

## Monitoring Cotonou

### **Monitoring EU Co-operation within the Cotonou Agreement: Background to the Eurostep initiative.**

The initiative was established as part of the 2002 programme of Eurostep. It was developed out of previous activities in which Eurostep was involved, particularly the Reality of Aid, the work around the World Summit for Social Development, Social Watch, and the EU's co-operation with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries through the Lomé Convention.

#### **Background to the Cotonou Agreement**

The Cotonou Agreement is the principal framework for co-operation between the European Union and 77 countries in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group. Signed in July 2000, the Cotonou Agreement succeeded the successive Lomé Conventions that originated in 1975. The framework agreement covers many aspects of co-operation, including the EC's aid to ACP countries, and the trade arrangements between the EU and those countries.

The central objective of the co-operation is to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty. The Agreement also recognises non-state actors as legitimate partners in the co-operation, an innovation that has been widely proclaimed as an important departure from the past.

Unlike its predecessors, the Cotonou Agreement covers a twenty year period from 1 March 2000, with mechanisms for reviewing and amending the agreement if, and when, it is considered necessary. The financial aid provided under the Agreement is defined through Financial Protocols, each covering five-year periods. The first Financial Protocol for this Agreement provides a total of € 25 billion for use over the period 2000 to 2007 (of which only € 13.5 billion will be new funding, with the remaining being drawn from unused resources from previous agreements).

For the trade aspects of the co-operation a separate process will be established in which negotiations will take place to define these further. Preparations for these negotiations are already being undertaken. Formally they are scheduled to begin in September 2002. The aim is for these negotiations to result in Economic Partner Agreements between the EU and ACP regions coming into effect from 1 January 2008.

While the Cotonou Agreement provides a framework for co-operation between the EU and ACP countries, individual bilateral agreements between the EC and each ACP countries are also established within this framework. It is through these that most of the financial resources of the Agreement are used. The process for defining these individual programming agreements are currently being defined and negotiated between the individual countries and the European Commission. The initial part of this process has been to produce Country Strategy Papers. These are to be followed by National Indicative Programmes defining the principal sectors for which the EC's aid will be directed.

#### **Eurostep's work on EU-ACP co-operation**

For Eurostep and its members the relationship between the EU and the ACP group of countries is central to the EU's co-operation policies and practices, not least because it covers Europe's relationship with Africa south of the Sahara, a priority region for many of member organisations. This was a key rationale for being active around the preparatory process that led to the Cotonou Agreement, and to follow this through on the implementation of the new Agreement itself. Because of the nature of the agreement this covers a number of areas and sectors in which member organisations are working. While many of these areas and sectors can be addressed in Eurostep's approach the participation of non-state actors provides a good departure point. This can be based on past work of Eurostep and its members to develop a dialogue with ACP civil society actors. In specific this has included:

- A seminar with ACP civil society participants in Geneva, June 2000 within the Geneva 2000 Forum.

- An electronic conference on strategies for ACP civil society participation in the Cotonou Agreement (October 2000 to June 2001), moderated jointly with participants from European NGOs and ACP civil society partners.
- A seminar with ACP civil society participants in Brussels during the LDC III NGO Forum.
- Participation as part of the planning task Force for a series of meetings in July 2001 focusing on ACP civil society participation in the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement.

Some preliminary planning with ACP civil society actors on producing reports on the experience of civil society involvement in the drawing up of country strategy papers within certain ACP countries. This initiative became a central part of Eurostep's programme in 2002. It seeks to draw on the different areas that are currently ongoing and help to bring them into a stronger relationship with each other. The core component of this approach is:

- To systematically produce assessments of the implementation of the EU's co-operation programme and its contribution towards the achievement of the international commitments. This could include periodic assessments of the overall approach of the EU, and could incorporate the continuation of work towards the EU's development policy and its relationship with trade, foreign and other policies.
- To give increased emphasis to implementation of co-operation programmes within developing countries. This would be need to done in co-operation with civil society actors from those countries, as well as using the capacities of member organisations within those countries. They could also target specific sectors.

While the EC's co-operation would remain the principal focus, the role and relationship of the member states programmes could also be addressed where these are relevant. This would be particularly important in relation to the concepts of co-ordination, consistency and complementarity. Assessments of individual member states attitudes towards EU policy and practice could be produced in this context. This could also include commentaries on the relationship between the activities of bilateral programmes and the EU programmes in general, either at a global level or in relation to specific countries.

Clear advocacy messages should be identified as central elements of the assessments being undertaken. These messages should be agreed as part of an ongoing strategy within Eurostep and with the relevant actors from civil society in developing countries towards the EU's co-operation programmes. In particular:

- The European Union and its co-operation with developing countries should be the central focus. It could be envisaged that the principal initial focus could be towards the EU's implementation of the Cotonou Agreement. However, it could also be envisaged that some elements of the monitoring process would also emerge through the follow up of the South Asia partner consultation and the LDC III Conference. The initiative has been developed from the basis of the current programme.
- The focus should be directed towards ensuring that EU policies were based on the over-riding objective to eradicate poverty, and the specific commitments that have been made in the 1990s UN conferences that aim to contribute to this objective;
- At the level of the EU, the 'Vision paper' provides the starting point, with its focus on the EU's development policy, the re-organisation of the Commission, and the need to re-enforce the prominence of the development objectives within other external policies;
- The focus of the trade programme provides a particular orientation around the developmental nature of global trade rules and the EU's trade agreements;
- Examples of coherence, currently on fisheries agreements, could be integrated as assessments on the impact of the EU's own internal interests on its co-operation with other countries;
- The move towards strengthening the role of civil society in co-operation programmes, and the particular role that the Eurostep programme has been playing around the Cotonou Agreement;
- The partner consultations and the proposals for taking these further in future. In recognising that more emphasis needs to be given to implementation of the EU's co-operation agreements, initial the main orientation has been given to the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement. The work undertaken over a number of years, particularly with ACP civil society actors, provided the basis for working towards producing a selected number of country specific assessments. In the first instance these have been oriented

towards an initial assessment of the actual involvement of civil society actors in the preparation of Country Strategy Papers. This resulted in a series of reports produced by national civil society actors. These assessments are being used to identify "acceptable standards for civil society involvement".

- These have been followed by a process that seeks to identify possible countries where stronger collaboration could be built involving civil society actors in that country, member organisations of Eurostep, and the Eurostep secretariat that provides a focal point in Brussels. There is also a focus within the initiative on the trade negotiations between the ACP and EU that will result in new trade arrangements for ACP countries by 2008.
- The results of the initiative will be produced in different ways, all contributing to an ongoing monitoring of EU co-operation. While a specific 'European' identify will be given to these "reports", they will also be provide contributions to other related initiatives, such as Social Watch, the Reality of Aid, the follow up processes to the last LDC conference, etc. The specific use of each product would need to be determined individually, so that they not only address the specific issues on which they are focused (geographically, thematically, etc) but also identify clear advocacy objectives. This can be seen as part of the ongoing production of different papers that can be used in the overall advocacy of Eurostep, its members and partners. The periodic production of some form of overall assessment of the EU's implementation of its co-operation policies is envisaged as part of the initiative. While these will be produced individually and collectively in hard copy form, the use of the internet is envisaged as a central aspect of the communication strategy. This will be placed within the context of Euforic.

## **Monitoring EU co-operation in the Cotonou Agreement Aims and objectives of the Eurostep initiative**

### **Overall Objectives**

The overall objectives of the initiative is to ensure that EU co-operation with a specific country directly contributes to the reduction and eradication of poverty in that country, and to the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals as interim steps to achieving this objective. In order to achieve this the initiative aims to:

- promote the effective participation of civil society actors at all stages of the co-operation process;
- promote human rights, gender equality, and ecological sustainability as fundamental principals of the EU co-operation in practice;
- promote the coherence of all EU's policies and practices; encourage a consistent and complementary approach between the European Commission and EU Member States. Focus of the projectThis initiative on the implementation of the EU's co-operation is focused principally focused around three core issues:
  - The effective participation of civil society actors;
  - The programming process, with a particular emphasis on basic education within programming;
  - Regional trade agreements;
  - Civil society participation Principal aim: To secure the space and define modalities for effective civil society participation in the national (and consequently regional and global) development process, at all its different stages.

### **Specific Actions:**

- To establish strategic partnerships with civil society organisations in identified countries with whom to develop joint approaches towards the EU's co-operation with those countries;
- To promote analytical reviews on civil society participation in the preparation of the National Indicative Programmes and their subsequent implementation;
- To establish strategies for using these reviews and their recommendations to promote proposals for policy changes for increasing their effectiveness in achieving set objectives.
- To identify and establish "best practice" for civil society participation in all aspects of the Cotonou Agreement, and at all levels.

- To work with civil society organisations to promote and develop regional and global structures that can facilitate dialogue at those levels.
- Output/tools: The production of analytical reports from a civil society perspective of EU co-operation, e.g. critical reports on civil society participation in the programming process in the identified countries. Specific proposals for optimising a participatory process.

### **Regional trade agreements**

Principal objectives: to advocate for EU trade arrangements with the ACP that foster sustainable development, income equality and poverty eradication; to promote a people-centred approach to the trade negotiations and to the resulting trade arrangements; to promote a formal mechanism for involving civil society actors in the process to define trade arrangements between the ACP and EU.

#### **Specific Actions:**

- To define common positions with civil society actors in identified countries;
- To follow and influence the EU and ACP official preparations for the negotiations;
- To produce reports and proposals drawn from the national and regional perspectives;
- To develop and pursue a common strategy for influencing the negotiations.
- Output/tools: The production of analytical reports on the expected impact of the trade co-operation between the EU and specific ACP countries and regions. Also to produce a paper setting out the concerns of civil society actors related to the future trade agreement, as well as to define a benchmark for the expectations of civil society for the outcome of the negotiations.

### **Programming, with a specific focus on support for basic education.**

- Principal objective: To promote the centrality of poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals for the National Indicative Programmes of identified countries. To this end to secure EU financial and technical assistance that will contribute to credible national policies for reducing poverty and achieving the international goals. In particular to ensure a substantial contribution from the EU to achieving the international goals for providing universal access to basic quality education, and to the realisation of the commitments of World Education Forum in Dakar (2000).

#### **Specific actions:**

- To work with identified civil society organisations in analysing the Country Strategy papers;
- To develop a common strategy with civil society organisations in selected countries for monitoring the implementation of the National Indicative Programmes, identifying in particular the attention given to basic education;
- To work for an effective contribution by the EU towards achieving the international development goals, and those related to the provision of quality education in particular.
- Output/tools: Critical reports on the Country support strategies and on the National Indicative Programmes, for use within the ongoing work around Cotonou, the EU and its co-operation with developing countries.