



## DEVELOPING THROUGH KNOWLEDGE WHAT IS THE ERD INITIATIVE?



The European Union is the world's largest provider of development assistance and is deeply committed to achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Despite the impact of the recent economic crisis and the threat of public spending cuts, European citizens remain staunch supporters of aid, with 90% thinking it is important, according to a recent Eurobarometer survey.<sup>1</sup> In addition, nearly three-quarters are in favour of honouring or going beyond the EU's existing aid commitments.

Aside from financial resources, European citizens believe that the EU can bring something valuable to the global development agenda. An overwhelming majority of Europeans surveyed (61%) believe that the Union can positively contribute to the global debate on development.

This is exactly what the European Report on Development (ERD) – which is the main outcome of the Mobilising European Research for Development Policies initiative – seeks to do by bridging the gap between academics, policy-makers and other actors involved in development. With input and contributions from stakeholders in developing partner countries, the ERD recommends new European perspectives on important and pressing development issues. The report develops perspectives based on independent knowledge excellence, policy innovation, wide consultation and the building of common ground between the various stakeholders.

In particular, the ERD endeavours to enrich policy-making processes, stimulate debate and research on development issues in Europe, and amplify the EU's voice in the international arena. It is intended to be a European counterpart to other flagship international reports such as the World Development Report from the World Bank and the UN's Human Development Report. The ERD initiative is supported by the European Commission and seven EU Member States, namely Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

Coordinated by the ERD steering committee, stakeholder participation is at the heart of the ERD's multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed and consultative authorship process. The report relies on both existing literature and original research which has been commissioned from specialised institutes and universities in Europe, the United States, Africa and Asia.

These research papers and the draft report itself are debated and validated during a series of preparatory events which take place in the months leading up to the ERD's release. Peer consultations and scrutiny of this kind helps not only to improve the quality of the knowledge contained within the ERD but also ensures it is transparent.

The ERD is not supposed to be a precise prescription but creates a framework for the EU and its member states to think about and re-think their role.

So far, two ERD editions have been produced and published under the lead of the European University Institute (EUI), on State fragility (2009) and social protection (2010/2011), both of which have a geographical focus on sub-Saharan Africa. The third ERD edition will be led by a consortium composed of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), the German Development Institute (DIE) and the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM).

## OVERCOMING FRAGILITY

The first edition of the European Report on Development appeared in 2009. It focuses on the complex and intricate issue of state fragility in sub-Saharan Africa. Countries in situation of fragility are countries where governments cannot or are not willing to provide even the most basic public goods and services which we, as Europeans, take for granted, such as security, access to safe drinking water and primary healthcare.

State fragility not only hampers development and increases the vulnerability of the citizens of these countries, it also tends to have a persistent, long-term grip. The ERD proposes a number of ways of tackling the problems and challenges posed by state fragility and boosting the resilience of societies and individuals caught in the fragility trap.

## SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

The 2010/2011 edition of the European Report on Development comes against the backdrop of the triple food-fuel-economic crisis which has increased poverty and vulnerability in many parts of the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

It examines whether social protection – which has been pivotal in tackling poverty and social exclusion in Europe – can play a similar role in sub-Saharan Africa and reduce poverty, promote pro-poor economic growth and inclusive development, and improve people's resilience to external shocks. It also explores how this can be achieved and funded, what is the role of African actors and how can the EU and other donors provide effective support to home-grown initiatives. Existing programmes around the world, including sub-Saharan Africa, highlight the importance of political will, commitment and administrative capacity for the success of any social protection initiative.

## QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE

- Do you think knowledge is an important ingredient in the development equation? If so, how?
- Do you think a European perspective on development is necessary? Why?
- How much attention do you think policy-makers should pay to academics and researchers in this field?
- What are the main constraints and challenges involved in bridging the gap between research and policy-making?
- What would make interesting themes for future ERD editions?
- How important do you think it is to improve the links between researchers from Europe and developing countries and how can this be achieved?

## FURTHER READING

- ERD site <http://erd.eui.eu/>
- 'Towards the European Report on Development – an inclusive and participatory process'  
[http://erd.eui.eu/media/ERD-Brochure\\_21x21\\_UK\\_LR.pdf](http://erd.eui.eu/media/ERD-Brochure_21x21_UK_LR.pdf)
- Mobilising European Research for Development Policies  
[http://ec.europa.eu/development/how/research-development/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/development/how/research-development/index_en.cfm)
- 'Millennium Development Goals at midpoint: where do we stand and where do we need to go'  
[http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/2008.11.06%20MDG\\_long\\_paper\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/2008.11.06%20MDG_long_paper_en.pdf)
- ERD 2009 <http://erd.eui.eu/erd-2009/final-report/>
- ERD 2010/2011 <http://erd.eui.eu/erd-2010/final-report/>

<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/eurobarometer200910\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/eurobarometer200910_en.pdf)