



Idiosyncrasy of the European Political Discourse toward Cooperation

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Abstract

Development and cooperation policies are located at the core of the European Union foreign policy. Not for nothing, the European Union, together with its Member States, is considered the world’s largest aid donor. Despite multiple challenges and failures experienced along these 60 years, the European Union strives to avoid to be blocked by past setbacks or by unresolved current conflicts and envisions new solutions to keep on going: the last initiative is the New Consensus on Development which attempts to align the European Union and the development policies of Member States with the development sustainable goals defined by the United Nations in 2015. This chapter examines the narratives used to launch this project so that the unique of the European political discourse

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toward cooperation can be identified, that is, the EU's specific contribution to the global discussion in terms of concepts, approaches, and aid management.

Keywords

European development policy · Sustainability · Migration · Partnership · Securitization · National ownership

Introduction

The European Union Foreign Affairs Council adopted on May 19, 2017, the New European Consensus on Development, a document that reflects the shared opinion that the European Union and the Member States have on the topic of European development until 2030. The Consensus was officially signed on June 7, 2017, by the Presidents belonging to the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, and the European Commission and also by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, which demonstrates the unanimous commitment from the different EU institutions to promoting the established priorities on the field of development (European Union 2017). The document updates the previous 2005 Consensus on Development and aims to define an EU framework for action in line with the Sustainable Development Goals approved by the United Nations on January 2015 (United Nations 2015). The objective is thus to establish the principles for a European development policy that further develops the concept of “sustainability” by applying the measures set out in the 2030 Agenda.

The new agreement has generated high expectations within the development community because they hope it will help solve endemic problems in the European development action. The development NGOs trust that the agreement is able to address issues that have been marginalized, such as the defense of women's rights or the participation of civil society groups (CARE 2016); the development agencies of the EU Member States expect an improvement in the policy coordination of the European Union (2012); the beneficiary countries seek that the new measures support the already signed agreements (Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific countries (ACP)); and the think tanks encourage the European Union to regain global leadership on development policy (Gavas et al. 2016).

However, the text has aroused controversy from the moment it was released. In the context of the refugee crisis, the recently signed Valletta agreement with Turkey, and the new EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, the European Union has been accused of prioritizing its protection from massive migration flows over the fight against inequality and poverty.

Irrespective of whether the agreement fulfills its proposed expectations, the Development Consensus allows to identify the specific contribution that the European Union makes to global development cooperation policy. The raised controversy justifies the interest to reflect upon the pillars that sustain the European Union perspective on development and to analyze the narratives the Union utilizes to frame it.

This chapter will first address the global and European context in which the Consensus has been approved, taking into account those features that define the European concept of development and the legal and financial structure through which cooperation policies are articulated. Secondly, an analysis of the content of the Consensus will be carried out, and, following this, the positive and negative evaluations expressed by the different development agents will be examined. The conclusion of the chapter will summarize the main European contributions to global development policy and the most significant challenges the European Union must face in order to guarantee effective aid.

Context of the New Consensus: Understanding the Relevance of the European Development Policies

In order to assess the potential impact of the new document, it is necessary to briefly consider some ideas in order to determine the influence of the European Union in the global picture of development cooperation policy and identify the values, structures, and dynamics that define the European Union contribution to development cooperation.

The European Union as a Global Agent for Development: External Relevance

The European Union and the Member States are collectively the world's largest aid donor. In 2015, only the EU Commission invested 10.3 billion euro in Official Development Assistance (ODA) and more than 1.4 billion euro in Emergency Aid. In addition, together with the Member States, the European Union made the commitment to ensure that 0.7% of the gross national income was allocated to this purpose, following the deadlines established in the 2030 UN Agenda. In parallel, the 11th European Development Fund has approved an aid budget of 30.5 billion euro for the 2014–2020 period.

The European Union has a long experience in cooperating and collaborating with deprived communities and has significantly contributed to the innovative vision of the current concept of development. Europe synthesizes its development cooperation in two statements: aid provider and values promoter. In fact, along with its outstanding role as a donor, the specificities of the European concept of development are perceived in the priority that its policies give to values that are part of its idiosyncrasy, such as the respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, peace, democracy, good governance, gender equality, the rule of law, solidarity, and justice (TEU, Article 21, paragraph 1 and “Agenda for Change” of the Union approved by the Council of the Union 2012).

Other international organizations also recognize the significant European influence on this matter. According to the last OECD evaluation, European development policies maintain a positive improving trend, despite the fact that they retain chronic

weaknesses and despite the slight aid budget reduction during the last 3 years: “The DAC’s Review of the Development Co-operation Policies and Programs of the European Union notes that, since the last review 5 years ago, the European Union has taken steps to make its aid more effective and give it more impact. These steps included organizational restructuring, streamlining the financial process, improving co-ordination, and working more with civil society” (OECD 2016).

The EU action contrasts with that of other major powers such as China and Russia, whose investments and interests in Africa are being criticized for the dubious effectiveness of their actions and the absence of human rights promotion. By contrast, as argued by some academic papers on the field, the recent inclusion of development objectives in the diplomatic actions of the European External Action Service allow to expect a more multidimensional and coherent collaboration of Europe in Africa (Constantinou and Opondo 2016).

To conclude, it is worth mentioning the appreciation made by the European Think Tank Group which considers that the integration of the development policy within the framework of the Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy is a unique opportunity for the European Union to position itself as a global development leader, since this context provides the opportunity to jointly address the diverse threats to security along with the challenges to sustainable development (Gavas et al. 2016).

Uniqueness of the European Notion on Development

The features that define the European perspective on development do not belong to it exclusively, but it can be asserted that the European principles on the matter were adopted earlier than in other institutions and organizations and that their complementarity and interaction give them a unique nature. The perspective adopted in this section is the one contained in the official legal documents and in political discourse, unfortunately not always present in the specific actions that have taken place on the ground.

Development in Europe is understood in an all-encompassing way, that is, recognizing the interdependence between the various aspects that give rise to poverty traps. Although the growing emphasis on “sustainability” has favored the deepening of this aspect, the European Union has always comprehensively considered the economic, human, social, and political aspects of development. Good governance achievements have always been a constant in the European Union’s policies (Agenda for Change 2012).

Among the aspects that form the comprehensive European perspective on development, the European Union has shown a special sensitivity to the human dimension of the concept over other more structural or macroeconomic facets (European Union 2012, 2016, 2017). In fact, the European Union has not hesitated to focus its actions on the most vulnerable groups. The relevance granted to education, health, or food security, especially present in the programs of the 1990s, has been reinforced in the new century by its implementation on areas of a more personal nature, such as job

satisfaction, the promotion of artistic expression, the education of girls, or the preservation of indigenous culture.

As a consequence, the concept of European development is essentially inclusive. Not only does it consider together the diverse causes of poverty, but it also attempts to involve all the agents that, in one way or another, are implicated in cooperation processes: European organisms, states, civil society, donors, and beneficiaries. The very structure of the European Union, articulated through various institutions, although sometimes complicates the processes and generates dysfunctions, facilitates the diversity of the participants.

The inclusive nature of development objectives implies a constant effort to advance in the coordination among agents and the coherence among policies. This effort can be seen in the recent texts on security and defense (Capacities Development in support of security and development 2015), actions in favor of good governance, the rule of law, and the defense of human rights that are initiatives of the Council (Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy 2012) or of the European External Action Service (new Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy for the period 2015–2019), in measures to address climate change (Paris Agreement 2015) or in the cross-cutting gender equality actions that focus on the stability and growth of the associated countries. Also, this attempting to improve coordination and coherence, can be verified in the policy coherence commitments that the European Union has regularly adopted and that are included in the next section of this chapter.

Participation is another defining element of European development policy (European Union 2016). In line with this inclusive perspective on development that drives its coordinated and coherent actions, the European Union seeks to determine the mechanisms that favor the real participation of all the actors involved. Participation is firstly considered in the relationship with the beneficiary partners. The European Union has been increasingly insisting on the fact that national governments are primarily responsible for the development of their countries and that they should partner with their local institutions and with their civil society since they are considered closest collaborators to face the necessary measures to contribute to the development of the nation. They are also deemed to be the ones charged with identifying their needs and the means to satisfy them (principle of “joint programming”). In this context, the beneficiary country should take the lead as far as possible, and international aid should solely act subsidiarily. It is also presupposed that local entities should also assume the obligation to evaluate the impact of their efforts and should be held accountable for the investment received.

Participation is also contemplated in relation to European agents. In recent years, the opinion of civil society groups has been incorporated into the institutional discussion, represented through trade unions, research centers, business organizations, and the private sector (A Stronger Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing countries, COM (2014) 263 final) and, above all, NGOs specialized in development and in environmental defense. The intervention of the private sector is increasingly relevant, not only as a source of

funding but also as a source of knowledge and experience, transferring know-how and “on the ground” learning processes.

Lastly, and in line with the global perspective on the topic, the European concept of development is essentially sustainable. The European Union understands sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the possibility of future generations to fulfill theirs” (EU Strategy for Sustainable Development; European Commission 2007, p.6–7). The Union has added to the basic objectives of sustainability (those related to the preservation of the environment) those referring to trade, promoting projects such as “marketing with cause” or “ethical banking.” Europe has also underlined the type of sustainability that focuses on human resources: investment in education; professional training; openness and tolerance; interreligious coexistence, which, in the medium or long term, can favor the peaceful resolution of latent conflicts; and the empowerment of the population so they are able to manage their development creatively and autonomously in the future.

The Articulation and the Dynamics of European Development Policies

In summary, it can be said that the priority objectives of the European Union in terms of development have been and are the eradication of poverty (in a sustainable and integrated way, encompassing food security, the fight against HIV, the management of migration flows, and security concerns), the defense of democratic values (which includes the protection of all human rights), and the national management of aid (which entails the responsibility and leadership of the partner countries in the management and implementation of it).

The progressive evolution in the achievement of these objectives has mainly followed three criteria: first, the improvement of the coordination and coherence between the actions of the EU institutions and those of the Member States; second, the incorporation of local partners in the participation in their own development; and third, the integration of the various facets that are involved in situations of poverty.

This evolution can be seen in the legislative documents regulating the action of the European Union. All development policies are based on the same framework: Article 21, Section 1, of the Treaty on the European Union, which establishes the guiding principles of the development cooperation of the Union; Article 4, Section 4, and Articles 208 to 211 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union; contained in the same document, Articles 312 to 316 cover budgetary matters. Following this, each region has its own specific cooperation agreements: the Cotonou Agreement for Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific countries and other bilateral agreements with partner countries from other regions, such as the Mediterranean.

The immediate antecedents of the New Consensus on Development appear in the previous Consensus (December 20, 2015) and in other documents that are enumerated next and that accurately reflect the lines of improvement of the European action:

- “Policy Coherence for Development” (2005)
- “EU Code of Conduct on Complementarity and the Division of Labor in Development Policy” (2007) and the “EU Operational Framework on Aid Effectiveness” (2011) adopt measures suggested by international organizations to improve the effectiveness of cooperation policies: OECD Paris Declaration (2005), the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011).
- The “Agenda for Change” (May 2012) identifies the basic pillars of European cooperation, establishes measures to enhance impact, identifies the group of least developed countries as a priority aid objective, and introduces the principle of differentiation to adapt cooperation to the specific and real needs of each country.
- The Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA 2015) is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, dealing with an effective use of financial and nonfinancial means, complemented by the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (United Nations 2015–2030) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (United Nations 2015), which provides a multilateral rules-based global order supported by the United Nations (2016).
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (July 2015 and November 2016) incorporates the sustainable development goals set by the United Nations and the commitment to allocate 0.7% of GNI to ODA.

The financial cooperation provided by the Union is articulated through three channels: a) projects, subsidies, and contracts granted under different conditions to organizations that propose specific actions to be developed within a certain time frame and that are awarded through public calls; b) budgetary support through transfers to the national budget of the beneficiary country, according to the needs expressed by them, and which assume the responsibility to manage and evaluate its effectiveness; c) sectoral support, which consists of financing specific industry fields (energy, education, environment, etc.) managed by each partner country and channeled through different modalities.

The aid is managed through a double approach: either through a transversal thematic approach, giving priority to the objectives proposed by the project (gender equality or access to drinking water), or through a geographical criterion, giving priority this time to the collective needs of a given area.

The new European Consensus on Development intends not only to integrate the objectives set by the UN 2030 Agenda (taking into account the significant EU contribution to its definition) but also to continue and consolidate the improving trends initiated in the new millennium and reflected in the aforementioned legislative documents. In relation to financing, it also contemplates new mechanisms to guarantee the effectiveness of the aid and the involvement of all the implicated agents. The following analysis aims to assess the specific contribution of the new European Consensus on Development.

An Analysis of the New European Consensus on Development: “Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future”

The 21-page document is divided into five different parts: The EU’s response to the 2030 Agenda; A framework for action; Partnership: the EU as a force for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; Strengthening approaches to improve EU impact; Following up with our commitments; and its content is organized through the five pillars indicated in the 2030 Agenda: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership.

At the beginning, the Consensus includes the values that articulate the proposal and that reflect those that define the principles of the EU: defense of democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, human dignity, the principles of equality, and solidarity and respect for the norms contained in the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Reflecting the philosophy of the new sustainable objectives, the document addresses cross-cutting elements that are cause and consequence of poverty and undertakes to give them the utmost consideration in all policies: youth; gender equality; mobility and migration; sustainable energy; good governance, democracy, and the rule of law and human rights; innovative engagement with more advanced developing countries; and mobilizing and using domestic resources.

These transversal objectives are coherent with the priorities traditionally defended by the European Union in terms of development, such as its interest for the most vulnerable population groups, the defense of the rule of law, and the importance of policies responding to the idiosyncrasy of local partners. In relation to the defense of the rights of the youth, women, and girls, although it has been a recurring theme in the EU’s discourse, especially regarding health and education issues (Agenda for Change 2012), the need to ensure a prosperous education and future for them is now incorporated, so that the youth are dissuaded from radical and violent options and are able to contribute to the future of their own nation.

In the chapter on “people,” the topic of migration deserves special attention. The Consensus encourages all necessary measures be taken to address the seriousness of the situation, but always respecting the Member States’ right to control the entry of migrants: . . . [those policies should] “not affect the right of Member States under Article 79(5) TFEU to determine volumes of admission of third-country nationals coming from third countries to their territory in order to seek work” (art 39). Although European collaboration is contemplated in the measures that can prevent forced displacement from occurring (the promotion of employment or trade and local innovation), the emphasis is placed on those actions that involve control and border management and the return of illegal migrants (Articles 40 and 41), in accordance with the provisions of the Valletta agreement signed with Turkey. Actions like this are the main reasons as to why the European Union is being criticized: it seems that the European Union’s security concerns take precedence over the needs of the affected populations.

Besides being treated under the specific heading of “planet,” environmental sustainability is present as a guiding principle in the provision of basic needs: the

guarantee of food security and a proper water management requires a regional solution taking into account local natural resources and the interlinkages between land, food, water, and energy.

The private sector is considered as a particularly effective collaborator in the chapter on “prosperity,” where the objective of generating stable employment with future prospects, especially for the young population, is valued as a priority for achieving sustainable growth. Although it is discussed in more detail below (in Article 82), it is in this section where, for the first time, consideration is given to the possibility of relying on public and private funds jointly (“blending grants and loans”). This form of financing, increasingly widespread in the framework of the United Nations, has generated suspicion on the part of those who distrust the solidarity intentions of the private sector.

The achievement of political stability and peace weights the possibility of collaborating with the security sector, following the principle of respect for the competences of the Member States and the involvement of local actors to ensure the security of their own country. Although the final document corrected a statement previously contained in the draft (“including military actors under exceptional circumstances”), this measure has also aroused protests due to the lack of reliability of some “security actors” and the risk of relying on practices that may end up violating human rights.

In accordance with the EU tradition in this respect, political stability and good governance constitute inescapable pre-conditions of any development process and demand the creation of a state based on the rule of law that guarantees human rights and that, firmly grounded on democratic principles, promotes equal and plural participation by all individuals.

The current Consensus emphasizes the participation of civil society, with which it is intended to establish a fluid dialogue and which is meant to be integrated in the design and evaluation processes of planned actions. The European Union recognizes the right to decide on its future, but also the need to respond to the commitments it entails. Therefore, together with the Member States’ governments and public funds from local partners, financial and human resources from private companies, NGOs, or other citizen groups will also be employed, making them responsible from the beginning in the design of the actions and for the accountability of their results.

In the context of sustainability, the Consensus underlines the importance of using domestic resources, both human and natural, adapting actions to local possibilities. This aspect was highlighted by Mogherini in the presentation of the document:

“So, we move from a traditional approach of donor recipient to a partnership approach in which we do things with our partners to cover all different set of fields. It is still mainly about poverty eradication and reduction but it is also covering many other fields that affect directly the living conditions of the people on the ground.” Mogherini (19 May 2017)

As far as the action of the European Union is concerned, the institution utilizes the document to improve the internal management of these policies. As stated in Article 6 of the Consensus, “the purpose of this Consensus is to provide the framework for a

common approach to development policy that will be applied by the EU institutions and the Member States while fully respecting each other's distinct roles and competences." Although it constitutes a EU longstanding objective, the need to avoid overlaps or repetitions takes on in the document renewed emphasis as a condition for a more effective policy and for the reduction of unnecessary costs. This coherence is also enhanced when considering the coordination with the EU external action. In this regard, it is significant that the signature of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security, Federica Mogherini, is next to that of the Presidents of the Council, Commission, and Parliament.

The New Consensus on Development follows on the EU's improving trend and replicates the principles of action already included in the Agenda for Change of 2012: "differentiation," paying special attention to those countries that are more fragile and have a higher level of poverty; "concentration," focusing the action only on three priorities considered key for each local partner; "coordination" between the European Union and the Member States, both in the programming of actions and in the information on the results obtained to guarantee a complementary and mutually reinforcing action; "coherence" in the principles that shape the different development actions.

Lastly, another significant, yet hardly new, aspect should be highlighted: the European Union, as part of the principle of policy coherence, also promotes the value of sustainability in the domestic policies of Member States, understanding it as a new mentality that should permeate all social activities. An example of this included in the new Consensus is the purpose of implementing the New Urban Agenda in the legislation of European regions and municipalities.

Discussions Concerning the New Consensus

The discussion generated by the publication of the new document on European Development constitutes a good synthesis of the state of play in the European space: what are the achievements and main objectives attained, what aspects remain unresolved, and what should be the path for future action. The positive and negative criticisms made to the Consensus well describe the framework of the current debate. The criticisms and controversies raised by the document are more numerous than the compliments. To a certain extent, they show the vitality enjoyed by the topic within the European Union, the significant self-criticism of the various agents involved, and the benefit of a healthy confrontation between the public and the private sector, which, despite the risk of stoppage of the actions, usually reverts in their improvement. All of this constitutes an outstanding feature of the communitarian policy.

The Consensus Contributions to Development Policy

The major contributions, even highlighted by the detractors of the document, are three: the reinforced vision on a sustainable development, the progress to a more

holistic perspective that integrates security, and, finally, the role given to civil society in the design and monitoring of cooperation policies.

Sustainability as a value is present both in the actions carried out and in the measures adopted in the different European societies and by the agents that promote development. In the beneficiary countries of the aid, and in accordance with the 2030 Agenda, the proposal of the new Consensus reinforces the interest in areas that guarantee a lasting and persistent growth, such as, among others, the defense of the environment, growth based on own natural resources, the creation of stable employment for young people, the education of women and girls, the advancement of democratic participation, and the promotion of conditions that favor responsibility and national autonomy in development processes. These topics are considered cross-cutting issues that should be present in the different cooperation agreements. However, as already mentioned, the aim is also to achieve a coordinated and coherent action between the European Union and the Member States in order to ensure efficiency, effective spending, and the attainment of complementary and mutually reinforcing initiatives.

The second relevant contribution is the close link established between development and peace, which reinforces actions of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The Consensus recognizes political instability and violence as fundamental causes of poverty: it is a transversal theme to which a specific section has been devoted. It recognizes new action scenarios, points out the need to coordinate humanitarian aid with development policies, and contemplates intervention in the entire cycle of violence, from conflict prevention measures to human and material reconstruction. According to the German Development Institute, “a holistic and sustainable security concept is however equally important for this overarching strategy so as to connect development policy to issues of stability, democracy and security in the EU foreign policy model (cf. combating the causes of forced migration)” (Henökl and Keijzer 2016).

NGOs specialized in development praise the predominance given to civil society as a crucial element to consolidate democracy. At least in terms of “ought to be,” the Consensus considers it is necessary for local civil society to be present in the origin, development, and evaluation of projects that are implemented in the area, combining the citizens’ control over the public body with the responsibility to collaborate in the application of measures within family and personal settings (Trimmel 2017). Lastly, also in relation to this aspect, it is worth mentioning the value given to the promotion of resilience and the desire to collaborate with civil society groups without limiting the process of pacification to governments and armies (Angelini 2017).

The most political sector praises the proposals for structural reform of the European development policies that are initiated in the document. The interdepartmental actions, the commitment for an improvement of the coordination, and the inclusion of the Consensus in the framework of the Global Strategy favor whole-of-government approaches to encompass all dimensions of the EU external policy (Gavas et al. 2016).

Limitations and Deficiencies of the Consensus

It seems necessary to begin by referring to the inevitable risk of Eurocentrism that the policies of the European Union entail, despite the fact that this concern is not present in any of the criticisms raised against the document. This Eurocentrism is evident in both the priorities set for development policies, in the way of understanding development and in the values exported. In this context, the first criticism that the document has received is that of the “securitization” of the development agenda, that is, the priority given to matters related to security. This issue has a positive aspect already examined, in that it involves an integration of all the variables that impact and hinder development. Yet the most controversial point is that this “securitization” may stem from an unjustified assessment of the risk that economic migrants and political refugees pose to Europe.

Reality is that the criticism of the “securitization” of the agenda is linked to that of an excessively Eurocentric analysis of the situation by placing the accent on measures aimed at avoiding and controlling immigrants who can pose a potential threat to Europe, both in terms of security (terrorist attacks) and in terms of socioeconomic imbalance. As Concorde points out, “(we) are alarmed by the instrumentalization of development cooperation toward security, commercial and migration objectives” (European Confederation of Development NGOs 2017). The European Union often takes a particularly close interest in matters related to conflict prevention and in fighting against the causes that trigger migration, which shifts the focus from the eradication of poverty and thus raises suspicions about what type of security is sought, whether that of the affected population or that of the European citizens. “EU governments (. . .) are trying to stop people from reaching Europe in search of safety and dignity, instead of fighting inequality and poverty,” denounces Natalia Alonso, Oxfam International Deputy Director for Advocacy and Campaigns (Oxfam 2017).

In particular, there is some reticence with regard to the fact that new items concerning border control or migration management are added to the contribution that the European Union makes to the OECD Official Development Assistance without proportionally increasing the final amount destined to it. It also disconcerts the lack of rigor in the analysis of the situation: for instance, the differences that exist between migration and forced displacement are not taken into account, which would otherwise require contemplating different measures aimed at these two population groups.

Closely linked to this first criticism, there is a complaint regarding the lack of coherence with the fundamental principles of the European Union since collaboration with governments that do not guarantee respect for human rights is considered as a way of halting migration flows. Although the final version of the document corrected a controversial statement included in the first draft (“[the EU] will work with security sector actors, including military actors under exceptional circumstances. . .”), the Consensus still considers necessary the coordinated action with local authorities without designing any guarantee scheme that allows for the identification of unreliable partners on the ground. This proposal is consistent with other agreements parallelly signed with the aim to stop migration. The recent Valletta

agreement (2015) signed with Turkey is a good example of this: it contemplates the detention of emigrants in exchange for economic aid and the granting of visas for Turkish citizens and also sets the terms for the return of citizens from Eritrea and Somalia, both to their countries and to Ethiopia, without guaranteeing their human rights protection during border management and upon landing.

The third element of criticism is the excessive recourse to the private sector and to blended finance. A general feeling among the development agents is that the Consensus has a great deal of confidence in the private sector by not articulating simultaneously control mechanisms that guarantee the priority of the service that the development cooperation requires over the benefit that companies seek to gain in any operation.

The imbalance between the ambition of the objectives and the lack of specific policies constitutes the fourth reason for controversy. Although in the presentation of the document, Neven Mimica, Development Commissioner, affirmed that the Consensus was only a framework for action and that the Commission would adopt more specific policies throughout 2018, a sceptical reaction has inevitably followed. The opinion of Ester Asin, Director of Save the Children's EU Office, is certainly widespread: "We see some good rhetorical commitments in the Consensus, but we need to see how these will be translated into reality."

Along the same lines, the concept of "efficacy" raises concerns over its meaning: it seems that it implies "to do more with less," and the risk of simply ending up "doing less" is clearly perceived. With regard to "doing more," the Consensus is very ambitious in the type of objectives that aims to achieve and in the areas in which it intends to act. However, it openly restricts resources without, on the other hand, specifying what kinds of actions will balance that reduction. The decrease of resources is justified if better coordination avoids overlaps, both with a more rational planning and with a progressive evaluation of impact. Yet the document does not determine what concrete actions are to be adopted or what type of collaboration is to be established with stakeholders or local governments (Boesman 2017).

On the other hand, there are important shortcomings in the interest shown in working with civil society groups. In particular, participatory processes that allow for the intervention of local civil society in an effective manner are not determined: coordination mechanisms are not specified, there is no information about direct financing, and there are not channels to share information regularly with local civil society groups that would allow them to be involved in policy control and evaluation (Angelini 2017). There were also other considerable objections raised from some political representatives of African countries during the Meeting of ACP-EU Economic and Social Interest groups held in Brussels on May 15–17, 2017: the talks surrounding the establishment of the appropriate channels for an effective participation of civil society should involve political parties and should not be exclusively targeted at governments.

Another objection refers to the expectations raised by the Consensus among the countries belonging to the African, Caribbean, and Pacific regions. A full revision to the current agreements that reduces the still existing imbalance in favor of European interests was expected: "The Partnership Framework, the EU Emergency Trust Fund

for Africa and the External Investment Plan are primarily serving the EU's own agenda instead of helping people lift themselves out of poverty" (Tempest 2016). In order to correct these imbalances, it seems necessary to identify new parameters that define development policies for the APC bloc. The German Development Institute advocates for a modernization of the relationship with these countries that implies the disappearance of the geographical parameters that have guided development policies so far, and an evolution toward more economic and transversal criteria, such as income level. The German Institute suggests a policy redefinition toward middle-income countries, regardless of their geographical location, as well as toward those countries that begin to be considered as emerging economies (Henökl and Keijzer 2016).

Finally, the absence of references to the impact that Brexit has on development policies has given the impression of a lack of realism and an ill-founded rhetoric on tangible commitments.

In summary, it could be concluded that there are two main complaints that experts from various development cooperation areas make to the EU document: it holds a short-sight perspective that prioritizes short-term goals on security over the long-term views that development requires and lacks concrete guidelines to operationalize that ambitious agenda.

Conclusion: The EU Contribution to Global Development Policy

As to the conclusion that can be drawn from the previous analysis, it could be said that the European Union is in a position to effectively contribute to the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda set by the United Nations (United Nations 2015), as credited by the concept of European development, the long experience accumulated and the policies and dynamics applied since its foundation. On the other hand, the lines of improvement in the effectiveness of development cooperation contemplated by the European Union coincide with the trends adopted globally.

The new European Consensus on Development ensures that support effectively. In full coherence with the European tradition in this area, it represents an advance in sustainability by integrating the security aspects in the analysis and in the necessary measures taken to eradicate poverty, considering the cross-cutting issues present in all facets of underdevelopment, and extending that sustainability to the improvement in the coordination of the work of the different development agents in Europe, as well as in the integration of the different policies that affect cooperation.

However, the implementation of the New Consensus requires a reconsideration of the balance between European interests and the real needs of underdevelopment. There is a sense of urgency to solve short-term problems – such as the refugee crisis – to the detriment of measures aimed at an effective poverty reduction. The focus on impeding migration flows over investments in places of origin that prevent displacement seems disproportionate, especially when restoring to measures that put at risk the coherence of European principles.

The new Consensus should also further develop many of the proposals mentioned. It is necessary to determine with precision the control mechanisms for the private sector, develop appropriate channels for the effective participation of civil society groups, specify the coordinated action of the institutions that in principle justifies budget reductions, and redefine the parameters of the development agreements signed so far. It would be irresponsible not to recognize that only a development policy that balances the positive impact on poverty reduction with reasonable economic and social spending will make European citizens willing to make the financial and human sacrifices necessary to collaborate on this field. The first objective of the European Union is to protect its Member States. Yet it is also obvious that a reasonable balance between protection and aid is needed and that there is a constant risk of discrimination in favor of European interests. This is the main challenge that the implementation of the Consensus must face.

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