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Press Release

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## Europe's future development strategies

The publication of the European Commission's communication on the revision of the EC Development Policy Statement on 13 July 2005 was greeted by many as an opportunity to ensure that Community development policy would be firmly rooted in the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, with the *European Consensus on Development* being scheduled for adoption next week, current drafts of the 25 page statement suggest that the MDGs will have little real prominence in many aspects of the Community's implementation of its development policy.

*"In September the EU staked a claim to playing a leading role in achieving the MDGs. In adopting common development objectives and principles for the EU this claim becomes more credible. However there is a danger that for the EC's future Development Policy, the MDGs will only provide the framework for some parts of the Community's development strategies. This could be disastrous for the credibility of the Community"* said Simon Stocker, Director of Eurostep. *"The MDGs are primarily about investing in people, which requires priority being given to supporting social sectors such as health and education. This must be clearly reflected in all parts of the new Development Policy statement."* In the current statement human development appears towards the end of a list of focal sectors of EC aid that include trade and regional integration, the environment and the sustainable management of natural resources, infrastructure and transport, water and energy, rural development, governance and democracy, and social cohesion.

*"The effectiveness of European Community development co-operation has been repeatedly questioned. The European Consensus on Development should provide the basis for changing this. But this will only be possible with the MDGs being at the heart of Community policy with priority given to social sector spending. For instance, the inclusion of the current indicative target of 35% of all EC aid being allocated to social infrastructure ought to be reflected in the statement"* observed Stocker. For the past five years the 35% target has been an integral part of the EU annual budget. It was originally proposed by the European Parliament to reflect the importance given in Community development to building social infrastructure, particularly health and education.

The eventual outcome of the current negotiations on the revised Development Policy Statement remains unclear, not least because of the ambiguous status of the document. The aim is for the statement to be a *consensus* of the Commission, Council and Parliament. *"We would hope that the final outcome fully reflects the positions that the European Parliament has taken on the EC's development. If in the end this is not the case, then the credibility of the European Consensus on Development will inevitably be questioned"* said Stocker.

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