

P7_TA(2013)0432

Local authorities and civil society

European Parliament resolution of 22 October 2013 on local authorities and civil society: Europe's engagement in support of sustainable development (2012/2288(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Title V of the Treaty on European Union and, in particular, Article 21(2) thereof, establishing the principles and objectives of the EU in international relations, and Article 208(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to Articles 16, 18, and 87 of the joint statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, Parliament and the Commission on EU development policy: ‘The European Consensus’¹,
- having regard to the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid,
- having regard to the UN Declaration on the Right to Development (41/128),
- having regard to the United Nations Millennium Declaration which established the Millennium Goals framework,
- having regard to the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement (the Cotonou Agreement),
- having regard to the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation (SEC(2011)1469 and SEC(2011)1470),
- having regard to the European Charter on Development Cooperation in Support of Local Governance launched during the European Development Days on 16 November 2008,
- having regard to the Commission Communication entitled ‘Increasing the Impact of EU Development Policy: An agenda for change’ (COM(2011)0637),
- having regard to its resolution of 5 July 2011 on increasing the impact of EU development policy²,
- having regard to the Commission Communication entitled ‘The Future Approach to EU Budget Support to Third Countries’ (COM(2011)0638),
- having regard to the Commission Communication entitled ‘The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations’ (COM(2012)0492),
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 15 October 2012 on ‘The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations’

¹ OJ C 46, 24.2.2006, p. 1.

² OJ C 33 E, 5.2.2013, p. 77.

(doc. 14535/12),

- having regard to the Council conclusions on EU Support for Sustainable Change in Transition Societies, adopted at the 3218th Foreign Affairs Council meeting of 31 January 2013,
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 15 May 2013 entitled ‘Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes’ (COM(2013)0280),
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 27 February 2013 entitled ‘‘A decent life for all: Ending poverty and giving the world a sustainable future’’ (COM(2013)0092),
- having regard to the international commitments under the 2011 Busan partnership on effective development cooperation,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 22 July 2013 concerning local authorities in development cooperation (doc. 12584/13),
- having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions on ‘‘Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes’’ (CdR 2010/2013),
- having regard to its declaration of 5 July 2012 on ‘development education and active global citizenship’¹,
- having regard to the Commission staff working document entitled ‘Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) in Europe’ (SWD(2012)0457),
- having regard to the study on ‘The experience and actions of the main European actors active in the field of development education and awareness raising’ of November 2010²,
- having regard to the concluding paper of the Structured Dialogue Initiative, May 2011³,
- having regard to ‘the Lisbon Statement for Improving and Increasing Global Education in Europe to the Year 2015’⁴,
- having regard to the consultation on ‘Civil society organisations in development cooperation’ and the consultation on ‘Local Authorities in development’,
- having regard to the DAC-OECD peer review of the European Union of 2012,
- having regard to the ‘Thematic global evaluation of the Commission support to

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0302.

² https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/aidco/images/d/d4/Final_Report_DEAR_Study.pdf.

³ https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/aidco/images/e/ea/FINAL_CONCLUDING_PAPER.pdf.

⁴ [http://www.gecongress2012.org/images/2012_GE_Congress_Report_FINAL_11feb201.pdf \(p.27-31\)](http://www.gecongress2012.org/images/2012_GE_Congress_Report_FINAL_11feb201.pdf(p.27-31)).

decentralisation processes¹ of February 2012,

- having regard to its resolution of 15 March 2007 on local authorities and development cooperation²,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Development (A7-0296/2013),
- A. whereas Article 208 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) establishes the reduction and, in the long term, the eradication of poverty, as defined in the European Consensus on Development (ECD), as the primary objective of EU development policy;
- B. whereas the ECD remains the doctrinal framework for EU development policy;
- C. whereas the EU has a strong political commitment to promoting an enabling environment for civil society organisations (CSOs) at national level as well as at regional and international levels, and whereas the EU recognises that an empowered civil society, in all its diversity, is important in its own right and represents a crucial and integral component of any democracy;
- D. whereas the EU has a strong political commitment to implementing a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) in development and whereas the UN statement on a common understanding of a Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation establishes that ‘all programmes of development co-operation, policies and technical assistance should further the realisation of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments’;
- E. whereas democratic ownership includes not only governments but also CSOs, local authorities (LAs) and national parliaments, which play crucial roles in linking citizens with government and in ensuring broad-based and democratic ownership of countries’ development agendas;
- F. whereas domestic accountability includes the oversight role of CSOs, which are key actors in fighting corruption and promoting transparency;
- G. whereas the OECD-DAC report recommends that ‘The EU institutions and bodies should pursue efforts to involve a broader range of civil society stakeholders in a strategic, structured dialogue. They should become more efficient in building civil society capacity in partner countries; instruments will need to be revised for this’;
- H. whereas a legitimate post-2015 framework requires civil society and individuals - particularly the most marginalised - to be able to participate fully in decision-making processes and in monitoring and reporting on progress made;
- I. whereas the results of the public consultation on ‘Local authorities in development’ pointed out the link between local democratic governance, decentralisation, and territorial development;

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/evaluation/evaluation_reports/2012/1300_docs_en.htm.

² OJ C 301 E, 13.12.2007, p. 249.

- J. whereas territorial development (TD) has been defined as the interaction between multiple stakeholders and multilevel governance which aims at investing in local territorial assets (human, financial, physical and natural resources) to strengthen the territory's competitive advantages and raise living standards;
- K. whereas strong, transparent and needs-oriented CSOs and LAs and inclusive local governance actions are essential core issues of democracy and the peace-building process;
- L. whereas LAs from new Member States need to exchange knowledge with old Member States on development cooperation practices in order to overcome the gap in terms of expertise, and in order for the old Member States to profit from the new Member States' experience of transition and structural transformations, which is a valuable tool in the global development framework;
- M. whereas CSOs and LAs are crucial in ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth, environmental sustainability, human rights and good governance in the post-2015 development agenda;
- N. whereas equitable and long-term partnerships between EU CSOs and their counterparts in developing countries have proven to be an important tool for the development of strong, independent and diversified CSO and CS initiatives on different scales and at different levels, from local to international;

An enabling environment for CSOs and LAs

1. Welcomes the recent policy developments at EU and international level which are focused on a more ambitious partnership with CSOs and LAs, founded on a human rights-based approach to development, including economic, social and cultural rights as well as international treaties on environment and biodiversity protection, and the clear commitment to strengthening the democratic process and accountability;
2. Underlines that creating accountable, human rights-based, and inclusive relations among governments, LAs, CSOs, the private sector and citizens offers a unique opportunity for the EU, including its citizens, LAs and the private sector to establish sustainable partnerships with developing countries;
3. Calls on the EC and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to develop guidance and implementation plans for a HRBA to EU development cooperation in dialogue with CSOs and to further the implementation of the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders;
4. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to mainstream the promotion of an enabling environment for CSOs and LAs and to consider this a priority for the EU's position in the ongoing negotiations on the post-2015 development framework; stresses the importance of defining a monitoring system which permits the evaluation of progress in the creation of an enabling environment at national level in terms of policy and regulatory provisions, in line with international human rights standards, as well as multiple stakeholder and multilevel dialogues; calls on the Commission to measure the enabling environment in order to fully appreciate its complexity and the characteristics of civil society actors;
5. Expresses great concern at the crackdown on CSOs cooperating with EU partners in a

number of countries and calls on the Commission and the EEAS to develop strategies on how to overcome these difficulties and to continue the vital support for CSOs;

6. Encourages the EU to promote institutionalised mechanisms for multilevel and multiple stakeholder dialogue among CSOs, LAs, the private sector and partner governments on decent work agendas, sustainable and inclusive growth with redistribution of revenue through the state budget, and on the issue of the enabling environment for both CSOs and LAs; recommends that for each partner country the EU applies the provisions on consultations with LAs provided for in the Cotonou Agreement for ACP states;
7. Encourages the EU to systematically involve women's organisations and networks in the preparation and, possibly, the implementation of policy dialogue, in line with the commitments made under the EU Gender Action Plan for Development;
8. Expresses appreciation for the Policy Forum on Development, which aims to create a space for dialogue with CSOs and LAs in policy discussions and encourages all stakeholders involved to make it a strategic space for guiding and influencing policymaking at EU and international level on development issues, including policy coherence for development (PCD);

Development effectiveness

9. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to allocate adequate resources in the future programming period, to allow CSOs and LAs from partner countries to monitor and analyse progress towards PCD at local, national and international level;
10. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to promote a 'partnership for accountability' for strategic cooperation between elected representatives at national and local level and CSOs which is based on transparency regarding official and non-official aid flows, as well as a participatory approach to development and accountability, including domestic social accountability and oversight, with a view to measuring policy impact;
11. Stresses the important role that local authorities and civil society organisations can play in fighting corruption at all levels, including tax evasion and illicit financial flows from developing countries;
12. Calls on the Commission to support the inclusion of LA representatives in the Steering Committee of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation;
13. Believes that PCD must be the guiding principle of any EU cooperation with local authorities which aims to develop the local economy in order to provide decent livelihoods for people at community level,
14. Recalls that all development actors should be accountable for their development efforts and results, and should promote the accountability of each other;
15. Calls on the Commission to promote a balanced approach between the principle of harmonisation and the right of initiative of CSOs and LAs; reminds the Commission that simplification and harmonisation of donor administrative procedures should be done in dialogue with CSOs and LAs;

16. Welcomes the Commission's proposal to draft road maps (RMs) for engagement with CSOs aiming to identify a global strategy for CSO inclusion in all forms of European cooperation; calls on the Commission to clarify how CSOs can contribute meaningfully to the process and to ensure that their participation is timely and significantly taken into account in the drafting phase and that priorities are jointly defined;
17. Encourages the Commission to establish country RMs for LAs as well, and to consider the development of joint CSO and LA country RMs;
18. Calls on the Commission to consider PCD as a key element of future RMs;
19. Calls on the Commission to adopt the sustainable development agenda, taking account of the fact that its three core components (environmental, social and economic) are equally important and inseparable parameters;
20. Recalls the importance of the partnership between LAs from European and partner countries in achieving sustainable development; in this context urges the EU to make efficient use of knowledge-sharing and capacity-development methods, including the use of the transition experience of LAs in EU Member States;
21. Encourages the EU to adopt a scaled-up agenda with a view to achieving a proportional increase in the effective experiences of projects and initiatives of both CSOs and LAs financed by the EU;

Decentralisation and territorial approach to development (TAD)

22. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to establish a more ambitious policy dialogue with and within partner countries to promote TAD and a comprehensive approach to decentralisation, and to give priority in the future programming period to strengthening the capacity of LAs and CSOs to influence and monitor decentralisation reform processes;
23. Recalls that an effective decentralisation process requires public sector reforms, such as the transfer of power, functions, and resources, as well as the active participation of citizens, through their representatives, and CSOs in participatory planning and budgeting; calls on the Commission to take due account of decentralisation and TAD in its support to public sector-wide reforms and to make them a cross-cutting priority in all geographic programmes;
24. Stresses that sustainable TAD needs as its basis an accountable, transparent and well-functioning decentralisation process; recommends that the EU consider TAD and decentralisation as important factors in achieving poverty eradication in the future post-MDGs development agenda;
25. Recalls that TAD is contributing to development effectiveness through strengthening ownership, multi-stakeholders and multi-actors dialogues and programmes and policy coordination at the sub-national level; calls on the Commission to launch pilot initiatives to support TAD through geographic and thematic programmes;
26. Recalls the added-value of decentralised cooperation in promoting both TAD and decentralisation; stresses that European LAs are very well placed to cooperate with their counterparts in the process of decentralisation, notably fiscal decentralisation;

27. Stresses the importance of strengthening EU staff expertise and commitment, in particular at delegation level, on decentralisation and on the role of CSOs and LAs in sustainable development, including on how to coordinate with CSOs, and encourages the participation of civil society organisations, including women's organisations, in order to add a gender perspective to those processes;

Fragile States

28. Stresses that the EU should engage with partner countries, in the context of the New Deal for Fragile States, to elaborate, as part of wider development strategies, national resilience strategies and specific programmes that aim to address the underlying causes of long-term vulnerability, including community-based and participatory risk analysis, management tools and in-depth research about the drivers of conflict or fragility, taking into account the views and perceptions of directly affected local people;

29. Recalls that resilience should also be a key theme of the EU's partnerships with CSOs and LAs; recalls that it is essential to strengthen the role of both communities, through community-owned and -led risk reduction activities, and LAs in fragile states, and to work closely with them in crisis and post-crisis situations; encourages LA partnerships in fragile states to provide for the development, transfer and exchange of administrative and technical skills;

30. Recalls that local elected representatives regularly act as mediators between antagonistic parties and in that regard assume an important role in conflict prevention and resolution;

31. Calls on the EC and the EEAS to establish guidelines for EU delegations on how to deal with CSOs and LAs in situations of crisis and fragility, using a human rights-based and gender-sensitive approach;

32. Stresses that in contexts where public authorities, local and regional authorities included, do not have the capacity to provide basic services, and where circumstances allow it, the Commission should support multi-actor partnerships to develop LA capacities so that they are able to provide services;

33. Expresses deep concern at the Commission's proposal to limit financial support in service delivery only to CSOs working in LDCs and fragile states; recalls that the key added value of CSOs in all countries, whatever their level of development, is their capacity to interpret the needs and rights of poor and marginalised groups and to provide innovative solutions for their benefit, while raising awareness and political support for addressing the root causes of poverty, inequality and exclusion;

Development education and awareness raising (DEAR)

34. Recalls that Parliament's written declaration on 'development education and active global citizenship' calls for a European strategy on DEAR which should be more focused on a critical reflection about development policy and, in particular, on PCD;

35. Calls on the Commission to develop an overarching DEAR strategy in close collaboration with CSOs to increase the financial resources which will be allocated in the future programming period to DEAR, and to develop, in close consultation with CSOs and LAs active on DEAR, flexible funding modalities that respect their right of initiative and allow

the participation of a wide and diversified range of actors;

Programming documents and aid modalities

36. Welcomes the Commission's engagement to systematically introduce political economy analysis at country level and recommends that this include an analysis of the political and legal situation of CSOs and LAs;
37. Is of the view that tax revenues are essential for local economic development and considers that priority should be given to putting in place effective and viable tax collection systems to ensure a sustainable source of development financing;
38. Calls on the Commission to improve the coordination and complementarity between thematic and geographic programmes and instruments; recalls that CSOs and LAs should be considered a key implementing partner in particular in the Global Public Good programme and should be consulted at an early stage on the programming of both geographic and thematic programmes;
39. Recalls that LAs are eligible in all DCI programmes, and calls on the Commission and LAs representative organisations to encourage a wider participation of LAs in all DCI programmes;
40. Calls on the Commission to continue its support of decentralised cooperation and partnerships between LAs from EU and partner countries; these partnerships have proven to be efficient tools in the reinforcement of the capacity of LAs in key sectors which contribute to poverty eradication; at the same time and for the same reason, calls on the Commission to continue its support of cooperation between CSOs from European and partner countries;
41. Calls on the Commission to facilitate experience- and expertise-sharing between LAs from EU and partner countries in order to provide access to knowledge on relevant areas of sustainable development, especially good governance, capitalising on the transition experience of LAs in EU Member States;
42. Calls on the Commission to engage in more strategic partnerships with national, regional, and international associations and networks of LAs;
43. Encourages the Commission to further develop a mix of more flexible, transparent and predictable funding modalities to reach the broadest possible range of civil society actors; asks the Commission to identify and develop these modalities through an inclusive dialogue with CSOs and LA associations, building on the Structured Dialogue;
44. Calls on the Commission to promote the participation of CSOs and LAs in the ongoing discussion on blending mechanisms in the framework of the EU Platform for Blending in External Cooperation; asks the Commission to draft guidelines and create inclusive impact assessment and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that concerned populations are consulted at and participate in all stages of the project cycle and that blending contributes to poverty eradication;
45. Calls also on the Commission to allow CSOs to participate in all new forms of cooperation under the EU Platform for Blending in External Cooperation;

46. Asks the Commission to strengthen national decentralisation reforms in the elaboration and implementation of good governance and development contracts, sector reform contracts, and state building contracts;

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47. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.