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Workshop 2

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Which cooperation between old EU member states and new EU member states?

Conclusions presented to the European Development Days' Official Conference on Sunday, November 16, 2008 by Christine Bedoya, TRIALOG.

The cooperation between old member states (OMS) and new member states (NMS) takes place on different levels, between national platforms and between individual NGOs. This workshop looked at cooperation that exists already and discussed the principles but also the challenges and opportunities that frame this cooperation.

Objectives in development cooperation and awareness raising on development issues are similar in all EU countries but some specific challenges particularly affect NMS. Some of the difficulties NMS face are:

- The missing public awareness of and support for development issues
- The missing political and financial support from national governments
- The high proportion of people living in poverty in the own country which makes it difficult to get support for activities in international poverty eradication.

For these and other reasons, it's still justified to talk about NMS which are the EU12 from 2004 and 2007 accession, and OMS, the EU15.

Despite the difficulties, NMS have important expertise and strengths to offer to European development cooperation:

- The experience of transition in their own country:
 - the transition from authoritarian to democratic political systems in most NMS
 - the transition from planned economy to free market economy
 - and last but not least the transition from receiver of international development assistance to donor of Official Development Assistance (ODA).

- Because of NMS role as new donor, people involved in development cooperation in NMS tend to be young, dynamic and enthusiastic.
- NMS also bring in the knowledge and experience of cooperation with their neighbours to the East and South of EU borders, the so-called European Neighbourhood where all but 2 countries are developing countries which are not traditional partners for OMS development cooperation.
- NMS focus mainly on the sector of democratisation, human rights and good governance, where they have own experience.

How should the cooperation between OMS and NMS look like?

Real cooperation means mutual experience exchange, mutual respect, mutual learning. It should not be a teacher – student relationship. NMS should not be pressured to copy what OMS did but find together new ways in development.

This includes to revise in each and every country the development strategy towards coherence, transparency and efficiency.

Important is also to include the voice from the global South (developing countries) in all stages of development policy and programmes and involve them as real partners in development and not just as receiver of aid. Only by equal inclusion there is a real ‘trialogue’.

The cooperation between OMS and NMS happens on different level, between platforms and between individual NGOs/CSOs. Generally, the decision whether a project should be lead by the platform or better by an NGO is guided by the subsidiary principle. The platform gets involved if the project is in the interest of all members and does not enter in competition with them.

Some good examples of successful cooperation:

The Regional Partnership Programme: between Austria and the four neighbouring NMS Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia. This programme included activities in joint capacity building for NGOs and platforms; joint policy dialogue between platforms, NGOs and the 5 involved governments; a fund for joint NGO pilot projects in the field of development cooperation and development education/ awareness raising.

Black Sea Forum / Trust Fund: is a very interesting example because it’s such a diverse region with NMS (Romania and Bulgaria), a Candidate Country (Turkey) and development countries like Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as well as one of the so-called “new donors” Russia involved. The focus of the programme is to find joint solutions to the problems of the region.

There is a lot of successful examples of NMS – OMS cooperation in **development education/awareness raising projects** on platform level as well as on NGO level. The reach is from joint campaigns to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals to joint projects on educational material in schools or other relevant activities.

One very successful field of cooperation between NGOs from OMS and NMS is **fair trade**. In almost all NMS there are already fair trade initiatives, shops and accompanying awareness raising activities which in many cases are elaborated together with similar initiatives in OMS.

Further possibilities are seen in new sectors like

- Responsible and sustainable tourism: OMS can offer their experience in the topic; NMS can offer their expertise in countries that might be very interesting for this kind of tourism (e.g. central Asia, Caucasus,..) where OMS don't have traditional cooperation and knowledge.
- Including Diaspora organisation into joint projects of development cooperation and awareness raising in order to bring the migrants perspective in.
- And last but not least to join efforts of civil society in OMS, NMS and the global South to support efficiency of Aid, especially in monitoring budget support AND in promoting civil society organisations as crucial development actors.