

European Conference on Public Awareness and Development Education for North-South Solidarity: Recommendations

Brussels, 18-20 May 2005

The conference was organised by the [Directorate-General of Belgian Development Co-operation \(DGDC\)](#) and the European Commission (DG Development, ECHO and [EuropeAid](#)) in close cooperation with the [North-South Centre of the Council of Europe](#), the [OECD Development Centre](#) and [CONCORD](#).

A. As part of an ongoing debate ^[1], participants from national, European and international administrations, non-governmental organisations and other actors of civil society, together with members of different media, took part in a conference on public awareness and development education for North-South solidarity in Brussels on 19/20 May 2005.

B. The participants, meeting in both plenary and specific working group sessions, have drawn up the following recommendations. Further specific proposals and suggestions from different participants are outlined in the conference papers.

1. The renewed commitment by the European Union and the member states to increase ODA levels adequately for 2010 and the achievement by 2015 of the level of 0.7% by most, as advanced by the United Nations in 1970, should be welcomed and propagated as widely as possible throughout the Union. Effective development education and awareness raising are essential conditions to mobilise support to reach these targets.
2. Noting that the assistance provided is a question of finance, effectiveness and quality, as well as sustainable development, the Millennium Development Goals should be included as a major facet of public awareness and development education activities throughout the Union.
3. Comprehensive and coherent development education and awareness raising strategies should be designed or reviewed at both national and European levels. The relevant authorities should ensure that these strategies are fully integrated into their development and education policies. This will require close cooperation with NGOs and other relevant civil society organisations.
4. Awareness-raising and development education should be integrated into the curricula of the formal and informal educational systems throughout the current and future members of the Union. Such programmes, aimed at all levels and ages of society, are necessary to foster the greatest possible North-South solidarity.
5. National and European authorities should ensure there is adequate funding for development education and awareness-raising in their planning. It is proposed that the European Commission and Member states move towards or beyond a

figure of 3% of ODA, as proposed in a UNDP Report. This increase in funding implies the necessary quality, efficiency and effectiveness of development education and awareness raising activities.

6. As part of the overall need to raise both quality and efficiency, best practices should be actively encouraged and supported, particularly between Member states but also internationally. Ongoing coordination and cooperation, learning from past experiences at the widest possible level, are therefore essential to ensure coherence and maximise effectiveness.
7. It should be stressed that both awareness-raising and development education are distinct from publicity and fundraising. Equally development education and awareness raising activities should be rooted in the realities of Northern societies and take into account the interdependency between North and South as well as the need for policy coherence in the North.
8. Assistance towards achieving effective development education and awareness raising in new Member States should be provided. In order to enable new and future Member States to access EU funding for development education and awareness raising, current thresholds on financial capacity requirements and eligibility criteria should be adapted in their favour.
9. Recognising that international development cooperation issues were not properly discussed in the course of the last accession rounds, further rounds should address it in a much more proactive way. In the case of the new Member States and acceding countries, ad hoc development education and awareness-raising activities should partly make up for the lost opportunities.
10. The contribution of national and local authorities, parliamentarians, NGOs and other civil society actors in North-South cooperation should be strengthened with a view to boosting capacity, awareness and commitment in the current and future Union, as well as outside.
11. Emphasis should be given to how, following natural or man-made catastrophes, there is a process of linking relief to provide initial stability, rehabilitation and development which should be on a sustainable and environmentally friendly basis.
12. A comprehensive press strategy for North-South solidarity should cover the broad range of existing media but focus on channels with the widest coverage where resources are limited. Development and humanitarian actors should make more efforts to provide useful, clear and appealing material and opportunities to journalists to enable them to offer independent and accurate information on North-South issues. The press has a fundamental role in preventing crises becoming forgotten both by governments and European civil society and should be recognised as a development actor.
13. Images and articles are best if they respect the dignity, beliefs and traditions of the peoples of the "South" in their presentation.
14. Monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian and development programmes must therefore cover not only the effect in the field but also the evolution of public perception in the North and the South of the progress accomplished. Building on existing experiences, increased efforts have to be made to improve monitoring and evaluation of development education and awareness raising activities in order to systematically enhance their overall relevance, efficiency and

effectiveness.

15. It is proposed that the recommendations of this Conference, particularly those pertaining to the role and place of development education and awareness raising, be integrated into the new EU Development Policy Statement before its adoption and coherently translated in other relevant policy processes and instruments.
16. A group of representative stakeholders be established, following this conference, in order to ensure the follow-up of the outcomes of this Conference throughout the current and future Union. This representative group should also be aware of the need for accountability - in the widest sense – and appropriate evaluation of what is a long term process of improving North-South solidarity. It would then organise further meetings and discussions as appropriate. In this context, it particularly welcomes the offer of the Chairman of the Development Committee of the European Parliament to draw up a report on the matter.

C. While these recommendations are addressed above all to the representatives of the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Commission, as well as the national authorities at the conference, they are also directed to all members of society, individuals and organisations who are able to increase awareness of and strengthen North-South solidarity in all its aspects.

D. The participants note with pleasure that certain authorities are already actively pursuing these goals. The recent communication of the Commission to the Council and the organisation of this conference by the European Commission and the Belgian authorities are recent positive examples.

[¹] See in particular Annex 1

annex 1

Political commitments to development education and awareness-raising on North-South solidarity in the EU-25

In November 2001, the EU Ministers in charge of Development Co-operation adopted a Council Resolution "on development education and raising European public awareness of development cooperation".

This Resolution states that "given the global interdependence of our society, the raising of awareness by development education [...] contributes to strengthening the feeling of international solidarity, and also helps to create an environment which fosters the establishment of an intercultural society in Europe. Heightening awareness also contributes towards the changing of lifestyles in favor of a model of sustainable development for all. Lastly, raising awareness increases citizens' support for further efforts in the public funding of development cooperation."

The Resolution further "encourages the initiatives of the NGOs and European and

national institutions aimed at raising awareness amongst the population of the candidate countries for accession to the EU of the importance of supporting international solidarity in the fight against world poverty, as well as promoting development education in general". "[It] calls on the Commission to reinforce its information and communication activities in order better to heighten the awareness of the public in the Member States, and in the Candidate Countries for accession, of European development cooperation policy."

Almost five years later, it is important to measure to what extent the recommendations made by this Resolution have been followed by concrete actions by the European Commission (EC) and the Member States (MS).

In November 2002, the Europe-wide Global Education Congress, held in Maastricht, has led representatives from governments, parliaments, local authorities and civil society organisations of Member States of the Council of Europe to commit themselves to increase support to Global Education, through the so-called "Maastricht Declaration". Measures agreed upon include, inter alia, the development (or strengthening) of national action plans for global education and increased funding, as well as the integration of global education into education systems at all levels.

In October 2003, the "Palermo process" -initiated by the revision of the NGOs co-financing budget line of the EC- has stressed the need for an "integrated approach to development", combining direct action in the South (development cooperation) with influencing attitudes and policies in the North (development education).

Since May 2004, the Community has opened its budget line 21-02-03 (Co-financing with NGOs) for public awareness actions in Europe about development problems in the developing countries to the NMS.

More recently, a Eurobarometer study, released in February 2005, reveals that in the EU-25 "public awareness of Commission activities in [the] field [of development cooperation] as well as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is limited". Four years after the adoption by the UN -including, thus, all EU-25 MS- of those MDGs aiming at halving extreme poverty by 2015, 88% EU citizens have never heard of them. Therefore, the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, has undertaken to "increase EU public awareness of our activities as well as of our Millennium Development Goals". He acknowledges that "European taxpayers have the right to know how their money is being spent, how we help the developing countries, how we are fighting poverty and infectious diseases and what we are doing to promote good governance, democracy and fundamental rights." He has recently initiated a tour of the capital cities, including many of the NMS, to explain his strategy, particularly in relation to the MDGs.

"Greater visibility" of the EU external action, including development and humanitarian aid, constitutes one of the major pillars of the new EC information and communication strategy. Development education and awareness-raising activities still have a long way to go to fully mobilize European public opinion on North-South issues, around the MDGs as well as around the more specific goals of EU development cooperation and

humanitarian aid policies. Are all the necessary conditions gathered for a successful outcome: political commitment; public funding? Are all concerned actors involved? Are there effective aid policies that ensure credibility when building public support? Is there adequate understanding of how to build public constituencies for North-South Solidarity? Have those tasks become even more challenging with the recent EU enlargement? To what extent are the 'older' Member States facing similar challenges?