Implementation of the EU external financing instruments: mid-term review 2017 and the future post-2020 architecture

2017/2280(INI) - 26/03/2018 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Marietje SCHAAKE (ALDE, NL) on the implementation of the EU external financing instruments: mid-term review 2017 and the future post-2020 architecture.

Between 2014 and 2020, the EU dedicated EUR 51.8 billion to its external action. A large share of this funding, EUR 32 billion, is disbursed through so-called external financial instruments. These consist of 9 different thematic and geographic instruments and a Common Implementing Regulation (CIR).

Mid-term review: Members noted that the Commission mid-term review found the current instruments to be generally **fit for purpose**. They regretted that the quantity and lack of flexibility and coherence of the EU funding under Heading 4 of the current MFF have been indicative of the EU's limited ambition to act as a genuine global player. However, the report noted that many of the partner countries and themes addressed by the EU EFIs have seen positive progress, which is testament to the relevance and importance of the EFIs.

Members noted that EU Trust Funds were created to address the root causes of migration. They regretted that the contributions from the EU budget to the EU Trust Funds and the Facility for Refugees in Turkey have reduced the overall coherence, long-term vision and impact of the Union's action. They stressed once again that new priorities must be financed with **new appropriations** and deeply regretted that Parliament was not formally consulted or asked to give its approval at any stage of the decision-making process in relation to the 'Turkey statement'.

Members regretted the **absence of a single clear vision document** clarifying synergies between the instruments and how these feed into a global, overarching EU foreign policy strategy. The instruments should be complementary and adaptable to the local context, as well as able to respond to new and unforeseen challenges quickly and effectively.

They also regretted that the instruments do not contain any explicit reference to the possibility of suspending assistance in cases where a beneficiary country fails to observe such basic principles as democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Recommendations for 2017/2018-2020: the report called for:

- the establishment of solid, consistent and transparent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;
- enhanced parliamentary control and scrutiny procedures and systems that are consistent for all instruments;
- improved transparency through the creation of a single common transparent public database of projects and actions;
- additional financial resources and training support to civil society organisations (CSOs);
- mainstream a more strategic involvement of CSOs in all external instruments and programmes, as requested by both the Council and Parliament;
- the possibility to carry over unallocated ENI and IPA II funds, within a limit of 10 % of the initial appropriations for each instrument, in order to increase the capacity to respond to unforeseen events;

Post-2020 architecture: Members called for funding of external relations instruments to reflect ambitious external actions, and for the **budget for the EU as a global player to be increased**. They stressed that in the event of the United Kingdom withdrawing from the European Union, the current **budget ratio** destined for external action **should be increased** or at least maintained at current levels.

Members underlined the need for the **predictability of long-term funding** while also introducing set amounts to be used flexibly. Flexibility requires the possibility to **transfer funds between envelopes**.

Recalling the difficulties beneficiaries currently experience in securing funding under the instruments, Members called for a simplification of procedures, the easing of administrative burdens and, where possible, the adoption of unified procedures for the various Commission and EEAS services involved and the setting up of a **one-stop-shop for organisations applying for EU funding** and the use of digital solutions, where possible, to streamline and reduce bureaucratic burdens.