



Country & Regional Strategy Papers

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- **18 March 2003: Common Framework for Country Strategy Papers - Council Conclusions**

(Doc. 6377/03)

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the progress report on the implementation of the Common Framework for Country Strategy Papers:"

"1. The Council welcomes the Commission's Progress Report on the implementation of the Common Framework for Country Strategy Papers (CSPs).¹ It considers that the CSPs Framework has, as intended, proved to be a very useful programming tool and has made a significant contribution to achieving the objective of giving multiannual programming greater substance and increasing the effectiveness and quality of EU external assistance.

2. The Council notes that this exercise contributes to improve co-ordination and complementarity with bilateral aid provided by Member States and other donors. Although further progress should be made, the Council notes that Member States have increasingly been involved in the drafting process of CSPs and NIPs, in particular in the field, and that the programming process provided a window of opportunity to improve complementarity between Community aid and bilateral assistance. The preparation of CSPs is therefore in line with the Guidelines on operational coordination adopted by the Council in January 2001. Good practice of coordination in the field has been observed, in particular in the ACP countries.

3. The Council appreciates the constructive role that the interservice Quality Support Group (iQSG) is playing in order to ensure continuous monitoring of the consistency, coherence and quality of the programming process and underlines the importance of its continued work. The recommendations of the iQSG should be taken into account when reviewing the CSPs.

4. The CSPs would be an even more successful tool for managing aid if accompanied by an appropriate implementation/monitoring and review mechanism. In order to maintain coherence in the CSP process, the same basic principles should apply to CSP reviews in all regions. First, CSPs should, as a matter of principle and in an appropriate timeframe, be reviewed at the mid-term point of the implementation period. Secondly, the review should:

- a. keep the strategy up-to-date with developments in the country brought about by internal, regional or external events, including the Poverty Reduction Strategy Process where it exists;
- b. take into account and operationalise, as far as possible, new EC/EU policy initiatives and commitments that have an impact on third countries or, more generally, at international level, while fully respecting the principles of ownership and concentration of aid, the objectives and priorities of the EC Development Policy and the specificities of the relationship between each partner country and the EU;
- c. assess the results and performance and draw lessons;
- d. lead to a constant improvement of the quality of strategy documents, in particular to correct some weaknesses which had not been adequately taken into account in the "first generation" of CSPs.

5. The review should involve the Commission's Delegation, the Government of the partner country and Member States and their relevant expertise in the field. The documents containing the assessment and the proposed outcome of the review should be submitted by the Commission to the management committees for opinion. In this exercise, the Commission and Member States should strive to further improve operational co-ordination.

6. A key challenge is to integrate the programming of horizontal budget lines more closely with country/regional programming. This would be facilitated by rationalising existing lines.

7. The CSPs process has also been a first and significant step towards improving the analysis of policy coherence and establishing a link between the Community's aid and related EU policies.

8. The November 2000 Council and Commission Declaration on the EC's Development Policy², identified six priority areas for Community action in development cooperation and stressed the importance of concentrating the EC activities in order to maximise the impact of EC Development Policy. Since then, several new external relations objectives and initiatives have emerged in the Council and from international agreements and commitments. The integration of these objectives and initiatives into the EC's Development Policy should, as appropriate, be carefully considered and implemented, in consultation with partner countries and taking due account of their specific needs. EC action in support of these new objectives and initiatives should be consistent with the agreed objectives and six EC's Development Policy priorities.

9. The Council welcomes the Commission's move towards a results based approach in the formulation of its development policy and the progressive integration of performance indicators in CSPs in order to measure the partner country's performance in terms of poverty reduction and social development. In this context, the discussions launched by the Commission and involving EU Member States, the World Bank, the OECD-DAC, and the UNDP, in order to try and foster greater co-ordination between agencies in the use of indicators in country performance assessment, should have an important influence on how this problem should be addressed in the future.

10. Every effort should be made to simplify and harmonise the process surrounding country strategies, thus reducing the transaction costs for partner countries, and to improve donor co-ordination in this respect. According to the January 2001 Guidelines, ongoing initiatives include efforts to streamline strategy documents and procedures, mutual consultation of all key donors in each institution's strategy process and, in particular, active co-operation in the areas covered by building blocks common to all CSPs. The Commission and the Member States should also strive, between themselves, to synchronise the timing of country programming and strategy preparation and review processes, as well as with the partner country's own budgetary and strategy preparation and review process.

11. Non-state actors should be consulted more systematically on CSPs and throughout the programming process as part of the discussions on the EC response strategy."

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