

# Challenge of the EU development cooperation policy for the new Member States

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The European Parliament adopted, by 378 votes to 11 with 16 abstentions, a resolution on the challenges of EU development cooperation policy for the new Member States.

The own-initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Danut **BUDREIKAIT** (ALDE, LT) on behalf of the Committee on Development. Parliament recalls that, in 2006, the EU provided EUR 47.524 billion in development aid (which accounts for 57 % of development aid worldwide), a figure which is expected to rise to EUR 78.626 billion by 2010. It also recalls that the new Member States have committed themselves to achieving a development aid target of 0.17% of gross national income (GNI) by 2010 and of 0.33% by 2015 and that the priority countries targeted by the development cooperation of the new Member States are the Community of Independent States (CIS) countries and the countries in the Western Balkans as well as a few countries which are members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States.

MEPs point out that, although the new Member States have joined the European Consensus on Development (agreeing to reach the Millennium Development Goals within the expected timeframe), they fear that many of the new Member States are not on course to meet the target of 0.17% of GNI to be spent on ODA (Official Development Aid) by 2010, and some may even see ODA fall in line with overall budget cuts, due to the need to reduce government debt.

Members stress the experience of the new Member States, in particular during the transition process and that good governance and the promotion of democracy must be the priorities for the EU in development cooperation matters. They call on the EU institutions to put to good use the experience accumulated in the field by the new Member States. Parliament also stresses the concrete benefit for the new Member States of participating in development cooperation policy, in particular in the areas of economic development and trade.

**Priorities of the new Member States in terms of development aid:** MEPs note that the priorities of the new Member States after the transition period are determined by their historical relations and ties with their neighbours, and that the major part of the development cooperation budget of the new Member States targets their immediate neighbours and the CIS countries. Parliament calls on the EU to seize the occasion of the accession of the new Member States to reinforce its strategic presence in eastern Europe, central Asia and the Caucasus as regions of the world hitherto less concerned by European aid but which are nonetheless facing numerous development challenges. Members suggest that the new and old Member States work together more proactively within the EU to ensure that the situation in particular countries included in the ENP is monitored in a more timely fashion so that the EU can react with greater flexibility in its policy towards these countries. They consider that a new assembly of EU and neighbouring countries (similar to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Euromed) and the Parliamentary Assembly for EU-Latin America (Eurolat)) could build on historical experience, boost the input of the new Member States in EU politics and help to co-shape the ENP and to make neighbouring countries aware of new political fields.

**Main challenges:** Parliament recognises that the biggest challenges for the new Member States in the coming years will be the increase in budgets and awareness-raising activities. There is a real lack of awareness concerning development cooperation. MEPs call for an overall communication and education strategy to remedy this deficit, particularly through school and media initiatives, and through developing

an international volunteer tradition. The institutional framework remains one of the most important challenges of efficient development cooperation for the new Member States, as well as the need to build up cross-party political and public support for development co-operation.

Long-term projects which target partners and sectors where the new Member States have a comparative advantage and can transfer experience are of optimal utility in the global poverty eradication process. MEPs call for a division of labour between the Member States with regard to the “added-value” that each can bring to development cooperation with the objective of working together effectively. They stress that the new Member States need to be fully included in the sharing of experience and in specific training in fields related to the programming, implementation and evaluation of development cooperation policy.

Lastly, Members believe that the Commission should:

- launch a specific awareness-raising campaign focusing on the comparative advantages and added value of the new Member States with regard to cooperation and development issues;

- actively involve the new Member States in the preparation and negotiation of Action Plans, and in monitoring their implementation.