

THE 'NAPAP' PROJECT: "N.G.O.s & POLICE AGAINST PREJUDICE"

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An innovative EU-funded project focussing on policing and racism has been operating across Europe over the past two years. The NAPAP Project, “NGOs And Police Against Prejudice”, has been a transnational project funded by the European Commission (DGV) to enable NGOs to develop innovative training for the police to function more effectively in a multi-ethnic society.

The project provided funding support for ‘local projects’ to undertake local, regional or national-level initiatives; and for establishing a transnational partnership between these projects for the exchange of experience and mutual learning, and the joint production of a ‘European State of the Art Report’. Eleven local projects were established in nine European countries: Austria, Belgium (French-/Dutch-speaking), Denmark, France, Germany (Berlin/Frankfurt), Italy, Netherlands, Spain and the UK. In each case the task of the NGO was to secure an appropriate police partner (such as a municipal police body or a national police academy), and then jointly develop and implement appropriate training programmes.

In some countries, to provide training on discrimination and multi-cultural issues was a very new activity for the police, as was any form of close cooperation with NGOs. In such cases, the projects tended to be experimental in character, often meeting initial suspicion and uncertainty on the part of the police. The NGOs on the other hand found that they too had learning to do, both about the precise role and organisation of the police and about the ‘police point of view’. Projects that tried to move ahead too quickly became vulnerable to misunderstandings and other difficulties among the partners. The Catalan/Spanish Project, based in Barcelona at the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia, wisely spent the whole of its first year on careful planning and on developing shared understandings and goals among the various project partners.

In other countries where there was already experience of police training on these issues, the challenge was to develop existing initiatives, or to extend them more widely than before. In the Netherlands, for example, the Rotterdam Anti-Discrimination Council (RADAR) already had extensive experience of developing cooperation with the Rotterdam-Rijnmond Police. It

was this cooperation, incidentally, which had stimulated the genesis at a Europe-wide Conference in 1996 of the 'Rotterdam Charter', entitled "Policing for a Multi-Ethnic Society". The aim of the Dutch NAPAP Project was to extend the Rotterdam model of training programmes to other parts of the Netherlands. The fact that this was more effective in some regions than others highlighted the crucial importance of securing political and high-level organisational support if initiatives in this field are to be successful.

The specific aim of the UK Project has been to develop ways of strengthening the involvement of contributors from the minority ethnic communities in police training on racial and ethnic issues. In Britain, over the past two decades, much progress has already been made in the development of community and race relations training for the police. However, the involvement of 'lay contributors' from the minority ethnic communities, recommended in the original 1983 Police Training Council report on this subject, has been relatively neglected.

The UK Project, which was initially sponsored by the Commission for Racial Equality, was coordinated by Reading Council for Racial Equality. Reading CRE had already established a partnership with the national Police Staff College at Bramshill to involve contributors from local minority ethnic communities in some of its training courses. The UK Project provided for this work to be strengthened and extended to other training programmes at Bramshill, including by increasing recruitment of community contributors, by providing briefing workshops for them, and through the appointment of a part-time Training Coordinator.

A second component within the UK Project has been based at Greenwich Racial Equality Council in south-east London, which entered into partnership with the Metropolitan Police to contribute to training in their local Greenwich Division. This partnership provided for Greenwich REC to contribute to the training of three groups of officers: new recruits, existing officers, and specialist staff in the local 'Community Safety Unit'. As in Reading, community contributors have been recruited, and briefing workshops provided for them. The Greenwich Division covers an area where there has been serious racial tension, involving several racially-motivated murders including that of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence. A major focus in this training has therefore been on improving police performance in dealing with racially-motivated crime.

So far as the transnational dimension of the NAPAP Project was concerned, the main activity was a series of six 'transnational workshops', mostly of two days duration and each hosted by a different local project. The main aim of each was to exchange experience on a specific

aspect of the project (e.g. establishing partnerships, training methods, evaluation), so that learning could be shared, and new ideas generated and implemented.

All the partners felt that having a structured framework for the transnational dimension was an extremely important innovation, which had normally been lacking in previous so-called 'transnational' EU projects. However, it was also felt that more time and resources needed to be allocated to the transnational dimension, since it was only during the second year of the NAPAP Project that transnational communication began to be really effective. There was a strong feeling that, particularly given the sensitivity of police-minority relations, the European Commission should have funded this as a three-year rather than just a two-year project, and that more resources should be devoted to developing transnational understanding and cooperation at the outset of any such programme.

Two other important issues emerged from the transnational dimension of the NAPAP Project. The first was the very low level - especially initially - of participation by representatives of migrant and ethnic minority communities in the transnational activities. In fact, this reflected the low level of such participation in some of the national projects also. Few of the 'national/local' NGO partners were actually 'grass-roots' organisations led by or with substantial staffing or involvement from the minority communities. As a result, migrants and minorities tended to be excluded from the transnational activities, which were mainly white/majority dominated.

Language factors also tended to exclude minorities from transnational activities. Although members of minorities usually have multi-lingual skills, the only European language in which they may be fluent (especially those of migrant origin) is that of their country of residence. If theirs is not one of the working languages, participation may be extremely difficult. Even for those from minorities who do speak English or French, this may often be their second, third or even fourth language. On the linguistic side too, therefore, the NAPAP Project showed that minorities potentially face a structured disadvantage in relation to transnational activities. If indirect exclusion of minorities is to be avoided, this needs to be recognised and addressed in the design of transnational programmes and in the management of proceedings in such events, as well as in resource provision for translation and interpretation.

The second issue, which also relates to minority exclusion, concerned the financing of the project. Because of serious delays in payment by the European Commission, the small 'grass-roots' anti-racist NGOs in the NAPAP Project have suffered severe financial difficulties and,

with major payments being outstanding at the time of writing, are still in danger of closing down. If the effect of EU funding were simply to support large white-led NGOs and undermine small community-based and minority-led groups, this would be a disastrous outcome.

Despite its overall success, therefore, the NAPAP Project has revealed that there is an alarming potential for 'institutional racism' - albeit indirect and no doubt unintended - in the manner of the operation of EU-funded projects. This problem urgently requires further examination, followed by appropriate methods of redress.

(Dr Robin Oakley was transnational consultant/evaluator for the NAPAP Project.)

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