Cooperation, third countries: democracy, rule of law, respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms

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Adopting the legislative report by Gerardo Saleote Quecedo (PPE,ES) on Community cooperation policy in the field of human rights (cooperation procedure), the European Parliament adds to the scope of the draft regulation the proper management of public affairs in third countries. It also broadens the scope of cooperation to include support for refugees and displaced persons, combatting sexism and initiatives supporting abolition of the death penalty. It also wishes to see measures to explain the aims and outcome of Community operations to public opinion. The report calls for support to be given to small scale partners as well as partners who cannot demonstrate any previous experience in the field of human rights. It also provides that, whatever their ideological allegiance, the partners shall take actions to defend human rights. The Parliament stresses the need for Community visibility and the durability of actions undertaken. It calls for actions to be the subject of a multiannual programme. The report amends the regulation's committee procedure in proposing an advisory committee and a stronger involvement of the European Parliament in its deliberations, in line with the new rules on comitology, soon to come into force (the Commission is required, among other things, to inform the Parliament of emergency measures). The Parliament calls, in particular, for the establishment of an advisory interinstitutional working party on democracy and the protection of human rights which will be consulted on the annual programme or mulitannual programmes set up by the Commission in this area and certain decisions (including emergency measures) relative to the regulation's implementation. The Parliament also wants the Commission to present it with an annual report to allow an overall assessment of actions in the field of human rights in order to assess to what extent these actions have effectively contributed to the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law. Elsewhere, the Parliament has removed the financial reference amount written into the draft regulation, as well as the article which determines the end of its application (31/12/2004). Finally, it is requested that the Commission should draw up a code of conduct for the partners involved in the operations governed by the regulation in order to improve compliance with its objectives.