to deal with this kind of conflict. And when we started the project in 1999, there was no empirical in-depth analysis on the High Commissioner's work. Thus, we found a rather empty field and had to start from scratch.

Second, we had the privilege to take a closer look at the work of Max van der Stoel, the first incumbent of this new institution. When he took office, nearly everything that today makes the High Commissioner - sufficient funds, advisers, working instruments, contacts, experience - was not yet in place. It was fascinating to follow the straight-forward way in which this great European statesman used the raw material of the mandate and his experience of a whole life devoted to peace and human rights to frame the institution of the High Commissioner as we know it today: an established and overall respected institution of European crisis prevention. Max van der Stoel and his advisers in The Hague have shown vivid interest in our project; they have encouraged us and have always been ready to answer our questions. We are very grateful for all their help.

Third, it was a great pleasure for us to work with a team of young, motivated and talented academics in the countries analysed: with Dr. Teuta Arifi in Macedonia, Jekaterina Dorodnova in Latvia, István Horváth in Romania, Dr. Volodymyr Kulyk in Ukraine, and Margit Sarv in Estonia. They not only collected and analysed piles of materials in eight languages to draft reports into a ninth one, but more importantly, they enriched the project with their specific experiences, avenues of access and points of view to an extent which would have never been achievable without them. We want to thank all of them for years of work and devotion.

We are also very grateful to Klemens Büscher, who worked with the project's Hamburg staff from the beginning of 1999 to mid-2000. The project owes very much to his superb expertise and analytical skills. And we want to warmly thank Kim Bennett, Jeffrey Hathaway, Katri Kemppainen and Veronica Trespacios who have polished about 700 pages of English-language text written by non-native speakers.

Last, but by no means least, we are especially grateful to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, whose generous grant, first of all, enabled us to carry out this demanding and rewarding research.

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The editors