EUROBAROMETER 46.0

DEVELOPMENT AID:
BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE
WITH PUBLIC SUPPORT

- SUMMARY -

done for

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE GENERAL DEVELOPMENT (DGVH1)

by

INRA (EUROPE)
European Coordination Office SA/NV

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Foreword

The opinion poll on which this report is based was carried out at the request of the Directorate-General for Development (DG VIII) of the European Commission, as a contribution to Eurobarometer No 46.0.

The poll followed the publication in November 1996 of the Green Paper on relations between the European Union and the ACP countries on the eve of the 21st century, and built on previous polls carried out across the European Union since 1983.

The new poll was conducted between 12 October and 11 November 1996, in all 15 EU Member States simultaneously, and coordinated by INRA (Europe) - European Coordination Office, based in Brussels.

The questionnaire, the names of the polling organizations taking part, and information on sampling methods, the way the sample was selected, etc., are all annexed.

The European Commission accepts no responsibility for the report, which was drafted by Francois Lambert. The original language was French.
Development aid is one of the chief means by which the EU makes its presence felt in the world. Through aid, the EU has acquired a unique international role, one which reflects its self-imposed responsibility to share the benefits of development with the world's poorest countries.

The EU is not only the world's main international trading partner, accounting for 20% of world trade, but the leading provider of development aid, well ahead of the US and Japan; 53% of the world's aid comes from programmes initiated in Europe.

Not only is Europe the leading international aid donor, but it is uniquely driven not just by economic goals but by a philosophy based on the democratic and human values that are the bedrock of the European identity.

Since 1975, EU development aid has taken the form of successive Lome Conventions with the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries. The strong, distinctive relationships fostered by the Conventions are to be distilled into a new cooperation scheme when the present Convention expires in the year 2000.

Negotiations with a view to drafting the new development pact will begin in Autumn 1998, and the European Commission, primarily through its Directorate-General for Development (DG VIII), is already working on the preparations.

A wide-ranging review of the objectives, means and achievements of European development aid has been conducted to provide the building blocks for this monumental project.

In practical terms, the EU and its ACP partners must "examine ways of reconciling two requirements the responsibility of the recipient countries and the requirement to account for the use of cooperation resources to European citizens."

The review draws upon the achievements and experience of the last 20 years, and is intended to signpost the way ahead. As part of the re-think, DG VIII has also set itself the goal of drawing the public closer to its plans for future activities.

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The latest opinion poll is a contribution to this process: it highlights the extent to which the public has been reached so far and, more importantly, further measures to be taken if development policy is to be transparent and all its implications understood, especially those that touch upon the basic, day-to-day concerns of EU citizens.

The first step in explaining development aid better to the public is to acquire a better understanding of EU citizens - their aspirations, their attitudes, and their behaviour, which is often critical.

For the time being, one of the key lessons of the poll is that almost 90% of EU citizens agree that development aid is important, but they tend see it as a European rather than a national issue. Development aid is the EU’s job and, as far as the public is concerned, the number one priority is Africa.
Chapter 1: Public opinion and the light it casts on the Green Paper

In November 1996 the Commission’s Directorate-General for Development (DG VIII) published a Green Paper setting out the basis for discussions on the next great project in European development cooperation: negotiations on the replacement for the Lome Convention between the EU and the ACP countries, scheduled to start in November 1998.²

One of the themes running through the Green Paper is a commitment to take on board the wishes of EU citizens, especially their desire to see EU aid made more effective.

The opinion poll was therefore partly intended to throw light from this angle on the issues discussed in the Green Paper. Two points emerged straight away:

- EU citizens are highly aware of development issues (almost 90% think development aid is important):

Graph: Is it important to help the people in poor countries in Africa, South America, Asia, etc. to develop?
(Question 57(a): percentage answering "Yes")

² See footnote 1.
- they want more information about EU development aid (over 90% say so).

Graph: Do you think the European Community's aid should be made better known?
(Question 62: percentage of affirmative replies.)

While demanding more information, however, those questioned had clear reservations as to whether their preferred sources, television and the press, told the truth: both received fairly mediocre scores for general reliability (64% and 65% respectively) and did even less well on development issues, on which fewer than 60% believed them.
Chapter 2: Perceptions of the development aid budget

The information gap perceived by the public is confirmed chiefly in relation to key concepts such as the financial flows underpinning development aid.

Graph: Do you think the European Commission helps people in poor countries? If so, how much of its budget

Leaving aside the minority which denies the obvious, i.e. that their government and the EU have development aid policies, EU citizens overestimate the sums devoted to aid and to which they directly contribute: 30% overestimate the EU budget and as many as 48% on average overestimate the national aid budget, while 16% and 15% respectively give the right answer.

It is, however, of vital concern that citizens grasp such basic information, since it is the key to accurately assessing the need for, and the benefits of, development aid.
This ignorance of the facts of financial life with regard to aid does not stop 83% of EU citizens agreeing that EU resources for development aid should be increased, while 67% agree that the national budget should rise.

Graph: Should the EU increase or decrease its development aid budget?  
(Question 60(b): increase a little, or a lot)

EU citizens therefore tend to be consistent in their assessment of development aid, they think it is important, and they translate that into financial commitment.

The approval rating for an increase in the EU aid budget confirms the view that emerged from previous opinion polls, namely that Europeans regard a commitment to development aid as a European value.
Graph: Should your government increase or decrease its development aid budget?  
(Question 60(a): increase a little, or a lot)

Better information is the surest way to avoid dissipating public commitment to aid and its goodwill as regards raising the aid budget.
Chapter 3: Perceptions of the trade implications of development aid

To analyse the public’s attitude to development aid in monetary terms alone is not to tell the whole story. Certainly, EU citizens make their views on that quite clear, they would prefer aid to go straight to the people and projects needing the money, cutting out any middle-men. All the same, there is more to aid, in terms of relations between the EU and developing countries, than a one-way stream of cash.

By substantially contributing (directly or indirectly) to trade between developing countries and the EU, development aid also boosts the economies of the 15 Member States in its own right.

Graph: The EU’s external trade, 1993

However, EU citizens tend to underestimate the scale of EU exports to developing countries only 43% believe developing countries are the EU’s main export market when in fact the EU exports twice as much to developing countries as it does to the US.
Given that people also tend to overestimate the amounts spent on aid, this gives them a very distorted picture of development aid. This lack of awareness of the trade implications of aid is confirmed by the fact that 48% of those questioned wildly underestimate the scale of tied aid, i.e., purchases which developing countries make in Europe using development funds.

Graph: Do you think that a percentage of the money developing countries receive is used to buy what they need from companies in the ED? If so, what percentage? (Question 61, EL) average.

On the other hand, they are much more aware of the opportunities for private investors in developing countries. 50% think that investment in poor countries produces faster returns than in rich countries.
Seen in the light of the Green Paper, this optimism is encouraging, since support for private enterprise, as a means to stimulating economic growth in developing countries, is one of the options considered for European development policy in the future.
Chapter 4:
Perceptions of the utility of development aid: the EU's role in the world, the extent of interdependence

The importance which EU citizens attach to European development aid cannot be dissociated from their view of what it can do.

It was examined in the survey from two angles in relation to developing countries, and in relation to ED Member States.

The EU's position in the world

On the first score, the public was asked to say whether Europe should help certain regions of the world rather than others. The answers showed that their views of development aid are coloured by geopolitical criteria. 69% considered Africa as the main channel for European aid.

Graph: Who is best placed to help poor people in Africa to develop? (Question 64(a))

The tendency to see Europe as having a special commitment to Africa is therefore contested only by a minority (31%). Moreover, very few of the latter thought the choice was between helping developing countries or helping states that aspire to pin the EU. Events in Eastern Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall have not challenged the popularity of EU action in Africa.

See Chapter 5 "Open-ended Questions", for a more detailed breakdown of the answers.
However, while Europe accounts for half of all international development aid, 40% of its citizens think the US is best placed to solve development problems in general.

Graph: Who is best placed to help poor people to develop in South America, in Asia and in Africa? (Question 64(a)+(b)+(c) totals, EU averages)

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<th>Latin America</th>
<th>Asia</th>
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<td>Japan</td>
<td>4</td>
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**Ranking interdependence**

The utility of aid is not a matter for developing countries alone. The theory of "interdependence" suggests that aid can also provide some leverage on problems which affect people in rich countries, too: unemployment, drug trafficking, environmental hazards, etc.

The poll shows that the public is fairly receptive to the idea of interdependence altogether. 56% thinks development aid could help on seven issues to which interdependence might apply.

**Graph:** Ranking interdependence. "Do you think that development aid provided by the European Community can contribute or not to solving the following problems?"

(Question 66 (a) to (g), European averages)

![Graph showing rankings](image)

*Negative numbers: "No"; positive numbers: "Yes". JOBS: Unemployment; DRUG: Drugs; POP: Overpopulation; IMM: immigration problems; AIDS: Aids & other diseases; ENV: environmental and pollution problems; COMM: trade development problems.*

However, the extent of support varies greatly from issue to issue. For example, ED citizens do not think that development aid could have much positive effect on the issue that matters most to them: unemployment. Sixty-four per cent think aid will not help unemployment problems.
Chapter 5: Open-ended Questions

Two questions incorporated supplementary, open-ended questions. They were both fundamental to the poll, in that they cast light on the importance assigned to development aid by the public and the importance assigned to European aid to Africa.

Specifically, they were designed to tell us:
- why 10% of those questioned thought development aid was not important, and
- why 31% thought Europe was not best placed to help poor people in Africa.

The reasons given by this minority of European opinion boiled down to a few key ideas. Some people suggested development aid was not as important as the problems of underprivileged and excluded groups in Europe. Others felt the EU's international profile and economic might compared unfavourably with the US and Japan. Still others see national aid as less important than EU aid, which only confirms a significant tendency, highlighted by the poll, to see development aid as a European value.
Conclusion

Facing one of the biggest challenges in its 20-year history of involvement in development policy, the successor to the Lome Convention in the year 2000, the European Commission, and particularly DG VIII, opted to open a wide debate on future issues for development policy.

The debate was largely based on a global rethink of the objectives of development aid. The answers to which this process will lead will take on board not only expert evidence but EU citizens’ vision and expectations of development aid.

The latest poll casts light on the public’s profound interest in this critical sphere of European policy. Development aid is a value shared by the general public, a value which, in its eyes, is embodied in ED policy.

Development aid concerns EU citizens in more ways than one. They think it an important issue, and say so, but aid has other implications that touch their day-to-day lives and the EU has a duty to inform them of that.

While usually realistic and positive in their views on development aid, they lack information.

EU citizens find it difficult to judge the scale of financial and trade flows between the EU and developing countries; they overestimate the former and underestimate the latter. People are probably aware of the gaps in their knowledge, since they express a desire for more information.

The public is not fully aware of the status the EU has acquired in the world through its development aid. In general, Europeans look towards Africa: a recurring theme in EU public opinion is that the EU should help Africa especially because it is best placed to do so.

In conclusion, EU citizens are aware of the importance of development aid but also of the need for information. They are still ill-informed on too many basic points, perhaps because they are not fully aware of how development aid affects them; they consider it highly important, but have yet to wonder “important to whom?”.