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Subject: NORWAY: ENGAGING CIVIL SOCIETY IN PRIORITY AREAS (JULY 2015 - JUNE 2016)

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DTG: 061548Z JUL 16
MRN: 16 OSLO 410
Originator: AMEMBASSY OSLO
Precedence: 5.ROUTINE
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SBU



Info Office: TAGS_KDSH, DO_JORDAN

MRN: 16 OSLO 410
Date/DTG: Jul 06, 2016 / 061548Z JUL 16
From: AMEMBASSY OSLO
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, PREF, PTER, KCRM, KHLS, SOCI, KISL, KDSH, KYOU, KIRF, KAWC, KLGBT, KDEM, KPAO, NO
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Reference: A) 16 STATE 70684
B) 16 OSLO 392
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1. (U) Embassy Oslo's recent civil society engagement efforts (ref A) have focused on three key areas: LGBTI issues, minority integration into Norwegian society, and countering violent extremism (CVE). Civil society in Norway is largely represented by local NGOs, think tanks, and smaller community-based organizations that often receive significant percentage of their financial support from the Norwegian government through grants and project-based financing. Post has sought out civil society actors that engage on issues outside of traditional government programs and will continue to work with contacts to promote activities in this space.

Engagement on LGBTI issues

2. (U) Post has found success in engaging with civil society on LGBTI issues, in particular on transgender equality, a subject that generally receives less attention from advocates in Norway's LGBTI community. For Oslo Pride, Post invited Dr. Katie Spencer, a licensed psychologist and coordinator of the Adult Transgender Health Services Program at the University of Minnesota, as a visiting speaker (ref B). Dr. Spencer spoke at two Embassy organized events in June 2016: a medical professionals' breakfast at the Ambassador's residence, and a lecture at Pride House (a venue for discussion and information exchange during Pride Week). The breakfast was the first time that transgender activists, national health policy officials, and leading transgender healthcare practitioners had met face-to-face in Norway.

Learning How to Integrate New Arrivals

3. (U) In the wake of the European migration crisis, Post has been particularly engaged in contributing to open discussions on integration and minority rights. At a conference in June entitled *Integrering av Flyktninger i Norge og Sverige* (Integration of Refugees in Norway and Sweden), Tamar Jacoby, President and CEO of Immigration Works in the United States, enriched the discussion with Norwegian and Swedish government officials and civil society representatives by sharing the U.S. experience with integration of immigrants. She highlighted the role of the workplace as the "crucible" of integration, as well as the value that ethnic-based communities can offer to society. She also contrasted the United States' laissez faire, community-based approach to integration with the European (Norwegian) state-centered model. Jacoby's presentation prompted questions from Swedish and Norwegian civil society members on their role in promoting integration and several interlocutors expressed interest in further discussions on how civil society can better support integration in Norway.

Improving Capacity for CVE

4. (U) Consistent with the Norwegian "model" of civil society, there is considerable crossover between programming conducted by local government and NGOs. Post works to constructively engage both to share ideas about effective strategies to counter violent extremism. Since 2014, Norway has placed increasing priority on raising municipal-level capacity for CVE (ref C). Last year, for example, Post designed a professional exchange visit to the U.S. for nine municipal workers and politicians from three Norwegian cities impacted by extremism: Kristiansand, Fredrikstad, and Skien. All three municipalities represented in the exchange saw youth unemployment as a major challenge that can lead to marginalization and radicalization. Participants were inspired by best practices in Minneapolis on the topics of youth engagement, job recruitment, and refugee resettlement that they used to create an action plan to further community engagement on CVE. Following the exchange, they also developed a summer jobs program for at-risk youth, many from minority backgrounds. This was one of the first such programs to be implemented in Norway and was directly modeled on Minneapolis' STEP-UP Achieve Jobs Program.

Looking forward

5. (SBU) Post will continue to engage targeted civil society organizations to bridge gaps in government policy and programming to advance U.S. goals. Since so much of Norwegian civil society is directly supported by the government, we continue to try to identify groups that work on issues and programming outside of traditional government activities. Programs such as IVLP and conference speakers, combined with regular interaction with community-based organizations, will continue to be important tools in supporting our civil society priorities in Norway.

Signature: Heins

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