

Development cooperation: European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights 2007-2013

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The committee adopted the report by its co-rapporteurs, H el ene FLAUTRE (Greens/EFA, FR) and Edward McMILLAN-SCOTT (EPP-ED, UK), amending - under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure - the proposed regulation on establishing a financing instrument for the promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide (European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights). The main amendments were as follows:

- the Instrument should enable the Community to provide assistance within the framework of not only its development cooperation policy and economic, financial and technical cooperation with non-EU countries, but also its common foreign and security policy (CFSP);
- the objectives as set out in Article 1 should specifically include helping to ensure respect for "civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.....which constitute the fundamental values on which European Union external action is based". Particular support should be given to "non-profit, non-state actors as defined in Article 9" and to "human rights defenders as defined in the EU guidelines on human rights defenders". The regional framework, as well as the international framework, should also receive support;
- the concept of complementarity of the regulation with other related instruments of Community assistance, as set out in Article 3, should be reformulated to make it clear that one of the specific features of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights is that the assistance provided "does not require the prior consent of the authorities of the host countries and that it is mainly channelled via non-governmental, non-profit human rights and democracy-promotion organisations";
- to ensure greater flexibility for dealing with difficult situations, the committee introduced a new Article 8a providing for "ad hoc measures", i.e. grants allocated on an ad hoc basis to help (a) support the functioning of independent civil society organisations facing difficulties, particularly in obtaining legal registration in their country, and (b) respond to the "urgent protection needs" of human rights defenders, including democracy activists, facing an imminent danger related to their activities in the field of democracy and human rights;
- as far as the budget for the regulation was concerned, the committee wanted "at least 66%" of funding for the implementation of the regulation to be earmarked for actions by non-profit, non-state actors. It also specified other expenditure totals: no more than 15% of the total implementation budget for electoral observation missions; a maximum of 8% for Article 7 (Special Measures), a maximum of 8% for new Article 8a (Ad hoc measures) and a maximum of 5% for Article 8 (Support measures);
- a series of amendments were designed to flesh out the various categories of action for which support would be provided through civil society, i.e. actions in support of women's rights should specifically include measures to combat female genital mutilation, early and forced marriages, honour-related crimes, domestic abuse, etc., while support for the rights of children should involve combating child labour, trafficking and prostitution, and the recruitment and use of child soldiers. The committee also added new categories, e.g. "the promotion and defence of freedom of expression, including artistic and cultural expression, and the fight against censorship";

- various amendments sought to enhance the role of the European Parliament, i.e. by proposing a procedure for a "structured dialogue" with the Commission, under which Parliament would be consulted at an early stage of the strategic programming process, would be kept fully informed and would be associated in the review process. The committee also extended the number of cases where Parliament would have to be informed of decisions on Special Measures (measures, not covered in Strategy Papers, which are taken under the management procedure in response to unforeseen needs or exceptional circumstances);

- lastly, the committee proposed that the review of the first three years of implementation of the regulation be presented by 30 April 2009 rather than 31 December 2010 as proposed by the Commission.