



POLICY BRIEF

Making the EU's Migration and Development Policies More Coherent

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Prague Process has included the migration-development nexus as one of its six thematic areas. Various activities have been conducted in this area over the past years, although the issue of policy coherence has not been at the centre of these initiatives. A substantial part of the Prague Process member states are also European Union member states. What are the lessons learnt from the EU's experience with policy coherence for development? How can they be useful for the Prague Process?

CURRENT CONTEXT

The concept of policy coherence for development (PCD) has been defined to have three aims for development policy: “to 1) advance shared objectives through synergies, 2) minimize negative side effects, and 3) prevent policies from working at cross purposes” (Hong and Knoll, 2016: 1). PCD was incorporated into EU fundamental law already in 1992 (the EC Treaty) and was also included in the Treaty of Lisbon (European Commission, 2005: 3). Politically, the EU made commitments in this regard through the European Consensus on Development (2006) and policy coherence was again endorsed in the Agenda for Change (2011).

It is clear that policy coherence has some potential in bringing together hitherto separate policy areas, especially when looking at migration and development. **Migration policies may affect development, while development as well can influence migration pressures and migration patterns.** As these interlinkages are often complex, there is a need for more policy coherence between migration and development (Katseli, Lucas and Xenogiani, 2006: 32).

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Another way to explain policy coherence is to denote it as consisting of a vertical and a horizontal dimension. The vertical concerns the EU and its member states while the horizontal is about the different policy areas. Action should not be duplicated or contradictory between the EU-level and the member state level, while the goals and impacts of migration policy should not contradict or interfere with the development policy goals and impacts (Sterkx, 2008: 126).

Although PCD linked to migration has been a process for several years already, its potential remains to be further realized by the EU. PCD could also be useful if applied more systematically in the EU’s migration dialogues. As has been noted by Michael Collyer (2011: 11): “[i]t is much more common for migration to receive substantial consideration in development policy than for development goals to be reflected in migration policy. Nevertheless, migration is still not as integrated in development thinking as might be expected”.

POLICY OPTIONS

As decided in 2005, the EU started to monitor progress in the area of policy coherence - the same year as the Global Approach to Migration was launched. Migration was partly included as “EU migration policy, through its impact on migrant remittances flows, has an influence on the balance of payments position of many developing countries”, but also for being a priority area, potentially contributing with positive synergies with development policy objectives (European Commission, 2005: 4-5).

As a starting point for the Commission in applying policy coherence to the area of migration, it was noted that “[t]he EU will promote well-managed international labour migration through the development of an EU policy on economic migration”. It was clear, thus, that migration, including to the EU, was seen as necessary to fulfil the development goals. The linkage between migration and development in this way opened up for more, although limited, migration towards the EU. The other “coherence for development commitments” concerned reducing the costs for sending remittances, turning the brain drain into brain gain, involving transnational communities and diaspora in development-oriented investments as well as facilitating circular migration, inter alia through relevant visa policy, as well as exploring South-South migration and ways to enhance its contribution to development (European Commission, 2005: 15).

The new European Consensus on Development covers various migration issues, noting the complexities involved with migration, and that evidence-based policies are required, also bringing in wording from the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

“Well-managed migration and mobility can make positive contributions to inclusive growth and sustainable development. [...] Strengthened engagement will help to facilitate the safe, orderly, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”
(The Council/European Parliament/Commission, 2017: 17).

Six EU PCD Reports were published in the period 2007-2019 and show an interesting evolution. They have dealt with issues such as (Extended) Migration Profiles, circular migration schemes, replacing irregular migration with legal migration, and support to employment services for labour matching and portability of social rights and entitlements of migrants. Some of the notable initiatives have concerned the establishing of an African Remittance Institute; the African Caribbean and Pacific Observatory on Migration; the Europe-wide African Diaspora platform for development; the EU Immigration Portal; and the €15 million flagship project EC-UN Joint Initiative for Migration and Development (JMIDI).

The 2007 report noted that there remained some challenges in the internal governance of the EU. Overall, many Commission DGs and Working Parties were suspicious of the policy coherence agenda, notably regarding migration (European Commission, 2007b: 37). Still, several member states had already put in place official policies or enacted legislation that either took into account migration’s consequences for developing countries, or that acknowledged the links between

migration and development. These member states included the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Greece, Sweden and Finland (European Commission, 2007b: 174).

In regard of partner countries, migration was mentioned in 18 out of 59 Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) of ACP countries (European Commission, 2007b: 37) and ten times in regard of the social dimension of migration in Latin American CSPs (European Commission, 2007b: 45). Even when migration was mentioned, however, it was still often poorly understood or analysed within a development framework (Black and Sward, 2009). Strikingly, only eight partner countries noted the importance of migration for development from their perspective, whereby brain drain especially in the health sector had been highlighted (European Commission, 2009b: 18-19). Migration profiles had been included as annexed to the CSPs of all relevant ACP countries (European Commission, 2007b: 178).

The Commission also stated in the 2007 PCD Report that "efforts need to continue in order to embark upon the policy challenge of offering real migration and mobility options for nationals of developing countries legally seeking employment in the EU" (European Commission, 2009a: 7). From this wording it was thus, again, likely that the EU from a PCD-perspective was of the opinion that the EU should enable more legal migration opportunities for third country nationals as part of the migration dialogues and negotiations. This notion was likely pushed for by the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), rather than by the DG in charge of migration matters (DG Home Affairs). It was, however, described as a "policy challenge", given the Member States' resistance to this idea, and insistence on primarily reducing irregular migration.

The next PCD Report in 2009 highlighted the preparatory work during 2007 for a Directive to facilitate the admission of highly qualified migrants (the EU Blue Card), where a specific clause had been designed for ensuring ethical recruitment in the health sector and elsewhere, where there might be shortages in developing countries (European Commission, 2009a: 4). The report emphasised the need for more research in this regard, as well as ways to introduce the option of "dual posting" (work opportunities both in an EU member state and in a third country) that could encourage and facilitate circular migration of health workers (European Commission, 2009b: 152).

The Commission also argued that "[g]iven the importance of employment as a driver of south-south and south-north migrations, greater consideration should be given to employment and decent work agenda in EU migration policies" (European Commission, 2009b: 145). A particular project was highlighted, namely the Migration Information and Management Centre in Mali (CIGEM) set up in October 2008. This EU-funded initiative aimed to inform potential migrants about legal employment opportunities in the EU, and the risks of irregular migration, and it also aimed to facilitate return and reintegration. The centre was also supposed to provide guidance to the government of Mali on its migration policy and encourage diaspora engagement in development (European Commission, 2009b: 153-154). The European Commission had also chosen Bamako as the site of CIGEM as it was one of three key transit cities for irregular migration to the EU (Feldman, 2012).

In March 2011, the European Parliament (EP) adopted a resolution, which requested more work towards policy coherence for development from the perspective of EU migration policy. The EP also wanted the EU to abstain from linking development assistance to the aims of migration control and deterrence, especially where there was a risk of violating the human rights of migrants (European Commission, 2011: 17). This indicated that there was some degree of institutional contestation around the migration-development nexus and PCD.

As one example, the Commission's report did not mention the internal disagreements within the Commission regarding the allocation of funds from the budget for relief, rehabilitation and development for the purpose of voluntary return to inter alia Afghanistan, although at the time several organisations doubted whether it was safe to arrange such returns. Similarly, a large part of the development-branded funding for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (TACIS) and the Western Balkans (CARDS) actually went to the reinforcement of border controls, which DG External Relations (DG RELEX) and DG DEVCO staff as well as development-practitioners in general do not regard as being part of the development objectives (Sterkx, 2008: 132).

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The 2011 report nevertheless regarded the initiation of policy dialogues on migration at regional and national level with third countries as progress since 2009 in regard of policy coherence. It also called for continued political commitments at high level in order to make further progress. It also noted that “[m]uch remains to be done to make sure that migration policy does not negatively affect development objectives and works better for development, while responding to European needs” (European Commission, 2011: 76).

An example of a project in this regard was the Eastern Partnership Panel on Migration and Asylum (including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) in 2011. This initiative followed the EU’s Global Approach to Migration. It included circular migration (especially from the experiences of Moldova) as a concept which is a key for understanding the migration-development nexus and PCD, benefiting both source and destination countries (EaP, 2012).

Also by 2011, EU funding of health programmes with a Human Resources for Health approach existed in 51 out of 57 countries that were listed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) having a crisis concerning human resources for health. The Commission mentioned the support it provided for research related to the identification of health worker retention and ways to facilitate circular migration (European Commission, 2011: 81-82). It also noted that the EU had given strong support to the WHO in developing its Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel, which had been tabled at the World Health Assembly in May 2010. The European Commission has since then been encouraging member states to implement the Code (European Commission, 2011: 81-82).

Furthermore, the 2011 Report also announced that its education policies were now brain drain sensitive. This meant that there was an awareness that student mobility programmes and the setting up of poles of excellence in Higher Education in the EU, could contribute to attract highly skilled from developing countries. To counteract such mobility, efforts were invested in encouraging the circulation of students within the developing regions, notably within the EU-AU Nyerere Programme in Africa. Moreover, there were plans to improve skills management in developing regions, which could include EU support to up-skilling and re-skilling, streamlining the transition between education, training and work, also as a way to turn brain drain into brain gain (European Commission, 2011: 82).

In 2013, the Commission’s PCD Report noted that there was a rather large difference in the understanding of the migration-development nexus among member states. Any advancements in this policy area would, thus, depend on political considerations in the various member states. Moreover, the EU had also attempted to introduce the concept of PCD in its dialogues with third countries, especially within the framework of dialogue with Africa and the ACP countries, as well as partner countries to the East, such as within the Prague Process, the Eastern partnership and the Budapest Process. Also, bilaterally within Mobility Partnerships, discussions on policy coherence in relation to migration had been included (European Commission, 2013: 15).

Furthermore, the Commission tried to promote a balanced understanding of the migration-development nexus when arguing that “migration can produce both significant positive and negative effects on the development, and effective migration governance is essential to unleash the potential of migration as a development enabler”. It thus promoted the potential of improved governance and joint action in achieving PCD (European Commission, 2013: 125).

Some of the downsides of migration to be addressed included the negative social consequences such as children left alone, families left behind and that these family members often lack access to social security. Further negative economic consequences could include that migration for employers might contribute to significant reductions in labour costs to the detriment of simultaneous efforts to promote inclusive growth. In addition, migration could lead to social tensions with the population of the destination country as well as potential competition of scarce resources in the case of developing countries being the destination country (European Commission, 2013: 125).

In its conclusions on the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility in May 2012, the EU Council had put an emphasis on the importance to further develop policy coherence on migration and

the role of migration and development in the EU's external migration policy framework. It was regarded as important for policy coherence to facilitate circular migration, to reduce the transaction costs of remittances as well as to mainstream migration into development. The then Danish Council Presidency emphasised the importance that not only the leading Council working group on the Global Approach, the High-Level Working Group on Migration and Asylum (HLWG), was undertaking work in this regard, but that also the development working group (CODEV) should be involved (European Commission, 2013: 128).

Mainstreaming migration into development planning is close to PCD, and has been defined by IOM as:

the process of assessing the implications of migration on any action (or goals) planned in a development and poverty reduction strategy, including legislation, policies and programme, and at all levels [...]. It is a process for integrating migration issues in a balanced manner into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in any sphere related to development and poverty reduction. The goal of this process is to provide support for a more development-friendly approach to migration" (IOM, 2010: 47).

A lack of PCD as well as mainstreaming motivated the Commission in its 2013 report to note that migration and development policies in nine of the member states showed uneven progress. Some of the countries, such as France, the Netherlands and Spain had introduced strategies in this regard, while other member states still had no specific policies in relation to migration and policy coherence for development. The report stated that "[c]onceptualisations of the development-migration nexus and approaches to policy coherence on migration differ between Member States, reflecting the need for further evidence and efforts to work towards a common understanding of the links between migration and development" (European Commission, 2013: 130).

As one aspect of labour mobility to benefit development, the Commission referred to a project by the European Training Foundation (ETF), which developed skills profiling reports on migration and skills in countries such as Morocco, Armenia and Georgia. These reports looked at the links between skills, qualifications and labour market needs, covering both potential and returned migrants. They also covered brain drain, brain gain and brain circulation in those countries. Existing mobility partnerships with several of these countries could be useful also in regard of implementing programmes of pre-departure training and validation of diplomas of returning migrants. Another initiative under the EU-funded EUROMED Migration III project, namely research on labour matching needs between EU countries and countries in the Southern Neighbourhood, was also announced (European Commission, 2013: 135).

Finally, the 2013 report mentioned portability of social rights and entitlements of migrants. This was regarded as important as it could promote and facilitate voluntary return among the circular migrants - in fact a control policy objective. It was mentioned that this issue is often discussed within the Mobility Partnerships and that support is provided to raise capacities in partner countries to deal with this aspect, including for negotiating and implementing such bilateral agreements. Such agreements had been signed for instance under the Mobility Partnership with Moldova. Nevertheless, an assessment had shown an uneven pattern of agreements and lopsided outcomes (European Commission, 2013: 135-136).

Policy coherence aims to ensure that broader development cooperation with partner countries is not negatively affected by (the often restrictive) migration control policies. The 2015 Policy Coherence Report noted that "[t]he links between migration and development are broad and can impact on sustainable economic, social and environmental development in both countries of migrant origin and destination. Therefore, policy coherence efforts require transnational cooperation to approach migration as an area of shared responsibility of all countries" (European Commission, 2015:79).

This pointed towards the need for continued cooperation within various regional dialogue processes, such as e.g. the Prague Process. Furthermore, Council Conclusions in December 2014 on the global Post-2015 Agenda and the future Sustainable Development Goals had argued that "well-managed migration and human mobility should be fully recognised as potential development enablers and all countries should promote policy coherence for sustainable development at all levels" (European

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Commission, 2015: 82). PCD had thus become a norm that the EU should share globally, with all partner countries.

At the regional level, the Commission remained concerned that its own framework for legal migration and against irregular migration remained unbalanced. The 2015 Policy coherence report therefore also referred to the Commission's report on the implementation of the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) (2012-2013), noting that "more could be done to enhance the use of MPs [Mobility Partnerships] to facilitate the mobility of migrant workers and other persons such as students, service providers or professionals, in cooperation with non-EU countries" (European Commission, 2015: 82-83). Another alternative would be to conclude more bilateral labour migration agreements, such as e.g. proposed for the Western Balkans countries and the EU in an IOM study (IOM, 2009).

The Commission referred to an evaluation of its projects on migration and development, which "found that projects proved to be effective only when countries of origin showed the capacity to link up with their diaspora in a positive and attractive manner which required considerable efforts of communication and a high level of coordination. The involvement of national and local authorities and institutions should therefore be sought as a priority in diaspora interventions" (European Commission, 2015: 86-87). Capacity building thus became an important part of this cooperation.

Eventually, **the 2019 PCD Report (covering 2016-2018) inter alia highlighted progress on the topic of remittances** as the Commission had set up new projects focusing on postal services and rural areas in countries such as Benin, Ghana, Madagascar and Senegal, and an initiative covering seven African countries targeting a reduction in remittance costs by a third. Also, the EU Payment Services Directive 2 had entered into force in January 2016. This reform to reinforce the regulation of the remittances market had been initiated as a way to ensure cheaper, safer and faster remittances to developing countries (European Commission, 2019: 24-25).

On diaspora, the report mentioned an early project under the new European Fund for Sustainable Development that targeted youth and women in particular, to leverage private funds towards micro, small and medium enterprises. The idea behind the overall aim to support innovative businesses and financial services through diaspora and remittances was described as addressing the root causes of migration (European Commission, 2019: 25). Thereby, also **diaspora members in the EU were, directly or indirectly, enrolled through their development-oriented business activities and investments to help the EU in its fight against the root causes of irregular migration.**

The 2019 Report also referred to the role of public opinion and political agendas in EU Member States in the area of migration and mobility which also affects the priority given to policy coherence (European Commission, 2019: 22). In this way, the Commission underlined the importance of EU internal dimensions for EU external policies. One aspect the Commission did not raise in any of its reports, however, was the promotion of peace as part of development policy which is counteracted by the export of armaments to conflict-ridden and refugee-producing countries, e.g. by EU Member States such as the Czech Republic (Caritas, 2019: 32).

In sum, while much has been achieved in these areas, there has only been gradual progress and some work remains to achieving policy coherence. Notably, reports also mentioned that there have been difficulties in working together within the EU Commission across various Directorates-General on a common understanding, as well as limited progress as far as the integration of migration into national development strategies were concerned. The reasons given were that **positive aspects of migration were often not recognized as such in partner countries, and that it had been difficult to engage development practitioners in this issue area.**

Some reports mentioned that the views about the migration-development nexus differ across member states and need to be brought more in line towards a common understanding. The same thing could probably be said in regard of the EU's migration dialogues, and especially in relation to transit and source countries of migration. However, **migration dialogues can per se also be regarded as a process towards more policy coherence as mentioned by the EU PCD Reports.** Regular interaction with development practitioners from e.g. Prague Process partner countries could thus further improve policy coherence and promote both development outcomes and migration policy impacts.

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The experiences of the EU in PCD has shown that progress depends on the establishment of shared understandings of the migration-development nexus among various actors. PCD is also an institutional process where different ministries and agencies need to work closer together to find common ground and consistent policies that do not stand in contradiction to each other. The Prague Process and other EU migration dialogues can benefit in at least three ways from drawing upon these EU-related experiences in their further project activities with non-EU partner countries.

Firstly, the fifty Prague Process member states could further elaborate on the respective objectives and working methods of both migration policies and development policies. Clear identification and closer alignment of those objectives are necessary in order to avoid contradictions and potential inter-ministerial and international disagreements.

Secondly, the Prague Process member states could conduct joint evaluations of those projects that the EU has implemented over the past decade and design their own projects based on good practices. Multilateral projects that involve several source and destination countries could potentially have larger impacts than merely bilateral projects.

Thirdly, it should be recalled that the migration-development nexus has been used as leverage in international relations between source countries and destination countries both for the joint management of migration and for the promotion of positive development outcomes. It is likely that PCD and mainstreaming need to become more elaborate key features of such leverage in order to arrive at mutually beneficial and sustainable cooperation.

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