

# European Communities Commission Background Report

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DEVELOPMENT: CO-OPERATION WITH NGOs

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## Summary

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a useful role in developing countries. They can offer both expertise and flexibility in support of small but important projects that cannot easily attract government funds. Their usefulness to EC development policy was recognised in 1976, and since then, on a growing but still inadequate scale, the Community has been prepared to contribute financially to approved micro-projects undertaken by recognised NGOs from the Community countries.

At the end of 1981 some 856 projects had been co-financed, with 56m ECU (£32m) (1) drawn from EC funds, and there were 151 NGOs operating in 99 developing countries, representing a total joint investment of 163m ECU (£93m). Small but practical projects ranged from equipping an agricultural school in Zimbabwe to improving stock farming in Paraguay; from providing necessities for a maternity clinic in Nepal to acquisition of rolling stock in Guinea-Bissau.

## Building Community co-operation

From the start of Community co-funding the European Commission sought to encourage meetings of NGOs from the Community countries, and this has gradually led to an annual Assembly, with an elected Liaison Committee to advise the Commission on NGO strategies and projects. In 1976 the Community budget allocation to NGOs was only 2.5m ECU; in 1981 it had grown to 14m ECU (about £8m) but was proving grossly inadequate to cover the number of applications for assistance.

The procedures for the co-financing of projects was laid down by the Council of Ministers in 1977 (2), which included a stipulation that the Commission should produce an annual report on the use of credits allocated during the preceding year. The Commission's 1981 report (3) makes fascinating reading.

Apart from actual projects in developing countries the Community has also contributed to NGO food and emergency aid operations and, on a small scale, to public education programmes on world development, which include those undertaken by trade unions, farming organizations and youth groups.

An interesting example of NGO co-operation was the decision to establish

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(1) 1 ECU = 57p (11 May 1982)

(2) Council Document R/207/78(GCD) of 26 January 1978

(3) COM(82) 157 final of 14 April 1982

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co-ordinating bodies for distribution of food and emergency aid. This led to the establishment of EURONAIID, a special organization set up by some of the main NGOs active in Food Aid; in September 1981 NGOs also worked out a structure whereby one agency in turn would take on the responsibility for co-ordinating NGO requests to the Commission for emergency aid.

#### Type and distribution of aid

In 1981, out of a total of 109 NGOs receiving EC assistance, 15 were from the UK. Co-financing covered 188 projects, with a Community contribution of 14m ECU. British NGOs were responsible for 33 projects with aid totalling 1.8m ECU (£1m). (See below).

Geographically, most NGO projects were in Africa (53 per cent), followed by Latin America (23 per cent), Asia (16.5 per cent) and the Mediterranean (7.5 per cent). Some 55 per cent of EC aid went to countries with a per capita income of less than \$500, while 23 of the least developed countries absorbed 29 per cent of available credits.

A third of EC aid went on educational projects, about a quarter on agriculture and a fifth on health. Other projects were concerned with transport, migrants and refugees.

Leading British NGOs, such as Oxfam, Population Concern, Save the Children Fund, the Intermediate Technology Development Group, Christian Aid and the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIA) were among those assisted by Community funds in 1981. Their work varied from the acquisition of motorised ferries in Bangladesh to building a paediatric annex to a hospital in Chile; from training programmes in Grenada and Zimbabwe to family planning in Indonesia, and equipping a technical college in Nairobi, Kenya. Many projects were concerned with health and medical development or small rural construction works of benefit to the local population.

#### Future co-operation

The Commission notes with satisfaction the growing co-operation between Community NGOs, and anticipates the necessity of creating a small, Community funded permanent secretariat to service the work of the Liaison Committee.

While admitting to local frustrations over delayed EC payments it considers that Community aid policy to NGOs has more than proved its worth. But already the demand for co-financing far outstrips the resources available. Projects have had to be turned down, not because they lack merit, but because funds have been used up.

The report is, in effect, a plea to the Council of Ministers to be more generous in future with budgetary allocations adequate to meet demand.

ANNEX

TABLE 1

Allocation of Community assistance to NGO projects in 1981

	APPROVED PROJECTS			
	Number of NGOs	Number of projects	of which block-grants	Community contribution in ECU
BELGIUM	16	34	9	2,341,312
DENMARK	1	2	-	351,462
GERMANY	10	18	1	2,315,671
FRANCE	19	32	5	3,099,489
IRELAND	4	10	2	331,454
ITALY	16	22	3	2,201,049
LUXEMBOURG	1	2	-	56,670
NETHERLANDS	4	11	2	924,235
UNITED KINGDOM	15	33	3	1,845,957
PUBLIC EDUCATION	23	24	-	595,619
	109	188	25	14,062,918
LIAISON COMMITTEE	-	-	-	58,137
TO BE CARRIED OVER TO 1982 (1)	-	-	-	219,230
TOTAL				14,340,285 (2)

(1) Dissociated credits carried over to the following year.

(2) Including credits carried over from 1980.

