



European Parliament elections 2009

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The EU should put in place coherent, social, economic and security policies that promote the right to sustainable development and responsible citizenship both for citizens of the EU and the rest of the world

The EU provides most of the development aid in the world, which gives it a crucial leadership role in the fight against global poverty and for a strong, informed and actively engaged civil society and it has already identified poverty eradication as an objective for its development cooperation. The EU has clearly committed itself not only to further increasing the volume of aid, but also to increasing the quality of its aid. But so far, it has not honoured this commitment



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European Parliament elections 2009
International development manifesto



INTRODUCTION / POLITICAL OVERVIEW

The current financial and economic crises look set to cause great hardship for people in the UK and around the world. The poorest and most vulnerable, already suffering from steep rises in food and commodity prices, will be hardest hit. The current economic system has created great inequalities of wealth and power which are not only morally unjust, but also economically and environmentally inefficient and unsustainable.

With food prices having risen by 83 per cent since 2005, the global food crisis continues to worsen, posing new challenges for people and governments around the world. This has created a global emergency which risks undermining any progress made up to now towards achieving poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). At the same time, climate change, the depletion of marine resources and the reduction in biodiversity are imperilling the gains of decades of effort put into human development and threaten the livelihoods of millions of people.

In June 2009, residents of the 27 European Union (EU) member states will elect their representatives to the European Parliament for the 2009-2014 term. UK civil society is using this opportunity to call upon European institutions to work together with European civil society towards a more sustainable model of development.

The elected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) will need to guide the European Council and the European Commission through many important decision-making processes.

A series of international agreements, in particular relating to climate change, are likely to be negotiated during the next parliamentary term. The outcome of these negotiations must not be at the expense of development and aid policies or human rights. Instead, the EU should establish political and economic partnerships to promote sustainable development based on fair access to resources, distribution of wealth and a mutual commitment to human rights, gender equality and social and economic justice.

At the same time, EU member states will be discussing solutions to the economic crisis and possible reforms of the institutions that govern the world economy. It is key that all governments and civil society are able to participate in such discussions with the objective of creating a system that reduces inequality, creates decent jobs, protects vulnerable people, ensures a healthy, sustainable environment, and works to eradicate poverty.

In this manifesto, UK civil society organisations identify and set out three essential EU objectives: **sustainable development, more and better development aid** and **democratic accountability**. We urge MEPs to act on them.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The main objective of the current EU policy on Europe in the world is to make Europe a strong and competitive actor in the global economy. *Meeting Europe's growth and jobs challenge is the key to unlocking the resources needed to meet our wider economic, social and environmental ambitions.*

Although maintenance of the well-being of European citizens is a fundamental objective of the EU, the underlying policies generate growing income disparities amongst EU residents and have not sufficiently and directly contributed to poverty eradication globally. In addition, the fact that the implementation of these policies exacerbates the situation of millions of people outside the EU is very often ignored. And yet the EU has a responsibility to all the citizens of the world not to harm but to honour their right to development.

Even though the EU has in principle acknowledged its commitment to eradicating poverty, this commitment is undermined by, for instance, its continuing reluctance to commit to the necessary levels of cuts in emissions which will enable a fair and sustainable agreement at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen and its aggressive trade policies towards developing countries.

The EU should design economic and other policies that aim at reducing inequality and poverty, and do not reinforce them. Sustainable development cannot be achieved when the rights of large parts of the global population to social development are being denied. We therefore call on MEPs to ensure that EU policies are coherent with development objectives and that the EU becomes a leading player in the promotion of human rights and sustainable development.

The EU should design economic and other policies that aim to reduce inequality and poverty

WE URGE MEPS TO ENSURE THAT:

- » The EU recognises its responsibility towards vulnerable communities around the world that have contributed least to the problem but are first and worst confronted with the impact of climate change. The EU should play a leading role internationally by substantially reducing greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to adaptation efforts with additional resources and ensuring equal access to natural resources.
- » The EU respects the right of developing countries to determine their own development paths, including economic, trade, social and environmental policies.
- » The EU adopts sustainable food security, nutrition and agricultural policies that will realise the Right to Food and food sovereignty in all regions of the world, in the context of the converging energy and financial crises and climate change.
- » The EU puts in place coherent, social, economic and security policies that promote the right to sustainable development and responsible citizenship both for citizens of the EU and for the rest of the world.
- » The EU prioritises its actions in areas that are key to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such as gender equality, access for all to basic social services, such as health, education and social protection, especially for the most vulnerable. The EU needs to contribute to the realisation of social rights to reduce inequality and promote sustainable development if the MDGs are to be achieved.
- » The EU ensures a strong follow up from the 2008 Doha Conference on Financing for Development and implementation of the Monterrey Consensus by fighting tax evasion and through multilateral and bilateral debt cancellation for all poor countries that need it, in order to stop the huge net capital flow from South to North and ensure that enough development resources are mobilised to achieve the MDGs.

MORE AND BETTER DEVELOPMENT AID

The EU provides most of the development aid in the world, which gives it a crucial leadership role in the fight against global poverty and for a strong, informed and actively engaged civil society; it has already identified poverty eradication as an objective for its development cooperation. The EU has clearly committed itself not only to further increasing the volume of aid, but also to increasing the quality of its aid. But so far, it has not honoured this commitment.

WE URGE MEPS TO ENSURE THAT:

- » The EU reaches the agreed target of 0.7% Gross National Income for Official Development Assistance by 2015 or sooner.
- » The EU deepens its commitment to democratic ownership, accountability and transparency, which are at the heart of aid effectiveness, and ensures that residents' voices and concerns are made central to national, regional and local development plans and processes.
- » The EU phases out all economic policy conditionality attached to aid, and agrees on more mutually accountable contractual agreements with partner countries, based on locally defined criteria.
- » The EU respects the centrality of human rights, gender equality, child rights, social justice and environmental sustainability, which are absent from the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

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DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY

The EU institutional and financial framework should promote democratic accountability and transparency and strengthen the participation of civil society organisations and citizens in the formulation and implementation of policy.

Democracy can only work in societies where every citizen can participate fully in decision-making. The EU needs to be more inclusive so that EU residents and those in countries outside the EU affected by EU policies can participate to a greater degree in European and domestic processes.

Institutional reforms and the EU budget have the potential to seriously influence the way European development cooperation can attain its objective of poverty eradication. It is important that the European Parliament ensures that the voices of citizens are taken into account.

WE URGE MEPS TO ENSURE THAT:

- » The EU focuses on the demand for democratic accountability by strengthening civil society to fully participate in the building of democratic governance.
- » The specific place and objectives of development cooperation as an independent policy within the EU are respected. This means a strong voice for development policy within the EU's external relations, with a dedicated administrative structure responsible for EU development policy and a dedicated Commissioner for Development who is in a position to promote the interests of EU development policy within the College of Commissioners and towards the Council.
- » The EU budget review, which the European Commission will carry out in 2009, ensures that the budget matches the EU's aims for sustainable development, engages with global issues such as poverty, climate change and conflict prevention and provides the means to translate European values and principles into effective action.