

Where is the Money? Europe Should Keep its Promises

<http://www.social-europe.eu/2010/04/where-is-the-money-europe-should-keep-its-promises/>

January 27, 2011



The following questions were hotly debated in last year's European Council meetings: How much financial assistance should Europe deliver in the run up to Copenhagen? In which time-frame, and under which conditions? With the financial and economic crisis in the back of everyone's minds, none of the 27 heads of state and government attending last year's meetings was happy to make any promises concerning this issue.

In the end, during the December 2009 meeting, the EU came up with proposals for the negotiations in Copenhagen. A total sum of 7.2 billion euro was promised for the years 2010-2012 in order to kick-start all the measures the developing world was hoping for: Financing mitigation action, financing forest protection, and financing adaptation measures in order to cope with the effects of a changing environment. In addition to this financing promise, the European Council also declared that by 2020 at least 100 billion euro per year would be collected from private and public sources in order to pay for all the necessities required by a successful climate policy.

In the last night of the Copenhagen negotiations, the topic of financial deliveries came up on the agenda again. How much would the developed world be willing to pay? Would others join the EU by promising substantial support on their own – and not only in the long run but also in the short-term? Especially the least developed countries wanted to see action in an area that they called the precondition for 'climate justice'. The EU, together with Japan and the United States, finally pledged a total amount of 30bn US dollars for 2010-12. This number was written down in the Copenhagen Accord. The precondition set by developing countries was that the money should be 'new and additional' – another important promise given in Copenhagen.

From today's perspective these discussions seem to be far detached from reality. Reality rather means: How to save Greece from a financial collapse or how to compensate for the consequences of seismic activities in Iceland? Climate finance has disappeared from public attention.

In the next few months, the first results from an analysis of 2010 spending on climate action in developing countries must be released. The findings will not only be disappointing. They might even endanger the whole process of international climate policies once again. The reason is simple: There was not a lot developed countries were able to deliver in international climate policies so far. Not on emissions performance and not on any other topic in the debate. The only way to create some credibility and trust would have been a strong delivery on the financial promises given in Copenhagen.

Aside from the issue of credibility, keeping promises in climate financing is also in our own interest. The capacities we help to build in developing countries today will be able to deliver action tomorrow. This might also prevent climate change destroying the few success stories our development aid achieved in the last couple of years. Similarly, money spent on forest protection will protect carbon sinks, which we will need for slowing down the process of global warming in the coming years. Last but not least, climate finance could build a prospect for life in areas where life is already threatened by

the effects of human induced changes in the environment. By financing more resistant crops for agricultural use or by supporting sustainable water management, Europe could provide positive prospects for people in affected regions and, at the same time, relieve some migration pressures and stop regional conflicts that could otherwise arise in areas without any hope for a better future.

The European promise on climate financing in Copenhagen was the one and only major step we were willing to take in climate policies since the decision on the 20% reduction target in 2007. We should make sure that we keep this promise. Otherwise the little trust which is left in the negotiations will disappear soon.

No related posts.