Role of local authorities in developing countries in development cooperation

2015/2004(INI) - 17/07/2015 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Development adopted an own-initiative report by Eleni THEOCHAROUS (EPP, CY) on the role of local authorities in developing countries in development cooperation.

Members considered that **strategic planning at national and local level** was absolutely essential to the promotion and integration of the three main dimensions of development: the social, economic and environmental dimensions.

The report highlighted the need for translating the Commission's new guidelines on local authorities and on recognising their role as state stakeholders into the effective implementation of European cooperation, both in terms of the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) and in terms of the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI).

Members urged the EU to **promote decentralised cooperation as a way of implementing the development framework post 2015.**

To this end, they called on the Commission to (i) consider the possibility of making decentralisation a priority funding sector for its external aid financing instruments, starting with the **DCI and the EDF**, and to (ii) step up efforts to include local authorities as full stakeholders in the implementation of the **11th EDF** in partner countries, regions, and in relation to sectorial and budgetary assistance.

For their part, Member States should **accord an appropriate role in their development programmes to local authorities** and to coordinate their activities with those of the Commission and of other Member States.

The report stressed the importance of the following points:

- **ensuring a fairer transfer of resources from national level to sub-regions, towns and municipalities**, ensuring also that some European budgetary assistance be allocated to funding local authorities, and establishing a genuine political dialogue among local authorities as part of European cooperation;
- **bearing in mind the role of local authorities in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals:** the MDGs revealed the crucial role of LAs in the fight against poverty and in the delivery of community services, such as water and sanitation, primary healthcare and education; additional resources should be allocated to strengthening the capacities of decentralised authorities so that they could provide high-quality public services;
- **setting reliable targets and indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals** that match the contexts, needs and worries of local populations; the post-2015 process should provide a clear vision for an implementation of Rio+20 outcomes that recognises the role of local authorities;
- **establish a renewed effective global partnership (with civil society, the private sector,** etc.) with a clear definition and division of responsibilities among partners;
- **strengthening partnerships with the private sector** by supporting: (i) the emergence of a middle class through the promotion of private entrepreneurship; (ii) local, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in job creation and promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth, notably through public-private policies; (iii) effective implementation of accountability mechanisms and definitions of mandatory social and environmental safeguards;

- **strengthening partnership with civil society**: the post-2015 global development agenda needed to change the role and impact of civil society organisations (CSOs). The report wanted to see the setting up mechanisms for regular dialogue between CSOs and Member States;
- **supporting domestic accountability and capacity building**: governments must be accountable both to domestic stakeholders and to the international community. The report stressed the importance of promoting good governance at local level by promoting the principles of accountability, transparency, participation, responsiveness and the rule of law; strong efforts needed to be made to improve the capacity of LAs to deliver public services;
- **engaging indigenous people** in the preparation of local and regional development and investment plans;
- **creating an enabling environment for the transfer of technologies** through cooperation that should also include longer-term investments;
- **providing in the Commission's partnership plans support for the management of a sustainable urbanisation process** adopting a territorial approach to address issues such as waste management and urban poverty
- **stepping up international cooperation to tackle illicit financial flows** and decentralising power to combat corruption, including corruption originating from multinational companies;
- **strengthening the mobilisation of resources**: the report stressed the urgent need to consolidate LA capacities in partner countries in the area of municipal taxation and budgetary planning. It asked the Commission to encourage the mobilisation of innovative sources of financing for decentralised cooperation, and urges the European Union to hence bolster the decentralised budgets that are a prerequisite for local development.