Between EU Actorness and Aid Effectiveness: The Logics of EU Aid to Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract: This article argues that, by acting autonomously and cohesively, the European Union was able to shape the global agenda on foreign aid throughout the 2000s, particularly on the issue of donor complementarity and division of labour. By contrast, its ability to promote aid effectiveness in sub-Saharan Africa was significantly constrained by national aid bureaucracies and by the complex aid architecture. More generally, to fully understand whether or not the EU is an effective actor it is necessary to take into account how EU actorness contributes to the issue being discussed. At the headquarter level, the European Commission sought to enhance EU actorness, which was seen as key to aid effectiveness. On the ground, national aid bureaucracies resisted EU actorness in the name of aid effectiveness.

Keywords: aid effectiveness, donor coordination, aid bureaucracies, aid architecture, EU development policy, EU-Africa relations, actorness.

Introduction

Despite contributing more than half of the world’s foreign aid, until the early 2000s the role of the European Union (EU) in international development was of marginal significance. One of the main reasons behind this poor performance was the coexistence of the development policies of the Member States along the programme managed by the European Commission, which made the EU much less than the sum of its constituent parts. This problem became more urgent when in March 2002 and May 2005 the EU Member States jointly committed themselves to boosting their volume of aid. For this, in the Spring of 2005 the European Commission launched an ambitious agenda, endorsed by the Council, with the view to enhancing aid effectiveness, placing emphasis on the issue of donor coordination. Drawing on these achievements, the EU played an instrumental role in several international conferences on foreign aid held throughout the 2000s. While the EU “can rightly claim to be an international leader with significant influence shaping global agendas”, with success largely attributed to its ambitious common positions, its implementation record on the ground has been disappointing – and in this case, reasons for failure are found in the aid architecture.

Against this background, this paper investigates the link between EU actorness and aid effectiveness. More specifically, it seeks to answer two interlinked questions: First, does greater EU actorness result in enhanced or diminished aid effectiveness? Second, does the architecture for aid effectiveness enable or constrain EU actorness? By explaining how the EU behaves in international development, this paper intends to contribute to two strands of literature that have rarely interacted: on the one hand, it
promotes a better understanding of the concept of EU actorness; on the other hand, it sheds new light on the issue of aid effectiveness. To do so, it draws on various types of sources, including unpublished reports of the European Union and about 100 interviews conducted with senior aid officials of most EU Member States, the European Commission, several international donors, and within the economic and foreign affairs ministries of four sub-Saharan African countries. The focus on sub-Saharan Africa is justified not only by the fact that more than half of its total aid comes from the EU and its Member States, but also by the fact that this region has suffered from the highest degree of aid fragmentation. To achieve its aim, this paper is divided into two main parts. The first part clarifies the concepts of EU actorness and of aid effectiveness, whereas the second focuses on how the two have interacted in the context of EU-Africa relations.

**Understanding EU actorness and aid effectiveness**

One of the most contentious issues in the recent literature on the European Union has been its role in the international arena. The assumption of most of these contributions is that the EU is capable of acting, but this is not always the case. The concept of EU actorness was firstly introduced in the early 1970s, but since then it has attracted only limited scholarly attention. No consensus has been achieved on the definition and the criteria for ascertaining actorness. As for the definition, one of the most used is the one that sees it as “the capacity to behave actively and deliberately in relation to other actors in the international system”. In terms of criteria, two are considered particularly important. First, there is a need for some degree of autonomy, which renders the EU independent from national interests and recognisable as a separate unit in the international arena. Second, there is a need for some degree of cohesion, which refers to the EU’s ability to formulate common and determinate policies, marking the boundaries for behaviour of all parties involved in decisions. This also means that while any commitment to shared values and principles and the formal delegation of authority to a supranational entity may help, they are no preconditions for actorness. In fact, the European Commission, by playing an entrepreneurial role, has at times gone beyond formal rules and shaped decisions more decisively than could be predicted. Yet, it is not necessarily true that the more supranational the EU policymaking process is, the higher the likelihood of EU actorness.

What is more important in making the EU act autonomously and cohesively is the degree of convergence between the preferences of the EU’s Member States and the EU’s institutions. This alignment of preferences – which reduces opportunities for non-EU actors to exploit intra-EU divisions at both the vertical (between Member States and EU institutions) and horizontal (within the Council or the Commission) level – can be achieved not only around norms but also around interests, and through not only persuasion and socialisation but also through side payments and issue linkages. In addition to the convergence of preferences, actorness is also affected by the degree of implementation of policies. Implementation takes time, and in some cases the EU may capitalise on ambitious decisions in the short term, which then fail, in the medium-to-long term, at the implementation stage. Policy evaporation, which means that decisions made by headquarters fail to materialise on the ground, has been identified as a significant problem in the EU’s relations with the developing world. This has undermined the EU’s credibility not only with developing countries, but also
with other international actors. Of course, assessing whether and how EU common decisions are implemented is not always easy in that delinquent actors tend not to make public their dissent and, according to Thomas, “the EU itself has an interest in painting a rosy picture of compliance with its policies”.\(^{15}\) However, the case of EU development policy, as we will see below, shows that the European Commission has not refrained from publicly shaming Member States.

Once we have identified the two key criteria for actorness, we need to see how EU actorness (or internal effectiveness) translates into (external) effectiveness.\(^{16}\) In fact, (external) effectiveness – defined as the ability to achieve the desired goals in the international arena – is a distinct variable, which may or may not be the result of actorness.\(^{17}\) To be effective an actor must be able to take advantage of the opportunities that are available to it. In this sense, opportunity is not a quality of actorness, but denotes those factors in the external environment that constrain or enable effectiveness. Of course, the EU must consider the preferences and behaviour of other international actors. This also means that the “recipients” of the EU’s external actions must be taken into account – and this applies particularly to the field of development policy, where ownership has become a mantra (at least in public discourses) for all donors.\(^{18}\) With this “issue-specific effectiveness”, the central matter is not whether the EU is able to achieve its goals through enhanced actorness, but more how its actorness contributes to (progress in) the issue in question.

This last point takes us to the issue of aid effectiveness, which has been widely discussed in the field of development economics. The scholarly debate for a long time concentrated on recipients, identifying several factors (generally related to poor macroeconomic frameworks and poor quality of governance systems) that negatively affected aid effectiveness. Less emphasis was placed on donors, though some exceptions exist. Early contributions, mainly based on anecdotal evidence, claimed that aid fragmentation resulted in waste of resources, high administrative burden for developing countries and underfunding of less attractive countries and sectors.\(^{19}\) More recent literature, based on formal analysis and drawing on large samples, has shown that aid fragmentation – that is, where donors spread their aid widely – retards economic growth, encourages corruption, and contributes to eroding bureaucratic quality in recipient countries.\(^{20}\) Despite these new studies and the commitments made in various international forums, results have been meagre: empirical evidence suggests that there was even less coordination in the 2000s than in previous decades.\(^{21}\) More seriously, in those cases in which donors decided to concentrate their activities, not only did they do so unilaterally, but they also focused on some countries (“aid darlings”) and ignored others (“aid orphans”) – and the same happened with sectors within recipient countries – thus making the situation even worse.\(^{22}\)

The reasons behind the failures in aid coordination are varied. Of course, some donors, which make voluntary choices about aid allocation, may value their presence in key countries more than aid effectiveness. This may be because they seek to promote their political and commercial interests, bandwagon and operate where other ‘rival’ donors are active, or consider visibility necessary to legitimise and secure more aid domestically.\(^{23}\) There could also be resistance to donor coordination from recipient countries, which may fear cuts in volume of aid or the imposition of more restrictive conditions that would further reduce their policy space.\(^{24}\) Moreover, donor coordination could be hindered by intra-government problems within African states –
and even lead to a restructuring of power – in that donors tend to privilege as their interlocutors ministries of the economy over sectoral ministries. But what is also important is that donor aid bureaucracies are part of the aid effectiveness problem. In fact they “define their outputs as money disbursed rather than services delivered”, prefer aid fragmentation because responsibility for failure is diffused, and when they try obtain good results for their own projects, they do so even if that impinges on overall aid effectiveness. The underlying problem is that the incentive structure for promoting donor coordination in aid agencies is very low: since the benefits would accrue mainly to developing countries, they would have little interest to pursue aid coordination.

**Development policy in the European Union**

Existing analyses of EU development policy tend to concentrate on the (multilateral) programme managed by the European Commission. Significant attention has been paid to the bilateral policies of the 27 Member States, though their interaction with the EU is often underestimated. By contrast, the EU’s federator role, which has gradually become a prominent aspect of EU development policy, has generally been overlooked. Some observers still note that the EU is a “sleeping giant” and the “full potential for EU actorness in this policy area could be realized only if greater consistency was achieved between EU and Member States policies”. Moreover, against periodic calls for repatriation of aid, we are reminded that development policy is not an optional extension, but is fundamental to the process of European integration and to the EU’s role in the international arena: “Without external policies such as relations with the developing world, the ‘idea’ of Europe diminished.” But to fully appreciate the EU’s actorness in international development, we need to take into account three different aspects.

The first aspect concerns the Member States. A vast literature, which has investigated why donors give aid, has pointed to the substantial differences in aid allocation between countries in Europe. Traditionally, a divide has emerged between the like-minded donors (i.e. the Nordics, the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Luxembourg), which have paid more attention to poverty eradication, and other countries, which have concentrated on former colonies (i.e. Belgium, France, Portugal, Spain) and/or their neighbours (i.e. Italy, Greece, and the newcomers in Central Europe). Recent analyses have focused on how donors give aid. In general, the divide between like-minded donors – which give more and better aid – and countries in Southern and Central Europe – which do not score high in terms of both quantity and quality of aid – has been corroborated. These striking differences, together with a more general approach to European integration, make any convergence of preferences on aid coordination at the EU level very difficult. In the course of the debates that preceded the adoption of the 2005 European Consensus on Development, a group of countries (e.g. France, Belgium, and the Southern Member States) supported greater EU aid coordination, including a more active role for the European Commission. At the opposite side, some Member States (e.g. the UK and the Nordics), traditionally skeptical on the possibility to pull sovereignty in this area, sought to preserve the status quo. In between, some countries (e.g. Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands) endorsed the idea of better coordination between European donors, but did not want to necessarily assign any privileged role to the European Commission.
The second aspect concerns (the aid programme managed at) the EU level, which has been seen by many as a proxy for EU actorness in development policy. The creation of a supranational development policy goes back to the Treaty of Rome, but since then types, areas, and modes of intervention have significantly changed. The patchy evolution of EU development policy, constantly adapting to the preferences of new entrants, attracted significant criticism not only by scholars but also from the Member States themselves. To address these criticisms, at the beginning of the 2000s, the European Commission launched a number of reforms, which gradually made EU development policy more poverty-oriented and more efficient. All these measures not only contributed to restoring the ‘development’ record of the EU and, but more generally the credibility of the European Commission as a donor. This, in part, explains why some traditionally sceptical Member States reacted more positively when the European Commission launched a number of initiatives to promote coordination and complementarity. At the academic level, some authors have pointed to a number of qualities that have made the EU’s supranational development policy distinctive. In this sense, the EU has projected a value-based identity, which transcends post-colonialism dynamics, emphasises poverty eradication, promotes an incentive-based approach to democratic governance, and upholds the virtues of regional integration and the security-development nexus. On the other hand, several scholars not only have challenged this distinctiveness, but have even questioned the rationale for the existence of a supranational development policy. In their views, the EU has become a follower of the development paradigm set by the World Bank and the WTO, based on aid conditionality and trade liberalisation, and has used development policy instrumentally to establish itself as a global actor.

The third aspect concerns the EU’s federator role. For many years after the Treaty of Maastricht the European Commission sought to promote a sort of functional integration, with the view of avoiding the duplication and waste of resources. Limited progress was made, until when at the beginning of the 2000s there was increasing acceptance that the EU could accomplish more if it played the collective card. The adoption of the European Consensus on Development in December 2005 marked a change of direction not only because for the first time the EU’s Member States and the EU’s institutions committed to a common vision in international development, but also because it crystallized the EU’s aspiration to a value-based identity. It was thus reaffirmed that poverty eradication is the main goal for EU development policy, that the EU promotes a number of common values and principles (e.g. democracy, the rule of law and human rights, equality, participation of non-state actors, political dialogue, ownership, effective multilateralism), and that it would strive to enhance development effectiveness through more and better aid on the one hand and enhanced policy coherence for development on the other hand. Within the EU, in other words, the conviction was that there was a ‘European way of doing development policy’ (in opposition to the Washington consensus), which did not necessarily imply the full delegation of policy authority to the supranational level.

The EU and the global agenda on aid

At the end of the 1990s, it seemed that foreign aid was withering away. The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the subsequent Financing for
Development (FfD) conference at the beginning of the 2000s marked a significant change of direction. In particular, in view of the FfD conference, the EU’s Member States pledged to boost their volume of aid. The importance of this decision was not so much linked to the actual outcome, which in fact was modest, but more to its consequences. In terms of outcome, the EU committed itself to increasing its collective volume of aid from 0.33 percent to 0.39 percent of the collective Gross National Income (GNI) by 2006. As for the consequences, it raised to the EU level an area in which national sensitivities had always prevailed. More significantly, the European Union was able to influence the behaviour of other actors – in fact, a number of other donors, including the United States, boosted their foreign aid budgets. The fact that the initial target was achieved before the deadline, and its enhanced credibility at the global level, encouraged the EU to set a more ambitious target in May 2005, that of reaching 0.56 percent of GNI by 2010 and 0.7 percent by 2015.

The increase in quantity of aid made the issue of quality of aid even more urgent. In the 2004 monitoring report on the Monterrey commitments, the European Commission urged the Member States to make progress on the issue of aid coordination, regardless of the lack of interest of other donors in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). In view of the second Forum on Aid Effectiveness scheduled for Paris in March 2005, at the General and External Relations Council (GAERC) in November 2004 the EU adopted a series of practical recommendations, which constituted the basis for the EU’s common position in Paris. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness – which set a number targets and indicators, emphasizing inter alia support for recipient-owned development strategies and more coordinated and predictable donor actions – was celebrated as a major turning point in the history of foreign aid. In general, it was considered a major success for the DAC (Secretariat), which had made aid coordination one of its most important missions. Interestingly, the fact that the Paris Declaration, more specially the sections on donor coordination, largely reflected the EU’s common position has been overlooked by the academic literature on foreign aid and EU development policy – and in spite of the fact that the DAC itself acknowledged the decisive contribution of the EU.

As a follow-up to the new agenda on aid effectiveness, in May 2007 the EU adopted a Code of Conduct on Complementarity and Division of Labour. Through the Code of Conduct, the Member States were urged to inter alia: concentrate their aid in fewer countries (“cross-country complementarity”); reduce the number of priority sectors (“in-country complementarity”) and focus on those in which they had a comparative advantage (“cross-sector complementarity”). The importance of this initiative was remarkable. In fact, while donor coordination is mostly a conservative strategy – in fact, the number of active donors does not need to be reduced – division of labour calls for a radical change of existing practises in bilateral policies. On the one hand, it urged EU donors to make decisions in concert, with the aim of correcting the imbalance between ‘aid darlings’ and ‘aid orphans’ – as well as reducing the number of sectors within they were active. On the other hand, it sought to promote the principles of inclusiveness – by involving the entire donor community present in the recipient country – as well as ownership – by fostering responsibility of recipients in aid coordination. Clearly, the Code of Conduct was not a matter of technicalities, but had significant political (and normative) aspects. The EU saw complementarity and division of labour as its own contribution to the global development agenda. In
general, observers looked at the EU’s activism positively, arguing that it could serve as “an engine for donor-wide division of labour, given its unique position in the aid system” and given “its member states’ long-standing experience with the supranational modus operandi.”

Some preliminary disappointing assessments of the implementation of the Paris Declaration – including by all European donors – combined with the potential risks that donors could cut funds because of the global financial crisis provided a new momentum for donor coordination in view of the forum on aid effectiveness to be held in Accra in September 2008. Once again, the EU was eager to show its ability to lead in the global discourse on aid effectiveness. For this, it launched a Fast-Track Initiative (FTI) on Division of Labour and Complementarity. The aim of the FTI was to support selected developing countries in the process of implementing in-country division of labour. The impact of the EU was again evident: the Accra Agenda for Action reaffirmed the commitments made in Paris, but also called on donors for fast action on division of labour. Moreover, the EU’s contribution helped inform the broader work of the DAC on aid effectiveness. In fact, the Good Practices Principles on in-Country Division of Labour, adopted by the DAC in March 2009, were a consequence of what had been adopted earlier by the EU.

From this discussion it emerges that, by acting autonomously and cohesively, the EU was able to shape the global agenda on foreign aid. Accused often of being a norm-taker, the European Union came up with complementarity and division of labour as its own distinctive contribution to emerging debates on aid effectiveness. The assumption was that greater EU actorness would lead to aid effectiveness. The European Commission was instrumental in setting the EU’s ambitious agenda. As for the Member States, the convergence of preferences was more accidental. The like-minded countries saw in the EU’s efforts a way to move the aid effectiveness agenda forward. The development laggards, by contrast, were seen as “using the aid effectiveness agenda to cover up the fact that they were failing to deliver on their promises for aid quantity”. Incidentally, at the end of 2010, the European Union failed to achieve the 0.56 percent target. Of course, the financial crisis represented a major obstacle, and for this the European Commission reinforced its previous call for alternative ways to promote international development. But it is important to note that it engaged in competition with the DAC, which was also seeking to promote donor coordination, so much so that Orbie and Verluys talk of a sort of “OECD-isation” of the EU as a development actor.

The implications of the EU’s commitments on aid effectiveness were questioned as soon as they were agreed upon, not only because they potentially called for a full review of the aid allocations of all European donors, but also because neither developing countries nor aid agencies working on the ground were involved in the decision making process. For this, the poor implementation record, as confirmed by the annual monitoring reports produced by the European Commission and various reports produced by the DAC, was not surprising. In general, several European donors gradually reduced the number of countries (and sectors) in which they operated, but they did so unilaterally: this even worsened the condition of aid
orphans.\textsuperscript{58} In general, the EU’s ability to promote aid effectiveness on the ground was affected by two sets of obstacles.

The first set of obstacles relates to EU actorness. In particular, the ability of the EU to act autonomously and cohesively was affected by the divergent preferences of the Member States. The EU did not behave – nor was it perceived by aid recipients – as an autonomous actor. Some cohesion was seen where the European Commission took the initiative, though this activism was more accepted by the Member States when it did not obscure their efforts.\textsuperscript{59} More often, however, the European Commission acted as one among several donors. The identification of ‘lead donors’, which could have enhanced EU actorness, proved more difficult than anticipated. In some cases, it created an opportunity for promoting ‘national’ rather than ‘supranational’ modes of interaction. In other cases, it involved excessive technical and human capacities for the lead Member State.\textsuperscript{50} Most of the Nordic countries indicated their preference to collaborate with “like-minded countries” – including some outside the EU – claiming that they did not share the same development norms and practises with other Member States in Central and Southern Europe.\textsuperscript{61} The risk of a “Europe of two speeds” or even more speeds, in which “the propensity to act individually or in like-minded groups [would] prevail” materialised on the ground.\textsuperscript{62}

One of the explanations for this what seemed to be a sort of “coordination fatigue” is linked to the role of aid bureaucracies on the ground.\textsuperscript{63} The European Commission, which did not shy away from publicly shaming the Member States, reported of “the impression that work on division of labour and complementarity creates an additional burden whilst the dividends for partner countries and for donors that should logically follow from division of labour are not yet apparent”.\textsuperscript{64} National aid bureaucrats, it is argued here, resisted EU actorness in the name of aid effectiveness. Some national aid bureaucrats claimed that the burden of coordination was excessive. In their view, and this comes from a large number of interviews on the ground with numerous Member States, attending meetings with other European partners reduced the amount of time they were able to devote to their work: paradoxically, donor coordination was seen as undermining the quality of aid.\textsuperscript{65} In reality, they failed to understand the logic of complementarity and division of labour, which would almost completely eliminate the need to hold coordination meetings. Other national aid bureaucrats maintained that recipient countries were not so keen on donor coordination and saw in greater EU actorness something that helped the EU and not them: this, ultimately, contradicted the principle of ownership.\textsuperscript{66} The element underpinning both explanations is that national aid bureaucrats do not have adequate incentives to promote coordination and division of labour. In fact, greater EU actorness could imply a loss of advantageous positions acquired over the years for some, and increased (instead of the existing diffused) responsibility for failure for others.

The second set of obstacles is linked to the aid architecture. On the ground, the EU is often part of wider coordination mechanisms and is called to interact with other international actors. It has to take into account the development policies of more established donors – and the US has shown limited interest in this issue – as well as (re)emerging donors – China of course, but also Brazil, Russia, and India. Moreover, it competes with other actors that have traditionally attempted to promote coordination at the sector level, particularly the World Bank (more in the economic sectors) and the United Nations (more in the social sectors). These actors not only
have a larger number of staff and often have exclusive relations with partner countries, but have found many followers among European donors – particularly the Nordic countries, which historically have looked at this type of aid coordination more favourably. Many other important elements concern the attitude of recipient countries. The starting assumption among aid practitioners at the headquarter level, in a rather paternalistic way, seemed that greater EU actorness would be welcomed by aid recipients. The reality on the ground did not necessarily support this view. Empirical evidence suggests that, where the EU was able to act more cohesively, it had the effect of reducing the space for negotiations for developing countries: ultimately, this suggested a trade-off between EU actorness and recipient ownership.

Nevertheless, a number of different situations can be seen. In the case of aid orphans (e.g. Burundi, Central African Republic, Malawi), greater EU actorness was not deemed necessary because of the reduced presence of European donors and the limited overlapping of activities between them. In the case of aid darlings, the situation varied significantly. In those countries in which recipient governments were able to lead the aid coordination process or in which wider coordination mechanisms seemed to work well (e.g. Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Zambia), greater EU actorness was considered redundant and not desirable. As for those countries in which wider coordination mechanisms were weak, in some cases (e.g. Mali), greater EU actorness was seen as a potential engine for involving recalcitrant international donors (e.g. Cameroon, Senegal); in other cases (e.g. Ethiopia), EU actorness was limited because it was argued that, in the interest of the recipient country, it would be better to (re)activate broader coordination platforms.

Conclusion

After a lost decade in which their existence had been questioned, during the 2000s the fields of foreign aid and EU development policy were galvanised. First, the pledges to increase the quantity of aid at the 2002 Monterey conference were accompanied by a new agenda on the quality of aid, exemplified by the adoption of the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Second, the EU played a major role in both areas, and this success was largely attributed to its new ability to act autonomously and cohesively. Third, towards the end of the 2010s numerous reports and evaluations pointed to a number of shortcomings in the implementation of the aid commitments, and the EU was not excluded from these failures. In particular, there was a clear mismatch between what the EU committed to at the global level and what was implemented (and even seen as realistic) on the ground.

This paper has investigated the reasons behind this mismatch by drawing on – as well as contributing to – the literatures on EU actorness and foreign aid. In particular, it has argued that to fully understand whether or not the EU is an effective actor it is necessary to take into account how EU actorness contributes to the issue being discussed, both at the headquarter and implementation levels. Moreover, it has pointed to the role of aid bureaucracies and their different incentives to promote donor coordination and complementarity for a better understanding of both EU actorness and aid effectiveness. More specifically, at the headquarter level, foreign aid was politicised, and EU actorness was seen as key to aid effectiveness. The European Commission, in particular, was more interested in establishing the EU as a distinctive
actor in the global discourse on development than on the consequences of the EU’s actions for Member States and recipient countries. At the implementation level, EU actorness faced significant obstacles. In several cases, the EU had to operate within broader coordination mechanisms, which did not encourage EU actorness, and against the reluctance of various recipient governments. But in a larger number of cases, resistance came from the aid bureaucracies of the Member States, which lacked the necessary incentives to pull in the same direction. For this, more aid effectiveness implied less EU actorness.

The role of the EU as a single development actor in the near future – and specifically on the issue of donor coordination – is affected by two important challenges, once again linked to both the aid architecture and EU actorness. First, the rise of new donors, like China and India, has offered development countries opportunities for new partnerships, but has further complicated aid coordination on the ground – though a sort of “natural” division of labour has gradually emerged, with European donors focusing on the social sectors and new donors focusing on infrastructures. Moreover, the global financial crisis has meant that several Member States have preferred to concentrate more on their national interests rather than moving forward with common EU approaches. Second, the Treaty of Lisbon has indicated the way for a more coherent EU external action. At the same time, the preservation of development policy as an independent policy and the reiteration that poverty eradication would continue to be the central goal of EU development policy has reassured those who feared the (further) politicization of the relations between the EU and the developing world. Moreover, it has made coordination a legal obligation for the EU’s Member States and the EU’s institutions. On the ground, the head of the EU delegations has assumed what was the role of the Presidency in donor coordination, potentially disposing of more power to confront some of the (political) barriers that have blocked EU donor coordination. These changes could provide, in the short term, a channel to further promoting aid coordination, and in the medium-longer term an opportunity for a better division of labour among all EU donors.

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1 In 2010, the European Commission managed about 18 percent of the total EU aid, whereas the Member States managed the remaining 82 percent. See Development Assistance Committee (DAC), European Union: Peer Review 2012, Paris: OECD, 2012.
4 These interviews were conducted in Brussels in January-March 2008 and in March-April 2010, in Senegal and Gambia in May-June 2009, in Ethiopia and Djibouti in May-June 2010.


8 Sjöstedt, External Role, p. 16.

9 Bretherton and Vogler, European Union.

10 Jupille and Caporaso, ‘States, Agency and Rules’.

11 Carbone, European Union.


13 Groenleer and Van Schaik, ‘United We Stand’; Thomas, ‘Still Punching’.

14 For Jupille and Caporaso and for Bretherton and Vogler this aspect does not seem to play a central role. For Thomas it constitutes an element of actorness.

15 Thomas, ‘Still Punching’.


17 For Bretherton and Vogler it is, while for Thomas it is not.


22 Examples of ‘aid darlings’ (countries that receive large quantities of aid) are Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ghana, and Burkina Faso. Examples of ‘aid orphans’ (countries that are generally overlooked by donors) are Chad, Burundi, Guinea, and Central African Republic.


26 Easterly, ‘Cartel of good intentions’.

27 Bigsten, ‘Coordination’.

28 Acharya et al., ‘Proliferation’.


Bretherton and Vogler, European Union, p. 136.

Holland and Doidge, Development Policy, p. 246.

Carbone, European Union.


See the peer reviews of its members published by the DAC, but also the annual updates of the Commitment to International Development published by the Centre for Global Development (available at: www.cgdev.org).


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Bretherton and Vogler, European Union.


Interview, April 2010.


This state of affairs was complemented by the limited use of delegated cooperation and joint programming – the two best ways to address the issue of aid fragmentation – not to mention the scarce use of budget support by most European donors.


Interviews.


In the 1990s, while at the headquarter level there was limited progress on coordination and complementarity, there seemed to be significant functional coordination between European donors on the ground due to the socialisation process between expatriates. Terhi Lehtinen, The Coordination of European Development Cooperation in the Field: Myth or Reality? (Maastricht: ECDPM, 2003).

European Commission, ‘Aid Effectiveness after Accra’, p. 11.

Interviews.

Interviews.

Corre, Current dilemmas; Interviews.

Interviews.

Interviews. See also Maurizio Carbone, ‘Better Aid, Less Ownership: Multi-annual Programming and the EU’s Development Strategies in Africa’, Journal of International Development, 20, 2008, pp. 118-229. This type of reaction, however, was consistent with more general trends in donor coordination, and was not necessarily related to EU actorness.

True, these increases were in some cases related to the promotion of global security and to debt relief, but while in 2000 the aid given by DAC countries was about $52 billion, in 2010 it reached about $120 billion.