

Protecting development cooperation in EU External Relations

15 April 2010

1. The Lisbon Treaty introduces a new European diplomatic corps

In December last year, the Lisbon Treaty entered into force following Ireland's ratification by referendum. The Treaty aims to provide the EU with a more efficient infrastructure and streamlined decision-making procedures.

On 25 March, the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton presented her proposals for the establishment of a new EU diplomatic corps, the European External Action Service ([EEAS](#)).

2. The creation of the EEAS will have serious consequences for Development

Under Ashton's proposals, the diplomatic corps would take responsibility for making strategic decisions about Europe's development priorities and for defining the plans for the way in which the EU's aid is to be used.. This creates the potential for politicising development cooperation and humanitarian aid. This could also lead to the use of development funds for foreign policy or security purposes.

It is also proposed that the European Commission's development division would be left to simply implement with only a partial, and as yet unclear, input into the overall formulation of regional and national plans and funding allocations.

3. The proposals go against the spirit of the Lisbon Treaty

The Lisbon Treaty confirms development co-operation as an area of competence specifically under the responsibility of the European Commission.

The sole objective of the EEAS under the same Treaty is to assist the High Representative in her task of advancing European foreign policy and security interests (Art 27.3).

In other words, the Treaty gives responsibility for programming and defining the use of the EU's Development aid and Humanitarian Assistance to the Commission (with democratic scrutiny by the European Parliament) while the EEAS will pursue European foreign policy objectives fulfilling an intergovernmental mandate, and accountable to the Council.

European NGOs are clear that the Treaty extends no powers to the EEAS or the High Representative to direct EU policy on Development Cooperation or Humanitarian Assistance.

4. EU development spending must focus on poverty eradication

The EU is the [world's largest aid donor](#): Together, the European Commission's aid programmes and the EU Member States' bilateral aid constitute 60% of total global aid flows.

Ireland channels [a significant portion](#) of its development aid budget through the EU. In 2008, this amounted to 11.7% of Ireland's total aid budget (€107m).

We must ensure that aid money is well spent and accounted for in line with Ireland's well-established principle, cemented in the White Paper, that poverty eradication is the overarching objective of development assistance.

5. How Ireland can make a difference

Final arrangements on the roles and responsibilities of the EEAS are being negotiated with member states at present. It is possible that a conclusion is to be agreed upon at a meeting of EU Foreign and Development Ministers on 26 April.

As member states prepare for this Council meeting, Dóchas members call for concrete safeguards and mechanisms to be put in place to ensure that the legal basis and long term objectives of EU development policy are respected.

Europe's member states, including Ireland, must:

- Ensure that any new institutional arrangements for EU external relations recognise the legal basis for EU development policy and its primary objective of poverty eradication;
- Clarify that the Commissioners for Development and Humanitarian Assistance are responsible for their respective policy areas and for the programming and use of the associated budgets, given the confirmed competence assigned to these areas under the Lisbon Treaty;
- Confirm that the Commissioners can effectively direct and instruct staff working on development programming and implementation, both in Brussels and in EU delegations;
- Assure that the EEAS must include staff with specific expertise on development both at Brussels and country levels so as to enable all activities of the EEAS relating to developing countries to be supportive of the EU's development policy objectives;
- Ensure that effective dialogue and coordination mechanisms are put in place between the European Commission and the EEAS in order to ensure all actions towards developing countries are guided by the primacy of poverty eradication and principled humanitarian action, and ultimately deliver EU policy coherence for development.

In confirming any new institutional arrangements for EU external relations, specific recognition must be given to the legal basis for EU development policy and its primary objective of poverty eradication.

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For further information, contact Dóchas at www.dochas.ie