Implementation of the Union's instruments for financing external action (2014-2020)

2011/0415(COD) - 11/12/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 613 votes to 34, with 24 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing common rules and procedures for the implementation of the Union's instruments for external action.

Parliament adopted its position at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure. The amendments adopted in plenary are the result of a compromise negotiated between the European Parliament and the Council.

Respect for democratic principles: the main underlying principles of the various 2014-2020 Union external action programmes are to

promote, develop and consolidate the principles of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms on which it is founded, on the basis of, where appropriate, dialogue and cooperation with partner countries.

The Union's action on the international scene should be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, as enshrined in Article 21 of the Treaty on the European Union

Effects and impact of measures: the Union's external action under the instruments to which this Regulation applies should contribute to clear results (covering outputs, outcomes and impacts) in countries benefiting from external financial assistance of the Union. Whenever appropriate and possible, the results of the Union's external action and the efficiency of a particular instrument should be monitored and assessed on the basis of pre-defined, clear, transparent and, where appropriate, country-specific and measurable indicators, adapted to the specificities and objectives of each instrument.

Certain criteria taken into account: the following criteria to be taken into account in respect of the implementation of actions have been added:

- accessibility for persons with disabilities ;
- progress achieved by the partner in respect of human rights and democratic principles;
- the vulnerability of the partners;
- experience gained in the implementation of previous programmes.

Monitoring of progress: the Commission should examine the progress made in implementing the measures of financial assistance taken under the various regulations relating to EU external action.

Visibility of the Union's financial support: measures have been introduced to enhance the visibility of European assistance by means of relevant actions.

Civil society’s views to be taken on-board: during the implementation process, notably the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of measures taken under this regulation, it is important to consult stakeholders in the beneficiary countries (civil society and local authorities) to ensure they play a meaningful role in this process. Provisions should be made to allow certain tasks to be entrusted to non-profit organisations under conditions equivalent to those applying to the Commission.

Optimising resources: the EU should seek the most efficient use of available resources in order to optimise the impact of its external action. This should be achieved through coherence and complementarity between Union's Instruments for external action, as well as the creation of synergies between the Union's external financial Instruments and other policies of the Union. This should further entail mutual reinforcement of the programmes devised under those Instruments, and, where appropriate, using financial instruments that have a leverage effect.

Action programmes and nature of financing: financing decisions should include in an annex the description of each action, specifying:

- its objectives,
- main activities,
- expected results,
- methods of implementation,
- budget and indicative timetable,
- any associated support measures and performance monitoring arrangements

and should be approved in accordance with the procedures provided for in Regulation (EU) No 182/2011.

Special measures: technical provisions were added to lay down procedures in regard to:

- special measures,
- multiannual actions,
- cross-border cooperation actions

in line with the changes made in the various relevant regulations.

Other new provisions: new provisions have also been introduced on a technical level to:

- promote local capacity in the framework of procurement;
- strengthen the follow-up, the effectiveness and the eligibility criteria in regard to the granting of **budget suppor**t to third countries;
- clarify the eligibility rules for the various programmes for partner countries;
- monitoring and evaluation of actions implemented at the local level;
- set the general framework for **annual reporting** of funds (mid term (2017) and final (2021)).

It should be noted that the annual report should should draw lessons from the implementation of various regulations and potentially revise certain provisions relating to the experience.

The report mentioned in Article 13 shall reflect the main lessons learned and the follow-up to the recommendations of the evaluations of the previous years.

Implementing acts: provisions were added to lay down the procedure applicable for the adoption of support measures by the Commission. In particular, it was stipulated that the **examination procedure** should not be used for (other than for the exceptions in the various regulations) the adoption of:

- individual measures for which the Union’s financial assistance does not exceed **EUR 5 million**;
- special measures for which the Union’s financial assistance does not exceed **EUR 10 million**;
- technical amendments to action programmes, individual measures and special measures.

The European Parliament should be informed of the measures in question.

The proposed regulation, as amended, is accompanied by a series of joint, bilateral or unilateral declarations of the European institutions:

- a Commission declaration on reflows;
- a Commission declaration concerning the use of implementing acts for the setting of the specific provisions for the implementation of certain rules in certain EU external policy-related regulations;
- a European Parliament statement on the suspension of assistance granted under the financial instruments in particular in cases where a beneficiary country fails to observe basic principles such as democracy. It is stipulated that in this case, and given that any suspension of assistance under these instruments would modify the overall financial scheme agreed under the ordinary legislative procedure, the European Parliament would be entitled to fully exercise its prerogatives in accordance with the Treaty.