

REPORT  
by  
WORKING GROUP ON ASSISTANCE TO NEW EMERGING DEMOCRACIES

The question of the need for inter-parliamentary cooperation in the field of assistance for New Emerging Democracies (NED) has arisen from observation of the growing importance of NED assistance activities, both for National Parliaments (NP), and for European institutions.

In addition, we are faced with the absence of any coordination of these activities, either at inter-parliamentary level or else between parliamentary institutions and the European Commission (EC), which has led to instances of inefficiency, as well as the duplication and waste of resources.

In this context, there is a need for coordination between the NP, and also between the NP and the EU Institutions, through establishment of an effective system for sharing information, improving management processes for European programmes and funds aimed at these activities, as well as new forms of cooperation.

In the pursuit of these aims, the following stages are of particular importance:

**1- Conclusions of the Speakers Conference, Budapest (2005)**

The Conference recognizes the need for NP to play an active role in cooperation with the parliaments of NED.

*In the light of these conclusions, on an initiative of the Italian Chamber the NED assistance working group of Speakers was set up, assisted by a technical group of high level parliamentary officials.*

**2- Conclusions of the Speakers Conference, Copenhagen (2006)**

The Conference approves the WG Final Report and mandates the Slovak Parliament, in cooperation with the Italian and Danish parliaments, to implement the aims set out in the report.

*The three mandated parliaments set up a task force composed of high level officials, with a view to examining the most efficient options for inter-parliamentary exchange of information and cooperation with the EC in this field.*

**3- Conclusions of the Speakers Conference, Bratislava (2007)**

On the basis of a report from the Task force the Conference notes the **EC's receptiveness** in relation to this project and

- a) mandates the task force to continue its work, under the authority of the Portuguese Presidency, recommending it to support the task force in order **to develop with the EC a consultation process** with representatives of parliamentary administrations when projects in this area are designed and developed, for exchange of information with NP on programmes, tendering procedures and requests for assistance addressed directly to the NP, permitting the NP to apply to programmes and for funding in this area.
- b) In relation to the **exchange of information**, the Conference concluded that the task force should continue to work on a data base on NED in IPEX, and that this data base should include information on the activity of the NP and the EC; in addition, it should broaden the scope of coordination and exchange of information on NED beyond EU borders, through the ECPRD and IPU, thereby achieving a worldwide inter-parliamentary information network.

At the Troika meeting of 7 January 2008, support was expressed for the continued work of the NED Working Group, with active participation by the Italian and Danish parliaments.

Accordingly, the WP met in Brussels on 21 January with the presence of representatives from the Danish, Slovak, Dutch, Italian and Portuguese parliaments and the EP. This meeting mapped out the following strategy:

- a) Collaboration between the National Parliaments (NP) and the EC on the planning of programmes, projects and strategies for technical assistance to NEDs;
- b) Forms of access to EC funds for NP in connection with assistance to NEDs;
- c) Invitations to apply to programmes, on an exclusive basis, given that NP have a monopoly on information and know-how on the workings of parliaments;
- d) To implement a data base for the exchange of information on existing programmes and the respective applications between the NP and transmission of this information to the EC, through IPEX.

Meetings were also held with the high level officials of the EC DG for External Relations and Human Rights and of the EuropeAid DG, with a view to obtaining the information necessary to pursue the aims set out in the strategy.

The interlocutors expressed an interest in the NP collaboration on the NED Assistance Programmes. However, it was stressed that the information provided by the NPs on their activities in this area needed to be presented in a more systematic manner.

As a result of these meetings, IPEX Central Support circulated to the NPs data collection files on NED Assistance Programmes and Projects.

At the IPEX Board meeting of 14 March, it was found that 16 chambers had completed these files. These files, and others which have since been delivered, will be available on the IPEX site as from 4 April 2008.

In view of the work carried out and the objectives established, the SGs resolved at their meeting of 4 April 2008:

- To welcome the support from IPEX for work on the NED assistance project;
- To invite the NPs to complete or keep up-to-date the information on their NED assistance activities by completing the files provided, in order to achieve the aim established at the Bratislava Speakers Conference in May 2007;
- To mandate the Portuguese presidency, with the support of the Task force:
  - to inform the EC of the current state of progress on this matter, and also to request collaboration on the reciprocal collection and provision of information;
  - to continue to explore with the European Commission the possibility to improve the management of the current procedures and projects of assistance funded by the EU Budget.