



Position on the strategic guidelines 2004-2006 for the decentralised cooperation budget line

- CEMR is glad to have been consulted by the European Commission in view of the finalisation of the document and is happy to have the opportunity to comment on the future strategy of the EU for the decentralised cooperation budget line.
- As recalled by the mayors, leaders and representatives of cities and local governments of the world, at their meeting in Johannesburg on the occasion of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, if we want to find solutions to the challenges of our world, it is essential to implement a close partnership between all levels of government - ranging from international to local. We therefore welcome the fact that the European Union recognises the role of local government in its strategic guidelines in decentralised cooperation. Local government has in fact an effective track record in the field of capacity-building for good municipal governance, evidenced by north-south partnerships achieved via programmes managed by the International Union of Local Authorities, for example, (of which CEMR is the European region) in which several of CEMR's member associations played a leading role, working with partners in Africa, Latin America and Asia.
- We welcome the position given in the document to the role of municipalities as cooperation partners eligible for financial support in this budget line and note with approval the distinction made with NGOs - local governments are in fact institutional actors.

We call on the European Union to recognise in the future the role and status of local government in the implementation of development policies, which is specific and unique in comparison with the other actors currently included as beneficiaries of the same budget line.

- We welcome the thematic priorities of action stated in the document and in particular the specific reference to the promotion of decentralisation by giving support to initiatives focusing on good municipal governance, by providing institutional capacity building for delivering basic services as well as for improving the legal framework, the government regulations, the procedures and the co-ordination systems, including between public and non-public actors at local level.
- The CEMR, as the European voice of local and regional government in the world, believes that Europe must play a pivotal role in favour of development in the World's poorest countries and that the European Union must provide appropriate resources for the fight against poverty and the strengthening of democracy in these countries. Decentralised cooperation should be considered as an important element of the European Union's foreign policy and we are disappointed that the European Union foresees only 18 Million Euro from 2004 - 2006 for decentralised cooperation, which includes supporting administrative expenditure. We recognize that, with a relatively modest budget allocated for these purposes, clear priorities need to be fixed. That said, the task of promoting decentralised co-operation in countries with 'difficult partnerships' is a particularly complex one. To construct effective and sustainable south-north local partnerships and projects in such countries requires good advance planning. Therefore, to make the process indicated by the EU in the document on page 10, point 5.2, work effectively, the CEMR considers that the competent organisations (such as

CEMR and its national associations as well as the national representative associations of local government in developing countries) need to know as early as possible the countries which are likely to be selected as priority countries for access to the budget line.

- The CEMR expresses its wish that, given the 18 million Euro allocated to this budget line, a sufficient proportion will be given to capacity building of local government in developing countries and that this will be foreseen in the package put forward by the national EU delegations at the moments of programming and project selection.
- The CEMR recalls that European regional and local governments and their national associations already fulfil a extremely important role to promote grassroots democracy and provide support to institutional capacity building in developing countries. Currently, the majority of these actions are carried out thanks to the support given by national governments of the developed countries which have a stronger idea of the role of local government in development policies. The CEMR wishes to make the role of local government more visible at European level and is pleased to be consulted by the European Union to give its opinion on this paper. The CEMR hopes to strengthen its cooperation with the responsible units of the Commission in the future in order to support the involvement and the role of local government in development policies.