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## PARLIAMENT VOTES TO BOOST EU SPENDING ON DEVELOPMENT

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28.10.2016

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EurActiv

MEPs on Wednesday (26 October) approved a  million increase to EU spending to cover the costs of the refugee and migration crisis without cutting development aid.

Europes response to the refugee crisis requires significant funds and the European Parliament has decided to make sure they will be available for 2017.

In a resolution adopted on Wednesday (26 October), the European Parliament demanded more funds to assist third countries to mitigate the migration crisis. The European budget must correspond to [the EUs] political commitments and strategic objectives, MEPs insisted.

As well as voting to reverse all the Councils proposed cuts in the draft EU budget for 2017, MEPs strongly questioned whether the funds available for projects in third countries were sufficient, especially in view of the current refugee crisis.

Lawmakers suggested an increase of almost half a billion euros to the EUs external spending, which finances its development and migration programmes. The vote was warmly welcomed by NGOs.

We call on the European Parliament to ensure that additional funds for external action in the 2017 budget are spent on addressing the root causes of displacement and not on border control, said Natalia Alonso from Oxfam International.

### EU AID AN INEFFECTIVE TOOL TO END THE MIGRATION CRISIS

Member states have deployed their development aid budgets to tackle the root causes of the migration crisis. But the effectiveness of these programmes in stemming the flow of migrants to the EU has yet to be seen. EurActiv France reports.

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MEPs are keen to make sure that sufficient funds will be available to cover the many new initiatives announced by the European executive over the last 15 months, aimed at helping developing countries to tackle the migration crisis.

### Diversion of development funds

According to an estimate by the NGO One, the EU has pledged at least an additional  billion to

tackle migration issues in 2017.

But somehow, the required funds do not seem to have materialised in the 2017 budget, proposed earlier this year. If we solve the crisis with no additional money, just using flexibility margins from the EU budget, we won't be able to prevent the next one, warned Valentina Barbagallo, policy manager at One.

## WEALTHY COUNTRIES FURTHER CANNIBALISE DEVELOPMENT BUDGETS TO HOST REFUGEES

Faced with what promises to be a long-term migration crisis, more and more donor countries are using their development budgets to fund their domestic asylum policies, a trend that is set to become increasingly the norm. EurActiv France reports.

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The risk of development money being diverted to help mitigate the migration crisis has been flagged by both NGO and MEPs. I can only warn the EU's foreign and development politicians not to consider themselves coherent policy spheres. We in the SPD are against the principle of conditionality. That means that we are against a country being given more money just because it stops its would-be refugees from leaving, German Social-Democrat MEP Arne Lietz (SPD) told EurActiv.

The European Commission has also recently proposed additional funding for new initiatives such as the External Investment Plan. While the Parliament and Commission show that the budgets ceilings must urgently be increased, they still do not cover all of the EU's new commitments made since the refugee crisis began, warned Tamira Gunzburg, Brussels director at The ONE Campaign.

### Member states responsibility

In the ongoing budget debate, Lietz also called on member states to move towards the target of allocating 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) to official development assistance by 2030.

Currently, only four European countries meet this target. The United Kingdom is the biggest donor, while Germany comes up short with just 0.5% of GNI. And the current legal framework allows for costs associated with refugees to be skimmed off the development cooperation budget, even when those costs are incurred domestically.

I have the impression that the signs of the times are not being heeded, warned Lietz. Particularly in light of Germany's strong tax situation, a discussion has to be held about how to distribute that money. I believe it would be a political miscalculation not to think about the 0.7% commitment immediately.

Ultimately, the ongoing political tension, which has been exacerbated by the refugee crisis, is going to weigh heavily on Germany's domestic politics and lead to nationalism and protectionism.

### Commission amending letter

Ahead of the vote, the European Commission also presented an amending letter to the original draft budget for 2017, suggesting another increase of  in commitments to EU external spending.

The amendment proposes mobilising additional finance for new initiatives such as the European

Fund for Sustainable Development. As expected, the Council informed the Parliament that this amended proposal could not be accepted and triggered the three week conciliation period, during which the Commissions €1bn proposal will be discussed.

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