# Local authorities and development cooperation

2006/2235(INI) - 15/03/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drawn up by Pierre **SCHAPIRA** (PES, FR) on local authorities and development cooperation. It recognised that the involvement of local authorities in development policies was essential for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and ensuring good governance, and stated that the role of local authorities in development had so far been under-estimated and under-exploited. It called on the Commission to strengthen direct cooperation between European local authorities and their international partners. Steps to be taken to ensure the continuity of the solidarity networks set up by the URB-AL, Asia URBS and other programmes, due to end in 2007 at the latest.

Local governments should enlist the support of the other local stakeholders (universities, social agents, development NGOs, companies, etc.) and stimulate citizens' participation in public life. Parliament asked local stakeholders to work together with international organisations to monitor industry and agriculture with the aim of preventing child labour and cooperating in the construction and maintenance of adequate school facilities with trained teaching staff and free transport and meals, so that all children were able to attend school.

Parliament welcomed the political recognition and the specific funds granted to local authorities by the instrument for development cooperation (DCI). This meant the following:

-local authorities are involved upstream in the definition of the cooperation strategies of developing countries, the drawing up of geographic and thematic programmes, their implementation and their evaluation;

-up to 15% of the thematic programme 'non-State actors and local authorities' may be allocated directly to local authorities;

- European local authorities will be integrated in a structured political dialogue with the Community institutions and the other Northern development stakeholders.

Parliament regretted that local authorities in developing countries had only been involved in the implementation of projects and not in the definition of development policies, even in ACP countries, despite the revision of the Cotonou Agreement which placed political dialogue with local authorities at the heart of the partnership. It undertook to carry out a detailed political follow-up with associations of elected representatives of the implementation of the DCI within both the EU and developing countries, in particular by examining country strategy papers. It also stated it would inform local authorities of new opportunities open to them and, in the event of difficulties on the ground raised by local authorities, forward information to the Commission.

Parliament also regretted that the Commission had restricted the possibility of local authority involvement in relation to geographic programmes. Cooperation between local authorities and central government would make development aid more effective and enable more effective use to be made of the funding earmarked and also allow aid to reach those most in need. Local authorities and their representative associations must be allowed to benefit from direct and appropriate funding:

-under DCI geographic programmes, in view of their role in local governance and the importance of their participation in the achievement of the MDGs; and

-in the 'non-State actors and local authorities' thematic programme, given that the enhancement of their capacity for dialogue and participation in the cooperation process in Europe and developing countries calls for financial support that is more in keeping with their new responsibilities;

Accordingly, the Commission was asked for the revision of the coming development instruments in 2008 /2009.

Parliament went on to call for an international monitoring centre for local democracy and decentralisation, in partnership with local authority organisations, inter alia, to monitor the involvement of local authorities in the process of cooperation with the EU and alert the institutions of difficulties encountered on the ground. It asked the Commission to promote structural measures aimed at providing an impetus to decentralisation and local capacity building in partner countries, together with greater democracy and citizen participation.

Lastly, Parliament proposed the use of the mechanisms for revising cooperation strategies, including that of the Cotonou Agreement, to monitor progress made in the involvement of local authorities in the cooperation process and to seek to remove legal, political and organisational constraints on the involvement of local authorities in the cooperation process.