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

2017/2280(INI) - 18/04/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 462 to 82, with 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: Parliament noted that the Commission mid-term review found the current instruments to be generally **fit for purpose**. It regretted the:

- 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;
- lack of **political guidance and overall vision**, inconsistency in the application of EU values and partnership principles, slow progress in achieving social and legal reform objectives in the wider neighbourhood, lack of rigorous monitoring and evaluation;
- absence of a **clear strategic document** explaining the synergies between the instruments and their role in the Union's overarching foreign policy strategy;
- absence of explicit reference to the possibility of **suspending aid** if a beneficiary country fails to respect fundamental principles such as democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

EU **Trust Funds** were created to address the root causes of migration. Members 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'.

Parliament reiterated the need for the instruments to be **complementary** and adaptable to the local context, as well as able to respond to new and unforeseen challenges quickly and effectively.

Recommendations for 2017/2018-2020: the resolution 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.

The resolution 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.

Members stressed that any restructuring of instruments should aim to improve **transparency, accountability, efficiency, coherence and flexibility**. They invited the Commission and the EEAS to propose a plan for the reform of the instruments that includes a solid governance structure. Parliament will not accept any reform of the instruments without this.