

Latvian Presidency Priorities for Development Cooperation

In the first half of 2015 Latvia will for the first time hold the presidency of the Council of the European Union (from now on referred to as the 'presidency'). Latvia took over the leadership of the Council – the EU institution that represents the executive governments of all 28 member states of the EU – from Italy and will pass it on to Luxembourg at the end of June.

Holding the presidency means being at the very centre of EU policy making by setting the Council's agenda for six months. The presiding country is responsible for ensuring the continuity of the work of the Council and identifying topics that are especially urgent to be tackled. In order to ensure the smooth functioning of the presidency, hundreds of civil servants and civil society organisation (CSO) staff are trained in policy making on European level to be able to engage in policy debates.

The priorities of the Latvian Presidency in development cooperation will reflect the Trio Presidency – Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg – joint programme and especially focus on a common and strong position of the EU on the **Post-2015 development framework, financing for development issues, gender equality and good governance**. The Latvian Presidency also plans to work on closer cooperation of the EU with **Eastern Partnership and Central Asian countries**.

For Latvian CSOs engaged in development

cooperation the presidency will not only be an excellent opportunity to engage with policy makers on national and European level, but it will also be a good time to plan for the sustainability of such a boost in competencies. Thus for the policy priorities of the Latvian Presidency, **LAPAS – the Latvian development CSO platform** – has chosen to deal with both urgent issues such as the Post-2015 development framework and also those topics that will contribute to the sustainability of the platform, such as raising awareness about development among the general public and identifying opportunities for Latvia – a **new donor** – to contribute to the debate on a new paradigm in development cooperation.

This policy digest will look at the wider context of the Latvian Presidency, the main topics concerning development cooperation what will be addressed, explain ideas behind LAPAS' priority areas during the presidency and identify opportunities for engagement with the Latvian Presidency for CSOs outside Latvia.

Context of the Latvian Presidency

The main objective of the joint 18 month programme of the Presidency Trio made up of Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg is to fully overcome the economic and financial crises, boost the EU's growth, create more jobs within the EU, seize digital opportunities,

safeguard fundamental rights and to fully engage in the fast changing world.¹

The **Latvian part of the programme** is built around key values of involvement, growth and sustainability and will focus on:

- **EU competitiveness** by working on the Investment Plan for Europe; strengthening the Single Market; promoting Better Regulation; establishing an Energy Union and promoting use of renewables;
- **use of European digital potential** through advancing data protection; enhancing cybersecurity; and initiating discussions on the Digital Single Market strategy;
- **EU's engagement in issues of global importance** through the **review of the EU Neighbourhood Policy** and a particular focus on Eastern Partnership throughout the Presidency; expanding external trade and aiming to conclude negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the USA by the end of 2015; working on the **EU-Central Asia Strategy**; strengthening the EU position on **post-2015 development goals** with a special focus on **sustainable development and gender equality**; ensuring safety of people, dealing with external threats and ensuring support for containing Ebola.²

Development cooperation priorities of the Trio Presidencies

In terms of development cooperation the Trio Presidency programme speaks of the need for the EU to effectively act as a global player by supporting economic, social and political reforms in partner countries. The Trio programme also sets out to address global challenges and promote EU core values, such as human rights and democracy. These values will be promoted by the Trio also within a **common EU position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda** which will continue to be prepared during the Latvian Presidency. Efforts to modernise and make EU development cooperation more effective will also continue.

The Trio programme emphasizes the importance of European Neighbourhood regions in the South and in the East in the context of foreign and security policy.

The main region of interest for the Latvian Presidency here is the **Eastern Neighbourhood**.

Improved effectiveness of **response to humanitarian crises** is another important focus area within foreign relations.

In the field of migration, the Trio plans to promote genuine solidarity on the issue at European level, continuing the development of a **Common European Migratory Policy** with a focus on growth in the countries of origin.³ As the issue of migration has been of particular interest to Italy, it has been one of the main priorities in its Presidency programme⁴.

Important policy processes in development cooperation during the Latvian Presidency

The Latvian Presidency falls on the year which will determine the development cooperation of the future. The most important process of 2015 without doubt will be the **Post-2015 process** and intergovernmental negotiations to define the new set of Sustainable Development Goals, targets and indicators; means of implementation, new Global Partnership and framework for monitoring and review of implementation. A global agreement on these issues is due to be reached in September 2015. Shortly before that the **3rd International Conference on Financing for Development** will take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July. The Conference will result in an inter-governmentally negotiated and agreed outcome, which should also support the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda⁵. The EU's preparations for both of these global events will largely take place during the Latvian Presidency and in February 2015 the EU Council is expected to agree on a common EU position on the means of implementation of the post-2015 development framework.

Within the field of humanitarian assistance the time of the Latvian Presidency will also mark the time of preparations for the **World Humanitarian Summit in 2016**. This first-ever global humanitarian summit of this scale will set a new agenda for global humanitarian action and focus on humanitarian effectiveness, reducing vulnerability and managing risk and transformation through innovation⁶. Council Conclusions ahead of the Summit are expected to be

¹ 18 months programme of the Council of the European Union: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2011258%202014%20INIT>

² The programme of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union: https://eu2015.lv/images/PRES_prog_2015_EN-final.pdf

³ 18 months programme of the Council of the European Union.

⁴ Programme of the Italian Presidency of the Council of European Union: http://italia2014.eu/media/1349/programma_en1_def.pdf

⁵ <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/overview/third-conference-ffd.html>

⁶ www.worldhumanitariansummit.org

prepared during the Presidency of Luxembourg.

In Europe development cooperation will gain enhanced visibility through the **European Year for Development 2015**⁷. The **European Development Days** are expected to be one of the central events of the year, taking place in Brussels in early June.

Directly unrelated to the EU events, a large scale event **Expo Milano 2015** will take place from 1st of May to 31st of October in Milan, Italy. The slogan of the exhibition will be "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life"⁸, taking up the issues of food production, security and sovereignty.

During the Presidency a total of over 200 meetings, working groups, seminars and conferences will be organised and take place in **Riga** – the capital city of Latvia. There will be two major development-related events organised in Latvia within the scope of the Presidency:

- **"Post-2015 and Beijing+20: Women's Economic Empowerment and Sustainable Development – the Synthesis for Success"** conference on 2 March 2015. The conference will tackle the issues of equal rights and access to market and economic resources for women, and share good practices of women's participation in entrepreneurship and development.
- **Eastern Partnership Summit** on 21 – 22 May 2015 bringing together the heads of state or government of Eastern Partnership and EU countries as well as civil society actors.

During the Latvian Presidency Council Conclusions – documents stating the joint position of the EU Member States – on Financing for Development and gender equality are expected to be prepared and adopted. During 2015 the new EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2016-2020 will be adopted and a lot of the work will happen during the Latvian Presidency.

LAPAS Presidency project approach

Latvia has, for most of its independence, been on the receiving end of aid and only recently become a donor country. Accordingly also the interest in development cooperation issues of the general public is low, with only 77% of Latvians believing that helping people in developing countries is important, which is the third

lowest rate in the EU⁹. In order to reach the public and to strengthen the sustainability of the Presidency project, LAPAS will invest in approaches that can also be used after the presidency. LAPAS is working on developing a **glocalization methodology** for working on global issues in local communities. Glocalization thus is an approach LAPAS has chosen to use when engaging with the Latvian public, especially with those who tend to favour local issues over global agenda. Glocalization is a process that includes both globalization and localization and it allows thinking globally while acting locally in routine situations¹⁰. This methodology will be tested on the wider public during the **Development Forum organised by LAPAS** in June, which will bring together representatives from grassroots and CSOs from Latvia and partner, especially Eastern Partnership, countries.

The priorities of LAPAS Presidency project

In terms of topics that LAPAS will put forward for discussion within its activities, these will be closely linked to the main priority areas of the Trio and particularly the Latvian Presidency, offering LAPAS' take on these.

For strengthening EU competitiveness and growth LAPAS sees the importance of working towards a **quality framework for development** that goes in line with the debate on Post-2015 development framework as a universal and a transformative one. LAPAS will advocate that any development cooperation framework within the EU should look beyond economic development to consider the social and environmental well-being of people both within the EU and outside of it.

LAPAS will also advocate for more importance and attention to be given to **non-financial means of implementation** of development targets, including such important elements as policy coherence for development (PCD), accountability mechanisms, trade, capacity building, knowledge sharing, technology and innovations based on local knowledge, the positive impact of migration and science. During the Latvian Presidency these will become an important part of discussions on topics that LAPAS' member organisations will speak about, namely, gender

⁷ Read more about the European Year For Development 2015 from the TRIALOG Policy Digest: <http://www.trialog.or.at/eyd-2015>

⁸ www.expo2015.org/en

⁹ Eurobarometer, January 2015, The European Year for Development – Citizens' Views on Development Cooperation and Aid, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_421_en.pdf

¹⁰ Read more about glocalization approach from the Manifesto of LAPAS, <http://lapas.lv/wp-content/themes/twentyten-lapas/images/manifesto-eng.pdf>

equality, transparent and independent media, human discussions on topics that LAPAS' member organisations will speak about, namely, gender equality, transparent and independent media, human security, climate change, migration and humanitarian assistance.

Strengthening the **EU's role as a global actor** is another priority area for the Latvian Presidency. In order to foster this it is important to unlock the full potential beyond the financial contributions of the Union as a project of 28 states. The **contribution of new donors** to development cooperation will be explored within the LAPAS Presidency project, focusing on expertise that can be relevant and valued in the EU's development cooperation efforts and promoting it both within the newer member states and those where the development assistance tradition is deeply rooted in administrative, legal, financial and human resources systems. Research on the role of new donors within the implementation of the new paradigm on development will be conducted.

While the Latvian Presidency has chosen to showcase Latvia's successes in terms of digital innovation, LAPAS plans to discuss the topic of food. LAPAS has chosen to approach **food security** by looking into the concept of responsible food consumption. This means investigating the interconnectedness of individual choices and well-being of groups of people both nearby and across the globe. Responsible food consumption will tackle the issues of ethics in food business, causes and persistence of hunger and malnutrition and promote short food chains, smallholder family farming, innovations in food systems, and the reduction of food waste. To raise knowledge and understanding of the wider public of development issues LAPAS will carry out a **campaign on responsible food consumption**. Food has been chosen as a transversal topic for the Trio development CSO platforms – CONCORD Italia,

LAPAS and Cercle de coopération.

LAPAS will also organise other activities related to development cooperation themes, for example two multi-stakeholder workshops – on development education and awareness raising (DEAR) and on the Post-2015 process, one study visit to an Eastern Partnership country on PCD and a learning lab on new donors within the European Development Days. All of these events will be designed to offer space for CSO representatives from the EU and partner countries to engage with each other and plan for future cooperation.



What can I do?

- Join your national development CSO platform and CONCORD for advocacy on policy issues such as the post-2015 development framework.
- Take part in various CSO events taking place in Riga, Latvia – such as the Development Forum on 3-5 June 2015
- Take part in the European Development Days in Brussels on 3-4 June 2015.
- Follow the research on the contribution of new donors to changing the paradigm of development cooperation, to be published in May 2015.

Tell your story of development!

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