

: Programme

as at 30 March 2015

sef: Policy Lunch 2015

International tax cooperation for sustainable development worldwide

Brussels

Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the EU,
Rue Montoyer 47

6 May 2015, 12.15 hrs.

Conference language

English

Cooperating Partner

CIDSE - International Alliance of Catholic Development Agencies, Brussels



BACKGROUND

In recent years, multinational enterprises (MNEs) have frequently hit the headlines for (legally) exploiting differences in national laws in order to minimise their tax liability. Tax avoidance by multinationals is currently costing the EU Member States an estimated one trillion euros a year. This gap needs to be closed.

The OECD's BEPS Project (base erosion and profit shifting) is intended to give countries the tools they need to ensure that multinationals' profits are taxed where the economic activities generating the profits are performed. This shifts the revenue authorities' focus away from private individuals towards companies. Multinationals with an annual turnover above EUR 750 million would be obliged to report their profits and tax payments to national tax authorities on a country-by-country basis. In October 2014, the G20 countries and major financial centres endorsed a new standard on automatic annual exchange of tax information. At the time of writing (12 February 2015), the 20 leading industrialised countries and emerging economies are making progress towards an international tax regime; for example, at the G20 Finance Ministers meeting in Istanbul, they agreed to address key elements of international tax rules by the end of 2015. To support implementation, a multilateral instrument which could be integrated into existing tax treaties will be negotiated by the end of 2016. The use of this tool would avoid the need for lengthy negotiations to update the 3,000 or so bilateral tax treaties worldwide.

In their Communiqué following the Istanbul meeting, the G20 countries invited the developing countries to join the Action Plan. The developing countries have not yet been involved as they lack the bureaucratic and technical infrastructure needed to support data exchange. Developing countries around the world are therefore advocating for a stepwise solution. Options will be discussed at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July 2015.

At their Policy Lunch in Brussels, the Development and Peace Foundation (sef:) and its cooperating partner CIDSE are keen to discuss with experts how the EU can and will position itself at the summit with a view to achieving more tax justice, especially for developing countries. Key questions are whether the OECD should continue to be the main forum for discussion of international tax cooperation, what role the G20 has to play, and whether the United Nations would be a more appropriate framework, based on a newly created intergovernmental tax body. This latter approach is advocated not only by various non-governmental organisations but also by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Agenda.

Key questions

1. Where are the major gaps in international tax justice which need to be addressed at the conference in Addis Ababa?
2. 2015 is a crucial year for international cooperation (keywords: new international climate change agreement, SDG agenda). What are the implications for more effective international tax cooperation?
3. What measures need to be taken to ensure that developing countries benefit from international tax cooperation to a greater extent in future?

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12.00 HRS REGISTRATION AND DRINKS

12.15 HRS. WELCOME

Rainer Steffens (tbc)

Head of the Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the EU, Brussels

Dr Gerd Harms (tbc)

State Secretary (ret.)

Deputy Chair of the Executive Committee of the
Development and Peace Foundation (sef:), Berlin

12.30 HRS. INPUT AND ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Chair

Annette Riedel

Journalist

Deutschlandradio, Studio Brussels

Input

Jean Saldanha

Senior Policy Advisor CIDSE

Chair of Concord Financing for Development Task Force, Brussels

Round Table Discussion

Àngela Corbalán

Deputy Head of Office/Head of EU Communications

Oxfam EU Advocacy Office, Brussels

Sven Giegold MEP

Financial Spokesperson of the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, Brussels

Member of the Board of Trustees of the Development and Peace Foundation (sef:)

Dr Patrick Ignatius Gomes (tbc)

Secretary General of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States, Brussels

Dr Max Lienemeyer (tbc)

Head of Task Force Tax Planning Practices

Competition Directorate General

European Commission, Brussels

Followed by discussion with the audience

14.00 HRS. RECEPTION