

## **Report on the EURASIA- Net Final Conference on Trans Regional Platform and Joint Research Agenda on Minority Rights**

*Venue- Swabhumi, Kolkata,*

*Date: 18-20 March, 2010.*

### **1. Inaugural Session –**

The three-day final conference on Trans Regional Platform and Joint Research Agenda on Protection of Minority Rights in the Framework of Eurasia-Net project took place on 18– 20 March, 2010 in Rang Durbar, Swabhumi. The conference was organized by CRG in partnership with other institutions of Europe and South Asia. The Conference was the final culminating point of the EURASIA-Net project took off with the kickoff meeting held in London on 18 February, 2008. The Conference was meant to bring forth the overall outcome of the project spanning over two years and to bring out the recommendations for implementation in future. The detail of the proceedings is chronologically arranged below in sections.

The inaugural session began with the comments by Samir Kumar Das, Honorary Senior Researcher, CRG. The session was chaired by Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty, an eminent professor and member of CRG. In his comments, Das highlighted some of the parallel and previous research programmes of the Calcutta Research Group. He also mentioned with regret the inability of Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer, Chairman, Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, to attend the conference and deliver the keynote address as he had suffered a fall and had to be hospitalized.

The address of the Guest-in-Chief was offered by I. A. Rehman, Human Rights Commission, Pakistan. After being introduced by the chair he expressed his dismay and pointed out how despite many efforts conditions of minority are still extremely poor in Pakistan. Laws are not being properly implemented. He reminded all that culture is not determined by acts of parliament or interpretation of courts. Minority rights should be concerned not just with protection and developing minorities, but ensuring their involvement in the public affairs. Minority rights can neither be separated from the rights of the people as a whole nor should be taken in isolation from the general context of human rights enjoyed by all in society. He emphasized the need of 'linking minority rights with the overall struggle of the people'. Many of the existing international laws are unsuitable to the conditions and culture of Pakistan. We have to redesign our efforts in order to establish a pluralistic and just society as a precondition for ensuring minority rights.

This was followed by the comments of Ranabir Samaddar, Director, CRG. He pointed out that in the governmental discourse there is a link between minorities and 'backwardness'. Problem arises as there is a difficulty of

finding a standard which could be used as a measure of 'backwardness', particularly because society is not equal and also people are differently 'minor' – that is to say, minorities in different respects. The global landscape is marked by a tussle between politics of security and politics of rights. Rights are guaranteed only when people can convince the government that they are not a threat. So the question of security obviously takes precedence as government concedes rights only with the successful architecture of security, and rights are recognized when a group claiming them is not deemed as security threat. In certain cases governments are often compelled to take specific steps. The old language of rights does not deal with this paradox. He concluded with the problematic meaning of the questions of autonomy – territorial, cultural and fiscal. The very shifting nature of autonomy reveals that the representation system of minorities (Article 371 of the Constitution of India), has its own problems.

The vote of thanks in this session was proposed by Paula Banerjee.

## **2. Proceedings and Discussions**

### **Session 1: Round Table on Media and Minorities –**

This session was chaired by Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, member, CRG.

In her presentation, Rita Manchanda, member, SAFHR highlighted the Indian example, where there is great pressure on media, by police etc to not report events truthfully. In this light she pointed out the incidents of crimes against certain groups, dubious arrests for terrorism crimes, extrajudicial executions and so on. She also substantiated her statement with an example. After the infamous Delhi blast last October all major dailies printed in their front pages the picture of a man wearing Kafka – a projection of a terrorist. Muslim students in Delhi thereafter were largely treated as terror suspects. Today, one has to accept that media is a very powerful actor for dissemination of diverse information but generalizations in this way could hamper the whole spirit of an active media. Often media is responsible for constructing events.

Bharat Bhushan, editor, *Mail Today*, also drawing on Indian experience expressed his views on media along similar lines. He argued that minorities are homogenised by the media and atrocities against dalits (the downtrodden) are reported differently. The question is why the media behave in the way it does in addressing minority issues. Probably the structure of the media is to be blamed for this. It is also seen that minority communities either have no presence or negligible presence in media reporting. Bhushan also stated that it is surprising how in his long career he has still not come across a dalit journalist. In India, Muslims are still associated with Pakistan by the dominant sections in India and this shapes media's perception on the same. Exemplifying the Shah Bano case, he argued how media used the story to project the Muslim community in a specific light as if the sufferings

and situation of Shah Bano is exclusive to the Muslim community. With some more examples of cases Bhushan noted how in several parts of the country dalits are being killed and tortured regularly but these are never reported in the media.

Jehan Perera, of National Peace Council, Sri Lanka, highlighted international media coverage of recent events in Sri Lanka. He stated that following the defeat of LTTE, *Wall Street Journal* published editorials supporting the government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and cited defeat as an example of a successful military response to terrorism, opposing liberal argument that the best way to resolve terrorism is to talk. He further pointed out how the GOSL has pressurized journalists and has made it difficult for journalists to cover the human cost of the war which is around 30,000 'hostages' of LTTE in the Vanni during final days of conflict. This has largely gone unreported in Sri Lanka itself. Those who questioned the GOSL approach or highlighted human rights abuses of the war have been labeled as traitors or LTTE collaborators.

The presentations called for quite a number of questions and comments from among the panelists and the floor. Sanjay Barbora, Panos South Asia, who was one of the participants of the round table, noted that Media is not always stuck between profit and propaganda as is believed popularly. Also, the ability for a person to tell their own story is an empowering process. Technological revolution in media through the use of mobile phone communication, internet etc is facilitating this. He also claimed that media's role now could largely be visualized as a 'servant of consumerism'. Subir Bhaumik, Correspondent, BBC, maintained that there is not much difference in media approach towards minorities in Europe and South Asia. Three key areas hence call for addressing in both the regions - a) Under - representation in the media sector (like, very few Turks are recruited in the German Media, and very few indigenous people in the media of Tripura and Assam, b) Media content - that is, how are minority issues reflected in the media?, perpetuation of stereotypes (particularly TV), equation of Muslims with terrorism in media and so on, c) Media Use - Majoritarian media does not reflect minority issues. As a result, a specific minority media emerges and comes to dominate amongst the community. As for example Turks in Germany are most likely to consume Turkish Diaspora media rather than the mainstream state media. This has been viewed by some as a threat to integration. I.A.Rehman also noted the wave of anti-minority feeling in Pakistani media.

The session concluded with the closing remarks of the participants. Firstly, in the Indian example, there is current mushrooming in government run media training, so things may shift in a few years as these trainees enter the profession. Secondly, while power of large media publishing companies should not be underestimated, the rise in small- scale new media like for example, 'Blogosphere' is essential too. However, there is an inherent danger in the categorization of media, as a participant pointed out: is it necessary to be a member of a minority group to cover minority issues meaningfully?

Perhaps not. Thirdly, privileging certain voices within minority groups through community leaders, spokespeople could be problematic as these voices represent the conservative viewpoint and may reinforce stereotypes.

## **Session 2: Reports of Working Groups convened in parallel sessions, placed for discussion.**

Five working groups were formed. After discussion was accomplished, report of each working Group was presented for an open floor discussion. The moderators of each working group presented the salient points discussed at the working group discussions. This session was chaired by Tomaselli Alexandra and Sergiu Constantine, both from European Academy. Following is the report of the salient points discussed in each working group.

### *Working Group A : Lessons of study visits and summer schools; relevance of educational material and publications.*

The discussion centered around three focal points A) Summer Schools. B) Study visits C) Publications.

A) Regarding Summer Schools it was highlighted by the participants that, firstly, the sustainability of summer Schools is questionable. Secondly, the question of duration was discussed. For example, whether the duration was too long or suitable for the participants. Thirdly, participants discussed lessons learn from various established annual programmes like the Winter Course of CRG. There were also Suggestions for research follow up with good participants and to initiate the launch of scholarships to selected participants so this can pave the way for more research endeavors. Fourthly, there were also suggestions for more interactive sessions, films, and field trips. One of the problems noted during the discussion was that students were not contributing to the summer school as much as they were expected to. One potent solution to this could be to emphasize that they need to be involved in post –summer school projects. Fifthly, it was felt that the courses should be based on more practical, field-based experience rather than on so much of class room based activity. Emphasis should also be put into feasibility of duration of school, organizational requirements and so on. Sixthly, some participants suggested that programmes should be mentored for selected students with more established academics from within partners. This was accepted by the rest as a good idea but perhaps unfeasible given the issue of geographical distribution. Finally, it was felt that issues like interactive activities, group work, and ongoing assignments and so on should be announced at the beginning of the course rather than leaving them for the last days of the school. Here, once again reference was made to the efficiency by which CRG handles one of its most popular and established programmes – the Winter Course on forced Migration.

B) It was discussed that the study visits were very short for scholars, but again on the other hand it may be difficult for scholars with teaching duties

etc, to be away from work for too long. Secondly, 'Double' study visits (twice in the field) were not planned, but happened, and proved to be an excellent solution. In fact, in this case, the visitor has time to reflect and conduct further questions or elaborate deeper research. Thirdly, it was discussed that exchange between Europe and South Asia works well and can be taken forward. Finally, all the participants echoed the desire to extend scope in order to include participants from Myanmar, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka.

C) Publications which were produced within EURASIA-Net were of three kinds: scientific articles or publications, educational material and material for specialized media. Stress was given on the need to produce other tools of documentation in addition to classical approach of articles for academic publication. It was felt that this would allow research to reach wider audience. There was also interesting suggestion that research data could also be utilized in creative ways like for example, to make documentary films. The same data could also be used to produce multiple outputs. In this way data could be used for dual purposes and readers would also be highly benefited as there would be better access to the findings. Cross-cutting work was considered as more interesting than analyzing issues country by country, particularly given the project's focus on regional collaboration.

*Working Group B : The Media Segment in the EURASIA-Net Project.*

At the very outset, it was discussed that the media's treatment of minority issues leaves much to be desired in both South Asia and Europe. Despite the diversity in both regions and the prevalence of democracy, the minorities often suffer under – representation in the media and their issues are often treated in a biased manner, at times bordering on outright vilification. The discussion veered around several countries in both South Asia and Europe on how media covers minority issues. Like one participant enumerated the case of Germany, it was found that media content is generally biased against the minorities. The media has been seen as a tool for integration. The picture is very much the same in the South Asian Countries like as one participant pointed out the case of Sri Lanka. The media there is very polarized and certain bias works in treating several issues, especially in context of inflammatory incidents in both the regional blocks. The central contention therefore is the commonalities in the mode of operation in the media houses of South Asia and Europe. The participants more or less consented in identifying three areas where an improvement could be initiated. A) Area of Recruitment or Representation – more recruitment to the media from minority communities is desirable. There is need for more journalists in the media of both South Asia and Europe from minority communities; a key tool towards this direction could be the establishment of more media schools since media schools are most common route into media career. B) Media Report – Steps for fair and balanced reportage on minority issues in the media along with enough, extended coverage of these issues – both in terms of content and volume could be another major area where there is a wide

scope for improvement. C) Media Use – a change could also be ushered in by using new technology and by developing minority specific media. According to some participants, this could pose a threat to national integration. But again this has been dismissed by studies which show that people who consume their own media have no more problems with integration than others, still the fear prevails. Certain recommendations were also discussed by the participants who could facilitate the implementation of the aforesaid suggestions. First, to develop a guidebook for minority reporting, for dissemination of information to council of Europe or SAARC. Second, although media houses cannot be forced to employ, this can be encouraged through the guidebook. Third, Media can be encouraged to adopt self-regulation. There should also exist a specific code of conduct for media relating to minority issues. Self regulation may assuage media concerns over control or censorship from external organizations. Journalists with monitoring responsibility could also be set up. Fourth, emphasis was also laid upon in-house training so that students could be aware and understand minority issues better.

This discussion was followed by several comments from the floor. First, there was disagreement with the idea that state should have no involvement in monitoring. Rather the media should not reform itself due to market demand. There is reservation for government jobs, universities etc, so question was raised why the same could not be extended to private sector as well like the media? Secondly, balance is needed to avoid feeling amongst media of state control or censorship. Thirdly, it is important for media to realize that diversity is in their interest and is enriching for their content and readership as well. Fourthly, there was a comment from the floor that media schools are largely ineffective and make students only good technicians which is not sufficient to have fruitful media careers. Fifth, it was pointed out that reservations in private sector have been dismissed as unconstitutional in India. Sixthly, new law in India could be initiated which would allow overseas educational institutions to open branches in India. Sixth, there was also a suggestion that media trainees could be involved in minority issues. Assignments could be initiated which would be a combination of technical skill development with substantive focus on minority issues.

*Working Group C: Research policy sessions and recommendations; EU sessions and impact of EU collaboration in Europe.*

It was stated, how participants have gained personally from cooperating in this network – particularly the opportunity to learn from expert practitioners. It was noted that this was the first attempt to combine research on Europe and south Asia on such a large scale despite grave challenges. The important point of focus was that even Europe can learn from South Asia, particularly India. This solely could be conceptualized, specifically how experiences shared and transferred in both directions could pave the way for mutual learning. It is also imperative to conceptualize trans-nationality within research agenda, especially in the context of new minorities in Europe with

trans-national links to South Asia. It is also important to recognize where Europe could become instrumental in South Asia and when it should not interfere. Recognition of sensitivity is also needed towards territorial integrity and cultural issues in the South Asian context. Participants also discussed how information could be produced regarding tension between having rulebook rights and realization of rights and difference between designing legislation and putting it into practice. Specific areas were identified where regions can learn from each other, like for example, Indian example of affirmative action can be a learning point for Europe.

Five key issues or challenges were also discussed:

1. Developing a comparative perspective between both Europe and South Asia-. This is a difficult but important step.
2. Stress was put on Globalization and trans-nationality, and inter-relations.
3. It is essential to look not just at particular minorities, but also at mutuality between diverse minority groups.
4. There should be an inter-disciplinary approach. Rights cannot be confined to one discipline solely.
5. There is difficulty in de-complicating and unpacking an otherwise complex situation.

The moderators also brought into focus the suggestions that were discussed during the meeting. Firstly, establishment of research policy and Trans – national platform beyond life of project. Secondly, to foster and support formalized cooperation between universities in Europe and South Asia. European Union should fund and open centre for peace studies in South Asia in order to promote collaboration and raise awareness. Third, the EURASIA-Net project had good contact with European Commission, but should also have sent publications and reports to South Asian government agencies. Fourthly, it was also discussed that cooperation with officials is a crucial aspect. Hence continuous cooperation should be recommended to E.U. This could turn out to be a possible training centre for EU officials going onto missions in South Asia. Fifth, it was brought into forefront that a lot of rich data has been collected. So in each member state there should be an information point collecting, and reports should be sent each year to European Commission. This should exist in the South Asian states as well. Sixthly, European Commission or European Union, before announcing a new programme should consult with South Asian agencies to identify genuine needs first. Seventh, there should be consultation between European and South Asian agencies and a contact book should be there which would have the detail of all important agencies or people of the region. Finally, it had been discussed that any funded project will mainly look at India, but the project should also maintain regional focus.

Working Group D: Regional instruments of protection; Comparative Experiences.

It was highlighted that attitude towards minorities has changed in Europe over the last 20 years. The principle of equality has also undergone changes at both formal and informal levels. There has also been a shift from universal rights toward 'minority' friendly attitude. Europe can learn from South Asia since here multi-nationality is more 'natural'. It was also realized that welfare states improve generally human and minority rights protection. Certain events are of gigantic importance to us in the present world scenario. Like, fall of the Berlin wall and 2004 EU enlargement with Copenhagen, minority protection has become the basic criterion of EU. It was suggested that the way EU judges standards and criteria could also be implemented in the South Asian context. However in the context of South Asia there remains a fear of demand for self-determination from groups. South Asia has an imbalance in power in the case of India. In contrast there is no single state dominance in Europe. Rather, there are more power 'blocks' and contextual considerations. So it is not possible at the moment to draft a SAARC document based on framework convention as SAARC is a weak platform for these kinds of legal measure. Participants also suggested a concrete position from SAARC on issues of refugees, disaster relief etc. A possibility is also there of enabling taskforce to intervene in these issues or events. This could turn out to be the starting point of enhancing regional cooperation on humanitarian aids and security, which could again be extended to include issues of minority protection. However things should be ushered in gradually as to be too demanding could turn out to be counterproductive. Incremental approach is preferred which would probably be more effective. Tradition of bilateral treaties should remain important in formulating solutions.

*Working Group E : Legal Pluralism, national laws and possibilities of dialogue*

The outline of the discussion was circulated at the start of the conference which comes as follows:

Ethnic movements have challenged the constitutional legitimacy of virtually all the states in South Asia. Majority of conflicts in South Asia have their roots in a mismanagement of ethnic and religious relations at local level which immediately has consequence at state or supra state level. In this scenario, it is not unusual to come across elements such as the non coincidence of social and political frontiers and the states' use of territorial nationalism in the attempt to create a monolithic construction of nationhood. With due attention to the social implications of legal pluralism – here designated as a normative situation in which different legal orders concur and compete in the regulation of a course of action or sets of actions concerning social relations of the same kind – and to the influence produced by both external and internal social spheres in the determination of legal norms of different origins. The working group was supposed to discuss issues on the following questions:-



1) Can we find in the primacy of constitution over the state (and nation) the solution for solving problems related to pluralist thesis of official legal orders? And to the mutual recognition of their interconnection?

2) Despite constitutional provisions protecting the rights of minorities in South Asia, both domestic and international human rights obligations have often failed to materialize on the ground. Hence, can the supremacy of the constitution over the state be enough in pursuing an integration of minorities through law?

During the discussion, a variety of views emerged from the participants. Firstly, today constitutionalism has developed a state-centered sense which in turn, proved unsuitable to face the challenges of pluralism. Current dialogue on constitutional values (especially in relation to human rights) seems not to be enough in linking the state's political will to minority rights concerns. Secondly, though a dialogue on constitutional values is taking place in South Asia, the same is not able to generate or result in the development or regional standards of minority rights protection. Space allocated to minority rights law is then left to the domestic authority with just (latent) reference to standards established at the international level. Thirdly, ideally, Model national law should be drafted within SAARC framework. Regrettably, today regional imbalance of power and the lack of valuable political will by SAARC member states are hampering the whole regional lawmaking process. Fourthly, given the South Asian reluctance in embarking on treaty –making processes, a soft law approach for the implementation of standards of minority rights protection seems to be more feasible solution for the region than hard law. Finally, implementation of standards of human and minority protection should be pursued in a comprehensive way so as to include security and economic dimensions in its development were also discussed.

This session was followed by the occasion of the release of a set of publications by Bharat Bhushan on *Minority Rights in Europe and South Asia: A New Agenda*. The titles of the publications have been circulated in the Summary report prepared by Samir Kumar Das.

### **Session 3: Roundtable on the possibilities and modalities of Trans-RegionalPlatform.**

In this session, each project partner of the EURASIA-NET project presented their views. This session was moderated by Sergiu Constantin. Following is the report of each project partner:-

*Ranabir Samaddar* (CRG) – Dr. Samaddar's presentation was circulated in advance in the conference folder in form of a note prepared by him. He briefly highlighted that Calcutta Research group was responsible for

coordinating research and publications towards creating trans-regional platform and put stress on the seminal points from his note regarding the areas of learning and development which are as follows :-

1. The need for platforms at both governmental and societal level should be taken into account. Governmental rights, conventions and regional inter-governmental agreements should also be considered.
2. Human Rights groups have tried to create such platforms independently. One has to take lessons from these efforts and appreciate strengths and weaknesses.
3. We have to recognize the gap in perception between the developed and post-colonial world, like for example, group versus individual rights, and impact of globalization and emergence of new minorities (e.g. migrants).
4. The principle of autonomy is linked to federalism and devolution.
5. He also suggested that lessons learnt from the project should be the basis of trans-regional platform.
6. In sustaining such a programme as this, virtual (web) links may not be enough. We should begin with modest goals and build on them. There should be movement between regions and an inventory of shared resources. He also proposed a web based trans-regional journal of minority rights as that would help the cause to a great extent.
7. The networks which already exist should be checked and with which this platform can align needs to be examined.
8. It would be a pity if activity ends without creating such a network.
9. Individuals involved in the programme should be counted as network resources.
10. He concluded by saying that this network should meet annually.

*Borhan Uddin Khan (University of Dhaka)* – At the outset he first narrated the situation under which he was included in the project. He then moved on to highlight certain key areas of the responsibilities that Dhaka University had in the project. Dhaka University was responsible for Work Package 4, that is, Trans-Regional Platform. The main task was to prepare higher educational material. Although the project did not expect the publication in the form of a book, the university would nevertheless do so duly. He also proposed recommendations that could be implemented, which are as follows:-

1. The Network should continue beyond the life of the project, even if the EU does not fund it.
2. He also suggested that each partner should take lead to organize at least one annual event each year, for partners to meet and share experiences.
3. Finally, he opined that media campaign should be continued to achieve tangible results.

*Günther Rautz (European Academy)* – His suggestions are enlisted below:-

1. We should institutionalize our work and the platform.
2. Trans-regional journal on minority issues should be initiated to ease cooperation and meeting between partners.
3. Soft law mechanisms should be enhanced keeping in view the frameworks of SAARC, the NCHRs, HR councils, NGOs etc.
4. Emphasis should be placed on autonomy issues, nation-building and means of power sharing.
5. Refugees, climate change etc growing issues in South Asia should be combined with our work, as the first group that would be discriminated against by climate change would likely to be the minorities. SAARC should be working on these issues and the Network should support this. Rautz stressed on the point that Economic, environmental and minority issues are all intertwined.
6. Cooperation of national human rights commissions is a model of best practice in Europe and this can be developed in South Asia as well. Annual meets could also be formalized. These European best practices can be learning point.
7. Building training centers and EU info points would be positive a development since there is potential to elaborate this idea and offering concrete, expertise training.
8. He concluded by saying that South Asian address book and directory would be useful.

*Ugo Caruso (University of Frankfurt)* – He mostly seconded several of the points raised by the European Academy. He also talked about specific training possibilities and of developing training format for EU officials and training tools. He expressed his dismay over non-implementation of existing tools and opportunities which have not been followed so far by EU officials.

*Harriet Hoffler (Brunel University)* – She regretted the absence of Javaid Rehman, Researcher of Brunel University owing to visa issues. She also conveyed that written notes of his comments would be circulated later. She explained that Brunel University was responsible for study visits and suggested the creation of a platform for exchange of publications and networking to extend beyond the life of the EURASIA-NET project.

*Tapan Kumar Bose (South Asia Forum for Human Rights)* – He highlighted several points, which are as follows:-

1. There is no desire within governments to set up effective inter-governmental regional platform. Research work can focus on this key challenge.
2. Institutions develop in a historical context. It is questionable whether European mechanisms can be applied mechanically to South Asia. So

he also expressed the desire to re-examine to what extent these European examples can be effectively applied to the South Asian context.

3. Minority rights should be placed within broader context of human rights in any trans-regional platform. This however might counter some resistance from states.
4. He also pointed out certain areas which have been under researched till now, like the areas of Social, cultural and economic rights.
5. He stressed on government participation since governmental involvement in platforms enhances impact and access. Co-opting such actors to the international platform should be an important strategy of continuing work. Platform in which governments have no participation will take a long time to develop.
6. Certain concepts need to be contested and deconstructed like 'autonomy' and 'minority'.
7. He also noted that existing guidelines to states is negatively phrased. Instead of recognizing what the state should not do, emphasis should be put on the state's proactive obligations towards their minorities.

The ensuing discussion invited a number of comments from the floor. these are summarized below:-

1. Concepts like autonomy and Federalism are useful to analyze the European concept of autonomy in comparison to South Asian concept of the issue. There is difficulty in the European and South Asian concepts in different ways.
2. Comparison on autonomies in Europe and South Asia would be possible after looking at the a) process that initiated it in both regions, b) Examining different concepts.
3. There is need to understand certain issues like why some South Asian states view autonomy as Balkanization and how has federalism worked in India. South Asia needs to address concerns of non-territorial minorities and find out how this could be answered through federalism, autonomy etc. The reservation system in India provides a possible model for this.
4. There was a consensus that problems have been faced in engaging EU officials with difficult issues on minorities.
5. The dimension of gender was not developed in the project and should be seriously considered. Tensions between groups of minority women in Europe and Asia over European conception of gender issues are already worked out in EU, but this is not the case for South Asia.
6. There was a suggestion to address issues of greater visibility and impact by re-orienting focus of study visits towards issues at the centre of public debates, issues that require engagement with the policy makers. It was felt that Equal Opportunities Bill in development of India was an important issue that was missed out but could have been addressed through study visits, topics for publications,

- workshops and conferences. Also policy papers on issues such as reservation schemes, federalism etc have not been made.
7. Importance of link between research, civil society and political institutions was highlighted so that good ideas can turn into a reality.
  8. It was noted that CRG is planning to apply to Union Of Social Sciences for funds to hold fourth conference of network in South Asia with CRG as the leading partner.

Sergiu Constantin summarized the session proceedings. He said that there is need for more formalized and institutionalized cooperation. There should be more contact points or training centers between European Union and South Asia. Minority issues should be placed in wider context of human rights. Socio-economic rights would have to be considered. There is need to identify new institutions and ways to gain access to governmental actors. This can increase efficacy of platform. There is also need for a more interactive platform, and increased visibility of the platform. He also pointed out the four key action or work points identified during the session.

1. Development of a research network and organizing conferences like this with media involvement.
2. Development of tools such as territorial and non-territorial arrangements of autonomy.
3. Development of research into issues neglected within the project to date like for example, gender dimension, major involvement of civil society etc.
4. Finally, there is a need to develop a communication strategy in order to effectively disseminate knowledge.

#### **Session 4: Lessons Learnt: Final Reflection by project partners.**

This was the final session of the programme and the session was chaired by Ranabir Samaddar. The partners and associates to the project once again reflected on the final lessons that have emerged from the many discussion rounds during the various activities and discussion sessions of the project. Following is the summary of the seminal points made by the representatives of each institution.

- Brunel University: Study visits are certainly an effective way of sharing information although many participants have complained that the duration was too short. More so because it was often difficult for visitors to arrange meetings via e-mail before arriving so this became time consuming during the visits themselves. The visitors got the opportunities to meet NGOs and policy makers. The practical-oriented activities were also beneficial in terms of information exchange. One disturbing fact was that there was a misbalance in gender. While most of the

European visitors were female, the picture was the opposite in case of South Asia. Also the geographical balance from South Asia could have improved. No participants were there from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Maldives despite widely advertising the project in these states.

- Bielefeld University: Attention should be paid not to lose what has been achieved so far both in terms of scientific and intellectual accomplishment, as well as personal relations. Suggestion was made to involve younger researchers in collaboration with more established scholars. Funds should be available for this.
- Frankfurt University: It was responsible for organizing EU information sessions. The most important lesson has been to discuss difficult issues. Implementation of study visit plan for EU officials from the very start of the project was also suggested.
- European Academy: Study of local autonomy also means reexamination of the same issue with its international dimensions. The EURASIA-Net project was the fundamental moment in which all these ideas could come into practice. The Summer Schools are a successful means through which European and South Asian scholars have successfully interacted. Hopefully this collaboration would continue even after the project ends. The design of the project has been a good mixture of scientific and exchange programmes. The training sessions, scholar exchanges and high quality publications are a testimony to the fact. Therefore the design of a programme is very vital for a successful result. The institutional strength of the European Academy stems out from the blending of scholarly and organizational capacity.
- Calcutta Research Group: started by giving a good deal of importance to the design of the project as has been exchanged by the European Academy. The project summary report circulated by CRG figured in the major part of the presentation. The report has been formulated by stocktaking of previous initiatives of linking projects with historical experiences, like the way SAFHR had attempted to link the project with existing programmes. A long paper has also been written on assessment of research policies and responses. A lot of material has been accumulated on minorities and minority rights framework. It would also be a good idea to provide a 'reader' of material, like the one already generated, to be used towards planning of workshops for new scholars. Possible areas of future research have to be examined. CRG has focused on research which could provide a collective focus for network. This collective ownership

of project was important. Deriving lessons from model cases is the best practice. There is a need to examine the possibility of applying lessons learnt across diverse regions; how can institutions of minority protection travel across diverse regions and what challenges will be faced in this? It was also noted that the friendship and personal contact emerging from the project are a treasure. While designing the project three major successes have been - the establishment of a network of partners which needs to be sustained even beyond the life of the project so that a trans-regional platform could be established, collective research and comparative learning, orientation and training, circulation and dissemination of knowledge. Finally, it was concluded that strategies can be developed to make study visits and summer schools sustainable.

- South Asia Forum for Human Rights: The design of combining academic with practical work was a challenge which has been dealt with efficiency. However there are certain lacunas also. Why was it not possible to design project so that topics which were raised in the summer schools and study visits fed into the publications and why have there not been opportunities for research to be shared amongst project participants? Had these issues been considered then perhaps the project would have been even more successful.
- University of Dhaka: There was a problem initially as what was meant by 'material' was not clearly elaborated. To make a document for use in higher educational sessions was a real challenge. The decision to send people on study visits - who had no prior expertise on minority rights was driven by the objective of creating new and original perspectives. Khan suggested greater care over deciding outcomes of the project- for example, publications were not a requirement of the project, but publication could have made a part and could have been counted as a tangible outcome. So perhaps more stress can be given on tangible outcomes while designing future projects.

There were several comments from the floor in the interactive session. It was argued that study visit reports have been submitted by those who had undertaken study visits and these have been fed into overall project. It was agreed that newer scholars could be given a chance to enjoy study visits. Main lesson is that communication is a difficult task so credit goes to all the partners for overcoming this challenge. Serious efforts were made to understand each other despite differences. There was suggestion for taking forward specific themes which one person from Europe and one person from South Asia can

together work upon. Finally, once again importance was given to the planning and designing of the project and on to ensure the success of the project like organizing the study visits.

### **3. Valedictory Session** –

The valedictory Lecture was delivered by honorable Justice Rajinder Sachar. He was introduced by the chair of the session, Paula Banerjee. The highlights of the speech by Justice Sachar are as follows: -

1. In this century, tolerance is the key to survival. India's constitution had been framed on tolerance and justice.
2. The Constitution of India also recognizes that minority rights should be safeguarded. This is enumerated in Articles 14 and 15. The demolition of the Babari masjid demolition (1992) has drawn extreme criticisms from people at large. So carte for minorities is part of our cultural milieu.
3. Minority problem in India is different from that in Europe where minorities are ethnically and linguistically different but in case of India minorities mainly differ on religious grounds. Language is not a big issue in India.
4. Minorities everywhere had an inbuilt defense mechanism.
5. India has never had the legacy of a Hindu rule or a Muslim rule; it had always been a mixture of both.
6. He did not support reservation of Scheduled Castes in *madrasas* hinting that reservation within reservation is not really needed.

The details of the speech were covered by various media houses. The session came to an end with the Vote of Thanks proposed by Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury. He concluded by thanking the EU, all the participants, the Partners and associates of the EURASIA-Net project and finally the rapporteurs of the programme.