

Proposal for a Government Decree on the Development Policy Committee

The Development Policy Committee (DPC) is a body monitoring and analysing Finnish development cooperation on a broad basis. There is a need to strengthen the status of the DPC and, to ensure the continuity of the activities and to clarify the DPC's institutional status, it is proposed that a Government Decree on the Development Policy Committee be issued.

1. Background

Activities of the Development Policy Committee

The Development Policy Committee (DPC) is a parliamentarily and societally representative advisory body on development policy. It creates a common vision of political parties and stakeholders on emerging issues in development policy and provides the Government with recommendations on their implementation. The DPC provides a forum for discussing development policy, exchanging information and formulating positions. It organises public events and strengthens cooperation between stakeholders and interest groups to promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also activates national parliamentary debate and communication.

The DPC monitors and analyses the realisation of Finland's development policies and Finland's international commitments. It promotes decision-making supporting sustainable development in policy sectors affecting the situation of developing countries. The DPC works closely with the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development when making proposals on how Finland should implement the universal SDGs set in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Key themes in the DPC's work during the 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2019 term included developing the private sector, gender equality and development funding as well as the policy consistency required by sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Government Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development issued in 2016 incorporated the DPC's tasks into broader long-term national implementation.





Need to strengthen the status of the Development Policy Committee

The roots of the Development Policy Committee (DPC) go back to 1966, when the first advisory board concerning development assistance matters was set up. As the duties of the board broadened, it was renamed over the years initially as the Advisory Board for Economic Relations with Developing Countries (1979), then the Advisory Board for Relations with Developing Countries (1992) and in 2003 the Development Policy Committee.

There is a nationally and internationally identified need for the DPC's broad expertise and activities. The DPC's status has been found to be weaker than that of other corresponding central government committees. The Government has appointed the DPC for one government term of office at a time, and the DPC has not had any permanently specified tasks or a permanent Secretariat. For the DPC to function even more appropriately, it has been found necessary to ensure the DPC's continuity and the permanence of its Secretariat and to clarify the DPC's institutional status in conjunction with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs by issuing a Government Decree on the Development Policy Committee.

Location of the Development Policy Committee

The Development Policy Committee (DPC) has operated in conjunction with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, but discussions on its location have taken place and, in recent years, other potential alternatives have been explored. Organisations proposed as a location for the DPC have included Parliament and the Prime Minister's Office. The DPC's location in conjunction with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has been found to be advantageous due to its closeness to the organisation implementing development policy but, on the other hand, the location has also been found somewhat problematic from the viewpoint of independence. The most widely supported option has, however, been the DPC continuing as an independent unit in conjunction with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Effects of the proposed Decree

The most essential effects of the Decree will be those that the Decree is sought to have in the first place, that is, to provide the Development Policy Committee (DPC) with a permanent role and to clarify its tasks. The employment relationships of the DPC Secretariat will be put on a permanent footing. There will be no other direct effects on human resources. The Decree is not expected to have any significant cost effects.

2. Authorisation to issue the Decree

The authorisation to issue the Decree on the Development Policy Committee derives directly from the Constitution. Under section 119, subsection 2 of the Constitution of Finland (731/1999), the general principles governing the bodies of State administration as well as the principles governing the regional and local authorities of the State shall be laid down by an Act. Under the Constitution, in other respects, provisions on the entities of State administration may be laid down by a Decree. Pursuant to the government proposal for a new Constitution Act (1/1998), entities



which can be regarded as such include advisory boards and other corresponding central government entities categorised as complementary entities whose tasks do not involve significant exercise of public powers. Consequently, provisions on such entities may be laid down under a government decree issued under the Constitution.

3. Drafting of the Decree

During the drafting of the Decree, there was close dialogue between the Development Policy Committee (DPC), including the DPC's expert members, and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The draft of the Government Decree on the Development Policy Committee, including the explanatory memorandum, was submitted to the DPC for an opinion. The period provided for the opinion was 15 July to 25 August 2019. The DPC provided a written opinion on the draft Decree in which it proposed a rephrasing of the DPC's purpose, minor further specifications of the DPC's tasks and of the procedure for the selection the DPC's members as well as the further definition of the composition of the chairpersons in the explanatory memorandum to the Decree, and the relaxation of the provision concerning the DPC Secretariat. Based on the opinion, the provision concerning the purpose of the DPC was in part rephrased. The references to sustainable development and global responsibility proposed by the DPC have been taken into account in the background memorandum to the Decree, which explains what is meant by development policy in the Decree. The further specifications of the DPC's tasks proposed in the opinion were made, and the provision concerning the DPC's Secretariat was relaxed to the effect that it does not determine the composition of the Secretariat. An addition was made to the provision concerning the members of the DPC and the procedure for the selection of the members, according to which the seat distribution of Parliament is to be taken into account in the composition of the chairpersons.

4. Contents of the Decree

Section 1 Purpose of the Development Policy Committee

Provisions on the location of the Development Policy Committee (DPC) and the purpose of the DPC are laid down in section 1 of the proposed Government Decree on the Development Policy Committee. The concept of 'development policy' is understood broadly in the Decree. Development policy means consistent activities in all those sectors of international cooperation and national policy that affect the status of developing countries. It is seen as part of the promotion of sustainable development as well as global responsibility and influencing. The DPC is located in conjunction with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The information production and activities of the DPC are independent of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and other central government as well as of the Government in office at any given time.

Section 2 Tasks of the Development Policy Committee

Section 2 of the Decree determines the DPC's tasks at the general level. It is most appropriate to determine the tasks of the DPC in the Decree so that they cover the DPC's tasks from one term to another. The DPC's tasks will be specified in greater detail for each term in the decision by which the Government appoints the new DPC.

Section 3 Term

Section 3 of the Decree provides the term of the Development Policy Committee (DPC). The Government, on the presentation of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, shall appoint the DPC for the duration of the parliamentary term. The DPC shall, however, remain operational until a new DPC has been appointed.



Section 4 Members of the Development Policy Committee

Provisions on the composition of the Development Policy Committee (DPC) and the procedure for the selection of the members are laid down in section 4 of the Decree. The selection of the members of the DPC will follow the procedure already established previously: The Ministry for Foreign Affairs shall request the parliamentary parties as well as key development policy stakeholders to nominate a member and a substitute member to the DPC. The members shall elect from among their number a chairperson and two vice-chairpersons. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs shall nominate the necessary number of expert members of the DPC. The Government shall appoint the members of the DPC by an appointment decision concerning the DPC (see section 3).

Section 5 Secretariat of the Development Policy Committee

Under section 5 of the Decree, the Development Policy Committee shall have a Secretariat who shall have an employment relationship with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Section 6 Decision-making

Section 6 of the Decree lays down provisions on the decision-making procedure of the Development Policy Committee (DPC).

Section 7 Entry into force

Provisions on the entry into force of the Decree and on the conditions applied to an appointed Development Policy Committee are laid down in section 7 of the Decree. The Decree would enter into force in late 2019. The term of the currently appointed DPC ends on 31 December 2019, but this Decree would not apply to it. Instead, only the conditions of the appointment decision of the current DPC would apply to the current DPC.