



European Solidarity Towards Equal Participation of People

Part of the act4europe campaign initiated by the Civil Society Contact Group

Briefing N°29

The Development Co-operation (and Economic Co-operation) Instrument

Towards a democratic decision-making structure

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Eurostep is a network of autonomous European non-governmental development organisations working towards peace, justice and equality in a world free of poverty. Its membership, rooted in their own societies, works together to influence Europe's role in the world, particularly in pursuing the eradication of injustice and poverty. It advocates changes in Europe's policies and practice based on the perspectives drawn from direct experiences of an active involvement of its members and their partners in development in over 100 countries across the world. The members of Eurostep include: 11.11.11 (Belgium), ACSUR Las Segovias (Spain), ActionAid Ireland, Concern Worldwide, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe (Germany), Helinas (Greece), Hivos (Netherlands), Kepa (Finland), Manitesse (Italy), Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke (Denmark), Oikos (Portugal), Oxfam International (Netherlands), People in Need (Czech Republic), SNV (Netherlands), Swiss Coalition (Switzerland), terres des hommes Germany.

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Background

When the European Commission published its proposal to replace the current range of geographic and thematic instruments for the delivery of external assistance with a single Development Co-operation and Economic Co-operation Instrument (DCECI), it justified its decision on the grounds that such a rationalisation was necessary in order to increase the efficiency of implementation. While the Commission's concerns about the efficient delivery of Community external assistance are widely accepted, it is crucial that the desired simplification is not achieved to the detriment of an open, democratic and transparent European Union.

The decision-making structure for the proposed instrument, as well as for the other co-decided external instruments (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument and Stability Instrument), is therefore a crucial element.

Clearly, the new instrument must respect the roles accorded to the different institutions by the Treaty, including co-decision in this area involving the European Parliament.

In particular, the EC Treaty accords the following powers to the European Parliament:

- **Co-decision over** Community policy in the sphere of development cooperation, **accorded by Treaty article TEC 179**
- **Co-decision over the implementation of EC development policy in the form of geographic and thematic programmes, in accordance with Article 179**
- **Scrutiny over the Commission's annual general report, accorded by Article 200**

Commission Proposals

The proposals on a DCECI instrument circulating to date do not deal with the powers Parliament has under the Treaty in co-deciding implementing legislation in the area of development co-operation. (See Annex 1, original Commission proposal)

A new position put forward recently by Commission President Barosso proposes an extremely limited role for both the Parliament and the Council. Under this proposal for external relations, Parliament would co-decide the overall DCECI, including the financial allocation and a series of geographic and thematic programmes to cover the entire duration of the financial perspective (2007 – 2013).

Under such a decision-making structure, Parliament and Council's only power is to withhold its approval until it is satisfied with the Commission's proposal. However, in the meantime, the Community's external relations would remain at a standstill. This proposal, therefore, exerts undue pressure on Parliament and Council to approve the DCECI and negates that Parliament has co-decision power in development co-operation.



While the role of the Commission is central to the execution of the development programmes, these programmes must be governed by legislation setting the parameters for implementation, which will allow Parliament to scrutinise the effective implementation of such legislation by the Commission.

Eurostep Proposal

Annex 2 is a proposal setting out distinct and separate roles for the institutions in terms of the implementation of and scrutiny over the development co-operation instrument. The following points elaborate on this proposal with regard to Parliament specifically:

1. Co-decision over an instrument for development co-operation

As the DCECI proposal is subject to the co-decision procedure, Parliament has the power to shape the draft regulation in order to ensure that it is a genuine Development Co-operation Instrument (DCI). Parliament must make full use of its power to ensure that the outcome of the ongoing negotiations is an instrument which is in line with the Treaty, and therefore:

- entirely focussed on development co-operation;
- based on Article 179 TEC only; and
- applicable to all developing countries.

2. Co-decision over acts defining the geographic and thematic programmes which fall under the DCECI

Parliament should co-decide the set of implementing regulations which govern the various geographic and thematic programmes.

3. Power to scrutinise the implementation of the geographic and thematic programmes on a yearly basis

In addition to its legislative role, Parliament will be able to scrutinise the Commission's policy implementation in order to ensure that this is conducted in line with the relevant regulations.

Parliament should be empowered to hold the Commission to account by scrutinising the implementation of its geographic and thematic programmes on a yearly basis. The Committee on Development should scrutinise plans to implement these programmes to ensure that they are consistent with the regulation that governs it.

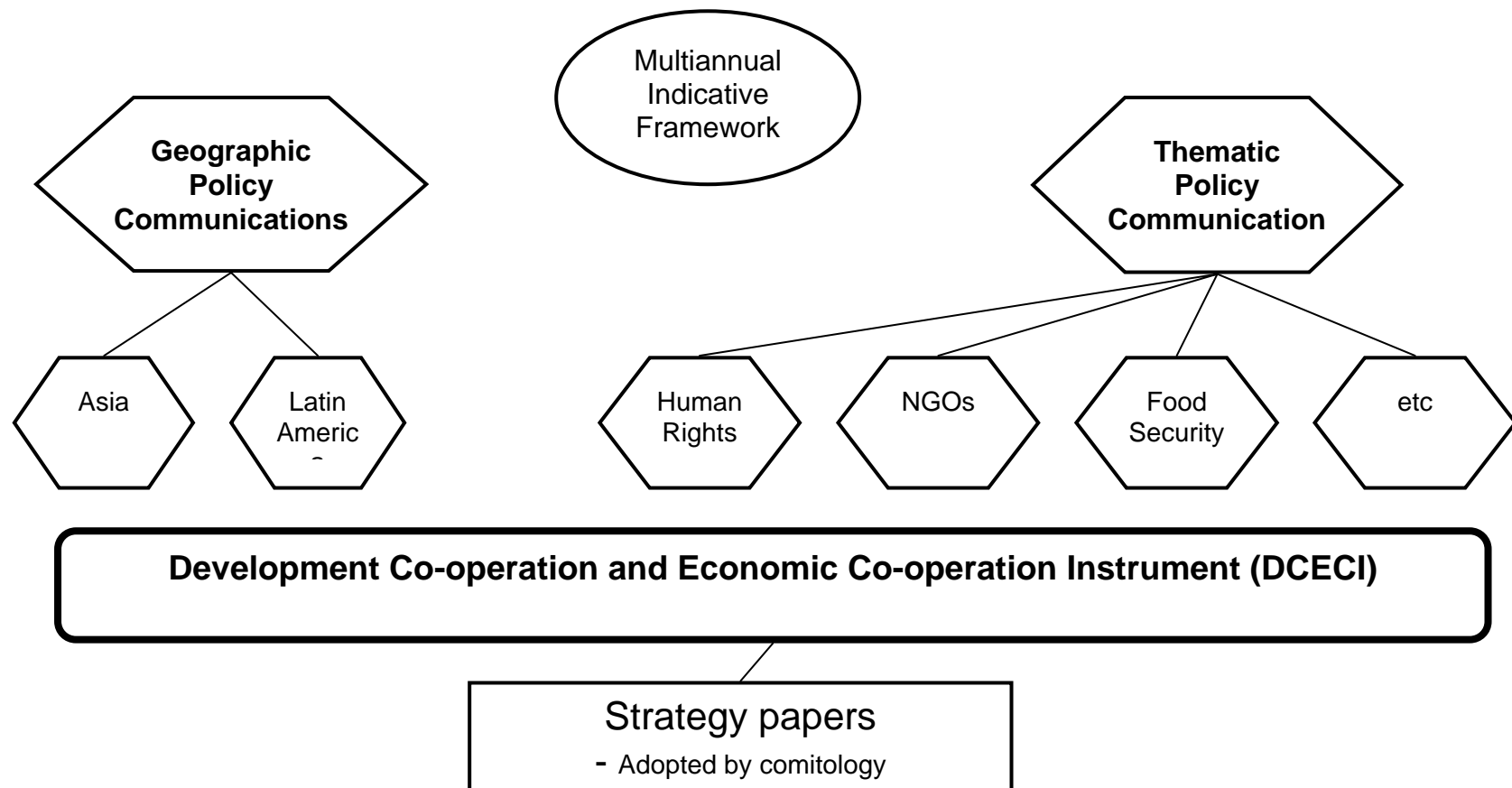
Given that the principal objective of the simplification exercise is to increase the efficiency with which Community Development Policy is implemented, it is vital that Parliament's power to scrutinise the implementation of the geographic and thematic programmes is an instrument holding the Commission to account and does not interfere with the executive powers of the Commission.

Parliament's role in legislation by adopting acts defining the geographic and thematic programmes and its role in scrutinising the actual implementation of these programmes are

an absolute condition to ensure that the DCECI falls within the Treaty and the tasks the Treaty assigns to the European Parliament under Article 251. Moreover an increased role for the European Parliament within the Comitology procedure could provide opportunities to increase scrutiny over the Strategy papers.

Eurostep urges you to ensure that these conditions are fully reflected in the discussions and decisions on the Development Co-operation Instrument related to the Parliament's first reading vote, which is scheduled to take place on Thursday 1 December.

Annex 1: DCECI Decision-making Structure as proposed by the Commission



Annex 2: DCI Decision-making Structure as proposed by Eurostep: Co-decision for Parliament

