

Evaluation of the Peace programme and strategies for the future

2007/2150(INI) - 27/03/2008

The Committee on Regional Development adopted the own-initiative report by Bairbre **de BRÚN** (GUE/NGL, UK) on the evaluation of the PEACE Programme (EU programme for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland), emphasising that local empowerment was an essential part of peace-building in Northern Ireland and that the participation of civil society significantly improved policy-making and implementation of local policies. MEPs welcome the contribution made by the PEACE and IFI (International Fund for Ireland) programmes to economic and social development in this region, noting that an enterprise centre established in a deprived area was developed with the support of the IFI.

MEPs emphasise that the cooperation between participants in programmes financed by PEACE and IFI **should not cease when the programmes come to an end**. MEPs call on government departments to ensure that cooperation continues once all PEACE funding finally comes to an end. They also call on the governments of both the United Kingdom and Ireland to put in place temporary funding arrangements specifically for community and voluntary groups in order to **bridge the gap between the end of PEACE II funding programmes and the beginning of PEACE III funding programmes**. In addition, they call on the Commission and the governments of the United Kingdom and Ireland to engage in dialogue with the Commissioners for Victims and Survivors with a view to finding a way for victim and survivor support groups to continue to receive financial support after the termination of all PEACE funding.

MEPs also call for the further development of cross-border work, given that cross-border work has been central to the regeneration of urban and rural communities in the border areas, as well as the further development of cooperation between local chambers of commerce and public sector bodies with voluntary organisations.

Recognising that peace-building is a long-term, evolutionary process and that robust development towards peace and reconciliation takes time, MEPs call for a longer timeframe for individual grants in order to allow projects to make a difference. They recognise that not only economic initiatives but also cultural and sporting initiatives can make a significant contribution to peace and reconciliation and should therefore continue to be promoted.

MEPs stress the fact that development in rural areas requires greater synergies between agricultural, rural and regional development funding and between nature conservation and ecotourism. Finally, they recommend that everyone should be better informed of the positive experience gained from the PEACE and IFI programmes, and suggest that comprehensive strategies be put in place to ensure not only that examples of good-practice are available, but also that they are used at every stage of the project cycle.