

# THE EUROPEAN YEAR FOR DEVELOPMENT AND BEYOND: MEPS' VISIONS



MEPs 2014-2019





# Foreword

2015 has been designated the European Year for Development (EYD), a year in which we are encouraged to look at what Europe has already contributed to international development and what we can each do to strengthen our contribution to a more just and equal world.

It is also the year in which the global community will agree on a new framework for sustainable development and a new set of goals to succeed the Millennium Development Goals. As the largest donor in the world, the EU has a critical role to play in this process and the contribution of MEPs and citizens is vital to the debate and its outcome.

One of the objectives of the EYD programme in Ireland is to gather perspectives from across Irish society on what “sustainable development” means to people. As part of this initiative Irish MEPs have been asked to provide their perspectives and we are delighted to present these as the first of many contributions we hope to garner throughout the year ahead.

This initiative is supported by the European Parliament Information Office in Ireland, Dóchas and Concern and is the first of many initiatives this year which will help to spark debate and discussion about the role that Europe can and should play in making our world a better place for all.

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# Contents

The perspectives presented in this publication were provided by all of Ireland's MEPs in the form of 500 word responses to the following questions:

## Question 1

*2015 has been designated as the European Year of Development. It is an important time to reflect on what kind of 'development' we want the European Union to pursue into the future. As we approach this time of reflection, what does "sustainable development" mean to you and what is your vision of how the European Union should respond to this challenge? How do you see your own role as an MEP in this process?*

## Question 2

*2015 will also be a key year for European Development policy in another respect, with the European Union having to put forward its response concerning the replacement of the Millennium Development Goals. The new Goals will set a framework for sustainable development around the world. In your view, what one goal or set of actions should the EU push for to ensure this global agreement delivers on "sustainable development"?*

Note: Following the launch of this publication at a special meeting in the European Parliament Information Office in Dublin on Friday 16 January 2015, it is being made available both at the official Irish launch of the European Year of Development with President Michael D. Higgins on 22 January 2015, and at subsequent meetings on the proposed framework for world sustainable development later on in the year, as well as on the partners websites and on social media.



## Lynn Boylan MEP

1) For me “sustainable development” means assisting those countries or communities that are needy but in such a way that helps them to help themselves. It means helping in a social, economic and environmental way, not just for the present but also for the long term future. The simplest answer to so many problems in the world is to go for the “quick fix”, monies are raised and immediate assistance is given. However this is not a long term solution, it is not sustainable development.

As stated in the ‘Brundtland Report’: “Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

There is no doubt in my mind that eradicating extreme hunger and poverty must be a prime goal on any path to sustainable development. I believe that this should be the focus for member countries of the European Union in the course of the European Year for Development. In my role as an MEP, as a member of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and as a member of the GUE/NGL European Parliament grouping, it is my intention to highlight the necessity of eradicating extreme hunger and poverty at every opportunity and to focus on new goals for sustainable development.

2) In my opinion there are a number of goals that the European Union must push for to ensure a global agreement delivers on “sustainable development”.

The eradication of extreme hunger and poverty in the world must be the starting point. The EU must move to ensure that extreme hunger and poverty ends for all, no matter what the gender or race. I also believe that an ending to conflict and violence must be focused on. For too long the EU has been reluctant to condemn violence where it sees it as problematic for its own political or economic reasons. No sustainable development will be achieved where war and conflict continues and where it is not addressed. The EU must be proactive in seeking peace in countries and communities. End conflict and you will allow for the possibility of sustainable development.

I also believe that if the EU wants to deliver on “sustainable development” that it must address social injustices in countries and communities. The EU must promote a just society by challenging injustices both locally

within member states and globally. Again no sustainable development can proceed where social injustices are allowed to fester.

The European Year for Development 2015 is a real opportunity for the EU to re-focus on “sustainable development”. Member states must come together, formulate new goals and put together an agreed framework. This is achievable in 2015.



### **Matt Carthy MEP**

If we are to achieve any sort of sustainable future we must begin to see development as a priority for global security and to view this in more human terms as “freedom from fear and want”. The security needs of the most vulnerable do not resonate with the people who determine what security those people can have; the most vulnerable rarely formulate policy.

There are striking issues as to the misappropriation of the world’s resources. While some progress has been made to eradicate staggering poverty rates, some 1 billion people will still live in extreme poverty in 2015. The cyclical economic pattern of neoliberalism, extracting mineral wealth, cheap raw materials, servicing the production of large scale manufacturing, cheap production, low wages, and limited regulation has done significant damage to our planet and to our citizens.

The EU is an institution of global governance, which, while being a major contributor to global development aid, is failing to set a precedent in supporting our own and the globe’s most vulnerable. Multinational corporations are able to operate across boundaries growing their income and power, surpassing that of any individual state. We have seen countless examples of corporate interference in the Commission and in negotiations on trade and environmental deals. This must stop. Resources such as water and sanitation, health and education are not commodities and their quality must never be threatened to suit the agenda of faceless shareholders.

There are fears regarding our reliance on fossil fuels. The realisation of limited supplies has called into question who controls these supplies. Agricultural farming, pesticides and fertilisers, nourishing overworked soil to sustain annual harvests, the machinery used to both plough, seed,

water and harvest the food that is then processed and distributed, all of this relies heavily on burning fossil fuels for energy. There has been very little if any investment in sustainable agricultural tools for local production of food.

It is anticipated that oil reserves will run out within the next 100 years. The need to explore and exploit other reserves for survival will lead to heightened antagonisms as the struggle for oil becomes more intense. Alternatives to oil reliance is something the EU has often championed. Recently, however, the EU's proposed Fuel Quality Directive (FQD) has come under immense pressure with lobbyists even threatening EU fuel security if we do not move away from our proposed position on tar sands. I would like to see the EU face up to this pressure with conviction and prove by global example that another way is possible, that we are not at the mercy of corporate elites.

Global warming and environmental decay have severely impacted on communities around the world. Water resources are becoming more fragile and the cause of anxiety and conflict among states. More people than ever are on the move seeking a better life escaping wars, food scarcity and desertification. Shifting populations are moving across countries that are unable to cope with the influx.

There are universal institutions that have devised a standard of care for every human being, which includes fundamental human rights. We are failing to provide these rights because of the prioritisation of profit and personal gain throughout the EU. In my capacity as an MEP I will push for foreign aid to be maintained without threat of budget cuts. I will also play my part to ensure that it is administered in a transparent and ethical manner to those who need it most.



### **Nessa Childers MEP**

1) Simply put, sustainable development allows people to plan for a healthy and secure future. As a member of the European Parliament I believe that we should be partners in development and support ambitious development policies. The EU should speak with one strong voice in defining the future global development goals, which must be ambitious and universally

binding in order to tackle the root causes of global poverty effectively. MEPs should push for a solid funding base for EU development aid. This could be achieved through the introduction of an EU wide Financial Transaction Tax that would finance development, and this is something I have been campaigning on for a number of years now.

2) To achieve a balanced approach to development we have to put equality and environmental protection at the very heart of development policy. This requires the protection of ecosystems for healthy water supplies and food production, while dealing with the reality of climate change. Then there must be an absolute emphasis on a human-rights-based approach and the fight against all forms of inequality. In particular we need to focus on the human rights needs of girls and women. For example, we need to live in a world where every girl has the right to go to school. But too many girls and women continue to be denied basic freedoms and choices. Ensuring their rights will not only benefit them personally but will benefit their children and the entire community.



### **Deirdre Clune MEP**

1) For me, sustainable development means that we must continue to grow and prosper as a global economy, bearing in mind that we are mere custodians of the planet, not owners.

It is not enough to focus on environmental challenges such as climate change, ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss; we must also look at socio-economic ones such as unemployment, growth and competitiveness. To ensure this, there must be cooperation and collaboration between public, private and non-governmental actors. We must move from a mind-set where we see development as giving food aid to poorer countries to a concept based on how we live, as citizens of our respective countries, but as one global economy. In particular how we live in a new world where technological and scientific progress presents us with new challenges.

We need to find a balance between the need to live comfortably now without impacting on the needs of future generations. So as well as a

mandate to protect the environment, we have to address issues such as the rise in unemployment and long-term unemployment amongst our young people. I have addressed the Parliament many times on the issue of youth unemployment, and have emphasised the importance of the Youth Guarantee in securing jobs for our young people. There seems to be little point in striving for sustainability in the environment if we cannot provide jobs that give our young people meaning and purpose. It is not enough to save the planet without creating a real reason for us to be here.

Sustainability is also about equality. Inequality is not a viable long-term proposition and as an MEP, we continually strive to pass EU wide laws that protect people's rights to live as equals.

2) Climate change is arguably the biggest challenge that humanity faces in the twenty-first century. It is clear we have little choice but to alter the way we use resources and consume energy. Our biggest challenges will come from countries like China and India, many of whose citizens are more concerned with a subsistence living than they are with loftier energy and climate change goals.

To tackle climate change, we must first allow developing countries a fair and equitable platform when it comes to trade and development and give them the same opportunities that we give each other in the EU. It is unsustainable that over 1 billion people in our world live in absolute poverty. How can we speak of saving the planet when we are unwilling or unable to save ourselves first?

The preamble to successful climate change strategies is equality - equality of opportunity, freedom of expression, the right to live in peace and with a decent standard of living.

The primary goal of the EU must be in preserving what kind of economy and environment we hand over to the next generation in 50 years' time. We have targets set out by the European Commission's proposal for a climate and energy policy framework for 2030. These include a target of reducing EU Greenhouse Gas emissions by 40% below 1990 levels, a target of achieving a share of minimum 27% renewable energy consumption in the EU, and a target of reducing the EU's primary energy consumption by 30%, all by 2030. Our targets must be realistic but they must go hand in hand with a new focus on fairer trade and equity measures for the developing worlds.





## **Brian Crowley MEP**

1) The European Year for Development provides the European Parliament and all MEPs with a unique opportunity to engage citizens in what the EU can achieve in terms of development policy and to collectively address the eradication of global poverty. It is important that citizens are actively involved in the process and that they are in a position to see the difference we as EU citizens are making to so many lives across the globe.

When launching the Millennium Development Goal pledge in 2000, Kofi Annan summed up what I believe is “sustainable development” when he stated “No calling is more noble, and no responsibility greater, than that of enabling men, women and children, in cities and villages around the world, to make their lives better.”

We need to make sure our taxpayers’ money is well spent and that investments are made for generations to come. We must ensure that individuals are empowered to govern their own resources through property rights and that opportunities for education and entrepreneurship are readily available for all.

I believe that the focus should be put on economic growth and wealth creation in developing countries themselves. We need a systemic change to our poverty elimination programmes, where best practices on wealth creation in the EU are shared with our partner developing countries and where a results-based framework acts as the guiding principle for development cooperation.

2) We have seen incredible achievements, as a result of the international commitment to the MDGs, which will come to an end on 31 December 2015. It is important that we utilise this time as an opportunity to renew our commitment to what I believe is the most important goal of all, that is to eradicate extreme poverty. We must define the world we want to see in 15 years and ensure that we deliver.

I would like to see a single, compelling and communicable set of goals that eradicate extreme poverty through sustainable development by 2030 and finish the job started by the MDGs. This must include “inclusive development” – embedding the principle of “leave no one behind”, eradicating extreme poverty and addressing poverty in all its other forms:

- inclusive and sustainable economic growth, including sustainable consumption and production as a key element in sustainable development;
- peace, good governance, transparency and accountable institutions, freedom from violence and adherence to the rule of law.



### **Luke Ming Flanagan MEP**

1) Rather than a ‘Year for Development’, the EU should speak of an era of development – in fact every year should be a year of development. As for the meaning of ‘sustainable development’, surely it is self-explanatory? Even as our own blinkered government continues to lay themselves before the very industries that got the world into the mess it is now in – the finance industry, the global tax-avoiding multi-nationals – surely in this country blessed by nature we should be focusing on what we can do for ourselves. We should focus on organic farming, labour-intensive and thus providing real, productive and gainful employment, we should focus on sustainable energy to power those local endeavours, whether by community wind-power/photo-voltaic/small hydro-electric plants.

Rather than looking for the impossible eternal growth model of development it currently embraces, the EU should look at conservation and preservation as its first order of business and as an MEP, this is an area in which I intend to be fully active. We must end the practice of viewing people as consumers and revert to the original – we are citizens, peoples. We are not on this planet to consume what it has to offer. We are here to preserve and enhance for future generations.

2) If there is just one goal or set of actions that the EU should push for, to ensure the new global agreement delivers on ‘sustainable development’, it is the seventh principle of the original goals, ‘To ensure environmental sustainability’. I say this in full knowledge that some may point to my advocacy of the rights of Ireland’s small turf-cutters to their age-old rights, but those rights ARE sustainable and in fact we ourselves have developed proposals that go beyond what the EU was proposing in that whole area.

Only the blind and the greedy of this world are not environmentalists; only the blind and the greedy want to profit at the expense of not just this generation but at the expense of every generation to come; only the blind and the greedy point to cost and expediency as an excuse to pollute this planet, to beget short-term profit and so-called progress. But what does it profit future generations if, to benefit a few – nay, even to benefit many of the current generation – we leave behind us a legacy of destruction, pollution and calamitous climate-change for all?

Efforts to further all the other noble aims must continue but this is the one goal above all others.

I sincerely hope this does not turn out to be just another of so many talking-shops on what are extremely serious topics. It is not enough for us to talk about and discuss these issues; we must become active. All of us.



### **Marian Harkin MEP**

As we approach 2015 and the EU priorities for the year designated as the European Year for Development, we must reflect on the Millennium Development Goals set out at the United Nations summit in 2000 and learn from the successes as well as the challenges that still remain for the EU commitment to achieving these goals.

The Millennium Development Goals pledged to reduce global poverty with a focus on developing countries. Recent shifts, however, in the global economy have seen an increasing level of inequality and poverty in both developed and developing countries. While this change is not a failure of the Millennium Development Goals but rather a result of an interchanging economic and political balance globally, it indicates that we need a new inclusive approach from both developing and developed countries to create a global sustainable development framework for 2015.

More specifically, underlying structural factors that lead to poverty, inequality and social exclusion need to be addressed, particularly education. In my opinion education is the single most important goal for long term sustainable development. The EU is a large player in education

and has a special responsibility in demanding that education should be prioritised in international cooperation as an enabling right, fundamental to development. The goal of ensuring that every child will be able to complete basic education, regardless of their circumstances, and have basic literacy and numeracy skills must be achieved.

As Ireland and Kenya are the two countries nominated by the United Nations to lead the international negotiations on a new global development agenda, we have a real opportunity to bring equality in education to the forefront of development.



**Brian Hayes MEP**

1) Sustainable Development is all about helping communities become more resilient to withstand any shocks whether economic, social or political. Sustainable Development must be about long-term planning and development. The European Union, as a group of rich countries, must help the developing world to escape the poverty traps and grow economically. As an MEP and member of the European Parliament Development Committee, I will work to ensure that the necessary supports are put in place for developing countries and that the resources reach the people and areas most in need.

2) As we look beyond the Millennium Development Goals, I think fighting malnutrition must be central to our strategy. In the developing world, approximately 22,000 children die every day. Undernutrition and the lack of safe water and sanitation contribute to half of all these child deaths. We need to invest in preventing child undernutrition now. Basic interventions such as encouraging breastfeeding to avoid contaminated water, better education and encouraging a wider variety of nutritious foods for children can make a big difference.

The immediate causes of malnutrition revolve around access to nutritious food. The EU needs to work to ensure access to nutritious diets for all. We also need to provide the training and equipment to developing countries to allow them produce their own food, ensuring future food security.

One of the primary causes of malnutrition is Gender Discrimination. The practice of girls not attending school, restrictions on women earning an income and their inferior role within a household needs to be overcome. Improving women's role in society, providing access to education and control of resources must also be central to the new development goals.



**Sean Kelly MEP**

*“In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter” (Treaty on European Union - Article 3).*

The first step towards sustainable development is to grow economies in order to create employment and food security. This, in turn, paves the way for social development, including investment in health care systems, provision of inclusive and fair education and creation of safe and just communities.

The best way the EU can respond to the challenge of sustainable development is through trade. By building on and increasing our international trade links, we promote continuous development in the economies of the world's poorest countries. The EU, at its core, is a trading block and as such, our strongest impact is made through our economic power. Establishing concrete and extensive trade links enables us to do what we do best and provides developing countries with so much more than emergency development aid or direct funding, which cannot deliver long-lasting social, economic nor environmental sustainability to community development.

These trade links give developing countries access to rich, extensive markets, enabling them to strengthen their economies. They provide employment and secure livelihoods, promote foreign direct investment

in the region, improve infrastructure and boost tax revenues. This kind of basic income security and increased state budget allows for greater spending on healthcare systems, education and other social services.

Increased cooperation and trade with the EU enables the promotion of health and safety as well as improved environmental standards. Through establishing trade links with countries we can encourage and even create a legal prerequisite for fair trade, ethical industrial practice and environmentally sustainable businesses. Human rights clauses are included in EU trade and cooperation agreements, and are a central means by which we can promote and encourage human rights and democratic principles to be upheld in countries we partner with. It is the greatest tool we have to encourage the development of inclusive, just societies.

From the Member States' perspective, such agreements offer European businesses further opportunities for growth and also provide European consumers with new and competitive products - a give and take that offers the EU itself the opportunity to develop and learn.

As a member of the International Trade Committee in the European Parliament, I see myself having a crucial role in the EU's response to sustainable development. Despite all our efforts, there is still more that we can do and my job is to encourage this and aid the negotiation process for the establishment of these links within the European Parliament. I am in favour of comprehensive trade agreements which can have the biggest impact and bring beneficial opportunities for these countries and at the same time encourage them to respect and uphold EU norms and democratic principles.



### **Mairead McGuinness MEP**

1) With the European Year for Development 2015 and the development of the international framework under the Sustainable Development Goals, the EU has an opportunity and a duty to raise awareness of and revitalise the global commitment to the developing world.

EU development policy focuses on tackling issues such as poverty, health, food security, access to medical care, energy, social justice, economic growth, democracy and the environment.

It continues to support progress in these areas through development aid programmes and by sharing diplomatic expertise and 'best practice' in terms of good governance models for developing nations.

I have a particular interest in food security and believe that development efforts must focus on agricultural development, and efforts to assist developing countries to maximise their own potential for agriculture and food production. In those countries which have specifically targeted rural areas and farming significant progress has been made, allowing households to both feed themselves by growing enough produce and also to sell the surplus and pay for essential services such as education and health care.

The EU is conscious of the impact of its policies, including the CAP, on development and has modified its policies to ensure consistency with our development hopes and aspirations.

Food insecurity leads to hunger and death. It also leads to political and social instability and riots.

The EU has a pragmatic interest in sustainable development to stop the flow of people from developing countries to seek a better life in the EU. These victims of hunger, famine and oftentimes war in their own countries need the support of the EU to create better conditions at home so that they have a future in their own place.

This is an enormous challenge but one which cannot be ignored.

Marking this year - 2015 - as the Year for Development will bring focus and attention to the development agenda. We have a responsibility to assist the development effort and the EU and Member States have a strong track record in this area.

As an MEP, it is my job to ensure that attention to the developing world is centre stage at a time when local, national and EU issues tend to dominate.

Progress in the developing world is progress for all. The EU has contributed to progress to date and is committed to doing so in the future.

2) The EU will contribute to international agreements on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are intended to follow the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

It is very important that we reflect honestly and critically on the successes and failures of the MDGs before moving forward with the purpose of achieving sustainable development.

The MDGs represented a global commitment to reduce hunger, improve education and health and protect the environment in developing countries by 2015 at the latest. With 1.3 billion people still living in extreme poverty in the world, it is painfully clear that we have much work to do.

We have failed to eradicate hunger. Some 23,000 children die every day due to a lack of nutrition – it is a shocking statistic but we have seen that figure come down from 36,000 a day, so progress has been made. However, one child death is one too many. Globally, 2.6 million children under the age of five die every year due to undernutrition, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), while one in every 9 people go hungry every day.

With the world population expected to grow to 9 billion people by 2050 and some predictions of even higher rates of growth, pressure on food supplies will intensify. The challenge globally is to ensure that farmers can feed the growing world population using new techniques and technologies. It also requires us to assist developing countries with knowledge transfer in agriculture which is appropriate and for new approaches to tackle food waste, which very often occurs at the production and storage stage in the developing world.

A global commitment to eradicate world hunger is an ambitious target but achievable with the right focus and policies. Other objectives should centre on wider issues such as poverty reduction, good governance with a human rights-based approach. We also need clearly-defined, measurable targets at an international level so we can closely monitor future progress to stay on track.

The EU and its Member States is the world's largest aid donor, providing more than half of all development aid. Between 2004 and 2010, EU aid provided 32 million people with access to drinking water, enrolled more than 10 million children in primary education and helped to immunise more than five million children against measles.

The EU has proven it can make a real and sustainable difference to the developing world and I believe we can and must continue to do so.





## Liadh Ní Riada MEP

1) For me sustainable development means challenging the current economic status quo that leaves 1.2 billion people in those countries who live on \$1.25 a day and over 800 million chronically hungry. I believe that in order to promote and support genuine and lasting development we need to challenge these outrages in the short, medium, and long term, and in a way that reflects the needs, wants and desires of the targeted people. This needs to be part of a process that is owned and controlled by the people affected. In order to ensure development is sustainable, fair and ecological it must be under democratic and local control, capitalising on the experiences and abilities of communities, addressing their particular needs as part of the global whole.

I believe it means developing ways to eliminate poverty while also respecting our fragile eco-system and ensuring that they are environmentally sustainable. Our rapid climate change is being caused by the industrialised nations of the Global North, including the EU, but it is having the most effect on developing countries, who are the small level polluters. Climate change is drastically affecting the agricultural systems and harvests, and increasing the amount of natural disasters, both of which disproportionately affect poor people.

My role as an MEP will be to listen to development stakeholders, bring information and analyses to the attention of the Commission, and monitor and analyse its proposals, as well as championing the cause of sustainable and fair development at home and abroad.

2) Poverty is easy to stop but hard to statistically define. We cannot focus just on absolute poverty and hunger, but also on relative poverty and hunger. As we see an increase in the economic growth of countries in the Global South we must also focus on inequality there as well as here. Sustainable development must also deal with the inequality, poverty and hunger that has become increasingly pervasive in EU member states.

The EU needs to pursue a development programme that is part of a joined-up, cross-cutting approach based on solidarity and fair trade, and that gives developing countries a voice on, as well as ownership of projects. One that is robustly financed, but also completely accountable, and transparent. A development programme that is untied, and not focused on side deals to help EU companies and countries engage in lucrative

trade deals. One that focuses on the EU's environmental responsibilities as a bloc of developed countries, and ensures programmes that enhance rather than destroy our eco-system. It is fundamental that the EU's development programme is kept free of geo-politics and calls on member states to end their destructive military aid and trade programmes.



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