

# Research in European Development Cooperation – a contribution by the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI)

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The end of the Cold War (1946 – 1989) influenced development cooperation in many ways. Firstly, development cooperation ceased to be a strategic policy tool in a context of bi-polar East-West conflict. This created room for donors to focus more effectively on the political dimensions of development (especially on issues like human rights, good governance, accountability etc.) but it also necessitated a new legitimacy<sup>1</sup>.

Secondly and in retrospect, the Cold War proved to have been a period of stability, and its ending has been the onset for major international instability. This has changed the way international relations are perceived, the aftermaths of September 11<sup>th</sup> (2001), the subsequent occupation of Afghanistan and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Iraq War (2003) possibly being a foretaste of how the new threats of international terrorism, failing states and weapons of mass destruction provoked military and security concerns to dominate the international scene.

Thirdly and more generally, the perception of our fast globalizing world has become more complex, which implies that policy-makers are confronted with new challenges when responding to international realities. This is particularly true for development policy, which addresses extremely diverse political sectors ranging from domestic politics to foreign policy, governance, human rights, social affairs, environment, gender, etc. Interestingly, this growing complexity of international relations has not impeded an increased global consensus on what the aims and instruments of development cooperation should be.

The universal agreement on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the principle of recipient ownership in the poverty reduction strategy (PRSP) and the harmonization and alignment of donor policies and procedures (“Rome Declaration”) have been accepted as the key to attaining the overarching goal of the international and also EU’s international cooperation and development agenda – poverty eradication – however difficult success in achieving this goal has been proven to be over the last four development decades.

From a broader perspective, a few key issues in (multidisciplinary) development research have therefore gained importance, without being completely new. The following are the most pressing concerns of many of the EADI member institutes and of the Association itself:

## **1. The development and security link**

People in the South in particular are under increased pressure from the world powers – the EU among them – focusing more on security and military issues than on social justice and human security. The link between security and development has been studied very much recently, with both concepts experiencing an important widening including political, social, cultural and ecological aspects. The relation between development and security comprises the question whether the two aspects reinforce each other or whether there can be a trade-off between the them. And if there is a conflict between development and security, how does it express itself? Shall poverty, hunger or social instability be recognized as the main challenges to global security – with foreign aid being the main tool to reduce security risks? Or are increased efforts and funds to be invested in anti-terrorist activities, arguing that development is only

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<sup>1</sup> In his NATO general report “Economic development through the lens of security” (Nov. 2003), Jos van Gennip shows how development cooperation lost much of its popularity, with aid sharply declining by 23% between 1991 and 2001 in the OECD countries.

possible where security is guaranteed? In other words: is security a precondition for development or development the precondition for security?

With these observations in mind, EADI will organise its next General Conference on the topic "Insecurity and development – Regional issues and policies for an interdependent world"<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. European development cooperation

Other issues are more specifically European, such as the impact of EU enlargement (or the new Constitution, or the new European budget, etc.) on the priorities and the direction of European development cooperation. However, considering the role of Europe in the global arena and its contribution of more than 50% to Official Development Assistance globally, European issues are more than just regional ones. Poverty eradication has been acknowledged ("enshrined") as the principal aim of the EU's future development efforts in the draft Constitutional Treaty<sup>3</sup>. The success of the EU in coordinating policies among member states and to achieve more coherence between trade policy, agricultural policy and development, and simultaneously harmonizing procedures both at EC and EU member state level will be a prerequisite for Europe to play a more efficient global role in the field of development cooperation. In this context, EADI has launched the pan-European project entitled "European Development Co-operation 2010", which aims at facilitating sustained analysis and debate about the future of European development cooperation across current and future member states of the Union and other European actors<sup>4</sup>.

In a more detailed way, the following topics<sup>5</sup> of European Development Cooperation should become areas of research:

### 2.1 EC policy formation (process)

The perception of EC aid and the EU's role in the world is important. Factors shaping this perception are to be explored. Particularly the accession to the EU of 10 new Member States make a better understanding of policy formation processes crucial. It is striking that the countries with the largest multilateral share in their development assistance are bad performers with regard to their overall GNP-share of ODA. By offering expertise and channels for aid, the EU/EC will smoothen the New Member States integration into the donor community. Governments' perceptions certainly have an impact and lobby groups/NGOs might have an impact on European development policy formulation. The EU, however, is more than a multilateral aid agency. It works as a multilevel system of governance and is likely to have a considerable life of its own with regard to its development agenda. Where are the EU's strengths and its structural deficits to be found?

- Which specific specialisation (regional, sectoral) do the New Member States bring into the EU? How will this transform the EU policy focus?
- With regard to Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations: Is trade used to promote development in partner countries? Will the EU provide sufficient

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<sup>2</sup> The conference will take place on 21-24 September 2005 in Bonn. For more information, see: [www.eadi.org](http://www.eadi.org)

<sup>3</sup> In 2002 the EU and all its member states undertook to reach the development aid target of 0.39% of GDP on average for all member states by 2006 (well below the pledge for 0.7% of GDP that had been made at the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen, in 1995) and so contribute to the achievement of the MDGs. Commitments announced at the Monterrey Conference are starting to be implemented.

<sup>4</sup> This project was conceptualised by EADI in 2002 following the EADI general conference in Ljubljana, and has since been developed into a long-term programme in partnership with other organisations and EADI member institutions. The project was launched as an answer to the obvious lack of long-term, coordinated and multidisciplinary debate and public opinion-building within the EU and its member states. For more information, see [www.edc2010.net](http://www.edc2010.net).

<sup>5</sup> Based on a discussion paper by Sven Grimm, ODI London at the EDC 2010 Steering Group Workshop 29 September 2004 in The Hague: "EDC 2010 – Paths to pursue in research".

aid to ACP-countries for their adjusting to the changing trade conditions under EPA's? How can the EU act as a benevolent trade partner? (e.g. services;incl. labour migration)

- What is the EU performance as a 'trade bloc' and potential 'aid bloc' in multilateral organisations (i.e. the WTO, the IMF, the World Bank)?
- Coordination among the EC and Member States in third countries: Where does it work and where does it not? How to improve it? (Possibly including mapping existing case studies).

## **2.2 EC policy coherence**

The international agenda is increasingly crowded with early warning mechanisms, conflict prevention, crisis management and the handling of assistance to weak and failing states. The European Security strategy refers to development issues as one strand of international action; its operationalisation will thus also affect the development community. As the EU is highly path dependent, regional approaches might be looked into, e.g. African case studies.

- How are rights promoted and conditionalities applied in EU development policy?
- Does the 'partnership' of Cotonou make a difference in human rights policy (funded by the European Development Fund) as compared to a 'donor logic' (via the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights without consent of the host country)?
- How does the EU respond to 'man-made disasters'? What are its institutional mechanisms?
- How does the EU consider the impact of crisis on neighbouring countries in its development strategies (e.g. the regional dimension of conflicts in Ivory Coast, Liberia, Simbabwe, Sudan)?

## **2.3 EC donor performance**

The EC provides for an added value to Member States' development policy. More empirical research on the EC's contribution and its commitment to international development and poverty reduction is needed.

The commitment to poverty reduction – conceptually and empirically – is at the centre of attention. Are we missing comparative advantages of the EU when we deplore its bad performance in the field of poverty reduction, which is usually judged by the share of Least Developed Countries among recipients?

- What effect did the introduction of Country Strategy Papers have on the EU performance as a donor? Do Country Strategy Papers encourage focussing aid or are they blurring the focus?
- What approach does the EU pursue in Middle Income Countries with regard to poverty reduction?
- How does the EU respond to new challenges such as the AU/NEPAD? Are its instruments sufficiently flexible to adapt to new environments?
- What is the EU's comparative advantage or complementarity towards Member states' policy? Is the machinery efficient and effective?

### 3. The research and policy link

A highly important issue that has come up in the development community recently is the link between development research and policy. Obviously, it should not be presumed that knowledge automatically feeds into policy-making. Researchers also have to understand and contemplate the fact that their research results, studies and recommendations are not always at the heart of political decision-making. The constant under-utilisation of research by policy-makers<sup>6</sup> can be attributed to a host of different reasons, including methodological and “cultural” differences between academics and political actors, as well as mutual prejudices. Hence the necessity to analyse why and where research does or does not influence policy, and what could be done to achieve greater impact and to better communicate knowledge to the political level. These issues have not only been analysed at a national<sup>7</sup>, but also at a global level, by answering the question how think-tanks need to work together across national boundaries if they are to influence policy-making internationally<sup>8</sup>. In a context where decisions in many policy areas are now being taken at the European level and where the EU as a “global player” has increasing possibilities to formulate alternatives to the present imbalanced world order, it has become urgent to explore how the European development research community can efficiently inform policy makers to achieve the goals of development and poverty reduction<sup>9</sup>.

The list mentioned is not an exhaustive one. It nevertheless reflects core interests of the European development research community. As the leading European Network in the field of development research and training, EADI intends to promote a Europe-wide, cross-border, multidisciplinary and policy-relevant debate on important development issues, with the ultimate aim to have a real influence and lasting impact on the shaping and design of European development policies.

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\* This paper was prepared by Thomas Lawo, Executive Secretary of EADI, Ms Jeanne Laett, Research Assistant, EADI/GDI and Sven Grimm, ODI. The views expressed are those of the authors.

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<sup>6</sup> A study made in the UK observed that from 70'000 research projects on education, only 70 influenced the education policy. Quoted in: E. Crewe and J. Young, “Bridging research and development: Context, Links and Evidence”, ODI/GDN, July 2002.

<sup>7</sup> see E. Crewe and J. Young, op.cit.; see also: H. Ihne, “Entwicklungsforschung und Politik – Warum lassen sich die Politiker zu wenig beraten?” in E+Z, 43.2002; J. Yound and J. Court, “Bridging Research and Policy – Report of a workshop held in Marrakesh” in : FORUM (1, spring 2004);

<sup>8</sup> see Maxwell, Simon, “Bridges across boundaries: linking research and policy in international development”, in: ODI policy brief and Stone, Diane and Maxwell, Simon, “Bridges across Boundaries: Global Knowledge Networks and International Development”, Routledge, 2004 (forthcoming). See also the “Bridging research and policy”-project of the Global Development Network GDN (for details: [www.gdnet.org](http://www.gdnet.org)).

<sup>9</sup> Bridging research and policy-making is also a core-objective of the *European Development Cooperation to 2010* (EDC2010 – [www.eadi.org/edc2010](http://www.eadi.org/edc2010)). Beyond the objective to raise public awareness about the current changes that are taking place in EU development policies, the long-term ambition of the *EDC2010* project is to provide an expert input for EU policy-makers and to establish a permanent dialogue with European institutions on development issues, in order to improve policy-making and increase the efficiency of policy implementation.