

# Effectiveness of relations EU/developing countries and impact of the Commission's reform on them

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Francisca SAUQUILLO PEREZ DEL ARCO (PES, E). It was pleased that the Commission was launching a process to reform its External Services departments but feared that the reform might lead to the marginalisation of development policy within the Commission because political responsibility would be separated from the strategic programming of the execution and monitoring of programmes. The committee called for an integrated Community International Development Department to be responsible for the whole development cooperation cycle. It believed the creation of the Common Service for External Relations (SCR) was a failure because it resulted in an unclear distribution of responsibilities and said that one person, namely the Development Commissioner, should be given the overall political responsibility for development cooperation, warning that, under the planned new Community aid management body, Community aid must be more effective and that Parliament would act as political watchdog over its activities. The Commission's reforms must be geared to improving the impact of development aid and increasing the effectiveness of the EC's relations with developing countries, in pursuit of the overarching aim of eradicating poverty and integrating the developing countries into the world economy. The committee strongly deplored any suggestion that development aid should be repatriated to the Member States and was determined that the Member States' development aid policies should complement Community development policy and not replace or duplicate it. It also wanted to ensure that other EU policies did not conflict with its development policy. The committee wanted the EU and the Member States to coordinate their positions more closely in international fora so that the EU wielded the political influence to match the large volume of its development aid funding. It said the Commission must have the staff and financial resources it needed to tackle development policy objectives effectively and undertook to allocate them through the budgetary exercise. The committee supported the Commission's plans to decentralise powers to its delegations and develop on-the-spot management, whilst stressing that the delegations must be equipped with the necessary resources (e.g. IT and qualified staff). It wanted to see management procedures simplified and was in favour of projects and programmes being taken over by local beneficiaries. Civil society, including NGOs, in the recipient countries should be involved in implementing programmes, and the report stressed the importance of "country strategy papers" and "National Indicative Programmes" for this purpose. Lastly, the committee called for a report, in the first half of 2001, on the implementation of the external services reforms.