

PRESS RELEASE

7 December 2011

EU proposes significant increase in overseas aid

Irish NGOs welcome Europe's ambitions to end extreme poverty

Irish NGOs today welcomed the European Commission's proposal to significantly increase overseas aid from 2014 onwards.

On 7 December, the Commission formally adopted its budget proposals, setting out European priorities for the 2014-2020 period.

"Today, the European Commission adopted budget proposals for its external policies for the 2014-2020 period. If adopted, this budget will allow the EU to fulfil its responsibility on the global stage: fighting poverty and promoting democracy, peace, stability and prosperity," said Hans Zomer, Director of Dóchas, the umbrella group of Ireland's Development NGOs.

In its response to the proposals, Dóchas pointed out that there is wide-spread support among the EU's citizens for a greater European role in efforts to make poverty history:

"Europeans care about world poverty. A recent MRBI poll showed that, despite the crisis, 79% of Irish people support our aid policy. Similar surveys show that 4 out of every 5 EU citizens support development aid. Today, the Commission has shown that it has listened to the people, by seeking a strong role for Europe in efforts to rid the world of extreme poverty," said Zomer.

The EU is the biggest donor of overseas aid in the world. Just under 6 per cent of all the Commission's expenditure goes to external programmes - and most of that is spent in countries bordering the EU.

Dóchas pointed out that the EU's budget for foreign policy and overseas aid has come under pressure of late, but that the Lisbon Treaty - and indeed all major EU treaties since 1992 - put poverty eradication at the heart of EU policy making.

"In the same week that 82 TDs and Senators wrote a letter to the Government to urge it to maintain Ireland's commitment to overseas aid, we are now seeing the EU seeking an ambitious mandate to deliver on the promises we Europeans have made to the rest of the world. It is clear that our leaders know that the fate of Europe is closely linked with that of all the earth's citizens" said Mr. Zomer.

Presenting the proposals, Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said: "Even in times of crisis, Europe must look outwards and engage in the world. Our security and prosperity depend on what happens beyond our borders, not least in our own neighbourhood. The EU will stand by its international commitments to the poorest

and most vulnerable people, to those in our neighbourhood undergoing transition and those in countries on a path to joining the Union."

On Monday, the Irish Government indicated that it would cut next year's budget for overseas aid by some €20 million.

"Budget 2012 contained a lot of bad news for a lot of people. And we are disappointed that overseas aid was cut yet again, for the fourth year in a row. Ireland's aid budget is now down over 30% compared to 2008 levels. Crucially, however, our aid promise of spending, by 2015, 0.7% of national income on aid is still within reach. And overwhelming public support for our aid programme means that our politicians have a strong mandate to keep investing in international cooperation," said Hans Zomer.

"Our overseas aid programme represents excellent value for money. Our aid has been shown to effectively assist the poorest and most vulnerable people of our world, and has contributed greatly to improving Ireland's reputation and influence abroad. In a globalised, inter-dependent world, Ireland needs to be an engaged and reliable member of the international community," said Hans Zomer of Dóchas.

"Earlier this year, the Taoiseach put it most succinctly when he said that despite our current difficulties, we are not willing to turn our backs on the world's poor and marginalised," continued Zomer.

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CONTACT

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NOTES FOR THE EDITOR

1. The proposals are made in the context of the "Multiannual Financial Framework" negotiations of the EU, which establish the future Union budget for the period 2014-2020. They come just after the EU signed up to a new global aid partnership with emerging economies on 1 December, in Busan, South Korea.

The proposals are available in full at:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/11/878&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

2. Today's proposals are the legal proposals to implement the Multiannual Financial Framework presented by the Commission on 29 June 2011, in the area of external action.

The total amount proposed for the nine "external action instruments" is €96,249.4 million over the period 2014-2020 (current prices):

- Pre-accession instrument (IPA): €14,110 million
- European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI): €18,182 million
- Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI): €23,295 million
- Partnership Instrument (PI): €1,131 million
- Instrument for Stability (IfS): €2,829 million

- European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights (EIDHR): €1,578 million
- Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation: €631 million
- Instrument for Greenland: €219 million
- European Development Fund (EDF, outside EU Budget): €34,276 million

The package will be transmitted to the European Parliament and the Council and is expected to be adopted in 2012.

3. The proposed European Union budget sees an increase to €96 billion for external action for the 2014-2020 period. The proposals presented today include:
 - A total of €13.7 billion to be spent on external action per year.
 - A 25 % increase for Official Development Assistance (ODA) from 2014
 - €1 billion approximate increase per year for the European Development Fund (The European Development Fund (EDF) targets African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and falls outside the EU budget. However the EDF is negotiated in parallel with the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework).
4. The full text of the letter from the 82 members of the Oireachtas is available at <http://www.facebook.com/notes/act-now-on-2015/82-tds-and-senators-call-on-the-government-to-defend-our-overseas-aid-commitment/318442598185546>
5. Results of the MRBI poll into Irish attitudes to overseas aid are available at http://www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/1/MRBI_survey_shows_strong_support_for_overseas_aid.pdf

Dochas is the association of Irish Non-Governmental Development Organisations. It provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between its 43 member organisations, and helps them speak with a single voice on development issues.

For more information, visit: www.dochas.ie

DÓCHAS MEMBER ORGANISATIONS:

A-Z Children's Charity - ActionAid Ireland - Afri - Africa Centre - Aidlink - Alan Kerins Projects - Amnesty International Ireland - Camara Education - Centre for Global Education - ChildFund Ireland - Children in Crossfire - Christian Aid Ireland - Christian Blind Mission Ireland - Comhlámh - Concern Worldwide - Friends of Londiani (Ireland) - Galway One World Centre - Gorta - Habitat for Humanity Ireland - Irish League of Credit Unions International Development Foundation (ILCU/IDF) - Irish Council for International Students (ICOS) - Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) - Irish Foundation for Co-operative Development (IFCD) - Irish Missionary Union (IMU) - Irish Red Cross (IRC) - Kerry Action for Development Education (KADE) - National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) - Oxfam Ireland - Plan Ireland - Progressio Ireland - Self Help Africa - Sightsavers International Ireland - Skillshare International Ireland - Suas Educational Development - Tearfund Ireland - The Hope Foundation - The National Council of Ireland YMCA Trust - Trócaire - Vita - Voluntary Service International (VSI) - Voluntary Service Overseas (Ireland) - Volunteer Missionary Movement (VMM) - War on Want Northern Ireland - World Vision Ireland.