

Evaluation of the Peace programme and strategies for the future

2007/2150(INI) - 20/05/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 603 votes to 21, with 12 abstentions, a resolution on the evaluation of the PEACE Programme and strategies for the future in Northern Ireland.

The own-initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Bairbre **de BRÚN** (GUE/NGL, UK) on behalf of the Committee on Regional Development.

The Parliament points out that local empowerment was an essential part of peace-building in Northern Ireland and that the participation of civil society in this process helped to improve policy-making and the way in which society is governed. The Parliament welcomes the contribution made by the PEACE and IFI (International Fund for Ireland) programmes to economic and social development of this region, noting that an enterprise centre was established with the support of the IFI.

Maintaining aid after the end of the European programmes: the Parliament emphasises that the cooperation between participants in programmes financed by PEACE and IFI should not cease when the programmes come to an end. On the contrary, it calls on government departments to ensure that this cooperation continues once all PEACE funding comes to an end. It also suggests that the governments of both the United Kingdom and Ireland put in place temporary funding arrangements 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, the Parliament calls on the Commission and the governments of the United Kingdom and Ireland to engage with the Commissioners for Victims and Survivors with a view to finding a mechanism for victim and survivor support groups to continue to receive financial support after the termination of all PEACE funding. It also calls 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.

A reconciliation based on time...: the Parliament recognises that peace-building is a long-term, evolutionary process and that robust development towards peace and reconciliation takes time. It therefore calls for a longer timeframe for individual grants in order to allow projects to make a difference, and points out that not only economic initiatives but also cultural and sporting initiatives can make a significant contribution to peace and reconciliation. Therefore such initiatives should continue to be promoted.

...and the development of the social and rural economy: the Parliament notes that the social economy sector is a sub-sector of the voluntary and community sectors, the consultation of which is important in order to develop local strategies and areas. The Parliament considers that other local businesses are also influential participants and it emphasises that development in rural areas requires greater synergies between agricultural, rural and regional development funding and between nature conservation and ecotourism. The use of renewable energies must also be further emphasised.

Better information on the positive impact of PEACE: the Parliament believes that considerable effort should be made to inform people of the positive experience gained from PEACE and IFI programmes. It recommends 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. Finally, the Parliament believes that the experience gained from projects undertaken in Northern Ireland should be

shared with those engaged in other international peace-building work. As a result, it calls for the establishment of a database as a learning tool for those involved in peace and reconciliation work at home and abroad.