Participation of non-state actors in EC development policy

European Parliament resolution on the communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee on participation of non-state actors in EC development policy (COM(2002) 598 — 2002/2283(INI))

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the communication from the Commission (COM(2002) 598 — C5-0625/2002),
— having regard to the Council’s conclusions of 19 May 2003 on that communication (1),
— having regard to the revised preliminary draft opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 26 March 2003 on the role of civil society in European development policy (2),
— having regard to Articles 177, 178, 179, 180, 181 and 181a of the EC Treaty,
— having regard to the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000 (3),
— having regard to the Council and Commission Joint Declaration of 10 November 2000 on the European Community’s development policy (4),
— having regard to its resolution of 1 March 2001 on the Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament on the European Community’s Development Policy (5),
— having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Towards a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue — General principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties by the Commission’ (COM(2002) 704),
— having regard to the Commission White Paper on European governance (6),
— having regard to the Commission White Paper on reform of the Commission (COM(2000) 200) and in particular Chapter II (IV) thereof on improving the dialogue with civil society,
— having regard to its resolution of 30 November 2000 on the Commission White Paper on reforming the Commission (aspects concerning the Committee on Budgets) (7),
— having regard to its resolution of 15 January 1999 on the participation of citizens and social players in the European Union’s institutional system and the IGC (8),
— having regard to its resolution of 15 January 1999 on the Commission communication entitled ‘Democratisation, the rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance: the challenges of the partnership between the European Union and the ACP states’ (9),

(1) DEVGEN 63/RELEX 169/Doc. 9125/03.
(2) REX/097-R/CESE/669/2002 rev.
(4) Doc. 13458/02 DEVGEN 140.
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— having regard to its resolutions of 19 February 1987 (*) and 14 May 1992 (**) on the role of non-governmental organisations in development cooperation,

— having regard to the International Labour Organisation Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of 18 June 1998,

— having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1658/98 of 17 July 1998 on co-financing operations with European non-governmental development organisations (NGOs) in fields of interest to the developing countries (***)


— having regard to the evaluation of the de-centralised cooperation budget line B7-6002 of September 2000 (****) and to the evaluation of the budget line B7-6000 of co-financing operations with European non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) of December 2000 (****)

— having regard to the Commission’s replies to the questionnaire by Richard Howitt in relation to the Commission communication (COM(2002) 598 — C5-0625/2002) (****)

— having regard to Rules 47(2) and 163 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Development and Cooperation and the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy (A5-0249/2003),

A. whereas ownership of development strategies by partner countries and the widest possible participation by all sections of society are key principles in EC Development policy; and whereas participation by non-state actors (NSAs) does not in itself guarantee the establishment of policies for bottom-up development, poverty-reduction and social inclusion and should instead flow from them,

B. whereas the UN General Assembly, in its UN Millennium Declaration of September 2000, resolved to develop strong partnerships with the private sector and with civil society organisations in pursuit of development and poverty eradication, with its accompanying Agenda for Action incorporating 1300 civil society organisations worldwide,

C. whereas, according to an estimate made by the Commission (****), out of 63 country strategy papers analysed, NSA inputs were taken into account only in 36 cases, suggesting that in 23 cases NSAs were consulted and ‘ignored’,

D. whereas some of the responsibilities of the European Parliament’s Committee on Development and Cooperation are the promotion, application and monitoring of the development and cooperation policy of the European Union, in which consultation with European and southern NSAs plays a vital role,

(*) OJ C 76, 23.3.1987, p. 128.
(****) Aidco, evaluation, ref. 951516, 09/2000.
(****) Aidco, evaluation, ref. 951568, 12/2000.
(****) PE 326.730 — available in EN & FR.
(****) Replies to Questions 1 & 2 (PE 326.730).
A. General principles

1. Welcomes the Commission communication on participation of non-state actors in EC development policy as a significant step forward in promoting a participatory approach in all EC development programmes;

2. Recognises that the role of NSAs is essential in carrying out the process of political democratisation, building an active civil society and strengthening economic and social cohesion, all of which are necessary components of any form of sustainable development; stresses, however, that the involvement of NSAs in EU development policy should be based on EU guidelines and priorities given to the EU's political responsibility and its commitment in seeking global solutions for peace, security and harmonious world development;

3. Welcomes the attempt to spread the principle, set out in the Cotonou Agreement (inter alia, Articles 2, 4 and 6 thereof) of NSA participation in each and every stage of development policy in all regions; regrets, nevertheless, that the fundamental principle stated in the Cotonou Agreement of opening the partnership up to all different kinds of NSAs, in order to encourage the integration of all sections of society into the mainstream of political, economic and social life, is not sufficiently reflected in the Commission's communication;

4. In particular, emphasises that as long as NSAs are not involved in the drawing up of EU development policy documents such as regional strategy papers, country strategy papers, national indicative programmes and regulations, there is a risk that the principles outlined in the communication will never, in reality, be put into practice;

5. Calls for policy dialogue with NSAs to include all aspects of relations between the EU and third countries that have an impact on development in the broadest sense of the word;

6. Considers it a priority to combine the efforts of the EU, its Member States, international multilateral organisations and NSAs to combat extreme poverty in the world; calls for close cooperation with economic operators in developing countries to ensure the utmost consistency and effectiveness of actions undertaken to combat this painful phenomenon;

7. Considers it important to improve dialogue and consultation between local NSAs and national authorities in developing countries in crucial areas such as the judiciary, public administration and the media, in order to strengthen the abilities, accountability and transparency of public institutions and to increase public sector effectiveness in applying the principles of respect for human rights and good governance, and in fighting corruption;

8. Regrets that there was no official solicitation for southern or northern NSAs to contribute to the communication, which runs counter to the principles aiming to ensure 'an adequate level of consultation and participation in all partner countries';

9. Acknowledges the subsequent informal consultation of various NSA groups by the Commission for the drafting of the 'Guidelines on principles and best practices for the participation of non-state actors in development dialogues and consultations' (hereafter 'the Guidelines') as a practical follow-up to the communication (1), but regrets the short timescale allowed for this;

(1) Replies to Questions 11 & 12 (PE 326.730).
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10. Calls on the Commission to draw on a spectrum of ‘global best practice’ and lessons learnt in participatory approaches established by other international actors such as the United Nations, the World Bank, bilateral agencies and academic institutions (1); considers that efficiency will be enhanced by stimulating the creation of national sectoral umbrella organisations, involving all the grassroots organisations, to act as partners in the dialogue;

11. Rejects the artificial distinction proposed in the communication between NSAs as implementing partners and NSAs acting on their own initiative, which, as the Commission accepts (2), fails to reflect the diversity within the NSA community;

B. Finding the right place for NSAs in the policy dialogue

12. Calls for the Commission to fully implement the principles outlined in its above-mentioned communication (COM(2002) 704), in particular a commitment to open, inclusive and non-restrictive dialogue with NSAs in development policy at all levels of policy formulation and implementation;

13. Welcomes the bi-annual meetings between the Commissioner for Development and the non-governmental development organisation (NGDO) community; calls for the Commission and NGDOs to cooperate in preparing the agenda and contents of the meetings to allow the latter a real input in policy formulation;

14. Welcomes the fact that the EU-ACP Council of Ministers has taken some steps to facilitate the implementation of Article 15 of the Cotonou Agreement in relation to NSA involvement in Joint EU-ACP Council meetings, with the organisation of the meeting with NSAs on 16 May 2003; calls on the EU-ACP Council of Ministers to guarantee the broad participation of NSAs in all of its meetings and calls for similar provisions to be adopted for all developing countries and regions;

15. Calls on the Commission to set up a contractually binding obligation for the participation of southern NSAs in all EC Cooperation Agreements and Programmes (ALA, MEDA, Tacis, Cards, etc.) following the model set up in the Cotonou Agreement and thus enhancing the creation of a ‘culture of dialogue’ in developing countries (3);

16. Calls on the Commission to ensure in all its communications with developing country governments that it underlines that increased participation of NSAs in the formulation and implementation of public policies is fully consistent with parliamentary democracy, and that a strong and diverse civil society in all countries strengthens democratic values by promoting public debate, scrutiny and participation;

17. Calls for the setting-up of multi-stakeholder national or regional cooperation programme steering committees in each developing state or region, to be consulted on EU aid programmes and promote all aspects of civil society participation and including representatives of the ACP State concerned, the head of the European Commission delegation in the country concerned, and representatives of the local NSAs;

18. Calls on the Commission to actively participate with private sector NSAs, in both the north and the south, and their stakeholders on issues relating to corporate social responsibility and insists that these issues be extended to their supply chain and subcontractors;

(1) Concrete publications are: ‘The World Bank Participation Sourcebook’ (World Bank), the ‘Fact Sheet: Presentation of Products for Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) — Instruments, Methods, Approaches’, GTZ and ‘Rethinking Governance Handbook: An inventory of Ideas to Enhance Participation, Transparency and Accountability’, University of Victoria’s Center for Global Studies, Canada. All these publications are available at www.worldbank.org/participation/tools&methods/toolkitsmanuals.

(2) Reply to Question 20 (PE 326.730).

(3) Reply to Question 22 (PE 326.730).
19. Calls on the Commission to ensure both NSA input, and a continuing demonstrable improvement in this input, in the forthcoming process of the mid-term review of country strategy papers in all countries;

20. Emphasises the importance of supporting the creation and growth of democratic trade unions in southern countries as a prerequisite for sustainable economic development; calls for the Commission to ensure practical implementation of the core International Labour Organisation conventions in all its development activities, and to guarantee the participation of southern trade unions, through the transfer of know-how from northern to southern trade union associations, in particular through the organisation of regional conferences, and also to support the setting-up of an independent ACP Trade Union Forum to parallel representation for business and wider civil society;

21. Stresses that private sector NSAs, active in trade and industry, can offer an important contribution to development cooperation due to their experience and know-how;

22. Recognises its obligations to constantly ensure and improve its involvement with representatives of NSAs in development policy, and in particular the need for the appropriate Committee to undertake regular dialogue through such mechanisms as seminars and hearings, as well as through the individual preparation of reports; considers it necessary to amend Annex VI point XIV of its Rules of Procedure to support this;

C. Implementation mechanisms, measurable targets and monitoring indicators

23. Emphasises the importance of the mapping exercise (1) undertaken by the Commission to establish a realistic picture of the potentialities and needs of local NSAs in development programmes specific to each country, and for the incorporation of the results of this exercise into country strategy papers in a consistent way, in consultation with local NSAs;

24. Highlights the importance of the objective pursued by budget line B7-6000 (NGO Co-financing line) to promote own-initiative development activities by European NGDOs; welcomes the improvements introduced by the Commission (AIDCO) in the management of this line, which have led to a significant reduction of the time lapse between the submission of a proposal and the final decision; regrets, however, successive attempts by the Commission to reduce the funding available in presenting its preliminary draft budget, as well as the continued understaffing of the unit responsible; notes the ongoing review aiming to further improve the quality of the selected projects and expects the European Parliament to be involved in this exercise in the near future;

25. Believes that European-based NGDOs play an essential role in development education and awareness amongst European citizens, in research and innovation in development policy, as well as in the implementation of specific programmes, often in cooperation with southern partners; believes that the objectives pursued by budget line B7-6002 (decentralised cooperation) for the direct involvement of southern civil society in EU programmes are equally important and calls for a significant increase in the level of its funding, subject to the outcome of future budget discussions and without prejudice to EU NGOs, as this is essential in achieving the aforementioned objective of enhancing partner countries' ownership of development strategies;

26. Following the entry into force of the Cotonou Agreement in April 2003, expects the investment facility to be launched in the near future; looks forward to seeing the results of EBAS and Diagnos reviews as part of the implementation of EU private sector development strategy in ACP countries;

(1) Reply to Question 9 & 10 (PE 326.730).
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27. Welcomes and fully endorses the Commission's Programming Guidelines Notes No 6, of 9 March 2001, in particular regarding the figure of up to 15 % of EDF funds to be allocated to local NSAs; calls for the Commission to incorporate this target up to of 15 % for NSAs in all geographical budget lines in the preliminary draft budget for future years;

28. Takes note that, as regards the funds reserved under the EDF for NSAs, in 39 countries out of 63 an amount has been agreed with the national authorising officer for a total amount of around EUR 170,18 million (1); calls for an amount to be discussed and agreed with the national authorising officer for the remaining 24 countries;

29. Emphasises that setting a financial target for NSA participation in the implementation of development programmes should not preclude the qualitative participation of NSAs in other stages of development policy;

30. Welcomes the inclusion in the Guidelines of appropriate monitoring mechanisms to check the quality of the NSA participation process, as well as the added value for policy formulation and implementation; endorses the inclusion of these assessments in the annual reports of EC delegations and in the annual report on EC development policy and the implementation of external assistance, where a special chapter on NSA participation in development policy should be included;

31. Welcomes and strongly supports the intention of the Commission to appoint one staff member in each EC delegation as responsible for ensuring the implementation and monitoring of the participation of local NSAs in development policies and programmes (2); regrets the fact that the Commission has not yet planned training for EC delegation staff in this respect (3); considers that immediate steps have to be taken, in particular as regards participatory methodology and day-to-day implementation of Commission financial regulations, for further dissemination amongst local NSAs;

D. Capacity building

32. Calls for a systematic mainstreaming of capacity-building activities for southern NGOs in all EC budget lines and all programmes related to development; believes that special attention should be paid to small and grass roots organisations which have the capacity to reach and represent vulnerable and isolated groups of the population, and to ensure participation in cross-cutting issues in fields such as gender, the environment and human rights;

33. Calls for the Commission to consider the creation of a capacity-building facility for southern NSAs, managed by each EC delegation, which would be especially relevant in countries unwilling to support or cooperate with local NSAs;

34. Calls, in this connection, on the Commission to leave projects successfully carried out via NSAs under NSA management, with a view to ensuring the continuity of this approach, in order, in addition, to avoid the risk that authorised EU funds will seep away within government structures;

35. Welcomes the Commission’s readiness to support activities proposed by the ACP Civil Society Forum (4); calls on the Commission to take active steps to improve its development and effectiveness, in particular as regards its transformation into a permanent global platform (5);

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(1) Reply to Question 2 (PE 326.730).
(2) Reply to Question 14 (PE 326.730).
(3) Reply to Question 13 (PE 326.730).
(4) Reply to Question 5 (PE 326.730).
36. Emphasises that there is a greater obligation on the Commission to undertake proactive consultation with southern NSAs, and to continually seek to simplify and open up its procedures at local level as well as at European level;

37. Calls on the Commission to continue providing an adequate and sustained level of core funding to support EU-level development NGO bodies, recognising the added value this provides to EU policy formulation and the legitimate expectation of voluntary donors to such organisations that their contribution be used in development activities rather than dialogue with public authorities;

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

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‘Television without frontiers’

European Parliament resolution on Television without Frontiers (2003/2033(INI))

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the fourth report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the application of Directive 89/552/EEC entitled ‘Television Without Frontiers’ (COM (2002) 778 — C5-0069/2003),


— having regard to its resolution of 6 September 2000 on the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled ‘Principles and guidelines for the Community’s audiovisual policy in the digital age’ (2),

— having regard to its resolution of 4 October 2001 on the third report of the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee on the application of Directive 89/552/EEC ‘Television without Frontiers’ (3),

— having regard to its resolution of 11 April 2002 on the evaluation report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the application of Council Recommendation of 24 September 1998 concerning the protection of minors and human dignity (4),

— having regard to its resolution of 26 September 2002 on a European Union Action Plan for the successful introduction of digital television in Europe (5),