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THE COUNCIL**

Report on the interim evaluation of the «Daphne III Programme 2007 – 2013 »

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1. INTRODUCTION

The present interim evaluation of the Daphne III programme aims at providing an insight into the results achieved so far by the programme and the qualitative and quantitative aspects of its implementation. The obligation to submit this evaluation to the European Parliament and the Council is expressed in Article 15 of the legal base of the Daphne III programme¹.

The evaluation of the programme was carried out by the Commission with the support of an independent external evaluator². It focused on the results obtained so far by the programme and the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation of Daphne III³.

The Commission has undertaken an in-depth analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Daphne III programme concerning:

- (1) How to improve the implementation during the reminder of the current programme; and,
- (2) How to improve the design of the programme in view of the "successor programme".

More specifically the evaluation of the programme assessed:

- (1) The relevance in terms of the programme's objectives and approach including, whether the objectives are pertinent to the needs and problems of the target groups, the priorities responsive to the policy developments, and whether the programme provides an EU added value and ensures synergies with other programmes;
- (2) The effectiveness of the programme, understood as the extent to which the programme is successful in achieving its objectives and creating trans-national partnerships, and what the factors affecting the progress are;
- (3) The efficiency of the programme referring to the extent to which the Commission and the funded organisations have made the best use of resources – financial, human, technical – to implement the programme and activities, and to deliver the results.

The Report presents the main findings of the evaluation, conclusions and the recommendations for the remaining period of the implementation of the Daphne III programme.

¹ Decision No 779/2007/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2007; OJ L 173/19 of 3 July 2007

² The study was prepared by the European Policy Evaluation Consortium.

³ The study undertaken by the independent evaluator was composed of desk research, interviews with Commission officials responsible for Daphne programme and other related programmes, an online survey of the beneficiaries of grants and finally case studies of selected projects.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

2.1. Overview of the Daphne programme

The Daphne III programme 2007-2013 "to prevent and combat violence against women, children and young people and to protect victims and groups at risk" was established by the European Parliament and the Council in 2007 and it builds on and serves as a continuation of the Daphne Initiative and its successors the Daphne I and the Daphne II programmes.

The first Daphne Initiative started already in 1997 as one of the elements of a broad-ranging response of the EU to the cases of trafficking and sexual exploitation of children that had shaken Europe and galvanised public and political opinion.

Recognising the links between violence against women and violence against children and young people, the Daphne Initiative aimed to promote actions to combat violence not only against children, but also against young people and women. This approach was further reflected in the subsequent Daphne programmes.

The general objective of Daphne III is to contribute to the protection of children, young people and women against all forms of violence and to attain a high level of health protection, well-being and social cohesion.

These general objectives contribute to the development of EU policies, in particular those related to public health, human rights and gender equality, as well as actions aimed at the protection of children's rights, and the fight against trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation.

The Daphne III specific objective is to contribute to the prevention of, and the fight against, all forms of violence occurring in the public or the private domain against children, young people and women, including sexual exploitation and trafficking in human beings, by taking preventive measures and by providing support and protection for victims and groups at risk.

By providing necessary funding Daphne III supports the following types of actions:

- (1) Specific transnational projects of EU interest involving at least two Member States (action grants)
- (2) Support to the activities of NGOs or other organisations, pursuing an aim of general European interest (operating grants)
- (3) Specific action taken by the Commission, such as studies and research, opinion polls and surveys, seminars, conferences and experts meetings (Commission initiatives)

The activities financed by Daphne III include assisting and encouraging NGOs active in the field, developing and implementing awareness actions targeting specific audiences, disseminating the results obtained under the Daphne I and the Daphne II programmes or identifying and enhancing actions contributing to positive treatment of people at risk of violence.

The programme also helps setting up and supporting multidisciplinary networks, ensuring the expansion of evidence-based information and the knowledge base, designing educational materials and finally studying phenomena related to violence and its impact.

Daphne III is open to organisations and institutions from EU Member States and EFTA States that are parties to the European Economic Area Agreement (Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway) and is managed centrally by the European Commission, which is responsible for setting the annual priorities, management of the budget, evaluation of the proposals and the conclusion of grants.

2.2. Implementation of the Daphne programme

The total financial envelope foreseen for the Daphne III programme is € 116.85 million for the period 2007-2013 with annual budgets of € 14.2 million in 2007, € 14.7 million in 2008, € 17.8 million in 2009 and € 18.45 million in 2010.

As far as the distribution of the budget is concerned, an average of 80 % of funds is allocated each year for Action Grants, 14 % for Operating Grants and 5 % for Commission initiatives.

Since 2007 the Commission has published 3 calls for proposals for Action Grants and 4 calls for proposals for Operating Grants and has contracted 14 Commission initiatives through public procurement procedures.

The calls published by the Commission attracted a great number of proposals. For Action Grants the Commission received and evaluated until now 697 proposals submitted by partnerships of organisations from at least two Member States. Following the assessment of formal criteria and the merits of the proposals, the Commission has funded 165 trans-national projects.

For Operating Grants the Commission received 112 proposals in total (including an on-going selection) and has funded 29 of those after an assessment of their quality.

The Commission finances up to 80% of the total cost and sets the ceilings for the amount of the grant. In case of Action Grants the minimum amount of a grant is € 75.000 while the maximum is € 600.000, whereas for Operating Grants there is only the upper limit of € 300.000.

Therefore, the budget of the Daphne III programme allows funding of an average of 41 Action Grants and 10 Operating Grants per year with the average amount of EU grant of € 362.000 and € 175.000 respectively (2009 figures).

Out of the 194 projects funded until now (Action Grants and Operating Grants) 55 aim to fight violence against women, 57 violence against children, 27 violence against young people, whereas 55 projects are addressing more than one form of violence. A wide range of activities are carried out by the funded projects, which usually address more than one specific objectives or priorities of the programme. The most common deliverables are the production of materials, such as leaflets, booklets, guides and websites; the dissemination of good practices; trainings; and conferences or seminars. Other deliverables include academic publications, other research products and the setting up of public debates.

3. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE INTERIM EVALUATION

3.1. Relevance

The evaluation concludes that overall the Daphne III programme is highly relevant to the problems it was designed to address. The level of violence is still prevalent and the demand for the programme is high. Furthermore, the programme objectives – prevent and combat all forms of violence against women, children and young people and develop a EU coordinated action – remain relevant to the ongoing needs of the target groups.

Actions implemented under Daphne III adhere to the programme objectives. According to a mapping of projects in comparison with the programme objectives there is a clear link between the activities that have been, or are being, implemented by the projects and the objectives outlined in the legal basis of the programme. Furthermore, the results of projects often feed into or have influence on policy (at national and EU level). However, the programme could do more to ensure that the results of activities funded by Daphne III are utilised in this way.

In terms of EU-added value, the trans-national nature of the programme means that the different organisations from the Member States cooperate towards reducing violence and benefit from exchange of knowledge and best practices. Furthermore, the programme offers the opportunity to organisations from different Member States to cooperate in preventing types of violence which are specifically trans-national.

At the strategic level, the need to address violence against women, children and young people remains highly relevant, as the problem of violence persists and these issues are as relevant today as they were in 1997, when the Daphne Initiative was adopted. The fact that the objectives remain relevant is further indicated by the high demand for funding through Daphne. On average, only 17.5 % of proposals for Action Grants and 36 % of proposals for Operating Grants can be funded each year.

The scope covered by the Daphne III programme has expanded since the initiation of the Daphne programme to cover violence against a wider target group and in a larger number of forms. This is because, as the programme has funded more projects, different forms of violence have come to light. Highly specific forms of violence covered by ongoing and recently completed projects include violence in kindergartens, "dating violence", abuse of elderly people and violence in intimate teenage relationships.

Violence *per se* is not defined in the legal base for Daphne – on the contrary, it is stipulated that the Daphne III programme covers "all forms of violence"⁴. In this regard, and in view of the expanding scope of target groups and issues covered, some criticism has been raised that the programme objectives may be too broad, and that it may be better to create a more focused programme. Furthermore, there is a risk that fewer projects which focus on trans-national violence will be covered.

The way by which the Commission ensures that the programme remains pertinent to its original objectives whilst allowing for innovation and flexibility is through the adoption of the annual thematic priorities. The thematic priorities act as specific objectives for

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Articles 2 and 3 of the Decision 779/2007/EC establishing the Daphne programme

each annual budget of the programme, and proposals are selected on the basis of their alignment with the priorities.

For example, in 2008 the priorities covered the broader topics of violence in the family and violence against vulnerable groups, but also the extent to which national legislation adheres to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as harmful traditional practices. This allows the programme to target a focused number of issues, while remaining flexible and open to innovation. Nevertheless, proportionally larger number of activities funded fall within the broader objectives. In this respect there may be scope to further narrow or more closely guide the focus of the funded projects.

There is a strong link to policy within the Daphne III programme both at the programme level and at the grassroots project level. It is clear that influencing policy is one of the aims of both. However, while the programme aims to guide policy (as well as reflect it), findings point to the fact that the Commission could do more to use the results of the implemented actions to support policy developments. Individually also, many of the projects implemented under Daphne III have as a goal to influence national or European policies. This is reflected in the survey of the project managers where a vast majority indicated that they would try, or already have, made an impact on policy. For example a Daphne funded organisation is advocating for Europe-wide implementation of a single telephone number scheme to report missing children.

In view of the fact that Daphne III addresses issues relating to gender equality, human rights, protection of children and the health and well being of women, children and young people, the programme has a scope to both complement but also overlap with other programmes both at the EU and national level.

While there might be some overlaps in terms of the target groups and to some extent in the content, Daphne is the only programme which deals specifically with violence against women, children and young people.

This was confirmed in consultations with stakeholders. The great majority of grant beneficiaries indicated that funding for the same type of activities cannot be obtained from other EU programmes, national or international institutions. They also agreed that without the funding of Daphne they would not have been able to implement their planned activities.

As regards to the EU added value, the programme was created in response to two very specific types of violence – paedophilia operating in networks and human trafficking – both of which are trans-national in nature. These two types of violence still form the focus of projects funded through Daphne to date. Specifically, in order to fight these types of violence, cooperation between different countries is essential.

There is also a need for exchange of best practices and investigation of the phenomenon of violence at a Europe-wide level. In particular, partnerships between distinct Member States can increase the knowledge-base of participating organisations and extend the scope of dissemination of projects results.

3.2. Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the Daphne programme refers to the extent to which the programme is successful in achieving its objectives. It could be stated that the Daphne programme has a considerable impact and has managed to make progress towards achieving its objectives.

Actions funded through Daphne III are contributing to the prevention of violence against the target groups, to the exchange of best practices between the Member States, and to policy developments at EU and national level. However, a number of procedural and substantive challenges have been identified which affect progress.

Since its launch as the Daphne Initiative, the programme has expanded in capacity. The budget of the Daphne I programme was € 20 million for a three year funding period; Daphne II had a budget of € 50 million for a four year programme; Daphne III has a budget of over € 116 million. This is reflected in the increase in the number of projects funded in the recent years.

Daphne often provides funding to the same organisation more than once, and this allows organisations to get off the ground and projects to evolve. Actions funded through Daphne have contributed to policy and have produced concrete outputs. More, however, could be done by improving the dissemination of the results of the Daphne programme to a wider audience.

Moreover, the impact of some projects remains questionable because they seem to lack innovation in their approach and the actions proposed, and are highly repetitive. Many applicants tend to concentrate too much on the presentation of the project rather than on the question whether the action would bring any changes to the problem of violence. This approach is further strengthened by the Commission's lack of reliable indicators to measure the impact of any project.

With regard to substantive challenges, involvement of local and national authorities appeared in some cases to be an issue. For example, for the development of some of the project activities the local or national authorities' cooperation was needed. When the level of cooperation or support from these authorities was low, this was a direct factor affecting the progress of the projects.

On a positive note, the creation and maintenance of trans-national partnerships is one of the key achievements of the Daphne programme and it is an element of the programme which has been the most successful in ensuring the EU added value. The data show that each project involves an average of 4-5 partners. Projects rarely involve many more partners, as multiple partnerships are difficult to manage, and it means that the financing is spread too thinly.

However, the evidence suggests that more could be done to promote new partnerships and to ensure that there is a reasonable geographic spread of lead organisations as the participation of organisations from some countries remains limited. This is especially the case for Member States that joined in 2004 and 2007 as the civil society organisations still lack the structures and expertise to compete for funds under Daphne. Organisations from Italy, the United Kingdom, Belgium and Germany are the most frequent project

leaders while there is notable lack of projects from Romania, Czech Republic, Poland and the Baltic countries.

3.3. Efficiency

The efficiency refers to the extent to which the Commission and the funded organisations have made the best use of resources to implement the programme and activities and to deliver the results.

The financial resources currently provided by the programme to implement actions are appropriate in that they allow high quality projects to be funded and at the same time the ratio of success in project selection ensures the significant competition among projects.

The majority of the grant beneficiaries confirmed during the survey and interviews that the financial resources available for the selected projects allowed them to produce the planned results. At the same time a suggestion was made that perhaps a change in the scale of projects should be considered. More specifically, funding of fewer but large-scale projects could be more efficient, provide better value for money and bring results with a significant impact.

The Commission makes funding available in the form of Action Grants (to finance specific trans-national projects) and Operating Grants (to support the day-to-day running costs of organisations active in the field). The percentage of budget available for Operating Grants and the number of organisations that would be eligible for this type of funding (are active at the European level) is however rather low. For this reason it was indicated that perhaps all funding should be concentrated on Action Grants only, which would reduce the administrative burden related to a separate selection process. Also greater use could be made of Commission initiatives to support the programme administration and the dissemination of results.

Regarding the application process, significant changes were introduced to facilitate the Daphne application process. Firstly, the Commission has introduced an electronic system of project submission through the PRIAMOS on-line tool. Secondly, an "online chat" was made available, through which the applicants could address queries to the Commission in an open forum which all the applicants could see. Thirdly, the application forms were changed to focus the evaluation process on the final results and outputs of the projects. Generally, the feedback from the grant beneficiaries shows that the application process is appropriate, although further efforts should be taken to reduce the administrative burden.

However, the evidence gathered suggests that the period between the project submission and the conclusion of contracts is too long and this has a negative impact. This is especially valid for the Operating Grants, where the funding was provided some months already into the financial year for which the funding was granted causing difficulties in implementing activities.

3.4. Sustainability

Sustainability refers to the extent to which the partnerships, actions and their outputs will continue once the EU funding has ended and will bring a sustained impact on the target groups.

It became evident that many projects rely heavily on EU funding to implement activities and to achieve impacts on the ground. In particular, a significant amount of grant beneficiaries under Daphne III had previously received EU funding and many were implementing activities under Daphne which were a continuation of those implemented under earlier funding. While this can be regarded as a weakness of the programme, it has to be underlined that the Daphne programme is often considered "unique" in its scope and, while other resources may be available, they may not be as appropriate as Daphne.

Moreover, the creation of stable partnerships is an important component of Daphne III. As with other EU programmes, Action Grants are awarded to organisations which have specifically formed transnational partnerships in order to implement their proposed actions. Indeed, the Daphne III programme frequently produces successful partnerships. According to the feedback from grant beneficiaries, the vast majority of partnerships are likely to continue cooperation in a structured manner.

Thus, the Daphne III programme allows organisations to establish future contacts and networks and this has been highlighted as one of the benefits of including partners from other countries. The types of activities funded under Daphne – for example exchange of best practices, support for networks for the protection of women and children, European level help-lines, and comparative European research – function better when undertaken by the trans-national partnerships. It could be emphasised that the creation of strong and sustainable partnerships is the key success of projects under Daphne III.

The extent to which the outputs of the projects will be sustainable and the needs of the target groups will continue to be met depends to a large degree on the activities which have been implemented under the projects, and the type of outputs and impacts resulting from these activities.

The analysis of the implemented activities suggests that projects funded under Daphne III have implemented some structures which will continue to support target groups in the longer term. On the other hand, activities which cater to the immediate and direct needs of the target groups may depend on the continued funding. However, the case studies conducted for the selected projects indicate that some implemented actions have already brought concrete results which are very likely to be sustainable over a long period.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In response to challenges and issues identified during the programme evaluation, the Commission plans to implement the following measures in order to strengthen the impact of the programme and improve its implementation.

4.1. Improved focus on EU policy priorities

Although the general and specific priorities of the programme remain relevant and the programme is very responsive to new developments through the adoption of annual priorities, the evaluation suggests that the Daphne III programme risks moving away from its main focus and target groups and in this respect could risk causing overlap with other EU programmes. The programme could also do more to achieve stronger links with current policy developments.

The Commission will continue to steer Daphne III through the adoption of annual priorities, but it will focus on a short list of priorities of particular importance. In this respect, the annual priorities will make the programme both flexible and responsive to evolving problems and needs. This will ensure that the Daphne III programme remains an important policy tool, both developing new ideas and best practices and influencing the policy-making across Europe.

To achieve stronger impact, the Commission will also consider adjusting the scale of funded projects, thus financing those that bring an important EU added value and produce widely disseminated outputs.

More focused annual priorities will also allow avoiding any possible overlaps with other sources of funding available through EU programmes such as PROGRESS, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship and Prevention and Fight against Crime programmes. It has to be noted that, although currently there are some similarities in terms of content and activities between Daphne and other EU programmes, in general these represent synergies rather than overlaps.

At the same time the Commission will still leave a possibility to finance new and innovative projects outside the annual priorities. The programme should remain open to new ideas on how to combat and prevent violence against women, children and young people and the organisations applying for funding should have an opportunity to develop and present innovative projects. The number of projects funded outside priorities will nevertheless remain limited to ensure focus on annual priorities.

4.2. Better dissemination and sustainability of projects' results

The evaluation of the Daphne III programme found out that more could be done to disseminate the results of the funded projects. The Commission will take measures to strengthen the impact of projects and their sustainability. First of all, the Commission will further focus the evaluation of projects and the design of the calls on the results and the outputs of the funded actions. This result-oriented approach will ensure that the available funds will be spent only on projects which really contribute to the objectives of Daphne and bring an important added value.

Secondly, funding fewer but bigger projects could also be a solution to improve sustainability as generally bigger actions have better chances of being properly disseminated. The Commission will also further raise the profile of the "Daphne brand" which, as mentioned on many occasions by the grant beneficiaries, gives the projects an important credibility contributing towards better impact and sustainability.

Finally, the Commission will make use of some other tools to improve the availability of information about the Daphne funded projects, such as the improvement and update of the "Daphne toolkit" website and funding specific projects which focus only on the dissemination of results obtained so far by the consecutive Daphne programmes.

4.3. Balanced participation in the Daphne programme

The participation in the Daphne programme is not equal among Member States. There is a notable lack of applicants from Central and East European countries.

The Commission will step up efforts to raise the profile of Daphne in countries where the participation of organisations is lower than the average. This could include a targeted information campaign consisting of information meetings and distribution of Daphne booklets.

Possibilities of cooperation with national and regional authorities to disseminate information on the programme will also be explored. This is particularly important as due to the moderate size of the programme the Commission cannot always directly reach potential beneficiaries and therefore needs to rely on other measures to communicate with organisations interested in the Daphne programme.

To this end, the Commission could involve more Member States in the Daphne Programme Committee to disseminate relevant information to civil society organisations in the Member States.

4.4. More efficient management of the Daphne programme

According to the information provided by the grant beneficiaries, there is a need for more efficient management of the programme in terms of timing and support provided by the Commission to applicants and grant beneficiaries. Some measures have already been taken to improve the application process. These are the introduction of the electronic system of application (PRIAMOS), new application forms that concentrate on the results of projects and the on-line chat to provide support at the application stage.

The Commission will take further measures to reduce the time between the publication of the calls and the conclusion of contracts, especially for Operating Grants which are awarded only for a given budgetary year.

It has to be also noted that the large number of grants awarded and, consequently, the number of final evaluations and the extent of support requested by the grant beneficiaries create a constantly increasing workload. In order to improve the efficiency of the management of Daphne, the Commission would identify solutions to achieve economies of scale, improving at the same time the impact of projects funded under the Daphne III programme.

4.5. Conclusions

The evaluation confirms the overall success of the Daphne programme in achieving its objectives. Since 2007 the Daphne III programme has been funding nearly 200 projects contributing to the prevention of, and the fight against, all forms of violence occurring in the public or the private domain against children, young people and women, including

sexual exploitation and trafficking in human beings, by taking preventive measures and by providing support and protection for victims and groups at risk.

The programme funded successful projects that established European networks, shared best practices, produced various publications and studied the phenomenon of violence.

The problem of violence remains prevalent and the need for the European response is as important as it was in 1997 when the first Daphne Initiative was established. The demand for funding remains very strong showing how relevant the needs of victims of violence – women, children and young people – are.

In order to improve the reach and impact of the programme the Commission will strengthen the links of the programme with policy developments, ensure balanced participation and improve the dissemination of the results of the projects and the management of the selection process. Lessons learned during this evaluation will be integrated into the reflection and preparatory work for the next multiannual financial framework.