

SOCIAL POLICIES AND EUROPEAN UNION'S APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

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Why the need for an integrated supranational approach to social policies in a development context:

- Rising social inequality within states, including developing ones;
- A renewed focus on issues of intergenerational justice.

Traditionally a national issue, social policy moved, especially during the 1990s, towards **global social policy**, an analysis of “**which supranational and global agencies are actors in the emerging processes of influencing national policy and engaging in transnational *redistribution*, supranational *regulation* and supranational and global *provision*.**” (Deacon, Hulse and Stubbs 1997: 22).

The prominent role of the EU in international development draws attention to how it defines development.

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Previous approaches to development (especially economic-driven, market oriented ones) have suffered from "inability to recognize and take due account of social complexity and its interface with other key development dimensions such as the economic, the political and the environmental" (Hall and Midgley: 2010).

The shift towards equaling development with sustainable development has not helped towards setting strong social objectives and policies, even though sustainable development was supposed to be a paradigmatic change (Koenig: 1995, in Hopper: 2012).

The social in sustainable development: Barbier: 1987: sustainable development means "simultaneous maximization" of *the objectives of the biological system* (genetic diversity, biological productivity, flexibility), *the objectives of the economic system* (satisfying basic needs, equity increase, growth in goods and services) and *the objectives of the social system* (cultural diversity, institutional durability, social equity).

However, the development discourse and practice in EU have been and still are defined (internally and externally) by the unidimensional, universalist approach of economic growth, leaving a limited role for social policies.

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The social dimension as the Cinderella of development strategies.

The European Social Model never really took off and the efforts to promote **inclusive growth** after the recent economic crisis have so far fallen short on both objectives and results.

How EU defines and sets targets for social policies in international development depends a lot on internal definitions. The lack of a strong normative expression (beyond reducing poverty) leads to loosely defined internal and external policies.

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Methodological approach – a normative framework for assessing public policies (Dunn: 2015), going from internal towards international development.

The case of Europe 2020 (Daly: 2012):

- Reducing poverty is central to the strategy and hard targets are set; cooperation among EU member states is encouraged. However, “the poverty target is loose and risks being rendered ineffective as an EU-wide target”.
- **“Social goals and philosophy of Europe 2020 are under-elaborated”**. Social equity and justice serve to further economic growth (Dragolea: 2016).
- ‘Inclusive growth’ is a loose term, mainly because the Europe 2020 Agenda **lacks a coherent model of social development**.

SOCIAL POLICIES AND EUROPEAN UNION'S APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

The New European Consensus on Development (ECD):

- Sets the direction for EU development policy; it maps the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (UN);
- As the SDG, it is not binding from a legal perspective;
- What is new: for the first time, it applies in its entirety to all European Union Institutions and all Member States;
- Recognizes that **poverty eradication** remains the primary objective of European development policy;
- The definition of development is strictly linked to sustainable development.

SOCIAL POLICIES AND EUROPEAN UNION'S APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

Three dimensions:

1. **Emphasizes co-dependency of different areas of development interventions** (old ones: peace and security, humanitarian aid, migration, environment and climate; also new ones: youth; gender equality; mobility and migration; sustainable energy and climate change; investment and trade; good governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights; innovative engagement with more advanced developing countries; and mobilizing and using domestic resources);
2. **Synthesizes traditional development aid with other resources**, as well as sound policies and a strengthened approach to policy coherence, recalling that EU development cooperation always has to be seen in the context of Europe's partner countries' own efforts. The Consensus provides the basis for the EU and its Member States to engage in more innovative forms of development financing, leveraging private sector investments and mobilizing additional domestic resources for development.
3. The EU and its Member States will create better-tailored partnerships with a broader range of stakeholders, including civil society, and partner countries at all stages of development. They will further improve their implementation on the ground by working better together and taking into account their respective comparative advantages.

(source: IP/17/1503)

SOCIAL POLICIES AND EUROPEAN UNION'S APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

A step forward? A matter of (lack of) definitions!

- The European Consensus on Development frames the implementation of the 2030 Agenda of UN, **but goes no further in defining social goals.**
- **Resilience is a noticeable concept in the ECD**, one that could point towards a normative vision for social policies that could set the tone for practical interventions. However, the issue of “Collect more, spend more” is problematic at best, neocolonialistic at worst.

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- Even when defined, targets fall short of needs.
- The issue of financing: “The EU reiterates its commitment to allocating at least 20 % of its Official Development Assistance (ODA) to social inclusion and human development.” As some NGOs have pointed (see Oxfam), the use of blended finances (private and other) for development is not explained nor are conditions set.
- Policy coherence for development (PCD) defines economic and environmental issues, but makes a *wish list* for social policies.

SOCIAL POLICIES AND EUROPEAN UNION'S APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

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