



An Analytical Study on Major Issues in European Union Development Cooperation Policy

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Abstract

The European Union (EU) is the largest multilateral donor/purveyor of development cooperation assistance and accounts for well over half of international aid transferred from the developed to the developing world. The major aims of the European Development Cooperation Policy (DCP) are said to be fighting underdevelopment, improving international distribution of wealth and enhancing global distributive justice and they have become core issues in the Union's effort to build a more just, harmonious, peaceful and principled world order. The present paper aims to study and analyze the Major Issues in the framework of European DCP.

Key Words: European Union, Development Cooperation, Policy Coherence

Introduction

The international development cooperation of the European Union (EU) is a 'shared competence' (2019) in that the European Community (EC) part falls under the first pillar, but the Member States have also retained the right to continue to pursue their own bilateral development programmes. Since the EC does not have exclusive competence in this policy sector there is the need to encourage as extensive coordination and complementarity as possible between all the development cooperation programmes of the Member States and the Community (Brolin, 2007). Moreover, from the initial stages the EC linked trade with development and the Community attempted to establish a free trade area between Europe and the African countries by offering free access to its market for goods from its African colonies. At that juncture, an element of coherence could be observed between the Community's development cooperation and trade policies, as trade policies were chalked out in the fashion that contributed to the development of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries. At the same time, one could also witness incoherence between the development cooperation policy and other policies of the Community, which inevitably reflected in its practice as well.



The European development cooperation remains a work at two - the European and the national – levels. There were attempts to Europeanise the development programme on the one hand and the member states wanted to play their individual (besides their collective) role, on the other. Opinion is divided in this regard and while some scholars advocate Europeanisation others call for renationalization, meaning an active role for the individual member states, reducing the European Commission as the 29th member. This is another major issue which continues to haunt the development cooperation policy and programme of the Union. Here, in the following pages an effort has been made to analyse the incoherence that had set in the European development cooperation policy and practice, which has invariably affected its effectiveness and outcome.

Policy Coherence for Development

“Policy coherence for development (PCD) may be broadly defined as taking account of the needs and interests of developing countries in the evolution of the global economy” (Development, 2003). The realization on the part of the EC that its development cooperation activities have failed to achieve desired impact on the developing world forced it to review its policy and practice in this regard. On finding that one of the major reasons for the failure was the incoherence in the policy and practice of development cooperation with other policies of the Community and the lack of coordination between the European Community and the member states, the Europeans attempted to bring in the necessary coherence and consistency into the development cooperation framework. For the first time, the Treaty of Maastricht or the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) sets out the objectives of a common European Development Cooperation Policy (DCP) was part of an “attempt to reduce inconsistencies between different policies.”

PCD found its way into Europe in Article 130v of the TEU which reads: “The Community shall take account of the objectives referred to in Article 130u in the policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries” (Hoebink, Research Gate, 2007). This is known in the field of development cooperation as the Maastricht Treaty’s ‘coherence article’. The intention is not to construct a “single development policy but to ensure the bilateral policies of all the member states consistent and complementary with the common policy” (Dickson K. A., 2004). Thus, Article 130x reads: “The Community and the member states shall coordinate their policies on development cooperation and shall consult each other on their aid programmes . . .”. “The Treaty sets out a number of objectives, which encompass the aim to achieve more coordination with the programmes of the EU member states, greater coherence between different policies formulated and carried out by the Community, and effective



complementarity between the Community's and the member states' bilateral programmes" (Olsen, 2004). The Amsterdam Treaty (1997) added a fourth principle: consistency of all external activities of the European Union. The principle of coherence is also supported by Article C of the European Union Treaty which maintains: "The Union shall in particular ensure the consistency of its external activities as a whole in the context of its external relations, security, economic and development policies".

The Maastricht Treaty officially included DCP among the main functions of the EU and also included development cooperation for the first time among the competences of the Union, to be exercised in a "complementary fashion with the development policies of the member states" (Art. 177 TEC). The Community and the member states "shall co-ordinate their policies on development co-operation and shall consult each other on their aid programmes, including international organisations and during international conferences" (Art. 180 (1) TEC).

In addition, the objectives of the European DCP are expected to be coherent with the fundamental values that underpin the Union's rationale as well as existence such as the promotion of world peace and the settlement of conflict through dialogue, the development and consolidation of democracy and the constitutional state, the observance of human rights and the fundamental freedoms, equity and solidarity (Federico Bonaglia, 2006).

DCP's incoherence with other EU Policies

As in the case of European DCP which becomes the victim of incoherence with other policies of the EU, other foreign policy goals of the Union too are victims of DCP's incoherence with them. For instance, the DCP which is expected to work in favour of EU's democracy promotion programme tends to go against it when the Union subsidises the authoritarian regimes by extending aid to them without bothering about how it was used. Some observers like Michela Wrong, the author of *its Our Turn to Eat*, are more concerned with the malign effect of aid on a country's politics and morale. Wrong has reported on the way that civil society organisations, political dissidents and anti-corruption campaigners in countries like Kenya, a major recipient of European aid, get disillusioned and discouraged when the continuation of that aid in effect implies the Union's approval and support of corrupt governments (Foreman, 2012). This happens when aid is given on other foreign policy considerations. Authoritarian regimes were supported because of their anti-communist stand. During the cold war era anti-Communism was taken by the West as a virtue, which would absolve any one of their all other evils. Political and ideological complexities thus ruled the Western minds.

Europeanizing the European development cooperation policy and programme is yet another issue, which has caught the fancy of the scholars on development studies. While



the Europeanists, leaders as well as scholars advocated Europeanisation and the EU-level institutions attempted at it, the nationalist leaders and advocates criticized the move vigorously and resisted it tooth and nail. Perennial clash of interest and domination of national over Community interest too mars the situation. National governments feeling that the European-level institutions being slow in taking decision, resulting in terrible delay in implementing them make them to resist any attempts towards ‘Europeanisation’ of the aid programme.

The member states were enjoined by the Treaty on European Union (TEU) to co-ordinate their bilateral programmes with that of the Commission. However, there was no formal restriction on each pursuing its own distinctive aid profile (Youngs, 2004). In practice “EU’s relations with the South comprise the bilateral policies of member states plus the collective policies of the Community, at times referred to as a ‘mixed system’”.

Though the “Community and the member states are expected to coordinate their policies on development cooperation and shall consult each other on their aid programmes”, there is a severe lack of coordination between them and suggestions that development policy be fully Europeanized were rebutted all through. Though, the proportion of total EU aid channeled through Commission-managed development programmes increased, the member states retained their own bilateral programmes and resisted any more significant pooling of aid budgets (Dickson K. A., 2004). In particular, the contribution of the EC has grown in real terms from US\$ 1,761 million (10.8 per cent of total) in 1980 to US\$ 4,763 million (21.2 per cent of total) in 2000, making it the largest multilateral donor (Barder, 2013). In 2004, €6.9 billion was channeled through the Commission (Grimm, 2006). The European Commission alone accounted for 13 per cent of total aid flows - €12.3 billion in 2009. In 2010 the EU was the third largest DAC member with USD 12.7 billion grant programme and loans and equities to partner countries totaling USD 8.3 billion (OECD, 2012). The Commission administered €11 billion or 20 per cent in 2011. At present, the EU accounts for more than half of the world’s Official Development Assistance (ODA). Three quarters of the overall EU ODA is provided by its Member States. The European Commission’s share in EU aid has considerably increased and now stands at about a quarter. It may be said that the Commission’s contribution hovers around one-fourth to one-fifth of the member states contribution. While EU member states were cutting their budgets (in real terms) by almost 15 per cent over the last ten years, the EC increased the quantum of its assistance to developing countries and transition economies by some 45 per cent. This increase, however, was not uniformly distributed, satisfying all the concerned parties (Federico Bonaglia, 2006).

Some member states contribute more development assistance than the EU itself. The persistence of separate member state development policies is reminder of member



states' unwillingness to surrender policy instruments in international arena. Naturally, most member states want to maximize their own international influence while also benefiting from a collective effort through the Commission. In the case of development assistance, most member states have specific preferences and self-serving agendas that are best pursued individually rather than collectively (Dinan, 2005).

Instead of coordinating their efforts with the Commission, some of the member states like the UK criticize the Commission and even try to outdo it. Andrew Mitchell, Secretary of State for International Development 2010–2012, took pride on projecting the UK as 'development superpower', just as the Americans are a military superpower. In 2012, the United Kingdom spent approximately £8 billion a year on foreign aid, and it was expected to increase to £11 billion by 2015 (Foreman, 2012).

Major Issues

a) Week Institutional Framework and Policy-Making

“The Community's external fisheries policy is the responsibility of the Commission's Directorate General for Fisheries (DGXIV) while its development cooperation with the countries in the ACP region is managed by the Directorate General for Development (DGVIII). Given the split responsibility, policy incoherence between DGXIV, who conclude fisheries agreements with third countries, including in Africa and DGVIII, who is expected to promote, among other things, fisheries development in Africa is proved unavoidable, as there are conflicts of interests or lack of coordination between the two Directorate Generals (Acheampong, 1997). With the declining stocks of fish in the territorial waters of EU Member States, European fishing fleets have been looking for alternate sources of fish in other parts of the world and to facilitate this, DGXIV had concluded a series of fisheries agreements with third countries. These fisheries agreements are an integral part of the Common Fisheries Policy, the primary purpose of which is to serve the domestic demand for fish in the EU and to supply the fisheries industry with raw materials for processing (Acheampong, 1997). On the other hand, DGVIII offers economic assistance to the African fishing communities to strengthen their fishing and processing industries. The bureaucratic dreadful of multiple Directorates and agencies deal individually with various issues concerning and imposing upon development, thereby creating, in effect, incoherence between the policies and programmes.”

b) Lack of Coordination between EU and members

Article 130x of the Maastricht Treaty calls on the EU and its “member states to coordinate their policies on development cooperation and to consult each other on their aid programmes.” In theory such an arrangement would provide a level playing field for



the many partners with which the EU and its member states have agreements. However, it was never practiced (Dickson K. A., 2004). The EU cannot be reduced simply as the twenty-eighth European donor. While the Commission implements 20 per cent of the collective EU aid effort, it also acts as coordinator, convener and policy-maker. The EU is an economic and trading partner, and its political dialogue, security policy and many other policies - from trade, agriculture and fisheries to environment, climate, energy and migration - have a strong impact on developing countries. It must translate this multi-faceted role into multiple policy mixes adapted and suitable to each partner country. To be completely effective, the EU and its member states must speak in one voice and act in unison “to achieve better results and to improve EU's visibility” (Aid, Europe Aid, 2004). Unfortunately this is not happening and both the EU and its partners in the developing world suffer as a consequence.

The member states have been unwilling to increase the “Community budget (the ceiling remains 1.27 per cent of EU GNP), and to enhance the portion of the budget (around 7 per cent) devoted to external action”. Focus on any new region for assistance results in the reduction of assistance to those regions which were concentrated upon earlier and that is what had happened to ACP countries when focus of aid transferred to neighbourhood countries (Smith, The ACP in the European Union's network of regional relationships: still unique or just one in the crowd?, 2004).

The mixed system led to a cumbersome bargaining process in which short-term national goals prevailed over Community values and goals (Dickson K. A., 2004). Alternatively, member states may sign up for Community policies which they have no intention of, or capacity to, implement. This means that what appears to be a united front initially may in practice disintegrate as member states refuse to play by the rules they themselves formulated (Dickson K. A., 2004).

c) Coordination/Consistency/Linkage Shortfall

‘Coordination short fall’ between the EU and the member states regarding DCP leads to incoherence. Hence, there was dire need for coordination in the objectives in the development policies of the member states and those of the Community, to make development assistance more effective (Dickson K. A., 2004). Again, “development policy and other facets of Community policy are not always consistent, which is referred to as ‘consistency or linkage shortfall’. If the Community needs to address this issue if it intends to increase its efficiency in international development. The lack of cohesion between different policies, directorates and services in actual means that while overall the Commission may be committed to the elimination of poverty in the South, sections within the Commission may have other priorities. Internal mechanisms for coordination though exist are not effective”. Grilli argues that there had never been a coherent



development policy but only a series of ad hoc responses to any given development on the part of the Community (Dickson K. A., 2004).

d) Lack of Policy Coherence

As mentioned earlier, there has been a specific EU legal commitment since 1992 as provided by the TEU to take into account the impact of other policies on developing countries. This obligation further got strengthened in the 2009 Lisbon treaty. Yet the policy coherence continues to remain an aspiration than a reality (Barder, 2013). The main fault with EU development policy is neither the quality of spending nor even the quantity. It is other EU policies which damage poor countries and the constructive work done by the former is undone by the latter. Since 2005, the EU has aimed to make all its policies coherent with its strategy for development. Still, EU policies, particularly on trade, agriculture and fisheries, continue to harm poor countries. Tindale is quite correct when he points out that “increased trade will not automatically help meet the MDGs, since the EU will have little influence over how the money earned by the developing country will be spent”. Nevertheless, as noted above, free and fair “trade is more important for economic growth than aid will ever be, so is a vital component of meeting some of the MDGs” (Tindale, Priorities for EU Development Aid). As such trade should be used to help economic growth by offering free and fair trade conditions to the developing countries rather than allowed to stand on the way of development through cooperation and assistance.

The lack of consistency upholds the appearance of a confused, unfocused actor and has prompted calls for structural/institutional reforms within EC resulting in the appointment of a “single external relations Commissioner within a reformed Commission” (Dickson K. A., 2004). Incoherence between the Community and the member states makes the scholars like Karen Smith to point out that it is inaccurate to lump together the Community and member state aid programmes and then to claim that they are the largest aid donors since “the European and national levels do not constitute such a coherent entity (Smith, The ACP in the European Union’s network of regional relationships: still unique or just one in the crowd?, 2004).”

After all, it is the low labour costs that give China, India and other Asian countries one of the few areas of comparative advantage in the global economy. Rather than supporting these countries by providing broad access to its lucrative market, the EU appears more concerned with defending its domestic industries in these areas that find it hard to compete by applying antidumping regulations. In such circumstances, the tension between the demands of a benevolent external development policy and aspects of internal EU economic policy cannot be reconciled (Holland, 2002). This becomes “problematic in the policy-making process and results



in lack of coherence between different sectors of Community policy and inconsistencies between Community policy and member states' national policies" (Dickson K. A., 2004).

These inconsistencies between Community policy and member states' national policies also influences in who gets what and how much from the EU, by way of development assistance. In 2002, Asia, with its high proportion of the world's poor, received about € 575m of development assistance. It was just one third of the per capita funding that the Latin American countries received. In spite of its best intention and attempt to introduce a reform in the allocation of money to these two regions, the Commission failed to obtain the necessary majority in the European Parliament in November 2003 due to intense lobbying, reflecting national foreign policy preferences (Maxwell, 2003).

Coherence, No Longer a Mission Impossible

In his concluding chapter Mold suggests that "perhaps the goal of coherence is an impossible dream". He says that it is useless "to constantly exhort policy co-ordination and coherence in aid delivery if structural constraints and bureaucratic procedures do not allow this to take place" (Mold, 2007). Probably, the Commission's failure to achieve coherence, in spite of its best and constant efforts, might have prompted Mold to concede defeat.

However, the struggle is worth continuing and attaining coherence is worth achieving. The EU needs to overcome the structural constraints and to reform the bureaucratic procedures, instead of throwing the blame on them. European civil society organisations are very clear on this issue. According to them, policy coherence is, by its very nature, a highly political issue and ultimately, needs to be dealt with in the political arena. Much more transparency and accountability is needed for meaningful participatory political debates on the issue of coherence and to arrive at a sensible solution (Drimmelen, 2001).

The adoption of the PCD communication and the subsequent Council conclusions marked a significant change in the EU, as confirmed by a leading official in DG Development: "Even though the concept of policy coherence for development was enshrined in the Treaties a long time ago, the issue has never made it all the way up to the Commission ... Things have changed, however, since the adoption of the MDG package; development is not always losing any more". The central question is the implementation of the commitments. Although it is not an easy task, "achieving better policy coherence for development is no longer a mission impossible" (Carbone M. , 2007).



Conclusion

Policy incoherence used to and continues to affect the quality of the European development cooperation from the days of Lomé Conventions. However, the issue of PCD emerged in a big way at the beginning of the 1990s. “The Development Assistance Committee played an important role in attempting to drive this agenda forward without much success. Within the EU, the debate started with the Treaty of Maastricht in the context of the 3Cs (complementarity, coordination and coherence) but, for various reasons, limited progress is made till date. The incoherence of the EU in its approach to international development was questioned by the NGO community which, in turn, carried out a number of public campaigns mainly against the EU’s common trade, agriculture and fishery policies. A number of member states, such as Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK, were also active on the coherence issue”.

The EU needs to ensure that its subsidized products are not permitted to enter any country where it will undermine local producers. “That is part of what coherence is all about” (Robinson, 1999). Only by combining its significant efforts in foreign aid with non-aid policies will the EU be able to make an indent in bridging the widening gap between the rich and the poor (Carbone M. , 2007). Any attempt to proliferate subsidized goods to enter developing country markets is not consistent with the EU's legal obligations under the Maastricht Treaty; the EU is obliged to take into account policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries. This legal obligation is to be met with at all costs.

Denying the lucrative EU market while trying to grab developing world market is unpardonable. Through the import of its highly subsidized commodities the EU has denied the Africans their own market. The case of South Africa affecting the fortunes of Namibian farmers of livestock industry remains a case in point. The Europeans claim that women are at the centre of their DCP, but, in reality affecting the life and livelihood of women indulging in dairy development, fisheries and agriculture through their trade policy and proposed partnership agreements.

The issue of development assistance is a matter of commitment at the highest political level and there is scope for further politicization of this issue. The call for better PCD will be intertwined further with the role that the EU intends to play in international politics. By acting as a unitary actor, and with its quality and quantity of aid, the EU is expected to shape the pace and direction of international development.

Dominance of neo-liberal tendencies in development cooperation policy and practice and efforts to chalk out policies which would serve the corporate interest has waylaid the DCP towards goals opposite to its natural destination. To justify its being called as a



normative power, the EU should follow the dictum: ‘Do no harm, even if you cannot afford to do anything good’, in regard to its development cooperation policy and programme.

The WTO argues that Aid for Trade has a supportive role to play in the realization of the MDGs. However, better infrastructure and capacity building alone would not be sufficient. The EU should also remove tariffs and quotas which discourage or exclude produce from developing countries. It needs to provide opportunity for the developing countries to have free and fair trade with the developed markets. To achieve this, policy coherence is indispensable. Policy incoherence leads to a situation in which the benefits that the EU gives through its development cooperation programme is taken away by its other policies. The best option left out for the EU to achieve its development goals and for the developing countries to achieve real development is policy coherence and Europeanisation of the development cooperation policy and programme.

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