

Seriousness for the Millennium Development Goals

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European development aid is far from being negligible (0.3% to 0.4% of GDP according to data). However, its execution has been raising some questions in terms of transparency and coherence for years:

- Decentralised cooperation expenditure (of the regions, constituencies, big cities) has increased but it is not always integrated into the national or European development policies' objectives;
- National development aid expenditure is still often covering the cancellation of debts, guarantees, tied aid and support to national operators.
- The European Development Fund is not communitarised and not subject to the ordinary control by the European Parliament: usually, its implementation is made through national operators.
- The various UN agencies have the same donors as the European Development Fund and also have overlapping mandates, which explains the risk of duplication of actions and responsibilities.

In times of crisis, if we want to get the support of citizens for development, its financing mechanisms will probably have to be reviewed. A new convergence between the Member States in terms of public expenditure in that field should then be established.

The decrease in public development assistance is threatening the Millennium Goals, as defined by the UN in 2000. It is true that some of these objectives, such as 'poverty eradication in a sole generation', had not been expressed very realistically.

The new European development strategy, in accordance with the MDGs, refocuses on priority objectives: health, food safety, salvage of the tropical rural world. In its communication on development of 31 March 2010, the European Commission launched a new strategy in true accordance with the MDGs, in view of avoiding, as much as possible, duplication between Europeans and duplication between the EU and the UN.

The Commission observation is very clear and echoes numerous European voices:

- the deteriorating food and public health situation is unacceptable.
- the delay in the Millennium Goals is burying their credibility and that of the relevant institutions. Andris Piebalgs, the new European Commissioner for Development, underlined the fact that the Millennium health goals took the wrong track. As a result, **a new European development strategy**, in two packages and on **priority targets**, has been proposed:
 - 1) Priority should be given to **health and food safety**;
 - new coordination with the FAO, the UNDP and Unicef;
 - better support for public healthcare facilities;
 - strengthened research on **pathologies** affecting poor countries (in the framework of the FRDP) - and not only epidemics;
 - 2) Priority should be given to prevent the collapse of the **tropical rural world**;
 - support for small farms in order to enable them to increase their productivity in available areas;

- increased effort for agricultural research;
- cooperation with the African Union in terms of land use (including the legal dimension)

Recalling its faithfulness to the MDGs, commitments will give a real plus to the EPP Group. However, it is also its duty to ask for more seriousness in the budgetary implementation, in the framework of a European strategy refocused on priority targets.

The Cashman Report subscribed to priority goals defined by the European Commission and put forward a budgetary clarification at national level: he proposed a multiannual budget programming on commitment timetables that would enable to secure necessary resources to the MDGs. Even if it sounds difficult to make this programming legally binding, such a programming should remain on the table, and one should have to publicly justify the various reasons leading to down-sizing of prior commitments.

However, in the current context, the extra commitments required for development assistance will presumably not occur without:

- increased convergence in terms of development assistance
- increased supervision of decentralised cooperation
- a clearer distinction between development aid, carbon equalisation and investments
- greater transparency on the European Development Fund that could eventually be communitarised (as outlined in the Lamassoure communication of 10 May 2010)
- a reliable and reactive European cross-compliance meaning: not asking for everything and being able to quickly suspend operations.

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