

SEMINAR

"Can the EU act as a responsible social and environmental player in its neighbourhood?" The implementation of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument

Panel 1: The political framework of the implementation of the ENPI

- Let me start by highlighting what **the role of the European Parliament** is in all this: we are participating in *a process of 'democratic scrutiny' of the new ENPI;*
- For us in the European Parliament this new process of 'democratic scrutiny' means that *we will follow the implementation of the ENPI through ALL of its stages,* starting with analysing the Country Strategy Papers and going all the way to scrutinizing project implementation on the ground;
- In other words, we expect the European Commission to keep the Parliament fully informed through this process; at the same time, in order to fulfil our responsibilities, we will need intense feedback from civil society, and especially NGOs working on the ground in the relevant countries;
- So far, we have been debating with the EC at the level of Country Strategy Papers and National Indicative Programmes - *all very vague and mostly reflecting the priorities inherited from the old MEDA and TACIS programmes;*
- *The crucial stage is still to come: the year of 2007 will be taken up by programming and financing of projects will only start in 2008;* the European Parliament will be following closely the programming phase, as this *will be the time when the real priorities for implementation on the ground will become apparent;*

- We expect to have substantive meetings with the Commission either just before, or just after the Summer - **we will get the most useful information at that point:**

So much, then, for the *European institutional* aspect of the political framework for the implementation of the ENPI - it is important, as it sets out the framework of my - and the European Parliament's - contribution to today's debate.

- I have to say that I mostly followed the southern dimension of the ENPI, as I was a member of the Working Group covering this region;
- As for the Country Strategy Papers themselves, and the **conclusions we have drawn from them, let me highlight the ones that I feel are most important at this early stage of the process of 'democratic scrutiny':**

1. Generally we feel that the Country Strategy Papers reflect an **approach that is very heavy on economic issues, trade, regulatory harmonization, budget support, human resources, etc, and relatively light on political reform, human rights, civil society capacity building and conflict resolution;**

2. **Egypt** is a good example of this approach:

- The distribution of resources around the different Strategic Objectives in the 'budget and phasing of the programme 2007-2010' **is heavily biased against the heading 'supporting Egypt's reforms in the areas of democracy, human rights and justice'.** This priority gets a mere **€40 million (7%)** of the overall budget, while 'developing the competitiveness and productivity of the Egyptian economy' gets **€220 million (40%)** and 'ensuring the sustainability of the development process with better management of human and natural resources' gets **€298 million (53%)**;
- It is of course true that supporting democracy and human rights is not as capital-intensive as 'budget support', or 'support for public health reform';

- Nevertheless, both the Egyptian and EC sides should make a greater effort to rebalance the allocation of resources, in a way that reflects more accurately Egypt's dramatic shortcomings in the fields of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

3. For example, the sub-heading '*promotion and protection of human rights*' is endowed with **no more than €17million over the three years** of the exercise, from 2008 to 2010.

These €17 million have to be distributed between four important components:

- promotion and protection of women's rights;
 - protection of women's rights;
 - strengthening of civil society;
 - and support for improvements in freedom of association and of expression and pluralism in the media.
- How much money will each of these get? How will the right NGOs be chosen in the context of an authoritarian regime? Will the National Indicative Programme for 2010 to 2013 include enough money to continue these modest efforts?

We don't know.

We do know that the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) - which is quite independent from the ENPI - will also contribute something to these areas: but how much in Egypt or elsewhere is still unknown.

What is clear is that in the case of Egypt and many other countries, democracy-building, human rights programmes and civil society capacity building are relatively minor worries in an ENP approach that is mostly focussed on technical and economic issues.

- Another issue that worries the European Parliament is the *impression that the ENPI is somehow disconnected from the political context it sometimes has to operate in;*
- In other words, the ENP is reluctant to leverage financial assistance *in favour of conflict resolution;*
- This is especially apparent in the case of *Morocco, which is endowed with the biggest single National Indicative Programme of the ENPI, at €654 million for 2007-10.*
- Despite the ongoing catastrophic situation in the Western Sahara, *there isn't one single € dedicated to specific conflict-resolution projects on the ground, there is no pressure on the government by the Commission in the context of the ENPI to improve the human rights situation, and there is no planning for specific actions for the benefit of the Saharan people (either in a separate programme or in a clearly ring-fenced section of the programme for Morocco);*
- Another Country Strategy Paper that is inexplicably sterile in terms of conflict resolution is the one on Syria.
- By the way, the European Parliament was *not convinced by the Commission's reply to our criticism in this area,* which consisted in saying that this is essentially "*a matter of political dialogue and not of using financial resources in the context of ENPI to influence political outcomes on the ground*" - but this is exactly what we are trying to do in the Palestinian Territories, *so why shouldn't we try to do it in the Western Sahara: financial resources should be leveraged to affect political outcomes*

Let me conclude with the following remarks: the overarching concept we have to keep in mind when reflecting on the *political framework for the drafting and the implementation of the ENPI is -*

JOINT OWNERSHIP.

Despite the obvious virtues of this approach, *it sometimes means authoritarian countries are not getting what they need from us, but rather what they want from us* - it is not easy to talk about women's

rights, democracy, civil society, or conflicts *with dictatorships like Syria, Morocco, Egypt, or Tunisia.*

The main challenge for us in Europe is to keep reminding our partners *and ourselves* that stability and prosperity are meaningless, empty shells without an unshackled civil society, an open press, a democratic and transparent political process, and sustained efforts to promote peace and conflict-resolution.