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| European Parliament2014-2019 |  |

**TEXTS ADOPTED**

P8\_TA(2017)0242

Resilience as a strategic priority of the EU external action

PE605.482

European Parliament resolution of 1 June 2017 on resilience as a strategic priority of the external action of the EU (2017/2594(RSP))

*The European Parliament*,

– having regard to Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), and Articles 208, 210 and 214 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),

– having regard to the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) published in June 2016,

– having regard to the Commission communication of 3 October 2012 entitled ‘The EU approach to resilience: learning from food security crises’ (COM(2012)0586) and the staff working document of 19 June 2013 entitled ‘Action plan for resilience in crisis-prone countries 2013-2020’ (SWD(2013)0227),

– having regard to the Council conclusions of 28 May 2013 on the EU approach to resilience,

– having regard to UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015 on ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’,

– having regard to the Conference of the Parties decision 1/CP.21 related to entry into force of the Paris Agreement on climate change,

– having regard to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 adopted at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held from 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai, Japan,

– having regard to the Commission staff working document of 16 June 2016 entitled ‘Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030: A disaster risk-informed approach for all EU policies’ (SWD(2016)0205),

– having regard to the Report of the United Nations Secretary-General of 23 August 2016 on the Outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit (A/71/353),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 26 April 2016 entitled ‘Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance Forced Displacement and Development’ COM(2016)0234),

– having regard to its previous resolutions, in particular those of 11 December 2013 on the EU approach to resilience and disaster risk reduction in developing countries: learning from food security crises[[1]](#footnote-1), of 16 December 2015 on preparing for the World Humanitarian Summit: Challenges and opportunities for humanitarian assistance[[2]](#footnote-2), and of 14 February 2017 on the revision of the European Consensus on Development[[3]](#footnote-3),

– having regard to the question to the Commission on resilience as a strategic priority of the external action of the EU (O-000033/2017 – B8-0313/2017),

– having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on Development,

– having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 1.6 billion people live in 56 countries identified as fragile[[4]](#footnote-4); whereas situations of fragility have largely man-made causes; whereas situations of fragility increase the vulnerability of populations due to various factors, including conflict and insecurity, lack of access to healthcare, forced displacement, extreme poverty, inequality, food insecurity, economic shocks, poor governance and weak institutions, corruption and impunity, and natural disasters exacerbated by the impact of climate change; whereas fostering resilience is particularly important in situations of fragility, which the OECD defines along five different but interlinked dimensions; economic, environmental, political, security and societal;

B. whereas the concept of resilience has been used in the policies of the EU and other international organisations for a number of years and appears to be broadening; whereas the 2013 Council conclusions on resilience define this as ‘the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to prepare for, to withstand, to adapt, and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks without compromising long-term development prospects’;

C. whereas the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) identifies ‘State and Societal Resilience to our East and South’ as one of the five priorities for the EU’s external action and defines resilience as ‘the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises’; whereas the EUGS affirms that ‘a resilient society featuring democracy, trust in institutions and sustainable development lies at the heart of a resilient state’;

D. whereas the EUGS further states that the EU will ‘adopt a joined-up approach to its humanitarian, development, migration, trade, investment, infrastructure, education, health and research policies’ and will, inter alia, pursue tailor-made policies to support inclusive and accountable governance, promote human rights, pursue locally owned rights-based approaches to the reform of the justice, security and defence sectors, support fragile states, fight poverty and inequality and promote sustainable development, deepen relations with civil society, promote energy and environmental sector reform policies and support sustainable responses to food production and the use of water;

E. whereas a multifaceted approach to resilience is needed in the EU’s external action, and whereas this can be fostered by increasing, in line with the principle of policy coherence for development, in particular development aid and, where appropriate, humanitarian assistance, together with environmental-related policies, with a clear focus on reducing vulnerability and disaster risks, as a crucial means of reducing humanitarian needs; whereas the EU’s foreign policy also has a central role to place in promoting resilience, notably by promoting sustainable development, human rights and political dialogue while fostering early-warning systems and working for the prevention of social and economic shocks such as starvation, a rise in inequalities, human rights violations and violent conflict, and for conflict resolution when this occurs;

F. whereas the EU should promote an integrated approach to its external action while at the same time enhancing its contribution to sustainable development and recognising each policy’s mandate and objectives, as recognised in the Treaties; whereas this is particularly important in crisis situations and with regard to the EU’s humanitarian action, which cannot be considered a crisis management tool and needs to be fully guided by humanitarian aid principles, as reflected in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, and aim at a coherent, effective and quality humanitarian response; whereas the EU should continue to promote respect for human rights and international humanitarian law by all parties to a conflict;

G. whereas humanitarian action should follow a set of internationally recognised standards and principles as they are encapsulated in the ‘Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations in Disaster Relief’ and broadly incorporated in the ‘Humanitarian Charter’;

H. whereas fostering resilience needs to be understood as a long-term effort embedded in the promotion of sustainable development, which will only be sustainable if it is resilient to shocks, stresses and change; whereas, as part of the EU’s foreign policy and development cooperation programmes, promoting resilience needs to be context-specific and seek to contribute to strengthening national resilience strategies owned by partner countries’ governments, which are also accountable to their populations;

I. whereas understanding risk, strengthening risk governance and investing in early-warning and early-response systems, prevention and disaster risk reduction, in line with the priorities of the Sendai Framework, are essential in achieving resilience and therefore essential for the fulfilment of the SDGs;

J. whereas a focus on people should remain central to the EU’s approach to resilience, including by, wherever possible, working with bodies and building capacities to support this focus at national, regional and local levels and by recognising and supporting the central role of civil society organisations and local communities;

K. whereas natural or man-made disasters affect women, girls, boys and men differently, with gender-based inequalities exacerbating the impact of stresses and shocks and impeding sustainable development;

L. whereas women and girls suffer the most in crises and conflicts; whereas women and girls are disproportionately exposed to risk, with an increased loss of livelihoods, security, and even lives, during and in the aftermath of disasters; whereas women and girls face heightened risks due to displacement and the breakdown of normal protection structures and support; whereas in crisis-related contexts the likelihood of rape, sexual exploitation and risky behaviour greatly increases the likelihood of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and reproductive health complications;

M. whereas empowering women is key in order to foster resilience; whereas in order for programmes to be effective, comprehensive and sustainable, they need to build and enhance resilience and must involve women, while addressing specific abilities and coping mechanisms;

N. whereas the family represents a major institution for carrying out essential production, consumption, reproduction and accumulation functions associated with the social and economic empowerment of individuals and societies; whereas families and their members build caring support systems and their resilient behaviour can be reflected in the maintenance of normal development of optimism, resourcefulness and determination despite adversity; whereas these strengths and resources enable individuals to respond successfully to crises and challenges;

O. whereas the EU’s approach to resilience in its external action should pay special attention to the needs of the most vulnerable parts of the population, including the poorest, minorities, forcibly displaced populations, women, children, migrants, people living with HIV, LGBTI persons, people with disabilities and the elderly;

1. Welcomes the recognition of the importance of promoting resilience in the EUGS by making it a strategic priority of the external action of the EU; welcomes the positive contribution that increased political, diplomatic and security attention to promoting resilience can have in partner countries, but underlines that resilience cannot be reduced to these dimensions;

2. Reaffirms the need for EU Member States to respect their Official Development Assistance commitments and strengthen resilience through their strategy and planning processes as regards development and humanitarian aid; underlines in that matter the importance of the OECD’s resilience systems analysis framework, which helps to translate strategies into more effective cross-sectoral and multidimensional programme plans;

3. Considers that the current EU approach to resilience, including commitments to address the underlying causes of crises and vulnerability, as set out in the 2012 Commission communication and the 2013 Council conclusions, remains fundamentally valid and should be continued, while recognising the need to incorporate lessons learnt from the implementation of this policy into the new joint communication; wonders how the communication will take into account elements from evaluations, as a major evaluation is only planned to take place in 2018; believes that the 2013-2020 Action Plan for Resilience should be fully implemented;

4. Stresses the multidimensional – human, economic, environmental, political, security and societal – nature of resilience, and welcomes the fact that this concept is becoming an important one in the EU’s foreign and security policy, development cooperation and humanitarian assistance; highlights that the distinct mandate and objectives of each policy need to be respected, while also promoting greater coherence between policies towards sustainable development; recalls the importance of ensuring the principle of Policy Coherence for Development in all EU external action by ensuring that EU policies do not undermine developing countries’ efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;

5. Underlines in particular the special position of humanitarian assistance, as this must be guided solely by needs and implemented with utmost respect for the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence and the respect for human rights enshrined in the Geneva Conventions and the additional protocols thereto; stresses that respect for humanitarian principles is essential to obtain access to populations in need and for the protection of humanitarian actors;

6. Welcomes the fact that the provision of humanitarian aid by the EU and the Member States should not be subject to restrictions imposed by other partner donors regarding necessary medical treatment, including access to safe abortion for women and girls who are victims of rape in armed conflicts, but should instead comply with international humanitarian law;

7. Highlights the fact that building resilience in partner countries is a long-term process and that it therefore needs to be integrated into development programmes that are inclusive of the most vulnerable segments of the population and into financial commitments; stresses that the new joint communication should recognise this and support the promotion of resilience as an essential element of the sustainable development strategies of partner countries, particularly in fragile states; notes that these strategies need to be context specific and in line with the internationally agreed principles of development effectiveness: ownership of development priorities by partner countries receiving support (including alignment with national development strategies), focus on results, inclusive partnerships, and transparency and accountability; underlines in this regard the important monitoring and scrutiny role of the European Parliament, of national parliaments and of civil society;

8. Urges the Commission to integrate resilience and its multidimensional nature as a core element into its policy dialogue with developing countries;

9. Highlights the overall importance of joint programming of the EU’s resilience-related actions in its humanitarian and development assistance to ensure maximum complementarity and less aid fragmentation, and to ensure that short-term actions lay the groundwork for medium- and long-term interventions;

10. Stresses the importance of providing technical assistance to least developed countries (LDCs) and fragile states, in particular in the areas of sustainable land management, ecosystem conservation and water supply, these being fundamental to achieving benefits for both the environment and the people who depend on it;

11. Recalls that poor people are the ones who are most likely to continue to feel the significant consequences of disasters in terms of income and welfare; insists that the primary and overarching objective of EU development cooperation therefore be the eradication of poverty in the context of sustainable development, in order to ensure dignity and a decent life for all;

12. Stresses the importance of disaster risk reduction in building resilience; calls for the EU to ensure that its promotion of resilience in the new joint communication is aligned with the commitments and targets made in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and that are being implemented through the European Commission Sendai Action Plan promoting a disaster-risk-informed approach for all EU policies, and to ensure that sufficient resources are devoted to this priority; stresses that risk management is essential to achieve sustainable development and calls for the development of inclusive local and national disaster risk reduction strategies and the development of an all-of-society and all-hazards approach in disaster risk management, with a view to reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience; calls for the links between disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and urban policies and initiatives to be reinforced;

13. Calls for personal and community resilience and a focus on vulnerable groups – including the poorest in society, minorities, families, women, children, migrants, people living with HIV, LGBTI persons, people with disabilities and the elderly – to remain central to the promotion of resilience in the external action of the EU; highlights the central role played by civil society and local communities in building resilience; underlines also the importance of collecting and disseminating disaggregated data to understand and address the situation of vulnerable groups;

14. Points out that efficient resilience building must recognise the importance of families and support their capacity to absorb shocks;

15. Calls for gender-responsive programming that strengthens the participation of women and addresses women’s concerns in developing their resilience to disasters and climate change, and that ensures women’s rights, including property rights and land tenure security, including as regards water, forests, housing and other assets;

16. Calls for further efforts to increase women and girl´s access to health and sexual health education, family planning, prenatal care and sexual and reproductive health and rights, notably to address the largely unachieved Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5 on maternal health, including reducing infant and child mortality and avoidance of high-risk births;

17. Underlines the importance of access to healthcare and services, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene, in emergency situations, as well as long-term community health planning;

18. Notes the particular challenge which forced and protracted displacement represents for many fragile and conflict-affected countries and their neighbours; underlines that the protection of displaced persons must be guaranteed unconditionally and that building the resilience and self-reliance of affected populations and their host communities is of the utmost importance, as outlined in the Commission communication ‘Lives in Dignity’; recalls the importance of self-reliance in fostering dignity and resilience;

19. Stresses the need to expand the Refugee Convention and the Kampala Convention to protect and assist displaced people around the world, as well as people affected by other forms of violence, such as human trafficking and gender violence, since they may have a well-founded fear of persecution or be at risk of serious harm;

20. Recognises state resilience as an important dimension of resilience and underlines that the resilience and stability of countries is directly derived from respect for human rights, the strength of democracy, the rule of law and good governance, trust in institutions, and accountability to the country’s citizens, but, above all, from involving citizens, individually and in associations, in identifying possible solutions – objectives which, each and every one, must be promoted and defended in the implementation of the EUGS; stresses the importance of boosting essential public services, such as education, health, water and sanitation, in order to enhance resilience;

21. Underlines that the concept of resilience in the external action of the EU should maintain a global geographic scope; notes that fostering resilience should be an objective of the promotion of human rights and sustainable development in partner countries and not be limited to geographic areas facing security crises with an immediate impact on the EU; stresses that promoting resilience should in any case prioritise and pay particular attention to LDCs, fragile states and countries subject to recurring and seasonal crises, while addressing the underlying causes of crises, notably through support for prevention and preparedness activities;

22. Emphasises the importance of early-warning systems and early-response capabilities as a mechanism to promote resilience, and calls for the EU to increase its efforts in this area, notably by promoting closer cooperation between different actors on the ground, particularly in EU delegations, and developing joint analyses in fragile contexts and exchanges within natural-disaster-prone regions facing similar hazards, which would allow a better understanding and a more coordinated response across EU policies and between EU institutions and Member States;

23. Calls for sufficient resources to be devoted to the promotion of resilience, in line with its place as one of the strategic priorities of the EU; would welcome a strategic reflection ahead of the next multi-annual financial framework of how the EU can use existing external financing instruments and innovative mechanisms more effectively, while continuing to align them with internationally agreed development effectiveness principles, in order to systematically embed resilience within development and assistance strategies and programmes; stresses that actions can be financed from different instruments working in a complementary manner and underlines that resources drawn from development cooperation instruments need to maintain poverty reduction as their central objective;

24. Underlines the need to strengthen and develop education in the context of disasters and crises and to improve the dissemination, compilation and communication of information and knowledge that will help build community resilience and promote behavioural changes and a culture of disaster preparedness;

25. Encourages increased collaboration between the public and private sectors on resilience; recalls, in this context, the importance of the Commission communication on ‘A Stronger Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Countries’; calls on the Commission to further facilitate the involvement of the private sector by creating incentives and the right environment for private entities to get involved in building resilience and reducing risks in partner countries;

26. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

1. OJ C 468, 15.12.2016, p. 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0459. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2017)0026. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. OECD (2016), States of Fragility 2016: Understanding violence, OECD publishing, Paris. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)