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EYD provides opportunity to bust development myths

*Written by Marius Wanders on 19
January 2015 in News*

This is a 'milestone year' for the future of international development issues, argues Marius Wanders. When the average EU citizen hears us speak about development, does he think of property development, product development, photo development or personal development, perhaps?

One of the main challenges of the European year for development 2015 will be to communicate in clear language with citizens that we are in fact talking about international development cooperation.

The first ever 'European year' on the external policy of the EU provides an extended opportunity to tell real

life stories about development and global justice with citizens, including many who may either have limited knowledge about the scope and results of European development cooperation or who reject the notion of investing resources in reducing poverty in faraway countries at a time of suffering at home. These will sometimes be difficult conversations but are essential to better understanding what motivates the thinking of our dialogue partners and explain what motivates ours. This way we can build bridges between opposing mind-sets. It should not just be a dialogue about "what Europe gives", but also about how Europe lives, in other words how our lifestyles, our consumer decisions, our trade, agricultu-

A new conversation with a new public

The first 'European Year' on EU external policy is – among other things - an opportunity to have a conversation about development and issues of global justice with a broader public, with people unaware of European development cooperation and not necessarily involved with the NGOs and institutions working on development. It's also an opportunity to reflect with a wider public on the changing narrative about 'development' and in particular, why solidarity with the most marginalised and poorest people around the world should remain a priority for us as individuals and for the European Union. The opportunity of having the European Year on development issues is accompanied by the challenge of holding this conversation against a backdrop of continuing economic and social hardship in Europe and scepticism with all things emanating from the EU.

What role for Europe in the world?

The European Year is a moment to reflect on the importance of our interaction with the rest of the world. Many of Europe's most pressing challenges (climate change, energy insecurity, migration) need to be tackled in global processes as part of European foreign policy.

As the European think tanks group reported in September 2014 "International development will always have poverty reduction and human security at its core. However, it is no longer simply about a

ral and economic policies in Europe affect global development.

"In 2015 we should underline why action on climate change is closely linked to development because its effects are already being felt disproportionately by those who are the least responsible for causing global warming but are the most vulnerable to its devastating consequences"

2015 is a milestone year for international development issues. The UN millennium development goals reach their deadline and negotiations will be concluded for a new post-2015 framework of sustainable development goals. In 2015, global talks on measures to tackle climate change will culminate with the COP 21 talks in Paris in December. In 2015 we should underline why action on climate change is closely linked to development because its effects are already being felt disproportionately by those who are the least responsible for causing global warming but are the most vulnerable to its devastating consequences.

Concord, the main European network of development organisations, is proud to have been asked by the EU institutions to convene and lead the civil society alliance of the year, bringing together a broad coalition of civil society organisations from across Europe and from across different sectors. This alliance will

not only help to reach out to a large and diverse audience of EU citizens, but will forge new partnerships with other civil society sectors, leading to synergies from which we will continue to benefit in our work well beyond 2015.

We are grateful that MEPs from across the political spectrum voted by an overwhelming majority to endorse the European year 2015 for development under the motto "our world, our dignity, our future". We now call upon

MEPs to use all opportunities they have through meeting with the media and local constituencies to engage citizens in critical dialogue. The conversation on development needs to move well beyond the 'Brussels bubble'.

Many outcomes are expected from this European year. Would it not be great if they included busting some persistent myths, such as "development aid is not working; it is money wasted" or "our aid is making corrupt leaders in poor countries richer"? And then there is the most difficult myth to bust of all: "We have a crisis here in Europe, so we need to divert all possible resources to fight poverty here at home."

About the author

Marius Wanders is a board member of Concord and ambassador for the EYD civil society alliance

Quel "corpo a corpo" per far nascere l'Agenzia italiana allo sviluppo

by Vittorio Sammarco on 20 February 2015 in Vita

È questa l'espressione usata dal viceministro Lapo Pistelli che ieri ha incontrato le ong parlando dei

decreti attuativi che seguono il varo della nuova legge. I non governativi dal canto loro propongono una road map in tre fasi

Il semestre europeo presieduto dall'Italia è stato positivo e ora "per

un'Italia protagonista sui temi dello sviluppo nel 2015", bisogna continuare su questa strada. Lo dicono le Ong riunite sotto il network Concord che ieri si sono riunite a Roma per un confronto tra società civile, governo, parlamentari, istituzioni italiane ed europee, per fare il punto sui risultati del semestre e presentare le proposte al fine di garantire continuità agli impegni in vista degli importanti appuntamenti sui temi dello sviluppo nel 2015: l'adozione della nuova Agenda globale post 2015, l'Expo, l'Anno europeo per lo sviluppo, il Mediterraneo e la migrazione.



zioni, hanno ribadito Marina Sereni, Vicepresidente della Camera dei deputati, e Giorgio Tonini, componente Commissione Esteri del Senato) all'approvazione della Legge 125/14, di riforma della Cooperazione che ha superato la vecchia n. 49 del 1987. Ora, però, è necessario il completamento del quadro normativo (ed è la fase più difficile, ha sottolineato Tonini) con i decreti attuativi che diano gambe a questo disegno. "Troppe volte in Italia abbiamo visto morire splendidi disegni naufragati malamente per la mancanza di strumenti adatti che rendano credibili e praticabili gli obiettivi iniziali". Senza questi atti, afferma il senatore, che è stato il relatore della legge 125, quel piccolo, simbolico, ma importante segno, aver cambiato il nome

"More and better Europe", è lo slogan positivo che lanciano per continuare su quella strada intrapresa nell'ultimo semestre che – se pur tra mille difficoltà – ha consentito di arrivare a una posizione comune europea, per nulla scontata all'inizio. Continuiamo a far vivere i tavoli di coordinamento – dice Francesco Petrelli, portavoce di Concord Italia – e facciamo in modo che le Agende dei prossimi semestri abbiano il tema Migrazione/sviluppo nelle loro priorità.

Per l'Italia è stato fondamentale che questa legislatura abbia portato (dopo anni di lavoro e di consulta-

del ministero (ora è Ministero degli esteri e della Cooperazione internazionale) che ha voluto testimoniare che la politica estera italiana è (fondata sulla) cooperazione internazionale, sulle reti, sulla collaborazione, ecco, rischia di diventare un mero atto nominale.

Il lavoro dal punto di vista del governo è in corso, ha rassicurato il viceministro Lapo Pistelli (in foto impegnato in un summit con il governo del Sudan) entro i 60 gg previsti – a novembre - siamo riusciti ad emanare il Decreto che stabilisce le linee guida per istituire il Consiglio nazionale per la cooperazione e lo sviluppo ("nel tentativo di creare una sorta di orchestra in cui siano presenti tutte le voci"); siamo "impegnati in un corpo a corpo con il Mi-

one-way relationship of supporting developing countries – and especially not only about aid. We understand international development in this century to be about all countries and citizens tackling shared problems of sustainable development, and with each partner playing its part".

The European Year is a chance to discuss how as individuals we have both the capability as well as the responsibility to contribute as actors – by our actions and by our behaviour, including consumer behaviour – to a more just world where human rights are universally upheld, including the undeniable right of all human beings to live free of poverty, marginalisation and inequality, and a world where good and sustainable stewardship is applied of our planet's precious and scarce natural resources.

The European Year is an opportunity to increase awareness and engage citizens as critical thinkers about and supporters or actors in development.

A year of development decisions and milestones

The discussions around what replaces the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 have nourished the debate about the future of development, particularly in a world in which the majority of the world's poor now live in middle income and rich countries. Our CSO colleagues from Latin America to Asia remind us that they are increasingly affected by the EU's other policies (trade, agriculture, fisheries, energy) – now they have 'graduated' from bi-lateral development programmes.

European commitments on overseas development assistance remain important nevertheless. As CONCORD's AidWatch report underlined, in 2015 we are due to miss repeated commitments to providing 0.7 on GNI to ODA.

We need to use the Year to renew the argument on why this target is so important to our credibility as well as in underpinning ambitious Sustainable Development Goals. Twenty fifteen sees a major milestone in global efforts to tackle climate change with the COP 21 in Paris in December.

We should use the European Year to underline why action on climate change is so closely linked to development. Its effects are already being felt disproportionately by those who have had least responsibility for carbon emissions yet will be most vulnerable to climate change.

We can build on the relationships we have developed with environmental NGOs in advocating for Sustainable Development Goals to push for an ambitious climate settlement with Europe in the lead. The introduction of a concept of 'universality' in the proposed Sustainable Development Goals being discussed at the UN to replace the Millennium Goals – challenges us to think how the eventual goals might apply to us here in Europe. This idea, that it's not about 'us' and 'them' anymore, echoed in the European Year's slogan 'our world, our dignity, our future' invites us as global facing civil society to deepen our dialogue and relationships with our domestic counterparts. Twenty fifteen is also the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and platform of action on the rights of women. It is a reminder of the lack of progress we have made internationally – including in Europe – on gender equality and women's empowerment. Let's hope the European Year on Development will also be an occasion where our sector shines the light on Europe's performance in global progresses in alliance with Europe's civil society.

nistero dell'Economia, il Consiglio di Stato, il Parlamento per arrivare presto e bene allo Statuto che stabilisca il funzionamento dell'Agenzia italiana per la cooperazione allo sviluppo (dal quale poi dipenderà la nomina Direttore, la sede e i bandi per il personale per completare la pianta organica, almeno entro l'anno confida Pistelli); "stiamo inoltre lavorando – rimarca il viceministro - perché questo tema abbia una regia unica a livello dell'intero governo, perché nel suo insieme assuma la consapevolezza della necessità di elaborare un Piano coerente per la Cooperazione. "Confido – ha detto Pistelli – che entro l'anno potremo avere un Regolamento che faccia funzionare l'intera macchina." Sui fondi, nota dolente, la media europea si è assestata poco sotto l'0,5 dei bilanci nazionali, ma lo stanziamento italiano, appena sopra lo 0,2 è ancora più lontano dallo 0,7 stabilito dagli accordi internazionali. E' bene però, è stato sottolineato dai protagonisti, che il trend in atto continui, seppure a piccoli passi, a segnare una crescita, senza più indicare inversioni di tendenza come è stato fatto negli anni passati. Oltre all'aspetto istituzionale – necessario per proseguire - le proposte delle Ong sono chiare e articolate: bisogna arrivare a un Piano di politiche per lo sviluppo coerente, dicono, attraverso tre fasi (una road map, sullo stesso modello previsto dall'Ocse per i suoi progetti). Prima fase: stabilire obiettivi e priorità, coinvolgendo l'opinione pubbli-

ca, lavorando con la società civile, enti di ricerca e gli stessi Paesi partner, per accrescere la consapevolezza dell'importanza del Piano (informare di più); richiedere l'assunzione di impegni pubblici al più alto livello possibile; pubblicare l'agenda con priorità e tempi chiari per l'implementazione e le tappe progressive del Piano a livello nazionale.

Seconda: assicurarsi che le pratiche di lavoro supportino un'effettiva comunicazione tra i diversi ministeri, stabilendo anche meccanismi formali di coordinamento interministeriale per le decisioni da adottare, con mandati e responsabilità specifici; individuare un mandato e ruolo chiaro e attivo dell'Agenzia nella discussione sul Piano.

Terza: dedicare risorse adeguate e specifiche (a livello nazionale e internazionale) per monitorare gli impatti sul campo, e i progressi fatti, coinvolgendo società civile, istituzioni della ricerca e riportando i risultati al Consiglio nazionale e dando conto a Parlamento e opinione pubblica.

Infine, è importante "chiudere il cerchio", prevedendo procedure che portino al cambiamento delle politiche che risultano incoerenti con la cooperazione allo sviluppo. Per far sì che questa importante opera di assestamento continuo, in grado di migliorare efficacia ed efficienza delle attività in corso, le Ong propongono che "i risultati del monitoraggio, una volta discussi, si traducano in indirizzi parlamentari e del Consiglio nazionale".

Human Rights and Gender Equality Vague in Post-2015 Agenda

by *Ida Karlsson* on 4 September 2014
in *IPSNews*

With the United Nations' post-2015 development agenda currently under discussion, civil society actors

in Europe are calling for a firmer stance on human rights and gender equality, including control of assets by women.

“The SDGs are a unique opportunity for us. The eradication of extreme poverty is within our grasp. But we still face very major challenges. Business as usual is not an option,” Seamus Jeffreson, Director of Concord, the European platform for non-governmental development organisations, told at a meeting in Brussels with the European Parliament Committee on Development on September 3.

An Open Working Group has been set up by the United Nations to come up with a set of new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to replace the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education by the target date of 2015. “We need to address women’s control over assets. The majority of farmers in the world are women but they do not own the land. There is legislation that prevents women from inheriting property” – Seamus Jeffreson, Director, Concord Development organisations in Europe say a rights-based approach need to be strengthened in the proposed new SDGs or there is a risk these could be traded off in negotiations with major powers that are less committed to human rights.

“We do not see the spirit of a human rights-based approach infusing the other goals. It should underpin the SDGs. The connection is not made that people have rights to resources. We cannot have a development agenda without people’s rights being respected,” Jeffreson said.

Jeffreson’s complaint was echoed by Thomas Mayr-Harting, European Union Ambassador to the United Nations. “From our point of view, a rights-based approach and gover-

nance and rule of law need to be better represented in the SDGs.”

While Concord welcomes a specific goal on gender equality within the SDGs, “more details are needed for this to be a goal and not just a slogan,” Jeffreson told IPS. “We need to address women’s control over assets. The majority of farmers in the world are women but they do not own the land. There is legislation that prevents women from inheriting property.”

The European Union will produce a common position before inter-governmental negotiations start. Further input will come from a High-level Panel set up in July 2012 by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to advise on the global development framework beyond 2015.

“We now look to Ban Ki-moon to play a core role in bringing this process together,” said Mayr-Harting, adding that Sam Kutesa, Ugandan foreign minister, who will chair the UN General Assembly from mid-September, will play also an important role.

Ajay Kumar Bramdeo, ambassador of the African Union to the European Union, who also attended the meeting in Brussels, said that more than 90 percent of the priorities in the common African position have been included in the proposed new set of development goals, including its position on climate change.

“The negative impact of climate change is already being felt in countries in Africa. The European Union has been an important historical, political, economic and social partner for Africa and would also feel the impact of climate change on Africa,” he added.

Kumar Bramdeo emphasised the need to mobilise financing from the developed countries through the Green Climate Fund of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), transfer new clean technologies, and enhance di-

A civil society alliance

How can we in civil society best contribute to making the European Year a success?

At CONCORD, we hope to bring together an alliance of European civil society networks to:

- Support national or regional civil society coalitions or actors in the implementation of European Year campaigns and activities and provide them with advice and coaching for shaping local, regional and national activities in Europe.

- Continuously upload relevant content to the civil society section of the official EYD2015 website of the European Commission and engage in social media interactions in partnership with the Commission including taking account of the EYD2015 thematic months.

- Develop civil society’s own innovative campaigning and communication tools to stimulate a conversation and be easily adapted to local, regional and national contexts.

- Ensure participation and contribution by civil society in centrally organised European events, including those organised by the incoming Latvian and Luxembourg presidencies.

- Prepare policy recommendations based on input collected during year and project activities. Given our roots in communities across the EU and our credibility and expertise, civil society organisations have been recognised as key actors to achieve the outreach objective of the European Year. Civil society organisations are keen and ready to play an important role as a partner for the European Commission and member states governments in implementation activities at European and national levels.

This outreach will require forging new relationships and alliances with those outside our sector and

innovative communications tools and techniques. It will work better if the Year happens at national and regional level rather than in Brussels.

There are many communities in Europe deeply involved and active in Development issues but who work independent of the mainstream NGOs. One such community are diaspora groups – Somalis, west Africans, Congolese, Kashmiris, Kurds– what is their view on Europe's role in promoting development in their communities of origins where cultural and family ties remain strong? How can we bring the energy, insights and support of diaspora communities to make EU development and foreign policy more relevant?

The European Year will be equally a moment to reach out to young people, trade unionists, the business community, consumers and others to discuss what our work outside Europe means to the issues they care about.

Of course, if we want to discuss our issue with others, we need to be prepared to listen to their issues too. So we should look forward to discussions with our civil society colleagues on ending extreme poverty and promoting basic rights around the world and how this relates to their priorities for education, employment, decent social protection and sustainable development.

It's time to start the conversation.

Postcard from Riga

Seamus Jeffreson is the Director of CONCORD, the European confederation of development NGOs. Here he gives his personal reflections of the launch of the EYD 2015 in Riga last Friday.

saster risk management and climate adaptation initiatives.

Ole Lund Hansen, representing the UN Global Compact at the meeting, stressed that the SDGs would not be achieved without the active participation of the world's business sector. "Some figures say we need 2.5 billion dollars per year in additional investments to achieve the SDGs. We clearly need to tap into the vast resources of the private sector."

The proposed new SDGs, which will make amends for the shortcomings of the MDGs, will be an integral part of the United Nations' post-2015 development agenda which, among others, seeks to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger from

the face of the earth by 2030.

There are currently 17 new goals on the drafting board, including proposals to end poverty, eliminate hunger, attain healthy lives, provide quality education, attain gender equality and reduce inequalities. The list also includes the sustainable use of water and sanitation, energy for all, productive employment, industrialisation, protection of terrestrial ecosystems and strengthening the global partnership for sustainable development.

The final set of goals is to be approved by world leaders in September 2015.

(Edited by Phil Harris)

Development aid popular among EU citizens, despite widespread ignorance



Published on 14 January 2015 in Euractiv

Neven Mimica at the presentation of the development aid survey in Riga. [George Gotev]

The European Commission has officially launched the European Year of Development. But a report

has revealed just how little European citizens understand development policy, despite broadly supporting it. EurActiv France reports.

The European Year of Development was inaugurated on 9 January in Riga, the Latvian capital. Despite appearing as a top priority for the international community, it is still

a subject of great ignorance among EU citizens.

According to a study on Europeans and development, carried out by TNS for the European Commission, 87% of those questioned said they had never heard of the European Year of Development before the survey.

Ignorance

More broadly, the study points out that European knowledge of development policy is, at best, flimsy. The destination of the development aid provided by their own countries was largely unknown by the Europeans questioned. 46% had no idea of the destination of the aid, while 49% said they knew “a little” about the subject.

France is among the countries where this lack of knowledge appears to be most deeply rooted: 66% of the French citizens queried admitted to not knowing the destination of development aid, and 32% said they had some knowledge.

Strong support in principle

In spite of the lack of detailed understanding, European citizens show a strong attachment to development policy.

Almost two thirds of the survey’s participants (64%) believe that fighting poverty in developing countries should be one of the EU’s top priorities.

>> **Read: ODA in austerity: development to the detriment of the less advanced countries?** (in French)

Even today, with several EU member states experiencing a period of severe financial hardship, the majority of Europeans think that aid should be increased to meet the levels promised (52%) or higher (15%).

Scepticism from the French

While 78% of French people agree that it is important to help the populations of developing countries, this proportion is “among the six lowest

across all EU Member States,” according to the study, and represents a fall of 9% since the last survey. France is not alone in this respect, as approval for development aid has also suffered a 9% drop in Belgium and Italy. Overall, 85% of respondents to the survey said they believe development aid to the poorest countries to be important.

>> **Read: Majority of French feel ill-informed about development aid**

Health a leading priority

The survey’s respondents placed health (39%), peace and security (36%) and education (34%) at the top of the list of issues they consider to be most important for developing countries, leaving gender equality (6%) and climate change (6%), both among the top priorities for the EU member states, far behind.

POSITIONS:

Neven Mimica, the European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, said “I feel very encouraged to see that despite economic uncertainty across the EU, our citizens continue to show great support for a strong European role in development. The European Year will give us the chance to build on this and inform citizens of the challenges and events that lie ahead during this key year for development, helping us to engage in a debate with them”.

Seamus Jeffreson, the director of the European development NGO CONCORD, said it was “very good news at the opportune moment. These positive results are a perfect start to the European Year of Development. The challenge now is to engage our citizens in a new debate on development. A debate that will go beyond the importance of aid and will analyse how our consumption, our ways of life and our policies affect global development as a whole”.

Snowy Riga, and the magnificent new national Library was the setting of the official launch of the EYD 2015 on 9 January 2014. LAPAS, the Latvian NGO platform, was one of the initiators of the idea of a European year focusing on development cooperation, so it seemed appropriate to be in the Latvian capital.

If we were in any doubt of the commitment of the EU institutions to the EYD - the presence of Jean Claude Juncker and Federica Mogherini along with Latvian prime Minister Laimdota Straujama at the opening session was a welcome reassurance and underlined the wider implications of 2015 beyond a narrow approach to development cooperation.

It is the year to agree ambitious sustainable development goals. As both Juncker and Mogherini pointed out - these will apply to us here in Europe too. I’m looking forward with civil society colleagues in Europe to seeing this fact reflected on the ‘domestic’ legislative agenda of the EU.

Everyone made the link with climate change talks scheduled for Paris in December – which is the time to make a global deal on reducing global warming.

You can find the video of my short opening remarks at the launch event here.

Nous sommes tous Charlie

The attack on ‘Charlie Hebdo’ in Paris was a very present theme during the day. In the ‘Green Room’ while waiting for the first session to begin, Economic and Social committee President Henri Malosse distributed ‘Je Suis Charlie’ stickers to Federica Mogherini and to us other speakers. Former Latvian president Vaira Freiberga - something of an institution in her own right as a voice of post communist Eastern Europe - was one of many speakers to express

our collective solidarity with the French people and determination to defend freedom of expression.

From words to action...

I felt the need to bottle up all the commitments made for ambitious SDGs, Europe's leadership role in ensuring a climate deal, the universality of the SDGs, the importance of other non development policies (from trade to agriculture to fisheries - so well argued by new Swedish Development Minister Isabella Lövin) by EU leaders. The Environment Commissioner underlined the importance of the 'circular economy' directive in 2015 - that we all understood Mr. Timmermans had taken off the table at the end of last year. We in civil society will be watching this one closely and are right behind you Mr. Vella!

In the press conference Foreign Minister Rinkēvičs and Development Commissioner Mimica underlined the importance of supporting NGOs to ensure the visibility of EU development cooperation and articulation with the European public - couldn't agree more!

Here's what everyone said - the advocates among you can scan and memorise for policy commitments:

- Video of speeches by Juncker and Mogherini
- Written speech copy Jean-Claude Juncker

Some of us were lucky enough to hear the OECD's Eric Solheim remind us at the high power lunch that money is not the problem: it's a question of political will. Time to get some of his native Norway's sovereign wealth fund's trillions out of oil company shares and invested in sustainable development in the countries that need it most and the switch to a green, low carbon economic growth.

Time for the EU to tackle speculative financial transaction making bankers even richer and start generating financial transaction

UE lança Ano Europeu do Desenvolvimento com apelo à participação dos cidadãos

Published on 9 January 2015 in Jornal

A União Europeia lançou hoje formalmente, em Riga, o Ano Europeu do Desenvolvimento, tendo o presidente da Comissão Europeia,

Jean-Claude Juncker, apelado a um envolvimento mais directo dos cidadãos europeus.

“A minha Comissão vai trabalhar de perto com as outras instituições da UE, com os nossos Estados-membros, e, claro, com os nossos parcei-



ros internacionais, para assegurar que obtemos resultados. Gostaria de instar todos os cidadãos da UE a acompanharem-nos nestes esforços (...) Cada indivíduo tem um papel a desempenhar para um mundo mais sustentável e pacífico”, declarou Juncker, na cerimónia de lançamento do Ano Europeu do Desenvolvimento.

Sendo esta a primeira vez que o “Ano Europeu” é consagrado à acção externa da União Europeia e ao papel da Europa no mundo, a presidência semestral letã da UE e a Comissão Europeia apontam que esta é “uma oportunidade única” para as organizações de desenvolvimento de toda a Europa “motivarem mais europeus a implicar-se e a participar no desenvolvimento”.

Portugal, representado na cerimónia de hoje em Riga pelo secretário de

Estado dos Negócios Estrangeiros e da Cooperação, Luís Campos Ferreira, participará nesse esforço ao nível da UE para “explicar aos cidadãos europeus como funciona a ajuda ao desenvolvimento e para demonstrar que produz efeitos concretos e duradouros” e “mostrar aos contribuintes que o seu dinheiro está a ser utilizado da melhor forma possível”. Nesse quadro, o programa português do Ano Europeu para o Desenvolvimento, coordenado pelo Camões-Instituto da Cooperação e da Língua, é promover o interesse, a participação e o pensamento crítico dos cidadãos portugueses sobre o Desenvolvimento Global.

O ano de 2015 é também a data limite para serem alcançados os Objectivos de Desenvolvimento do Milénio acordados em 2000, e a comunidade internacional deverá

decidir qual o futuro quadro mundial para a erradicação da pobreza e o desenvolvimento sustentável, a chamada “agenda do desenvolvimento pós-2015”.

De acordo com o relatório anual da Confederação Europeia de Organizações Não Governamentais de Ajuda Humanitária e Desenvolvimento (Concord) divulgado em Novembro

passado em Paris, a maioria dos Estados-membros da UE, entre os quais Portugal, não vão honrar as metas com que se haviam comprometido para 2015, apesar de a UE e os seus Estados-membros continuarem a ser, em conjunto, os maiores doadores de ajuda pública ao desenvolvimento a nível mundial.

Lusa

Officials adjust terrorism challenge to European Year for Development

Published on 12 January 2015 in Euractiv

Federica Mogherini in Riga [Georgi Gotev]

The emotions following the Paris terrorist attacks left a mark on the messages of EU officials during the launch on Friday (9 January) in Riga of the “European Year for Development 2015”.

More than 300 officials from 38 countries attended the launch in Riga of the “European Year for Development 2015”, the first year designated with such a global theme, since European years have been designated thematically since 1983. The aim of the “European Year for Development 2015” is to make as many citizens of the EU as possible understand and support the role of



Union in addressing global challenges and providing development aid. An unprecedented number of events during the European Year of Development will focus on 12 themes (see background) and are expected

to citizens in all EU countries with the help of youth and women’s organisations, local authorities, and unions.

It is not by chance the launch took place in the Latvian capital Riga.

taxes for the fight against poverty and action against climate change. There must be votes in that for politicians...?

And civil society voices?

Press conferences are apparently very precisely timed events. French cooperation minister Annick Girardin was not impressed at being rushed. I was not impressed at being bumped off the second panel session! - here’s what I was going to say.

Fortunately the day included some of civil society’s perspective and role in having a conversation with a wider public about development and global solidarity. World vision and CONCORD EYD ambassador Marius Wanders was joined by Inese Vaivare (LAPAS), Stefan Grasgruber (Sudwind Austria) and Ingo Ritz (Global Call for Action against Poverty - GCAP) for a lighthearted look at what the EYD means to normal people not inhabiting the Brussels bubble.

Watch the video of the role play session here

This culminated in the presentation of Nobel prize winner Malala Yousafzai’s letter on the action/2015 to Commissioners Mogherini, Mimica and EP Development Committee chair Linda McAvan.

Two Latvian bikers are going to bike from Cape Town to Riga, guided by school students to interesting places on their route (too late for me to apply for a sabbatical year to join them alas)... Luxembourg are launching a video competition - watch their video presentations here.

I’m probably biased but I thought Plan and CONCORD’s Tanya Cox was the best speaker in the panel on good governance and accountability in the SDGs. Although the development Commissioner’s contention that he is the most feminist voice in the college of Commissio-

ners lead to a minor twitter storm. Europe women's lobby head Joanna Maycock immediately invited him for a meeting - prepare yourself Mr. Mimica!

It was a pleasure and food for the mind to listen to Homi Kharas - UN brain on SDGs - give a thoughtful Kapuscinski lecture. Find out more here.

So after a high profile launch with lots of political commitments it's time to take the EYD out of the conference room and into the classrooms, trade union halls, bars, and pop festivals around the 28 countries of the EU.

Latvian platform LAPAS showed us how fun and stimulating we can make this year with their pre-launch event in the magestique Splendid Palace cinema this week. It's true - those Latvians like to sing and really are idealists!

If you missed it or fancy a trip to Dublin, I'm sure Irish national platform Dochas' launch event for the EYD 2015 on 22nd January will be worth attending or tuning into. Irish president Michael Higgins obviously thinks so - he'll be there. More info here.

Ireland also contributed the youngest delegate to the conference too. She asked delegates what 'sustainable development' meant to them. And there's still time to register for CONCORD 's launch of the Civil Society Alliance for the EYD 2015 at Mundo J in Brussels where - in addition to launching action/2015 for an end to poverty, inequality and climate change, - we'll be asking our colleagues in other parts of civil society from youth to trade unions, environmental, women, social, human rights and fair trade NGOs and movements (among others) - what are your priorities for 2015? How can the EYD work for you?

Latvia not only holds the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union, but in fact the initiative originated in this country.

Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker paid tribute to Andris Gobiņš, President of the European Movement - Latvia and Member of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), who in 2010 started the initiative with Concord, the European confederation of Relief and Development NGOs. Without directly referring to the Paris terrorist attacks, Juncker said that the world is becoming increasingly interdependent, and challenges such as radicalism do not know any borders.

"Our response needs to be united. Our policy must adapt to better face these challenges", Juncker said.

'Je suis Charlie'

Foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini said that each year, over 1.4 million people lose their lives to violence.

"Je suis Charlie. Things are interconnected. The challenge of our new commission working internally and externally in different sectors is vital for our own interest and security, as well as for the benefit of the rest of the world", she said.

According to Mogherini violence and insecurity have undermined the attainment of MDGs. On average, a country that experiences major violence in the period between 1981 and 2005 has a poverty rate 25% higher than a country that saw no violence, she said.

Latvian Foreign Affairs Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs said the EU had the necessary range of tools, and if it applied funding for development correctly, it could influence the reasons that provide inspiration for terrorism.

European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica said the EU ne-

eded to strike a balance between its security and its development action. There is a need to tackle the security problem at its roots, starting with the humanitarian relief responses, to the long term responses in all crises, Mimica said.

Moderation blunders

As each of the speakers was taking the time to express their condolences to France over the Charlie Hebdo attack, ironically, French minister of State for Development and Francophonie Annick Girardin was left without speaking time. As she was last on the list of speakers, she was rudely interrupted at the beginning of her statement, with the moderator saying time was out. Girardin, visibly upset, said that she would continue her statement nevertheless, but had to wrap up her message faster than she had expected.

It appears that Latvians are obsessed with scheduling, and even Juncker was surprised when his press conference the previous day was cut short abruptly by the moderator.

Strong criticism

Henri Malosse, President of European Economic and Social Committee, made the strongest statement during the ceremonies. He called the Paris attacks a manifestation of "new Nazism, new fascism".

"Terrorism is our enemy, but our first enemy is poverty, which is conducive to terrorism," he said, adding that the Mediterranean is "becoming a cemetery because of (a) lack of development".

Malosse did not spare the Commission from criticism, saying that development should be negotiated, from equal to equal, and that in his words this has been forgotten.

"Development policy got lost in bureaucracy," Malosse said. The EU is supplying a lot of direct assistance to governments, "but where is the

money?”, he asked.

Further, Malosse advocated the need of “real reform” in development aid, of establishing a dialogue which should touch upon the issue of religions and “never compromise on values”.

More coordination is needed in development aid, Malosse further argued, adding that the national politics of EU countries eclipse the common EU policy. He also argued that development should be a community policy.

Asked by EurActiv to comment on Malosse’s critical statements, Mimica said he wouldn’t deny problems exist.

It should not be forgotten that development activity takes place in most fragile environments, and is run by partners, therefore avoiding that

L’Europa del futuro insieme su immigrazione e ambiente

Published on 8 January 2015 in La Stampa

Volge al termine il semestre italiano di presidenza europea. Il 13 dicembre il Consiglio dei ministri sviluppo della Ue ha pubblicato le “Conclusioni” sui temi dello sviluppo a partire dal posizionamento europeo sull’Agenda Post-2015, i nuovi obiettivi per lo sviluppo del Pianeta, che il prossimo settembre andranno a sostituire i vecchi Obiettivi del Millennio, che hanno guidato per gli ultimi 15 anni l’azione internazionale di aiuto allo sviluppo e nella cooperazione. La Stampa ha intervistato Francesco Petrelli, portavoce di Concord Italia (la piattaforma delle Ong italiane che fa parte della confederazione delle Ong europee) per fare il punto su questo documento, che – anche grazie all’Italia – vede un’Europa ritrovare una voce comune sui temi della cooperazione,

money going in wrong directions is a “delicate exercise”, Mimica said. Rinkēvičs also answered this question and appeared to contradict Mimica to a certain extent, by saying that to some extent, NGOs were “more efficient” in providing development aid. He emphasizes that a “more individual approach” to the world’s regions was needed.

dell’immigrazione, e dello sviluppo.

Qual è il suo giudizio sul lavoro svolto in tema di cooperazione a livello europeo? In particolare, che ruolo ha avuto l’Italia?

«Nonostante le difficoltà del semestre, il risultato è stato positivo, in particolare sui tre temi guida indicati come prioritari: processo post 2015, migrazione e sviluppo, e il ruolo degli attori privati. Due osservazioni: la prima è che l’Europa alla vigilia del round di negoziati, che ci porterà a settembre 2015 a definire il set di obiettivi post-Millennium Goals, riesce ad esprimere una posizione comune, a parlare con una voce sola. Questo non era scontato perché si partiva da una situazione di profondo disallineamento. Si arriverà al negoziato sui nuovi obiettivi per lo sviluppo post-2015 uniti e con una visione coerente definita nel documento finale (scaricabile qua)».

Europe in the World: EU delegations

For almost a decade now, in our work on monitoring the performance of European Union delegations’ engagement with civil society, CONCORD has played a “watchdog” role, assessing how policies decreed in Brussels are actually being put into practice in the countries in which the EU works.

This important role remains. But civil society organisations can also have a role highlighting good practices and encouraging improvements. At a time of Euroscepticism, I think it’s particularly valuable to support steps by the EU to ensure that civil society can play a meaningful role in the planning and implementation of its external policies on the ground. This report, drawing on wide-ranging participation from CONCORD members and partners, describes what’s working well and where things could be better.

The space for civil society around the world to do its job (watchdog, advocate, service provider, educator) is increasingly under threat. EU institutions’ and EU delegations’ efforts to include civil society and other non-state actors in a dialogue about EU programmes and policies is therefore as critical as ever. We want European external policies to be progressive, respectful of human rights and single-mindedly focused on ending extreme poverty. Involving civil society is not only the right thing to do, it is also effective. It makes for better, more inclusive and better-accepted policies.

The role of civil society as a partner in policy dialogue is not accep-

ted or understood in the same way by all the EU's partner governments. Highlighting successful practices, proposing where things could be done differently or better, is one important way of increasing and improving civil society involvement in decisionmaking and in the implementation of those decisions globally. CONCORD has successfully drawn on its members' work at EU policy level, combined with in-country presence and relationships, to make a significant contribution to this vital aspect of the EU's external action – supporting CSO engagement.

My first experience of CONCORD was responding to a questionnaire about CSOs' interaction with EU delegations back in 2005 while working for CAFOD and Trócaire in Addis Ababa. This report marks another milestone in the process in which European CSOs and their in-country civil society partners are working together to increase and improve the quality of consultation and engagement between the EU and civil society in the countries in which the EU's programmes and policies have an impact.

I would like to thank all those whose time and hard work contributed to the findings of the report, and I look forward to continued and deeper cooperation between CSOs, our partners and the EU in maintaining and expanding civil society's role as a key driver of sustainable development with a place at the decisionmaking table.

La seconda osservazione è legata all'elemento cardine del Semestre. Si è riusciti ad aprire a livello europeo la discussione sul tema delle migrazioni?

«Sì, riuscendo anche a legarlo al tema dello sviluppo. Un risultato questo tutto italiano. Perché è evidente che di questa partita delle migrazioni l'Italia è al centro del dramma dei profughi e dei richiedenti asilo, non solo della migrazione economica o "circolare". Nelle conclusioni c'è dunque l'indicazione di una nuova comunicazione europea entro il 2015 su vari strumenti d'implementazione, che andranno messi in campo per affrontare il tema dei flussi migratori finalmente come questione europea».



Quali saranno i principali ostacoli?

«Lo sviluppo di molte nazioni del Mediterraneo meridionale è legato al nostro benessere. Quindi non si possono affrontare queste tematiche di sviluppo e migrazione con un approccio ancora a compartimentazione stagna: il tema è interconnesso e non lo si può che affrontare in modo slegato e frammentario. Per superare l'approccio solo "emergenzialista" o peggio "securitario", l'Europa dovrebbe mettere il tema migrazione in cima alle sfide di un'agenda politica; dovrebbe essere un'Europa che agisce come "global player" sui

problemi globali. Ma se l'Unione ha risolto nel complesso positivamente il processo di integrazione dei paesi dell'Europa centro-orientale, ha dimenticato l'area mediterranea».

Uno dei metodi per diminuire i flussi d'immigrazione è sicuramente quello di sostenere lo sviluppo in questi Paesi mediterranei, che sono poi Paesi prioritari anche per la cooperazione italiana. Il documento ribadisce l'importanza di tornare a raggiungere lo 0,7 % del Pil da destinare allo sviluppo dei paesi meno ricchi. Il tema delle risorse per lo sviluppo diventa un fattore?

«Si ribadisce questa intenzione, e ciò è importante. Per noi lo 0,7% per la cooperazione rimane un obiettivo necessario da raggiungere, anche se appare difficile pensare che nei prossimi 5 o 10 anni possa essere raggiunto. Nondimeno l'aiuto pubblico allo sviluppo ha una funzione, irrinunciabile, di "volano" per la lotta alla povertà. Va mirato sulle vulnerabilità sociali: sanità di base, istruzione, sicurezza alimentare e accesso all'acqua. È quindi un obiettivo rilevante, da raggiungere davvero in tempi certi e ragionevoli. C'è ancora un tema importante, che è quello della coerenza di tutte le politiche. Per i paesi del Mediterraneo o del Nord Africa sono ugualmente importanti le politiche dello sviluppo e della cooperazione quanto quella della mobilità, quelle commerciali e industriali o agricole. Non si può fare aiuto allo sviluppo da un lato e sfruttare i lavoratori e delocalizzare dall'altro».

Il rischio?

«Non agire può diventare un fattore di crisi di senso e utilità della costruzione europea. Se l'Europa è solo burocrazia, austerità e regole inviolabili e non viene percepita come un grande progetto utile per il futuro, si aprono praterie per i parti-

ti europei xenofobi e razzisti».

Uno degli ulteriori elementi che si è aggiunto nell'Agenda per lo Sviluppo post-2015 è la questione ambientale, che finalmente torna a riemergere nel tema cooperazione e che sarà un elemento centrale dei negoziati.

«Prendiamo il Mediterraneo. La salvaguardia del mare comune, che è fonte di ricchezza, oltre che di preservazione ambientale, è fondamentale. Il Mediterraneo se non è coltivato diventa una delle aree senza anticorpi per la resilienza. Quest'agenda è innovativa perché dice due cose: uno che devi tenere assieme povertà, sviluppo sociale, sostenibilità ambientale e diritti; la

seconda è che riguarda tutti i Paesi, quindi, supera il paradigma donatore- ricevente in termini di comuni, ma differenziate responsabilità. Siamo lontani dalla cooperazione tradizionale: l'ambiente è una questione che unisce Nord e Sud del mondo, dove il tema dell'ambiente si fonde con quello dell'agricoltura, della produzione del cibo, della gestione dell'acqua, della manutenzione dei territori. Secondo Enrico Giovannini – l'ex ministro e presidente Istat, oggi co-chair del gruppo di consiglieri di Ban Ki-moon per la "Data Revolution" - l'Europa è a rischio di choc ambientale. Quindi pensare allo sviluppo integrato ambientale è una questione che riguarda il futuro di tutti noi».

Lancio ufficiale dell'Anno europeo per lo sviluppo 2015

Published on 9 January 2015 in Il Velino

L'Anno dello sviluppo, originariamente proposto dalla Confederazione Europea delle ONG Concord Europe, sarà dedicato a far crescere la consapevolezza e l'impegno di tutti gli europei nei confronti dei diversi progetti a sostegno della cooperazione da parte dell'Unione Europea. "Quest'anno non deve essere solo un anno Europeo", ha detto Mogherini durante la cerimonia, "ma deve riguardare tutti i cittadini e non solo quelli europei". EYD2015 presenta un calendario pieno di eventi a tutti i livelli, che permetterà a giovani, politici, società civile, industria, mondo dell'accademia e della ricerca, di dare un contributo su decisioni cruciali, utili alla definizione di politiche di sviluppo, ambientali e di prevenzione dei cambiamenti climatici. Il dibattito dell' EYD2015

verterà sul tema, proposto dalla Commissione Europea, "il nostro mondo, la nostra dignità, il nostro futuro".

"L'anno europeo è l'occasione per intavolare un dialogo sul tema dello sviluppo e su questioni di giustizia globale, con un pubblico più ampio, con persone estranee al mondo della cooperazione e non necessariamente coinvolte con le ONG e le istituzioni che lavorano per lo sviluppo. Vogliamo che quest'anno non riguardi solo il tema degli aiuti – ovvero ciò che l'Europa dà -, ma anche il come l'Europa vive: come i nostri stili di vita, il commercio, le politiche agricole ed economiche Europee influiscono sullo sviluppo globale", ha sottolineato Seamus Jeffreson, direttore Concord, durante la cerimonia a Riga. "Lo scopo dell'Anno europeo per lo Sviluppo è di informare i cittadini europei sullo sviluppo e la cooperazione, metten-

Sustainable by example – CONCORD's new sustainability measures

CONCORD Director Seamus Jeffreson outlines the new sustainability measures adopted by CONCORD's secretariat in Brussels. To mark the European Year of Development 2015, the CONCORD Secretariat in Brussels has introduced four measures aimed at operating more sustainably.

- Carbon offsetting for air travel
- Recycling and improved sorting of waste
- Reducing meat consumption in our catering policy
- Making our building more sustainable by working with other organisations in Mundo

How do these measures work?

When someone in the secretariat travels, we will contribute to a carbon offset scheme - there are plenty of these around (see insert carbon offset org website) - it is not expensive and mainly makes you think about the carbon price of air travel. We have not introduced this for CONCORD's travel budget for members as many worry this will limit participation of non Brussels based members in our meetings and work, something we do not want to do.

We recycle paper, plastics and food waste (using a compost collection space) in the office. Old furniture is also recycled or donated.

We have now made vegetarian food as the standard option for catering. Meat can be ordered as the 'extra option'. This is to make the point that land usage for the level

of meat consumption we currently have in Europe is unsustainable. We work in a fantastic space with lots of other CSOs called Mundo J – founded by an ethical property company dedicated to networking and greater sustainability. We will be exploring with our neighbours and colleagues ways of making the usage of the building more sustainable (reduce consumption of energy, water and other resources) and possibly an environmental management audit. This has the advantage of an external verification and regular evaluation to ensure we remain on track. There is a cost involved, but in the long run and among a number of organisations this should be feasible.

Why did we introduce these sustainability measures?

In our discussions on the new CONCORD Strategy we spoke a lot about ‘practicing what we preach’ - so we asked ‘what could we do to pay attention to and hopefully reduce our use of the planet’s non-renewable resources’.

Looking at our own consumption and the consequence on others around the world is also a theme of the European Year for Development.

Sustainable Development or just Development?

For us the EYD2015 is an opportunity to discuss a new narrative about development.

Years ago, development NGOs described a world in which a developed ‘west’ provided help to an underdeveloped ‘third world’.

Today, our members speak of global challenges and the need for global justice to tackle poverty and reduce inequality wherever people live. Global challenges affect everyone but unequally.

Those people and countries that have generally contributed least to increasing carbon emissions are the ones suffering most from

do in luce i risultati che l’Ue, agendo congiuntamente con gli Stati Membri ha raggiunto operando come attore globale”, ha dichiarato Neven Mimica, il Commissario europeo alla Cooperazione e allo Sviluppo internazionale. “Abbiamo bisogno di alzare il livello di consapevolezza sui benefici apportati dagli interventi

di cooperazione dell’Ue, per i paesi beneficiari ma anche per i cittadini europei. Si tratta dell’occasione della vita per poter mettere sotto i riflettori mondiali i temi dello sviluppo e spero che la gente da tutta l’Europa si unisca a noi e partecipi all’anno Europeo”.

“Como el continente más rico, tenemos que enviar un mensaje”

Published on 9 January 2015 in El Pais

“Como el continente más rico, tenemos que enviar un mensaje al mundo”. Y tal mensaje es el que ha lanzado este viernes el presidente de la Comisión Europea, Jean-Claude Juncker, en la inauguración del Año Europeo del Desarrollo. En la presentación de la agenda de iniciativas

que se desarrollarán a lo largo de 2015, Juncker ha señalado que una de las prioridades de la nueva Comisión es fortalecer el continente como actor global, algo que sólo será posible “si los europeos comprenden cómo el papel de Europa beneficia a los países interdependientes”. El presidente de la Comisión ha mencionado al ébola y el radicalismo como ejemplo de problemas en la que esta



interdependencia se hace evidente. “La ayuda de Europa marca la diferencia en la vida de millones de personas”, ha añadido.

La jefa de la diplomacia europea, Federica Mogherini, ha subrayado por su parte la necesidad de involucrar a ciudadanos, actores políticos, ONG, universidades, medios de comunicación y opinión pública.

Entre los retos de 2015, Mogherini ha destacado la importancia de que las economías emergentes asuman sus responsabilidades en la ayuda a otros países.

“No es caridad. Está en nuestro propio interés; si tenemos éxito este año, 2015 podrá ser considerado como el principio de una nueva era”, ha declarado. Todos los ponentes

coincidieron en que 2015 será decisivo, pues es el año que se fijó para alcanzar los Objetivos del Milenio, en el que Naciones Unidas analizará los avances en la lucha contra la pobreza y cuando se debe alcanzar un acuerdo internacional sobre el clima en París. “Aquellos que tienen menos responsabilidad en el aumento del cambio climático son los que están sufriendo las peores consecuencias”, ha lamentado el director de la Confederación de ONG de Europa Concord, Seamus Jefferson. Por su parte, la jefa de la Comisión de Desarrollo del Parlamento Europeo, Linda McAvan, ha subrayado: “Este año nos brinda una oportunidad para despertar conciencias y mejorar las políticas europeas”. McAvan ha mostrado su inquietud por quienes piensan que “no podemos permitirnos el dinero destinado a cooperación internacional”. También ha manifestado su deseo para

que la Comisión Europea trabaje muy duro en asuntos de género y ha advertido de que la educación de las mujeres “está en riesgo de ataque”. La igualdad entre hombres y mujeres, la inclusión social y el espíritu de la sociedad civil son algunos de los valores que, a juicio del presidente del Comité Económico y Social, Henri Malosse, deben integrarse en el plan de ayuda al desarrollo. “Hace falta que estas políticas sean más accesibles y visibles al ciudadano”, ha sugerido.

Para el presidente del Comité de Regiones, Michel Lebrun, es necesario fomentar una “fuerte sensibilización pública sobre el tema del desarrollo”. Lebrun ha pedido la “intervención inmediata” de las autoridades para avanzar en el desarrollo de servicios primarios dirigidos a “factores esenciales de la vida humana como la salud, la pobreza o la alimentación”.

La UE impulsa el Año Europeo del Desarrollo para “mandar un mensaje al mundo”

Published on 9 January 2015 in Terra

El presidente de la Comisión Europea (CE), Jean-Claude Juncker, inauguró hoy el Año Europeo del Desarrollo para que “el continente más rico del mundo” envíe un mensaje al resto del planeta: combatir la pobreza y alcanzar el desarrollo sostenible requiere el compromiso de todos.

“Como el continente más rico, tenemos que enviar un mensaje al mundo”, dijo Juncker en un acto en Riga al que también acudió la primera ministra letona, Laimdota Straujuma.

La agenda del Año Europeo del Desarrollo incluye distintos eventos y actividades a nivel europeo, nacio-

nal y regional.

Cada mes del año estará dedicado a un tema: enero al lugar que ocupa Europa en el mundo, febrero a la educación, marzo a temas de género y abril a la salud, entre otros.

Juncker señaló que una de las prioridades de la nueva Comisión es fortalecer el continente como factor global, algo que sólo será posible “si los europeos comprenden cómo el rol de Europa beneficia a los países interdependientes”.

El Año Europeo del Desarrollo es una “oportunidad única” para transformar un mundo “cada vez más interdependiente (...) donde no hay fronteras” y donde problemas como el Ébola o el radicalismo afectan a todos, afirmó el presidente de la CE. “La ayuda de Europa marca la

climate change. So we have a particular duty in Europe to tackle our unsustainable consumption habits. The EYD is an opportunity to discuss with the public how our consumption directly affects other parts of the world and what we can do about it.

But isn't the answer European or national level policy changes? Isn't CONCORD's job to advocate for that?

Absolutely, but we also need to contribute to the creation of greater awareness of consumption, why present practices and trends are a problem and what can be done. One way of doing that is for individuals and organisations to look at their own consumption.

I hope we also can show others what can be done - sometimes in very simple ways - to reduce consumption. We are lucky enough to have members and partners who have done great work in this area to give inspiration and practical tips.

Policy Coherence for... what did you say?

Over the last seven or eight years I've been working with ActionAid and CONCORD to try to get the European Union to acknowledge and set right its negative footprint on some of the world's poorest communities.

When you say 'international development', peoples' first thoughts are of development aid. But a much bigger part of the story is the likes of trade deals, energy and agriculture policies which can totally obliterate the good work done with that aid. From Europe. From the US. From anywhere. In EU speak this is known as Policy

Coherence for Development or PCD.

Ahh Policy Coherence for Development. Every time I say that phrase, I sigh. Because unfortunately, it tends to have the effect of either putting people off to sleep, completely confusing them or setting them off on a tangent. It is sometimes confused with completely other things. I once typed PCD into a search engine, only to be told that to the rest of the world PCD is short for 'Pussycat Dolls'. Maybe its time to start rebranding it?

So just what is Policy Coherence for Development?

It ultimately is about the EU taking a fair and coherent approach to developing countries, making sure that not just its work on development but all of its policies do no harm to and indeed reinforce human rights and poverty eradication.

As many of you'll know it's the European Year for Development 2015 and there's a real opportunity for both NGOs and institutions to communicate development issues better.

Fair agricultural policies – the role of small producers

The reality is that small producers and farmers, predominantly women, are simultaneously the main producers and the poorest sections of society. They are half a world away from being able to break into national, not to mind international trade markets. DG Development is conscious of the need to support women farmers to access the benefits of trade deals. But the issue is still timing. It is impossible to slap trade deals on countries when the majority of their populations cannot even hope to benefit, and then call this poverty eradication by trade. The reality is that only a small elite are benefitting. And that has got to be the deciding factor 'who

diferencia en la vida de millones de personas", añadió.

La jefa de la diplomacia europea, Federica Mogherini, subrayó la necesidad de involucrar a ciudadanos, actores políticos, ONG, universidades, medios de comunicación y opinión pública.

Entre los retos de 2015, Mogherini destacó la lucha contra el cambio climático, la pobreza o la violencia y el fomento del desarrollo sostenible, la igualdad de género o la paz, así como "que las economías emergentes acepten nuevas responsabilidades" en el marco de ayuda a otros países.

"No es caridad, está en nuestro propio interés; si tenemos éxito este año, 2015 podrá ser considerado como el principio de una nueva era", concluyó.

Todos los ponentes coincidieron en que 2015 será decisivo, pues es el año que se fijó para alcanzar los Objetivos del Milenio, en el que Naciones Unidas analizará los avances en la lucha contra la pobreza y cuando se debe alcanzar un acuerdo internacional sobre el clima en París.

"Aquellos que tienen menos responsabilidad en el aumento del cambio climático son los que están sufriendo las peores consecuencias", lamentó el director de la Confederación de ONG de Europa CONCORD, Seamus Jeffreson.

Por su parte, la jefa de la Comisión de Desarrollo del Parlamento

Europeo, Linda McAvan, consideró que "este año nos brinda una oportunidad para despertar conciencias y mejorar las políticas europeas". McAvan mostró su inquietud por quienes piensan que "no podemos permitirnos el dinero destinado a cooperación internacional" y estimó que estas políticas son necesarias, pues gracias a ellas hay "millones de personas con acceso al agua potable o millones de niños salvados de la malaria".

También manifestó su deseo para que "la Comisión Europea trabaje muy duro en asuntos de género" y advirtió de que "la educación de las mujeres está en riesgo de ataque". La igualdad entre hombres y mujeres, la inclusión social y el espíritu de la sociedad civil son algunos de los valores que, a juicio del presidente del Comité Económico y Social, Henri Malosse, deben integrarse en el plan de ayuda al desarrollo. "Hace falta que estas políticas sean más accesibles y visibles al ciudadano", basadas siempre en los valores, el respeto mutuo, la igualdad y una mayor confianza en la sociedad civil, sugirió.

Para el presidente del Comité de Regiones, Michel Lebrun, es necesario fomentar una "fuerte sensibilización pública sobre el tema del desarrollo". Lebrun pidió la "intervención inmediata" de las autoridades para avanzar en el desarrollo de servicios primarios dirigidos a "factores esenciales de la vida humana como la salud, la pobreza o la alimentación".

OUR WORLD, OUR DIGNITY, OUR FUTURE

*Published on 9 January 2015 in
EESC website*

EESC president Malosse takes part in the launch of the European Year for Development in Riga today

On 9 January, the European Year for Development will be launched officially at a special event in Riga in conjunction with the opening of Latvia's presidency of the Council of the EU. European Commission

president Jean-Claude Juncker, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini and the Latvian prime minister Laimdota Straujuma will be among the speakers at the opening. The EESC president Mr Malosse has called for a reform of European development policy: “We have to seize the occasion of the European Year for Development to make our policy more effective in resolving the huge problem of poverty. First of all, we should make the policy for development a Community policy.” “It is also vital to redesign procedures, by reducing the bureaucracy involved, and to concentrate our funding efforts on populations’ concrete needs”.

The EESC has played an influential role in establishing 2015 as the official European Year for Development (EYD2015). In 2013, the EESC adopted a special opinion on the European Year of Development with rapporteur Andris Gobiņš, which provided firm support for the first ever European Year with a strong global and rights-based dimension. The idea was consistently promoted by the EESC, together with other civil society organisations, the most prominent of which was CONCORD – the European confederation for relief and development – until EYD2015 received official approval from the EU institutions in the spring of 2014.

our world
our dignity
our future

“It is the first year which explicitly looks beyond the EU’s geographic territory and seeks to be more than just about informing people or campaigning. It aims to increase engagement and discussion, and puts civil society at the core of the process. It presents a great chance to go beyond the traditional players by involving more stakeholders, including those from the private

sector, trade unions, consumers, environmentalists, NGOs”, said EESC member Andris Gobiņš. The EESC has worked to put civil society at the core of EYD2015 and supported the establishment of a broad alliance of civil society organisations, coordinated by CONCORD, to play a key role in designing a wide civil society action programme.

benefits?’ For the record, when I asked DG Trade to provide evidence of how the EPAs have served the EU’s poverty eradication goals, I got no answer. The response was ‘DG Trade takes development very seriously’.

DG Trade representative explained that they work hand in hand with DG Development so that on one hand they can strike a good trade deal which will offer open access to EU market and on the other hand EU development projects are set up to help local farmers to enhance their export capacity. At the same, we were told that there is not much they can do when observing human rights violations in a country with which they have a trade deal; this is the primary prerogative of the country government to deal with it. Hmmm.

The New Alliance on Food Security and Nutrition

There are some other programmes supported by the Commission and DG Devco itself which are not entirely development friendly. The New Alliance on Food Security and Nutrition for example. This is a G8-born initiative to support MNC agribusiness in agricultural investment in Africa as a means of creating jobs and prosperity for Africans. A win win. Except it’s hard to see that double win.

The New Alliance is a framework to create an ‘enabling environment’ for investment. It puts MNCs in a position to negotiate with African countries on rearranging a whole range of policies that are potentially interesting for their business e.g. land and seed laws. It has seen countries setting aside huge tracts of land for agribusiness, complicating matters at a time when already complicated land reforms to establish peoples’ rights to land are ongoing. To boot it has no real poverty framework to show how it is impact on poverty.

Looking at the last progress report, the figures of smallholder farmers benefitting comes from the MNCs investing themselves and it is pretty impossible to figure out where they got those figures. DG Devco is doing some pretty amazing work in terms of supporting 10 African countries to adopt the internationally agreed Voluntary Guidelines on Land Tenure. It would be the height of irony if in a given country, the EC was funding that process, whilst simultaneously supporting an enabling environment for land grabbing. This issue will be part of a big discussion at the World Social Forum this March. The EU needs also to start an honest discussion on it, answering the ultimate question ‘who really benefits?’

The EU and biofuels

There were many other issues on the table at that event, the impact of biofuels targets and subsidies in terms of incentivising land grabs and food price volatility for example. In 2009 the EU signed off on a 10% target for renewable energy in transport by 2020. Thanks to the efforts of DG Climate Action - who recognised that a) biofuels were not the climate silver bullet they were thought to be and b) the idea of using food as fuel was a ludicrous idea to begin with - the European Commission proposed that the target be capped at 5%. Just last Tuesday, on the same day we were talking about the Pussycat Dolls in Brussels, the European Parliament voted for it to settle at 6%, a compromise with the EU member states, many of whom have been battling for it to stay as high as 7%. The battle of those numbers continues and we will see if sense and rights prevail there. But the important issue is this: development and green NGOs have managed to reframe the debate. It is no longer that biofuels are a smart

2015 — Europe's year for development



by By Richard Jones on 10 April 2014
in Devex

The flag of the European Union. The year 2015 has been designated the official European Year for Development. Photo by: Francisco Luis Benitez / CC BY-NC

Next year promises to be “a very exciting and groundbreaking year for international development.” The statement comes from European Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs, commenting after the European Parliament voted last week by overwhelming majority to designate 2015 as the official European Year for Development. But what is EYD2015 and what does it aim to achieve?

Every year since 1983, the EU has designated a specific theme around which it has encouraged debate and dialogue within and among the bloc's member states. The aim is to raise awareness and — ultimately — to change attitudes.

EYD2015 would be the first designated to a global, external action-related theme.

“This year provides an unparalleled opportunity for us to engage with EU citizens, to showcase our strong

commitment to eradicating poverty worldwide and to inform them how every euro of support helps to make a difference in the lives of so many, in some of the world's poorest countries,” Piebalgs said.

Activities

EYD2015 aspires to inform EU citizens about development cooperation efforts and highlight the EU's role as the world's biggest aid donor. As in previous years, measures will include communication campaigns, conferences, events, initiatives, studies and surveys at European, national, regional and local levels, to convey key messages and encourage participation among the general public.

Marius Wanders, a board member at CONCORD — the European NGO confederation that first advocated for the EYD2015 initiative — believes the year represents an opportunity for open public debate with citizens, but cautions that it “should not be only about aid — what Europe gives — but also about the consumption choices that we make as citizens that affect global development.”

It's not clear whether consumer

behavior will be among the topics of the year, which is expected instead to focus efforts on stimulating interest in development issues and creating opportunities for active engagement and on-the-ground implementation of policies through the Commission's new aid volunteer scheme, among other priorities.

Funding

Although extra funding will likely be made available — as in most previous European years — for local, national and cross-border projects that address the year's theme, the availability of extra EU funding for overseas projects remains uncertain. However, EYD2015 will certainly be considered a flagship campaign of the first 12 months of the next European Commission — only expected to be nominated in November or December 2014 — and an opportunity for the incoming president and development commissioner to send a strong signal that development features prominently in future policymaking.

The Commission may also propose new legislation that could see strengthened policy integration and coherence among the work of directorates-general in fields such as energy, trade, agriculture or gender, to name a few.

Impact

According to Wanders, the initiative is very timely: "It's the year when important global agreements to decide how to tackle global poverty will be negotiated."

Indeed, 2015 is the final year for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the year in which the post-MDG agenda will build up a head of steam to take the major

decisions on what the future framework will look like in practice. For the EU Commission, it also marks four years since the adoption of the "Agenda for Change" — the blueprint to refocus its development aid to ensure it reaches those sectors and countries most in need.

Piebalgs, who praised the work of the European Parliament in bringing the concept to fruition, said EYD2015 promises to be a major event that "will need the broadest support possible to match its ambition and its huge geographical reach."

Next year will see donors and stakeholders once again come together to look at what has been achieved and — most importantly — what remains to be done.

And despite many EU member states finding themselves falling behind with their official development assistance targets during the ongoing economic downturn, the institutions will at least be encouraged by the public levels of support for development aid. For example, in a Eurobarometer survey released at the European Development Days in November 2013, some 85 percent of EU citizens agreed that Europe should continue helping developing countries.

With continued strong backing from the European public and the institutions, the aid community may feel more optimistic that 2015 can indeed meet expectations and prove a truly pivotal year for the future of development.

alternative to fossil fuels. It is about 'no food for fuel'. This is a fairness agenda, a PCD agenda, which the EU cannot afford to ignore in its next moves on the 2030 energy package.

Leaving the event this week I felt hopeful. Sitting around the table with the people working on these policies is the first very positive step forward. Even if we are still at the stage of clarifying concepts, we have well and truly managed to challenge each other to think more broadly. Bringing in a southern perspective to redefine PCD is also a good idea. As Biraj Patnaik from the India Right to Food Network put it, it's simple, it's about 'A just world via just means'.

"Sustainable development" and greater citizens' involvement: successful launch event of EYD in Greece

On Friday 6, March Christos Stylianides (European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid & Crisis Management and EU coordinator for combating Ebola), Nikos Chountis (Alternate Foreign Minister for European Affairs), Nikolaos Vamvounakis (Director General of the Foreign Ministry's International Development Cooperation Service) and Marius Wanders, (CONCORD board member and ambassador for the EYD Civil Society Alliance) officially launched the European Year for Development in Greece with a captivating event at the Foreign

Ministry's Kranidiotis Amphitheatre in Athens.

The plan of activities, which includes cultural and sporting events, development education seminars (teacher training, actions at schools and universities), conferences, actions for informing public opinion was presented. The Foreign Ministry is coordinating the EYD2015 actions, through the International Development Cooperation Service and in cooperation with Ministries and public agencies, civil society organizations and the academic community.

Marius Wanders, after a short presentation of CONCORD and the Civil Society Alliance, remarked the importance of the EYD2015 for giving a new meaning to the concept of "sustainable development". "Not enough citizens of the EU understand that "sustainable development" stands for a universal and transformative global agenda that promotes social justice at home and abroad and that will eradicate dehumanising poverty across the world, without compromising the future of the planet we live on" he declared during his speech.

The persistent myths around the concept of "development cooperation" – like "development aid is money wasted" or "We have a crisis and increasing poverty here at home in Europe, so therefore we cannot afford to fight poverty elsewhere" – need to be busted according to Wanders. And this can be achieved only through a new narrative that "should not just be about "what Europe gives", but should include an honest and self-critical examination of "how we live". We may need to step outside our comfort zone and critically examine how our lifestyles, our consumer decisions, but also the trade, agricultural and economic policies that we adopt in Euro-

Details emerge about the European Year for Development 2015

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The European Union is launching the "European Year for Develop-

ment 2015". The first details were disclosed during a public event held in Brussels on Tuesday (9 November). The European Year for Development 2015 is the first year designated with



such a global theme, since European years have been designated thematically since 1983.

The initiative originated in Latvia. The European Year for Development 2015 will take place in Riga on 8 January, as part of the events marking the beginning of the first Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The second half of the European Year for Development will be during the Luxembourg presidency. Seamus Jefferson, Director of

CONCORD Europe, the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development who was instrumental for the launch of the "European Year for Development 2015", called the coming year "seminal" in terms of expected events and decisions. He mentioned the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in December, as well as the expected decisions concerning the post-2015 development agenda. But 2015 is also the year of expiry of the Millennium Development Goals, with many European Union

states falling off track on anti-poverty aid targets.

Commission representatives, communication experts, as well as figures from the NGO and business sector all agreed that the European Year for Development 2015 should provide an opportunity to reach out to a wider public regarding the importance of the development agenda. Possible new alliances are being sought with youth and women's organisations, local authorities, and unions.

A study made by Weber-Shandwick highlighted the fact that a new "swing" audience could be reached, especially if messages are better thought. As an example, Julian Lambertin, head of Strategy, said that "self-reliance" or "empowering women" worked better than goals such as "ending poverty", which act like trigger for sceptics.

Commission experts also said that people aged 15-24 were showing the highest degree of openness to international development, and that they were among the "swingers" the 2015 campaign was trying to reach.

It was also highlighted that the campaign was aiming to reach audiences in new member states, mostly Central European countries that haven't been very involved in development activities up to now. Key broadsheets and broadcasters in all member countries are expected to participate to the campaign.

Thematic months

The various events during the European Year of Development will

focus on 12 themes. The month of January will be dedicated to the theme "Europe in the world", February will focus on "Education", March on "Women and Girls", April on "Health", May on "Peace and Security", June of "Sustainable green growth, decent jobs and businesses", July on "Children and youth", August on "Humanitarian aid", September on "Demography and migration", October on "Food security", November on "Sustainable development and climate action" and December on "Human rights and governance".

Among the major events of the European Year of Development are a Belgian opening event with Bazar and Africaliato be held on 17 January, a gender event in Latvia on 2 March, the European Development Days on 2-3 June, as well as a closing event by the Luxembourg presidency on 8 December.

In addition, the Committee of the Regions highlighted another major event, called "Assises of Decentralised Cooperation", to be held on 1-2 June in Brussels, with 800 to 1000 participants, many of whom would come from developing countries. Maarten Roest, communication coordinator in Brussels of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), announced that his organisation would organise together with the Italian government a concert "with a very promising list of stars".

pe and in member states impact on the lives, prospects and living conditions of other global citizens with whom we share this one sole planet".

In this perspective, the statement of the Director Vamvounakis about the importance to establish a good relationship with the honest and efficient CSOs that were seriously harmed by the media campaign on the scandals of mismanaged funds becomes even more important: a step forward in the right direction.

EU needs to rethink its Latin America relations

EU relations with Latin America should promote greater cooperation and socioeconomic equality with a focus on human rights, according to NGOs meeting at the second EU-CELAC Civil Society Forum held in Brussels, organised by CONCORD and Mesa de Articulación.

The event hosted Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs, as EU leaders are set to meet in Brussels today for the EU Council.

The EU in Latin America: a good partner?

The EU plays a major role in Latin America, being one of its biggest development aid donors and its second largest trading partner.

From 2001 to 2011 exports of raw materials from Latin America to the EU increased steadily by a total of 52%. Yet often the aggressive extraction of natural resources has negative impacts on the local environment and increases the forced displacement of local people and other rights violations.

For Laura Sullivan, Vice-President

of CONCORD, the European NGO confederation for relief and development: "Europe needs to have a fairer relationship with Latin America, ensuring that its policies on trade, energy and agriculture are coherent and do no harm. 2015 is a make or break year for EU development commitments."

Human rights and poverty reduction vs economic interests Miguel Santibáñez, Coordinator of the Mesa de Articulación says that "in the present context, the two regions show similar worrying trends. Economic interests are prioritized in bi-regional relations over human rights and poverty reduction, and universal access to basic social services is limited." European civil society networks based in Brussels with a strong focus on EU-Latin America relations including the EU ACT Alliance, CIDSE, Cifca, Grupo Sur and Oidhaco view the forum as a strategic opportunity to highlight the importance of promoting relations between the two regions, focused on human rights and gender equality, sustainable alternatives to the current economic model and the creation of a more just and inclusive society.

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM 2015 IN TUNIS

The world social forum 2015 is a global meeting place for civil society organisations and activists from around the world.

CONCORD, the European NGO confederation of Development NGOs will be present at the forum, taking part in a range of activities. FOLLOW OUR STORIFY

The European Year for Development 2015 started in Latvia

Published on 10 December 2014 in Euractiv

A telephone conversation in 2010 launched the idea of designating 2015 as European Year for Development, Andris Gobiņš told EurActiv in an exclusive interview.

Andris Gobiņš is President of the

European Movement – Latvia and Member of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). He was speaking to EurActiv's Senior Editor Georgi Gotev.

The European Year for Development 2015 would be the first dedicated to such a global theme, since European years have been



designated from 1983 up to now. Is it true that you personally launched the idea of the European Year for Development 2015?

Everything started with my call to my colleague, the Director of the Latvian platform for development cooperation Mara Simane in 2010 when I said: we have a lot of problems in Latvia with development cooperation, with development policies, with development goals, and the modest financial commitments our country makes. And I added it was very hard to push through and to keep the promises we made. So I said if 2015 is a special year

for the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 agenda, what would you say if we push for a European year of Development? And she immediately said yes, this is a good idea. Two days later we were in Concord, in the General Assembly, and presented the idea. Again, we got extremely positive feedback from the members. After gaining this positive feedback from Concord, it was clear that this idea will fly, and as I am a member of the European Economic and Social Committee and I'm leading the European Movement in Latvia, I managed to get this idea into an

opinion of the EESC, which became the first EU institution on board, already in November.

And my colleague Mara Simane spoke to Development Commissioner Andris Piebalgs, who is also from Latvia, and once I was travelling with him on our way to Brussels, I asked him: How do we do this in reality? And he named his vice director of cabinet Peteris Ustubs as person in charge of the European year of Development, and from that moment, step by step with Concord, we addressed the Committee of regions, we addressed the Parliament President Martin Schulz, who was very positive. We then reached to different political parties' representatives in the European Parliament. Charles Goerens (ALDE, Luxembourg), Thijs Berman (S&D, Netherlands), Phillippe Boulland (EPP, France), again to have the major groups represented, and the European Parliament voted [in April 2014] to make the European Year of Development a reality.

It the European Year of Development one of the key events of the launch of the Latvian EU Presidency?

Actually it's the first big event of the Latvian Presidency. The European Year of the Development will be launched on 9 January in Riga. It will coincide with the visit of the College of Commissioners. It will be Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker with the Latvian Prime Minister [Laimdota Straujuma] and the Latvian Commissioner [Valdis Dombrovskis, Commission Vice President and former Prime Minister of Latvia] who will inaugurate the European Year of Development.

We hear opinions that some EU countries, especially new members from the East, who lack traditions in development cooperation, should be involved more. Is Latvia

providing a good example?

In terms of funding we are a bad example. We are not even close to the commitments we have made. But it could have been even worse if we didn't have a European Year of Development, because such an initiative increases the visibility and puts some positive pressure on the politicians to keep their promises. I think where we are extremely strong in Latvia is in real cooperation, not in the traditional aid-type of things. We don't call this type of aid development cooperation, we simply do it. So there is a lot of cooperation with Georgia, Moldova. A lot of people don't realise these countries are also recipients of development aid. These are the countries where the most projects from Latvia take place. And it's real exchange, real cooperation. It's not about Westerners teaching Georgia democracy, it's real development projects which I think are extremely efficient and need-based. Development is much more than donating money, it's much more than percentage of GDP dedicated to development aid. It's about a coherent and fair policy. As an example, it makes no sense to send humanitarian aid to Georgia, and through our subsidies to destroy their farming sector. I'm exaggerating, but this is an example that we need more coherent policies. That's the strength of Latvia and I hope my government will continue in the same direction.

Speaking about development cooperation, isn't it unusual to mention countries covered by the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative, which suggests another level of rapprochement?

It's a priority area for Latvia, for us it makes sense to work with those countries, because the transition they experience now is something we have experienced some 20-25 years ago.

No sustainable development without social accountability

In terms of development cooperation and global social justice, we are living through times of profound change, especially during this pivotal year 2015, the European Year for Development.

The global community is counting down to the adoption of an ambitious and comprehensive new framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will be recognising and building on undeniable achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) while at the same time acknowledging and addressing their weaknesses and shortfalls.

The global community, individual countries and organisations can indeed celebrate that progress has been made, for instance in terms of reducing child mortality.

The number of children under the age of 5 around the globe who are dying each year has fallen from 12.6 million per year to 6.6 million per year in the past two decades.

Nobody can deny that these statistics indicate progress. But equally nobody can be complacent. Every young child dying needlessly of often easily preventable causes, is one too many and constitutes a deep individual human tragedy for the affected families and communities.

The fact of the matter remains that at a time when major advances in global child health are being rightly applauded, millions of children around the world still die unseen, invisible, unregistered and unable to access the kind of health services that could save their lives.

To end that tragic injustice and

to make development cooperation truly sustainable, more accountable public institutions are needed at local, national and global levels.

The first step towards improving accountability of public institutions is to improve citizens' access to key information about the most critical issues in their lives, the issues that touch their lives directly. By raising the awareness of citizens – wherever they are in the world – about their rights and entitlements and about the performance of critical services like health care and education on which they depend, we lay the foundation for an evidence-based dialogue between citizens and government.

But increased access to information is not enough to ensure accountability. In addition, communities need to be engaged in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Citizens and government need venues (virtual and physical) to discuss the information and evidence they have and to ensure an institutional response. Citizens no longer want to be considered as passive beneficiaries with needs, but rather as true agents of change and partners in the process of development. Families and communities hold the key to unlocking accountability in governance, from local services to global frameworks.

Social accountability – the act of enabling citizens to hold their state to its promises and obligation – improves and sustains progress in development, enables the involvement of some of the world's most vulnerable children and people, and generates data that helps to track and improve the well-being of children.

Civil society organisations with ample experience in long term development work have over recent years developed and field tested

The European Year for Development 2015 started in Greece



Speech Marius Wanders on 6 March 2015

Ladies and gentlemen,
On behalf of CONCORD, the European Confederation of Relief and development NGOs, I wish to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for organising and hosting this opening event of the European Year 2015 for Development and for inviting CONCORD to make a contribution. Our member organisation, the Hellenic Platform of Development NGOs, also thanks the Hellenic Aid Office for having sought and used civil society input and advice in shaping the plans and activities that are now part of your National Work Programme for the European Year. Allow me to begin with a brief introduction of CONCORD. Our network brings together close to 2.400 development NGOs from across all 28 member states of the EU, from Dublin to Nicosia and from Lisbon to Talinn. They are in turn supported by millions of citizens, making financial or material contributions, doing voluntary work, being advocates and sometimes actively working in projects in the field shoulder to shoulder with

local communities and partners, digging water wells, building and running schools and health care centres, treating Ebola patients, re-foresting or irrigating dry lands and all those other critical interventions to address the most critical needs. Their expertise and field based experiences consistently feed into the CONCORD working structures and into fundamental and evidence-based contributions we make to EU and national development cooperation policies, projects and programs. Over more than a decade, EU institutions have come to recognise CONCORD and its membership as a credible and reliable partner and a legitimate voice in European civil society.

Thanks to that profile, CONCORD has also been asked by the EU to convene and lead a broad alliance of civil society organisations from across Europe and from across different sectors, specifically for this European Year 2015 for Development.

That alliance extends well beyond the membership of CONCORD. It will enable us to reach out to even larger and more diverse audiences of EU citizens. We will be able to

tap into the highly diverse and rich expertise of these different sectors of civil society. This will enrich the public debate, and it will allow forging new cross-sector civil society partnerships, leading to greater synergies that will benefit our work well beyond the year 2015.

For many citizens in the EU, “development” is synonymous to charitable donations of money and goods given by richer countries to poorer countries. Some will believe that we can ill afford this kind of charity in a time when European societies themselves are struggling with the effects of a long and difficult economic and financial crisis.

Not enough citizens of the EU understand that “sustainable development” stands for a universal and transformative global agenda that promotes social justice at home and abroad and that will eradicate dehumanising poverty across the world, without compromising the future of the planet we live on.

In the European Year 2015 for Development, we wish to engage and mobilise citizens as critical thinkers and as active participants in moving towards the vision expressed in the motto of the year: Our world, Our dignity, Our future.

The objectives for the European Year are ambitious and to succeed, we will first and foremost need to communicate with citizens, using language and stories that all of them can somehow relate to. Because we are working out there every day in the front line of where it is all happening, we have thousands of these stories to share. Simple stories about normal everyday people around the world, told to normal everyday people in Europe. Stories that will engage people’s hearts as well as their minds.

Not everyone may be equally thrilled to hear such stories. We will probably need to engage in some difficult and uncomfortable conver-

sations with fellow citizens of the EU, who have reasons to reject the notion of investing scarce resources in reducing poverty in faraway countries at a time of such great suffering and hardship at home. Difficult as these conversations may be, they are essential to bring about better understanding of what drives each of us and to begin building bridges between opposing mind-sets. That will be a valuable reward for stepping outside our comfort zone. This year, CONCORD wishes to launch a new narrative that should not just be about “what Europe gives”, but should include an honest and self-critical examination of “how we live”. Here again, we may need to step outside our comfort zone and critically examine how our lifestyles, our consumer decisions, but also the trade, agricultural and economic policies that we adopt in Europe and in member states impact on the lives, prospects and living conditions of other global citizens with whom we share this one sole planet. The timing for this European Year could not have been better. Three major global processes are converging in the year 2015 and will shape the global development agenda for the next decades. The EU was absolutely right in designating that crucial year 2015 also as European Year for Development.

So how does one measure the success of such a European Year? Many of us have different expectations about the outcomes. For CONCORD, for instance, the success of the Year will be measured by how we will have managed to build lasting relationships and alliances with our colleagues across civil society. The European Commission will probably wish to see the indicators and trends in the recent Eurobarometer survey improve as a result of the European Year.

For me personally, an indicator of a successful year would be the ex-

quite successful social accountability methodologies and approaches. These methodologies and approaches equip communities to engage in constructive dialogue with government to hold it accountable for the services that communities, families and children use on a daily basis, like healthcare and education services, and ultimately to take hold of their own future in a sustainable way.

By using a simple set of participatory tools, communities monitor local public facilities and compare reality against government commitments. The methodology lies at the intersection of data collection, awareness raising and community-led advocacy.

Social accountability approaches often combine activities that can be divided into three phases:

- enabling citizen engagement (civic education about concrete rights and entitlements)
- engagement through community gathering (a scorecard, social audit and interface meeting)
- improving services and influencing policy (implementation of an action plan to improve services)

These approaches help to improve relationships between people and their government to sustain development progress over the long term and to foster constructive, evidence based dialogue among citizens, government and service providers that strengthens relationships and renews trust.

Through social accountability approaches:

- Communities learn about basic human rights and how these rights are articulated under local law;
- Communities work collaboratively with government and service providers to compare reality against government commitments using an adapted social audit tool;

- Communities rate their government's performance against subjective criteria that they themselves generate, using an adaptation of the 'community scorecard';
- Communities convene town-hall style 'interface meetings' that foster constructive, evidence-based dialogue about concrete ways to improve services. Citizens, service providers and local government work with other stakeholders to influence decision makers to improve services, using a simple set of advocacy tools.

A post-Millennium Development Goals world will greatly benefit from robust mechanisms for social accountability that equip citizens themselves to drive effective, sustainable development.

As the world's biggest aid donor, the European Union (EU) and its Member States have an influential role to play in shaping the next development framework. But we need political champions willing to stand up for those children furthest from the kind of healthcare and education they deserve. It is now time for the EU to enable the systematic and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders in holding their governments accountable, especially the most vulnerable children and communities, whose voices are rarely heard. The European Commission Communication "Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change" recognises that good governance is one of the two main priority areas of EU development policy, along with inclusive and sustainable growth. **Social accountability is an essential element of good governance, and all EU policies and programmes should reflect this.**

The EU has a strategic policy framework for engaging with communities through civil society

tent to which we have succeeded in busting some very persistent myths around the concept of 'development cooperation', like the myths that "development aid is not working; it is money wasted" or worse still that "our aid is only helping to make corrupt leaders in poor countries richer"? And then there is the most difficult myth to bust of all: "We have a crisis and increasing poverty here at home in Europe, so therefore we cannot afford to fight poverty elsewhere." It is hard to imagine an EU member state where that last myth may be harder to bust than right here in Greece, where society faces incredibly difficult challenges. On top of all the economic and financial challenges that the Greek society and government face, you also happen to be one of the 'border states' of the EU that by their geographical location have to deal

with large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers desperate to escape the violence, misery and poverty in their home countries and desperately seeking safety and a more humane future in Europe.

I therefore want to conclude with a personal appeal to the citizens of this beautiful country, the cradle of European civilisation, the birthplace of European democracy and the country that was home to some of the greatest philosophers that the world has ever known.

Citizens of Greece, please make a personal effort to collect and spread your own stories during this European Year for Development. You could do this by reaching out personally to just one of those countless refugees or asylum seekers migrating to Europe through Greece. Ask him to tell you his story: Where did he come from, why did he leave,



what has he left behind, how hard was it to get here, what are his hopes and dreams for tomorrow, for next week, for next year, for 5 years from now, and what does he expect Europe to offer to help realise those hopes and dreams?

Doing this, you will learn a lot. You will gain new insights and perhaps even discover reasons to re-evaluate the way you look at your own situation. You will at the least have a gre-

at story to share with your friends and families, who can in turn share it with others.

But you will also have made that simplest of human connections, a conversation between two individual people from different parts of the same planet. And finally, for one brief moment you will have broken the isolation that most asylum seekers and refugees face in their host societies.

All it requires is a bit of time and once again the courage to step outside your own personal comfort zone. I wish all of you in Greece a won-

derful, exciting and inspiring European Year for Development. Thank you for your attention.

organisations, in the interest of the most vulnerable children and families. And it has also committed to enhancing accountability approaches.

Now is the time for the EU to position itself as a leading voice in promoting inclusive governance through support for social accountability approaches. It can demonstrate leadership by further encouraging EU Delegations to work with governments of partner countries to develop social accountability guidance and frameworks with existing government planning, monitoring and review processes, and ultimately scale up funding for social accountability.

Concretely, civil society organisations promoting social accountability call on the European Union to:

- Allocate and track significant resources that scale and measure the impact of social accountability approaches, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.
- Integrate and strengthen social accountability approaches across EU programming aimed at crisis prevention and recovery, democratic governance and addressing the underlying causes of chronic poverty.
- Champion the inclusion of robust mechanisms for social accountability in the post-2015 development agenda.

Ensure that citizens are involved in the planning and review of local services and monitoring of related national and global development targets.