Local authorities and civil society: Europe's engagement in support of sustainable development

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on local authorities and civil society: Europe’s engagement in support of sustainable development.

The resolution welcomed the recent policy developments at EU and international level which are focused on a more ambitious **partnership with civil society organisations (CSOs) and local authorities (LAs)**, founded on a human rights based approach to development, including economic and social and on the clear commitment to strengthening the democratic process and accountability.

Creating an enabling environment for CSOs and LAs: Members considered that democratic ownership includes not only governments but also CSOs, LAs and national parliaments, which play crucial roles in linking citizens with government and in ensuring broad-based and democratic ownership of countries’ development agendas.

The Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) are invited to:

- develop **plans** to promote EU development cooperation in dialogue with CSOs and to further the implementation of the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders;
- mainstream the promotion of an enabling environment for CSOs and LAs and to consider this a priority for the EU's position in the ongoing negotiations on the post-2015 development framework;
- develop strategies on how to overcome these difficulties and to continue the vital support for CSOs.

The resolution encouraged the EU to **promote institutionalised mechanisms** for multilevel and multiple stakeholder dialogue and recommended that for each partner country the EU applies the provisions on consultations with LAs provided for in the Cotonou Agreement for ACP states.

Development effectiveness: Parliament called on the Commission and the EEAS to:

- allocate **adequate resources** in the future programming period, to allow CSOs and LAs from partner countries to monitor and analyse progress towards PCD at local, national and international level;
- promote a **‘partnership for accountability’** for strategic cooperation between elected representatives at national and local level and CSOs;
- support the inclusion of LA representatives in the **Steering Committee of the Global Partnership** for Effective Development Cooperation.
- establish **country RMs for LAs** as well, and to consider the development of joint CSO and LA country RMs;
- **adopt the sustainable development agenda**, taking account of the fact that its three core components (environmental, social and economic) are equally important and inseparable parameters.

The Union is invited to make efficient use of **knowledge-sharing** and capacity-development methods and adopt a **scaled-up agenda** with a view to achieving a proportional increase in the effective experiences of projects and initiatives of both CSOs and Las financed by the EU.

Decentralisation and territorial approach to development (TAD): Parliament called on the Commission and the EEAS to establish a more ambitious policy dialogue with and within partner countries to promote TAD and a comprehensive approach to decentralisation. It stressed the importance of **strengthening EU staff expertise and commitment**, in particular at delegation level on decentralisation and on the role of CSOs and LAs in sustainable development.

Fragile States: Parliament recalled that resilience should also be a key theme of the EU's partnerships with CSOs and LAs. It called on the Commission and the EEAS to **establish guidelines** for EU delegations on how to deal with CSOs and LAs in situations of crisis and fragility, using a human rights-based and gender-sensitive approach.

Moreover, it expressed deep concern at the Commission's proposal to limit financial support in service delivery only to CSOs working in LDCs and fragile states.

Education: recalling Parliament's written declaration on 'development education and active global citizenship', Parliament called on the Commission to:

- develop an **overarching development education and awareness raising (DEAR) strategy**;
- increase the financial resources which will be allocated in the future programming period to DEAR.

Programming documents and aid modalities: the resolution welcomed the Commission's engagement to systematically introduce political economy analysis at country level and recommended that this should include an analysis of the political and legal situation of CSOs and LAs.

The Commission is invited to:

- improve the coordination and complementarity between thematic and geographic programmes and instruments;
- encourage a wider participation of LAs in all DCI programmes;
- support decentralised cooperation and partnerships between LAs from EU and partner countries;
- facilitate experience- and expertise-sharing between Las from EU and partner countries;
- engage in more strategic partnerships with national, regional, and international associations and networks of LAs.

Lastly, Parliament called on the Commission to promote the participation of CSOs and LAs in the ongoing discussion on blending mechanisms in the framework of the EU Platform for Blending in External Cooperation.