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2015: an intense year for the development agenda

Notizie

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our world
our dignity
our future

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The "European Year for Development" coincides with a review of the EU Agenda for Change and the replacement of the Millennium Development Goals with new global targets, making 2015 a crucial year for development.

Since the creation of the first "European Year" in 1983, every year has been dedicated by the EU to a different theme, ranging from music to road safety to active aging. **While most of these brought an area of internal policy into focus, the** European Year for Development **in 2015, launched under the motto "Our world, our dignity, our future",** will mark the first time that the European Year has looked out to the wider world.

The main purpose of the European Year is to spark debate, encourage shifts in opinion, and the exchange of ideas on certain topics. It also indicates a greater focus on the topic in policymaking, including potential legislative steps. This looks particularly likely for EU development policy in 2015. The EU Agenda for Change, a European strategy approved in May 2012, is up for review. The Agenda was aimed at focusing assistance on the 48 least developed countries (33 of which are in Sub-Saharan Africa), particularly in the areas of governance, social protection, agriculture and renewable energy. It involves a shift in funding that has been criticised by some anti-poverty campaigners on the basis that still-poor communities in emerging countries would be abandoned.

The Agenda for Change is tied into another crucial process in 2015, the replacement of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals(MDGs) by a new set of global targets, dubbed the 'Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs). **The MDGs, which expire at the end of 2015, have provided the key framework for development efforts over the past 15 years and therefore have had a huge impact in the way the EU and other donors have targeted their development cooperation.**

Despite patchy progress on the MDGs, and despite the economic crisis, European public opinion remains firmly in favour of continued development cooperation efforts, suggesting that the 2015 theme for the European Year will be a popular one. According to a 2012 Eurobarometer survey, 85% of Europeans still believe that Europe should continue to help developing countries. This figure has fallen only slightly from 2009, when it peaked at 88%.

"Continued support for development cooperation is vital in a rapidly changing world" declared MEPs in a resolution on the European Year adopted on April 2014. "Around 1,3 billion people still live in extreme income poverty and the human development of many more are still not being met". According to **Linda McAvan, a UK member of the Socialists and Democrats** and Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Development, the Year should help engage citizens beyond those usually active in the field, and should give a sense that the world's common problems require coordinated and common solutions.

The European Year of Development will be launched on 8 January, and the initiatives will be carried out under the Latvian and Luxembourgish presidencies of the European Union. To give due attention to the various aspects of development, each month will be dedicated to a sub-topic: the month of January will be focused on "Europe in the world", February will be on "Education", March on "Women and Girls", April on "Health", May on "Peace and Security", June on "Sustainable green growth, decent jobs and businesses", July on "Children and youth", August on "Humanitarian aid", September on "Demography and migration", October on "Food security", November on "Sustainable development and climate action" and December on "Human rights and governance".

Valentina Pavarotti