



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 11 November 2008 (12.11)
(OR. fr)**

15293/08

**DEVGEN 210
ACP 219
RELEX 868
CDR 115**

NOTE

from : General Secretariat
on: 11 November 2008

No. prev. doc.: 14450/08

Subject : Council conclusions on local authorities as actors for development, working to
reduce poverty

At the meeting on 10 and 11 November 2008, the General Affairs and External Relations Council adopted the conclusions annexed hereto.

**Council conclusions on
local authorities¹ as actors
for development, working to reduce poverty**

1. The Council considers that local authorities in developing countries contribute to democratic local governance, which is conducive to poverty reduction, to inclusive and equitable local development and to the provision of the basic services needed by the population, particularly by the poorest section of the population.
2. The Council welcomes the Commission communication entitled "Local Authorities: Actors for Development." With due regard for the diversity of statuses of local authorities and the administrative organisation of States, the Council recognises that local authorities now occupy an important place among actors involved in development policy. It appreciates the increasing role they play in developing local democracy, combating poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
3. The Council stresses the added value of local authorities in local-level development cooperation to reduce poverty, since through their local knowledge and closeness to citizens local authorities can facilitate dialogue and partnerships between different types of development cooperation actors.
4. European local authorities can also help to raise public awareness and educate the public on development issues, especially when they are active in the field of development cooperation. In this context, the quality of their action in this area is of particular importance.

¹ The term "local authorities" is used here to mean all decentralised entities as defined by the States concerned, with due regard for their own internal organisation.

Strengthening synergies between actors to improve aid effectiveness

5. In the spirit of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action, European local authorities – where active in the field of development cooperation – are asked to adapt their measures to the development plans and strategies drawn up by the governments and local authorities of partner countries and to work in partnership with NGOs. The Council encourages them to contribute to aligning support for governance and local development with national policies and decentralisation strategies by supporting national procedures and systems.
6. In this context, local authorities are called upon to engage in consultations at national and European level, with the whole range of development cooperation actors. In this regard, the Council recognises the efforts which local authorities have already made to coordinate their action better. They are largely organised into national, European and international platforms. It supports initiatives to facilitate dialogue between local authorities and other development actors, whether in the North or in the South.
7. The Council also welcomes the participatory process, which brought together various platforms of local authorities, NGOs, Member States, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions and culminated in the drawing up of a draft European Charter on cooperation in support of local governance. This document identifies the main principles of action, in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action, in order to improve the effectiveness of cooperation practices between European actors. The Council wishes to see the partners' follow-up to this document contributing to better harmonisation of development action in the field of local governance, linked as far as possible to other existing international initiatives.

8. In order to foster the complementarity of development policies, the Council stresses the value of having specific information on the development cooperation activities of local authorities. The Council would encourage the Commission to list activities carried out in the field of decentralised cooperation on the basis of the available information.
9. The Council takes note of the Commission's suggestion to set up a "stock exchange" mechanism to enable local authorities in Europe to share information with partner countries, and calls upon the Commission to develop this project further, having regard to existing initiatives, in order to avoid any duplication. The Council stresses that, where necessary, this project should make it clear that the principle of ownership is to be respected in decentralised cooperation, as in all development policies. The Council also notes the Commission's proposal to strengthen support for twinning, with the aim of contributing to the development of exchanges of experience and to building long-term partnerships in the service of development.
10. The Council welcomes the organisation of the European Development Days (EDD) in Strasbourg from 15 to 17 November, devoted this year to local governance, including the role of local authorities as development actors working to reduce poverty; these days will act as a forum for promoting the Charter in support of local governance drawn up by the actors concerned.

Follow-up

11. The Council calls upon the Commission to report back on the implementation of measures planned to achieve better synergy between actors and, more broadly, to monitor the debate opened on support for democratic local governance in developing countries. The Council also calls upon the Commission and the Member States to consult the local authorities of developing countries as necessary, when preparing the programming of instruments which contribute to development assistance, including the thematic programme "Non-state actors and local authorities in development".
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