

### Press release

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#### **The European Parliament puts Europe's Development Policy back on track**

*Eurostep*<sup>1</sup> welcomes proposals being presented to the European Parliament next week on proposed legislation covering EU co-operation with developing countries. The proposals in the form of amendments to the Commission proposals published in September 2004<sup>2</sup>, will be presented to the Parliament's Development Committee on 25 January by its rapporteur on the proposed legislation, Irish MEP Gay Mitchell. The proposed changes would establish a clearly defined enabling instrument covering the EU's aid to developing countries. *Eurostep* has welcomed the proposed amendments.

*"After a year of deadlock in negotiations to establish new legislation covering the EU's aid to developing countries, the EU is now moving closer to putting in place a legal instrument dedicated to its co-operation with developing countries"* said Simon Stocker, Director of *Eurostep*. *"The Commission's original proposals combined coverage of EU co-operation in developing countries with that towards industrial countries. This would inevitably result in confusion and ambiguity of purpose in the EU's relations with developing countries, and compromise the integrity of its development policy."*

These amendments, that still need to be adopted in the Parliament<sup>3</sup>, would make a clear separation between EU's relations with developing and industrialised countries, and ensure that co-operation with developing countries is based solely on the appropriate legal base in the Treaty. *"This separation ad clarity is essential for ensuring transparency in EU co-operation with poor countries, and in strengthening the EU's role as a responsible global player in the world,"* said Stocker.

*Eurostep* also welcome's the rapporteur's proposals to reaffirm Parliament's role in determining regional and thematic priorities of EC aid through the establishment of a set of legal regulations focusing on regional and thematic programmes. *"We fully support these proposals."* said Stocker *"It is vital for Parliament to have a real role in setting priorities, an aspect missing from the Commission's original proposals. Preserving Parliament's powers over setting development policy priorities will ensure greater levels of accountability, in line with the expectations from its citizens, and maintain a focus on the role of the EU in achieving the Millennium Development Goals"* said Stocker.

*Eurostep* has published a Briefing paper on the amendments being presented to Parliament next week<sup>4</sup>.

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**Explanatory Notes:**

*Eurostep is a member of CONCORD*

1. *Eurostep* is a network of autonomous European non-governmental development organisations working towards peace, justice and equality in a world free of poverty. Its membership, rooted in their own societies, works together to influence Europe's role in the world, particularly in pursuing the eradication of injustice and poverty. It advocates changes in Europe's policies and practice based on the perspectives drawn from direct experiences of an active involvement of its members and their partners in development in over 100 countries across the world. The members of Eurostep include: 11.11.11 (Belgium), ACSUR Las Segovias (Spain), ActionAid Ireland, Concern Worldwide, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe (Germany), Helinas (Greece), Hivos (Netherlands), Kepa (Finland), Manitesse (Italy), Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke (Denmark), Oikos (Portugal), Oxfam International (Netherlands), People in Need (Czech Republic), SNV (Netherlands), Swiss Coalition (Switzerland), terres des hommes Germany.
2. The European Commission presented, in September 2004, its proposals on the creation of six external relations instruments for the EU (Category 4 of the budget) in the context of the Financial Perspectives: 3 geographical instruments (Pre-accession; European Neighbourhood and Partnership; Development Cooperation and Economic Cooperation) and 3 thematic instruments (Stability; Humanitarian Aid; Macro-Financial Assistance). The European Parliament's development committee originally rejected the proposal on the Development Cooperation and Economic Cooperation Instrument on the basis that it brings developing and non-developing countries in an unnatural alliance and that the Commission proposal would have diminished the power of the European Parliament on development policy. After more than year of negotiations between the three institutions, the European Parliament's rapporteur, Gay Mitchell MEP, decided to put the issue back on the agenda of the development committee with a new set of amendments that would change substantially the nature of the original Commission proposal if they were adopted.
3. These amendments should be discussed by the development committee on 25 January 2004 before a vote in committee due to take place in February. The report will then be discussed in the plenary session of the European Parliament and is likely to be finally adopted in Parliament's first reading on April 2006. The issue will then be discussed in the Council as part of the regular co-decision procedure.