

Activist guide to targeting MEP candidates

EU elections 2009

Anti-poverty groups need to ensure that our voice will be heard loudly and clearly by candidates during the election period. We can do this by ensuring that candidates are contacted by their constituents with questions related to international development and climate change.

This will send a strong message to candidates that international development and climate change issues are voters' minds when choosing who to vote for, and that they are issues that they will need to take into consideration once they are elected as their constituents will keep an eye on how they act on these issue during their five year mandate period. For candidates with no previous interest in these issues, it could also be a way of putting our issues on their radars and starting a dialogue with them.

Thus, it is important that activists passionate about international development, global justice and climate change issues show their regional MEP candidates that these issues matter to them by contacting them and letting them know that this is the case. There are various ways of doing this:

1. Writing the candidate a letter/postcard
2. Writing the candidate an email
3. Giving the candidate or his/her office a call
4. Setting up a meeting with the candidate

The form of communication chosen will depend in large part on what the activist feels most comfortable doing, but generally a meeting in person or a phone call will be the most effective way of influencing the MEP candidate as it is a more personal way of communicating and will set you apart from other interest groups who may send mass mailings or emails to all candidates without any personal contact with them.

A handwritten letter is also more personal or direct than an email and sends a stronger message that you are a real person, a constituent with real concerns that you want to know what the candidate intends to do about.

If you do contact a candidate, try to decide before you speak to him/her what you want to talk about and what the concrete commitments you want from the candidate are. Listed below is a list of potential questions you may want to ask the candidates depending on your particular interests, but if you are more interested in an issue not listed below, feel free to ask about that. The important thing is that the candidate sees that you are passionate and

informed about the issue and that his/her answer will affect how you vote in the EU elections.

If you have had an initial contact with a candidate, it is always useful to follow up with the candidate, both before and after the elections. If you write a letter and get a letter back promising that the candidate will do x, y, z, then it is good to write a letter back asking how he/she intends to do that, and if the other candidates from the same party will do the same. If the candidate is elected, follow up a few months after the election asking what the candidate has done to achieve the things he/she promised you before the elections.

In your contacts with candidates, whether in writing or in person, make sure you always seem polite and serious, without losing your passion.

Please send relevant responses of your candidates, to Europe@bond.org.uk

Keep a copy of the successful candidate's statements, made before the election, so that you can hold them to account in the future.

Questions you could ask your MEP candidates

On climate change

- If you are elected as an MEP, what will you do to ensure that EU member states domestically reduce emissions by at least 30% by 2020 and by least 80% by 2050 (both compared to 1990 levels)?
- What will you do to ensure that the EU will push for effective and immediate action on climate change at the global climate change summit in Copenhagen in December 2009?
- Will you work to ensure that the EU assists and helps pay for developing countries to reduce their emissions, develop cleanly and adapt to climate change?

On trade

- Will you work to scrap unfair trade deals like Economic Partnership Agreements, in their current form, in the European Parliament?
- How will you ensure that the European Commission changes its aggressive trade liberalisation agenda?
- How will you ensure that trade relations with countries in the global south are mutually beneficial and will help eradicate poverty in the poorest countries in the world?

On Food Security

- Will you work to ensure the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is changed so that it doesn't give EU countries an unfair advantage compared to countries in the Global South?
- What will you do concretely to ensure that food poverty is tackled, both within the EU and in the global south?

On gender equality

- Do you think that EU aid should support specific actions on women's rights and gender equality?
- Do you think that the EU should pay more attention to the rights of women, both in the EU and globally?

On labour rights

- What will you do to promote labour rights, both in the EU and in the developing world if you are elected?

On debt cancellation

- Will you work to ensure that the EU takes action to ensure its members cancels unfair debt from countries in the Global South?
- Will you work to ensure that debt cancellation isn't counted by EU governments as overseas aid if you are elected?

On Aid commitments

- How will you ensure that the EU reaches the agreed target of 0.7% Gross National Income for overseas development aid by 2015 or sooner (without including debt relief or other non-aid items)?
- Do you think that allocating 50% of overseas development aid should be earmarked for sub-Saharan Africa?
- How will you ensure that the EU will put pressure on other governments in the industrialised world to increase the quantity and quality of their overseas development aid?

On Democratic Accountability

- How will you ensure that the EU is more accountable to its citizens on development issues, as well as other issues?

On Corporate Accountability

- How will you work to increase legal requirements on EU-based companies operating in developing countries, such as mandatory reporting, directors' duties to consider stakeholders and the environment, and the chance of redress for people and communities harmed, if justice fails them in the country in which an abuse took place?