

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

## COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT

Public Hearing on **NEW EU DONORS**, 30 January 2007

### Development Cooperation in the New member states from NGO perspective

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**Introduction** – brief description on the state of Slovak ODA system in the light of Government – NGO relations, main achievements of Slovak NGOs, the role of the Platform

**Bratislava ODA conference Dec 2006** – each of the NMS being members of the EU since 2004 has its own ODA system created, but there are many challenges ahead.

#### **Slovak NGO Platform**

- NGDO Platform created with 31 member organizations, recognized by MFA as partner – participation in the intergovernmental Coordination Committee on Development Aid and the Steering committees of the 2 funds responsible for ODA grant schemes
- Involvement of the Platform (NGO) representatives in all levels – policy, programming and project cycle level is crucial for the system
- Cooperation on regional and European level – Regional Partnership Programme, Concord

#### **Main problem areas**

##### **Finances for Development**

Official Declaration of Commitment of the NMS Governments is 0.17% GNI (by 2010) and 0.33% GNI (by 2015). NGOs do not believe that this commitment is being taken seriously.

Why:

- small commitments until now – even if the ODA/GNI figure is going up statistically, big portion of the development cooperation money goes as contributions to multilateral agencies or to the budget of the EU
- In case of Slovakia out of 1 739 551 000 SKK = ca. 50m € reported ODA in 2005, which represents 0,12% ODA/GNI, 30% went to debt relief to Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Albania, 40% was a contribution to the common budget of the EU which can be counted as ODA, 21% as contributions to multilateral agencies and small programs of Slovak line ministries and only about 9% was allocated to bilateral ODA through Slovak entities
- Small allocations to bilateral aid (SK is providing less than 5m EUR for a 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year). Bilateral aid is an opportunity for building and enhancing the national development cooperation constituency and capacity.
- Lack of data and transparency of ODA reporting in NMS: from Aid Watch report (2006). In many of the countries there are serious problems of coordination and transparency. Access to information on the details of development spending is limited, making it difficult for citizens and NGOs to monitor.
- Need for real steps to fulfil the commitments, Aid Watch - NGOs are asking Governments to provide genuine aid resources to meet EU targets and to publish a "road map" on reaching 0.17% GDP for ODA in 2010
- Quality of Aid – where and how the ODA money is spent. NGOs position: fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals, poverty reduction and policy coherence, targeting vulnerable groups. Real aid versus debt relief ODA.
- Lack of capacities compared to the traditional donor countries (majority of EU15) - lack of history in development cooperation, few and weak actors - a need for extensive capacity building civil society / NGDOs as implementers of bilateral ODA. Strong national NGDOs are

needed to fulfil their role in public awareness raising, which is a paramount task in NMS for at least the next 10 years.

- Conditionality of Aid – SK government tends to look for a strong national involvement in development cooperation projects which sometimes may block some initiatives and overlook eradication of poverty and the real needs of recipients in developing countries.

### **Legislation, mechanisms for ODA**

- Development cooperation systems in the NMS have been created and are being reformed as well, but they are still new and there is limited experience
- Leading role of MFAs, in some NMS the MFA is only one of the national ODA players (CZ) - more coordination would be needed, the role of Agencies, political versus expert decisions
- Trilateral cooperation – between NMS, OMS and developing countries - a possibility for building capacity and finding synergies
- Problem for NMS NGOs to access EU financing – high thresholds for co-financing, measures to be taken facilitating partnerships with experienced development actors in OMS
- Long term ODA strategy and multi-annual ODA programming is needed, overcoming annuality of ODA state budget money (PL, SK)
- Humanitarian Aid – need for transparent and rapid reaction systems, open to involvement of NGOs
- Inclusion of civil society into the dialogue on development issues and policy - should be institutionalized, access to policy making as a partner, but as well as an implementing partner

### **Public Awareness**

- Because of the lack of history of NMS being donors, raising public awareness and understanding of development cooperation issues is crucial for members of parliaments, media, educators and the wide public – major task for NGOs
- Concrete examples which strongly help to public awareness on development issues – campaigns, film festivals, exhibitions, public collections, involvement in GCAP
- Need for systematic and open approach – Development Education and Public Awareness grant schemes to be included in the national ODA systems
- Participation in EU programmes like ED 21-02-03
- Need for reflections of public opinion in foreign policy – the wider public understands better development cooperation in terms of eradication of extreme poverty and fulfilling MDGs as foreign policy objectives of the governments.
- NGOs are closer to public and are more trustworthy than the political leaders, especially through positive examples and good practice from their projects in developing countries

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Slovak NGDO Platform is supported by TRIALOG (<http://www.trialog.or.at>), a project aimed at raising awareness of development policies in the enlarged EU and integrating development NGOs in the new member states into the EU NGDO-community by strengthening "trialogue" and partnerships with the global South

Slovak NGDO Platform is a member of CONCORD (<http://www.concordeurope.org>), the European confederation of relief and development NGOs. Its 22 national associations and 19 international networks represent over 1.800 NGOs, which are in turn supported by millions of people across Europe. CONCORD coordinates analysis and debate, organizes political action campaigns, and regularly engages in dialogue with the European Institutions and civil society organizations.