

Fresh perspectives from the European Commission with Ms Angela Filote

We are interviewing **Ms Angela Filote**, the **Head of the European Commission Representation in Romania**. In the context of the **European Year for Development (EYD2015)**, our discussion is touching upon the role of the EU as the biggest development donor in the world and Romania's profile as a new donor in the field of international cooperation.

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Alexandra: **A special survey dedicated to the #EYD2015 has been carried out at the end of 2014 in all the 28 Member States of the European Union. At a European level, 85% of the citizens consider that helping people in developing countries is extremely important and should be a priority for the EU (64%).**

However, more than half of the Europeans (55%) do not know where the EU aid for development goes and lack knowledge on the way the EU operates in partner countries where development work is conducted.

Having a look at the way Romanians answered, we discovered that 55% of the population does not know where the Romanian ODA goes; nevertheless, almost the same percent of respondents (54%) consider that tackling poverty in developing countries should be a priority for the national government. About 70% agree that tackling poverty in developing countries is a moral duty of the European Union.

Now when the EYD is about to end, how would you describe its legacy in terms of enhancing knowledge and spreading good practices in the field of international cooperation across the EU and more specifically in Romania?

Ms Filote: Going into this campaign, we always knew that 2015 would be a key international year for enhancing knowledge with a follow-up framework to the recently approved Sustainable Development Goals, this December's Climate Change Conference in Paris and the ongoing financial and now refugee crisis. The timing of 2015 for the European Year for Development (EYD2015) was therefore crucial as it created a unique communication platform and momentum to raise awareness and bring global issues such as climate change, natural and man-made disasters, trade, migration, radical extremism, outbreaks of epidemics and security issues closer to EU citizens.

An effective EYD2015 communication campaign was needed to show and involve EU citizens in the reality of international cooperation. Thanks to a decentralised, innovative and engaging approach with an emphasis on the young (15-24), the EYD2015 has brought about widespread support from our partners and a new and better way to communicate the narrative on international cooperation's current and future global challenges affecting our everyday lives via co-owned social media channels, [an interactive website](#) and a [thematic campaign toolkit](#) in all languages.

Like the majority of the Europe's Member States, Romania has contributed to the year's legacy and ran a very ambitious campaign for the year through music and art festivals, youth exhibitions and EYD Days on 19-20 September as part of our broader campaign taking place across 17 European Member States. The EYD Days involved youth volunteers, local NGOs, the private sector and national media targeting the broader public.

Alexandra: **2015 is the European Year for Development. However, if we had dedicated a thematic topic to be celebrated by the entire world this year, 2015 would have been the Global Year for Development. What are your hopes and your doubts about the new post-2015 agenda and how does it influence the EU's role as the biggest development donor in the world?**

Ms Filote: The Millennium Development Goals have guided EU development policy for 15 years and the EU has made the biggest contribution - the EU and its Member States are collectively the world's largest donor by far, providing €58 billion in 2014.

However, progress has been unequal around the world, and there remains unfinished business as we reach the MDGs 2015 deadline. Furthermore, the world is a very different place to what it was in 2000 when the MDGs were put in place, with new challenges that call for global and integrated solutions across a wide range of policies. The new set of Sustainable Development Goals reflects that. The EU is determined to fully implement the 2030 Agenda, across the range of its internal and external policies. In doing so, the EU remains committed to global solidarity and will support the countries most in need.

Alexandra: We are going to slightly change the topic and discuss the fact that since 2007, Romania's role in development cooperation has changed. From a beneficiary country, it has become a donor of official development assistance (ODA). While providing ODA through multilateral channels (i.e. UN agencies, EU, OSCE, etc) might give us less visibility in the field, bilateral assistance is perceived as a very efficient way of exporting our transition experience. What are Romania's comparative advantages as a donor and how can it enhance its role in the development cooperation, from your perspective?

Ms Filote: The transition experience of Romania is definitely a valuable asset for its development policy. Its comparative advantage consists in the multitude of development and transition similarities with the partner countries we try to engage with at the moment. The fact that Romania succeeded in achieving important results during the transition process towards democracy and an open economy might benefit to our partners in development. Moreover, Romania's knowledge of the economic, political and social context of the Eastern neighbourhood and the South Caucasus region should give us a leading role in promoting the European agenda and several development projects and programmes.

Since its integration in the EU in 2007, Romania has provided bilateral development assistance (i.e. country-to-country) and has also joined the European Commission's efforts in the field. Currently, from a geographic perspective, Romania's focus is on 12 countries: in the Black Sea extended region (Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) and in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region: Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Irak, Palestine and Afghanistan. Amongst its thematic priorities, we should mention i) the transition to democracy, good governance, support for the Civil Society, ii) the support to agriculture and economic growth, iii) the environment protection and the promotion of the renewable energy sources in the Climate Change context.

Last, but not least, I would also add the fact that recently Romania made significant progress in increasing its aid transparency. In July 2015, Romania became the first country from those that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 to publish data related to its development cooperation activities according to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) requirements.

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With over 20 years of experience in institutional communication management, **Ms Angela Filote** worked in Romania, Turkey and Egypt, and in 2010, she started to work at the European Commission in Brussels as one of the spokespersons responsible for the EU Enlargement and the Neighbourhood Policy. One year later, Ms Filote joined the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development as the Head of the Communication Department in charge, amongst others with the

information campaign on the EU-wide Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In January 2014, she became the Head of the European Commission Representation in Romania.

Ms Filote studied economics, political science and European affairs. She holds a Master's Degree in Philosophy, with a Major in International Relations from VU University of Amsterdam.