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(Acts whose publication is obligatory)

REGULATION (EC) No 625/2004 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 31 March 2004 extending and amending Regulation (EC) No 1659/98 on decentralised cooperation

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 179(1) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Acting in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 251 of the Treaty [1],

Whereas:

(1) Council Regulation (EC) No 1659/98 of 17 July 1998 on decentralised cooperation [2] was applied until 31 December 2001.

(2) Regulation (EC) No 1659/98 was amended and extended until 31 December 2003 by Regulation (EC) No 955/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

(3) An evaluation completed in 2003 has led to the conclusion that the budget line concerned should be more focused.

(4) The decentralised cooperation instrument has a specific added value for the purposes of supporting operations in specific situations and difficult partnerships where traditional instruments cannot be used or are not relevant, and in terms of the support it provides for the diversification of decentralised actors as potential partners in the development process.

(5) Regulation (EC) No 1659/98 should be amended and extended until 31 December 2006 following the completion of the evaluation and the adoption of the Commission Communication on the participation of non-State actors in Community development policy. The financial framework and reference period indicated in that Regulation should be adjusted.

(6) Regulation (EC) No 1659/98 should be amended accordingly,

HAVE ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

Article 1

Regulation (EC) No 1659/98 is hereby amended as follows:

1. Article 1 is replaced by the following:

'*Article 1*

The Community shall support operations and initiatives undertaken by decentralised cooperation agents of the Community and the developing countries centred on poverty reduction and sustainable development, particularly in situations involving difficult partnerships where other instruments cannot be used. Such operations and initiatives shall promote:

— a more participatory approach to development, responsive to the needs and initiatives of the populations in the developing countries,

— a contribution to the diversification and reinforcement of civil society and grassroots democracy in the countries concerned.

In supporting such operations and initiatives, priority shall be given to decentralised cooperation agents of the developing countries. All developing countries shall be eligible for operations to promote decentralised cooperation.'

2. Article 2 is amended as follows:

(a) the second indent is replaced by the following:

'— information and the mobilisation of decentralised cooperation agents and participation in international fora to enhance dialogue on policy formulation,':

(b) the following indent is inserted after the third indent:

'— strengthening the networks of social organisations and movements campaigning for sustainable development, human rights, in particular social rights, and democratisation,'.

[1] Opinion of the European Parliament of 18 December 2003 (not yet published in the Official Journal) and Council decision of 4 March 2004.

[2] OJ L 213, 30.7.1998, p. 6. Regulation as amended by Regulation (EC) No 955/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council (OJ L 148, 6.6.2002, p. 1).