

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

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The Committee on Development unanimously adopted an own-initiative report by Danut **BUDREIKAIT** (ALDE, LT) on the challenges of EU development cooperation policy for the new Member States. The committee 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.

However, even though, overall, the institutional framework of Community development aid still poses a problem to the new Member States, it is the need to build up cross-party political and public support for development co-operation that remains the number one challenge in these countries.

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.

**Defending fundamental rights:** MEPs emphasise the importance of good governance and the promotion of democracy in development cooperation matters. They, therefore, call on the EU to put to good use the experience gained by the new Member States in this area, in order to enrich its development policy.

**Priorities of the new Member States in terms of development aid:** MEPs recall that the priority of the new Member States in the area of development aid is their immediate neighbours, due to the historical links that bind them together. They also point out that the majority of the development cooperation budget of the new Member States targets the **CIS countries** and call on the EU to increase its strategic presence in eastern Europe, in central Asia and the Caucasus. They suggest, in particular, that the new and old Member States should 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 and that they play a greater role in the development and implementation of EU policy on neighbourly relations.

**Main challenges:** while Members recognise that one of the main problems facing the new Member States in the coming years will be the increase in the cooperation budgets, they also point out that these Member States will have to focus on awareness-raising activities. Even though the population within the new Member States is already aware of humanitarian aid, 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.

However, the new Member States can also make a contribution by relying on their experience in terms of combating poverty. MEPs therefore 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). Members request that the new Member States be fully included in the programming,

implementation and evaluation of development cooperation policy and that they be given assistance in terms of adopting their new role as donors. Efforts should also be made to reinforce the training provided to employees in these countries who work in the field of cooperation.

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 implementation of this policy.