

European Commission calls for greater role for Europe's local authorities in development action

The Commission today proposed for an increased dialogue with local authorities aimed at increasing their participation in the design and implementation of development activities. The Commission believes that local action is at the core of development policy. A structured dialogue is considered key since an increasing number of municipalities, districts and regions are increasingly financing their own development projects. An exchange platform should facilitate assistance between local authorities.

Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid said: "Linking actions between citizens at the local level in Europe and their counterparts in poorer countries is at the heart of development policy. A large number of local authorities have already launched development projects with local authorities in developing countries. The results of these experiments are impressive: for a small financial investment, we see proportionally big rewards. We need many more such initiatives."

In the Communication "Local Authorities: Actors for Development", a series of measures are proposed that recognise the vital role of local authorities.

- A structured dialogue: To capitalise on the expertise of local authorities and ensure better cooperation between them, the Commission proposes that they should meet once a year under the aegis of the Committee of the Regions.
- An information exchange platform "Stock Exchange" should bring local authorities together - those which seek assistance and those who can grant them. This would consist of a website where local authorities can publish their needs and others their offers.
- Local authorities should adhere to the same principles as international donor community. As the number of donors sharply increased in recent years, donors agreed to coordinate their development assistance. Local authorities should also implement the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) recently updated at Accra (2008).

The theme of local governance will also be the focus of the European Development Days to be held in Strasbourg from 15-17 November 2008.

Background:

An increasing number of local authorities are becoming the bodies spending an increasing amount of aid. For example, Spanish local authorities spent around 15 percent of Spanish overall Official Development Assistance in 2006, indicating a substantial net increase over the last 5 years. In Germany, local authorities spent € 764 millions in the same year, rising from € 607 millions in 2003.

The large number of local authorities offers excellent potential for development policy. In Europe, there are more than 91,000 authorities at local level (municipalities), 1,150 intermediary level organisations (districts, counties) and more than 100 regional bodies.

European Development Days 2008

<http://www.eudevdays.eu/Public/Page.php?ID=703&language=eng>

IP on aid effectiveness:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/548&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Communication "The EU - a global partner for development

Speeding up progress towards the Millennium Development Goals"

http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/COMM_PDF_COM_2008_0177_F_EN_ACTE.pdf

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf>