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Mind the GAP: Addressing the "delivery challenge" in European Commission Development Cooperation

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Mind the GAP: Addressing the "delivery challenge" in European Commission Development Cooperation

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Julián Romea 18, 28003 Madrid
www.ceu.es

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1. Introduction

1.1. No shortage of policy innovations at the European Commission level

Reforms have been high on the European agenda since the end of the 1990s. Changes in the overall institutional machinery for dealing with European external relations and administering aid have received considerable attention. The yearly reports of EuropeAid on the implementation of EC aid testify to the progress achieved and the further challenges ahead in terms of improving aid delivery[1].

There have also been many changes at the strategic level. Over the past decade, the EC has been actively developing new policies to keep up with a rapidly changing world. A case in point was the thorough revision of ACP-EU relations, which led to the signing of the Cotonou Agreement in 2000. The transition from the Lomé Conventions to the Cotonou Agreement involved more than a change in name. The new Treaty marked an important break with the past. Major innovations have been introduced to improve the overall impact of aid, trade and political cooperation between the ACP and the EC.

This drive for policy innovation has continued in a variety of partnership relations, sectors of intervention and thematic areas. On the whole, the EC tends to be lauded for the quality of its policy frameworks. Such a positive assessment can, for instance, be found in a variety of independent evaluations of EC Development Cooperation.

1.2. Gap between policy objectives and actual practices

However, what about the implementation of new policy objectives? Is the EC –as an institution– able to deliver on this host of new policy commitments? Or is it systematically confronted with major gaps between stated policy objectives and actual implementation practices?

In order to better understand the delivery challenges involved in EC policy changes, three specific cases are considered in this paper. They concern important policy changes recently introduced with regard to:

- The new partnership between Africa and Europe, as proposed in the 'Joint Africa-Europe Strategy' (JAES) adopted during the Lisbon Summit (December 2007).

- The growing support for governance as a key priority of EC Development Cooperation (which gained momentum from 2000 onwards).

- The adoption of the participatory development agenda and related changes in cooperation approaches with civil society (which also became prominent from 2000 onwards).

For each of these three cases, this paper (i) briefly reviews the policy changes involved; (ii) examines the EC implementation strategies followed and the progress achieved; and (iii) identifies some the main

[1] Annual Report 2008 on the European Community's Development and External Assistance Policies and their implementation in 2007. EuropeAid, 2008

'implementation gaps' that arise in practice. Building on this analysis, the paper draws a set of overall conclusions on EC delivery capacity and offers some pointers for discussion.

2. The joint Africa-EU strategy (JAES)

2.1. The search for a new strategic partnership

The Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) was endorsed at the Lisbon Summit in late 2007 and commits both the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU) to a renewed long-term political partnership, based on a formal consensus on a set of values, common interests and strategic objectives. The Strategy embodies the need for both parties to adapt their relationship to a context[2] that has drastically evolved since the previous Africa-EU Summit in Cairo (2000) with:

- the emergence of issues such as security, migration and environment on the international agenda;
- the birth of the African Union which provided Africa with political institutions geared towards continental integration and created a new framework for political dialogue and interaction with an enlarged European Union ;
- the growing trend toward regional differentiation, reflected in the formulation of specific EU support strategies for Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

The new Africa-EU strategic framework is ***ambitious*** and reflects four major shifts compared with the past. First, the framework goes ***"beyond aid"*** and encompasses all policy issues that govern the relationship between the two continents. Second, the new strategy offers the possibility to overcome fragmentation and to enter into a continent-to-continent relationship[3]. One cannot expect the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which encompasses North Africa, to simply disappear as a consequence of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy. However, it will be a challenge for Europe to fulfil its commitment to adapt its instruments and practices in order to start ***"treating Africa as one"***. A third innovation is the ***commitment to joint implementation*** with African partners. The new Strategy is clearly seen as a multi-actor endeavour. Its successful implementation will depend on the association of all relevant actors, including Member States and other institutional actors on both sides (e.g. the European and Pan African Parliaments), the regional economic communities (RECs), civil society, and the private sector as well as local governments. ***Fourth, there is a strong commitment to delivering*** concrete results ('early deliverables') to be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis.

2.2. Implementation strategies followed and progress achieved

In order to implement the new commitments, the Joint Strategy first Action Plan translates them into ***eight priority partnerships*** covering various themes (see Box 1). The Action Plan covers an initial period of three

[2] For further details see Mackie, James a.o in *"Coherence and effectiveness: Challenges for ACP-EU relations in 2008"*. InBrief ECDPM, No 20, February 2008, particularly p. 6-8.

[3] The Africa-EU relationship has historically been fragmented into three agreements and policies: the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership with Northern Africa; the Cotonou Agreement for sub-Saharan Africa and the Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement with South Africa.

years, but is intended to be rolled forward as time advances. The first objective is that the implementation of all priorities set be initiated within this first three-year period.

In principle, there is ***no blueprint approach*** for implementing the partnerships. In some, like the partnership on migration, joint priorities and action plans have already been drafted and efforts will focus on implementation. Peace and Security is another area where joint AU-EU work gained momentum before the JAES appeared on the scene (in the context of the Africa Peace Facility). As a result, a relatively clear agenda already exists for joint work in the years ahead. In other areas, such as the partnership on climatic change, a common agenda still needs to be agreed upon. The Strategy and related action plans do not provide a detailed implementation strategy for the JAES. The parties agreed a basic set of implementation principles (e.g. with regard to participation of all relevant actors). The actual modalities will have to be sorted out as the process moves on, based on experimentation and knowledge acquired.

Box 1: Priority partnerships of the new Joint Africa-EU Strategy

1. Peace and security
2. Democratic governance and human rights
3. Trade and regional integration (which includes the partnership on infrastructure)
4. Millennium Development Goals
5. Energy
6. Climate change
7. Migration, mobility and employment
8. Science, information society and space

In order to ensure effective implementation of the new Strategy, efforts are undertaken to put in place an adequate and potentially innovative ***inter-institutional structure*** with the following key features:

- Quite logically, the ***overall coordination*** of the process is put in the hands of the two Commissions. They are seen as the motor that should ensure an effective implementation, by playing a variety of roles such a organising the dialogue; facilitating the work of the partnerships; mobilising the European and African actors; and ensuring funding from various sources. The annual 'College to College meetings' are a central mechanism for dialogue and are expected to become more political and operational.

- The JAES will rely on Joint Africa-EU ***Expert Groups*** (JEGs). They should ensure the implementation of the Action Plan. The EC and the AUC will take part in each of these groups.

- The involvement of the ***Member States*** (MS) is another key feature of the new strategy. The main instrument used to get Member States on board on the European side are the so-called ***Implementation teams***, i.e. coordination structures between the Member States, the Commission and the Secretariat of the Council. They are based on a lead-agency model, allowing MS to actively engage in a partnership of their choice. The African side is also undertaking efforts to put in place coordination systems. But the story there is more complicated because the institutional set-up is less consolidated and there also Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to be integrated into the scheme.

- The role of the (first ever) EU ***Ambassador to the AU*** in Addis Ababa should also be mentioned. After lengthy discussions in the relevant Council working groups, the decision was taken in 2007 to create a new common

EU Delegation exclusively dedicated to the AU, headed by a person who at the same time is the European Commission Head of Delegation and EU Special Representative (EUSR) to the AU (double hat). This EU Delegation should function as a strong and permanent interface with the AU and its Commission. It should also help to ensure a coherent approach with regard to the implementation of the Africa-EU partnership, covering both the first and second pillar issues[4].

Progress achieved with the implementation of the Joint Strategy will be reviewed continuously until the next Summit in 2010 at which a new Action Plan will be approved. Between summits, the ***biannual Africa-EU ministerial troika*** meetings will play a central role in reviewing and monitoring implementation. In addition, the AU and EU Commissions will –on an annual basis and in cooperation with the respective Presidencies- coordinate the preparation of a joint progress report on implementation, using clear indicators and concrete benchmarks and timetables to ensure that implementation is on track.

The JAES is in its first year of implementation. The progress achieved so far can be tentatively assessed with the help of some ***process indicators***, i.e. benchmarks that may shed light on the direction the process is taking (in comparison to stated policy objectives).

Four such ***process indicators*** seem relevant:

2.2.1. To what extent has the JAES mobilised the various categories of actors?

There has undoubtedly been a huge institutional investment on the side of the EC. The JAES has not only mobilised units traditionally involved with Africa (DG DEV and other members of the RELEX family) but also a growing number of departments outside the sphere of development cooperation (e.g. involved in migration, environment, energy, etc.). The AU Commission is also active in the process, but its participation is hampered by capacity constraints as well as a wide range of competing demands and strategic partnerships with other key players on the global stage[5]. EU Member States are participating in the implementation of the JAES (e.g. through the Implementation Teams) yet there is clearly still a long way to go before the JAES is properly integrated into MS bilateral cooperation policies, let alone co-funded by them. The involvement of African Member States seems very limited so far. The same holds true for the other key institutional partners on both sides. Work has been done to identify suitable mechanisms to involve civil society, but the process has not advanced very far as yet.

2.2.2. How much dynamism is there in the 8 partnerships?

All the partnerships have met and have started their work to define priorities and early deliverables. Progress varies from partnership to partnership. Where concrete activity has taken place, it generally concerns programmes and funding that were already foreseen before the adoption of the JAES. One of the current

[4] For more details see: Communication to the Commission from Commissioners Michel and Ferrero-Waldner: *"Follow-up to the Africa-EU Lisbon Summit: Engaging the Commission in a partnership of results"*. Brussels, 19.3.2008, SEC (2008) 353 final

[5] This includes amongst others China. To name just one area where competition between the EU and China is already intense, China has proposed spending US $ 20 billion on infrastructure in Africa over the next three years, which is more than twice the Euro 5.6 billion ($ 8.3 billion) in EDF funds that Europe announced in October 2007 for its new Africa-EU Partnership on Infrastructure. Even though EU Member States are expected to add funds to this initial EDF contribution to the partnership, it is clear that China is going to fast outstrip the EU as the major external funder of infrastructure on the continent. This also illustrates a major advantage China has over the EU in its foreign relations: the capacity to act as a single entity rather than having to wait for an internal consensus to be reached.

priorities of the various Partnerships is to carry out mappings of actors, promising initiatives, and last but not least, possible sources of funding[6].

2.2.3. Are new common agendas defined?

This formulation of truly common agendas is one of the key expectations of the JAES. Yet there seems to be limited movement in that direction. The focus on early deliverables may push the partnerships to focus on concrete actions, without taking the time to first create the right conditions for a more in-depth, multi-actor dialogue. The Partnership on Democratic Governance and Human rights is a case in point. The AUC argues that it needs to further invest in a consolidation of its own governance agenda and build closer linkages with other institutional governance actors at continental level (e.g. the Pan African Parliament, ECOSOCC, the RECSs) before it can engage in a meaningful dialogue with Europe.

2.2.4. Are new working methods tested out?

It is not clear at this stage whether the new institutional set-up for the JAES will also lead to more effective ways of working together. Furthermore, here the pressure to quickly deliver results, as well as a fear of institutional innovation, may act a strong brake. Practices so far suggest a continuing heavy reliance on existing forms of dialogue, involving the traditional actors. In a similar vein, the implementation seems to be largely delegated to the technical level (i.e. through the joint expert groups) rather than to the political level. There also seems to be limited openness to accept institutional alternatives. In the above mentioned Partnership on Democratic Governance and Human Rights, for instance, the African side developed a set of concrete proposals to transform the envisaged 'Platform on Governance' into a truly multi-actor dialogue process (rather than into a yearly event). However, the European side so far seems to be reluctant to engage in this type of debate, preferring the more traditional avenues for dialogue.

2.3 Major gaps observed

It is too early to make major statements on implementation gaps. Yet as the JAES process unfolds and on the basis of initial experiences, it is possible to identify areas where gaps between stated objectives and actual practices are likely to arise sooner or later. Some of these possible gaps are briefly considered below:

- *Ownership gap*. The initial experience with implementing JAES shows that this first risk should be taken seriously. It is linked to the existential question "who really owns the JAES" beyond the EC (as a driver of the process) and the AUC (as the main interlocutor and partner). In this context, it will be particularly interesting to assess whether or not the levels of ownership by EU Member States increase over time in measurable terms. It will also be fascinating to see how the AUC will manage to build ownership on the part of African Member States of this new policy framework, (which is added onto existing agreements while providing no fresh funding). Needless to say, similar ownership challenges arise with all other actors that are supposed to play a key role in the implementation of the JAES (e.g. the European and Pan African Parliaments, civil society actors, local governments, etc.).

[6] For an overview of progress achieved per partnership see the Joint Communiqué of the 11th Africa-EU Ministerial Troika Meeting, held in Addis Ababa on 20-21 November 2008 (htpp://www.consilium.eu).

- *Whose agenda?* There is a huge asymmetry in power, resources and capacities between the two Unions/Commissions. Experience in traditional development areas (e.g. aid, trade, political dialogue) suggests that these unequal conditions are not necessarily conducive to establishing balanced partnerships or defining truly common agendas. The danger of Europe pushing too strongly its own agenda (even unintentionally) is real. This holds also true for new policy areas covered by the JAES (such as climate change, migration, energy). The EC/EU officials involved in these sectors tend to have very limited exposure to the realities of international cooperation. This, in turn, may lead them to be primarily concerned with externalising domestic EC/EU agendas in their talks with the African partners. It remains to be seen whether the EC will recognise the asymmetric relationship and provide relevant forms of (institutional) support to African institutions to prepare their own agendas and positions before negotiating new deals with Europe.

- *Treat Africa as one*. In policy documents, the EC has re-affirmed its strong commitment to ensure "full coherence […] between the Africa-EU Strategy, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Neighbourhood Policy"[7]. The rationalisation of the EU working groups and committees dealing with Africa evidences movement in the right direction. Yet beyond this point, it is difficult to detect a clear political commitment to treat Africa as one. If anything, the Mediterranean Union project, pushed forward by the French President Sarkozy and approved in July 2008, seems to reflect a move in the opposite direction. In the view of Jean Ping, Chairperson of the AUC, this process is set to further divide the African continent and to contradict the decision made at the African Union Summit to see Africa as one integrated, geographical and political unit.

- *Coherence gap*. This is another risk awaiting the EC/EU in the near future. As the JAES gains prominence, it will be critically important to ensure coherence with other policy frameworks affecting Africa-Europe relations. The upcoming revision of the Cotonou Agreement will provide a critical coherence test for the EU/EC with regard to the status of the JAES.

- *Funding gap*. This gap is already acutely felt at the level of the various partnerships. The EC has repeatedly insisted that EU Member States should respect their ODA scaling-up commitments, amongst others by providing the necessary funding to Africa and related JAES. It has also made clear that EC assistance alone will not be sufficient. Yet it is doubtful that much additional funding will be forthcoming in the short-term. The EC/EU invested heavily in creating a new strategic framework for an ambitious global partnership with Africa. But the whole funding issue was not necessarily addressed with the same energy and creativity. The net result is a glaring contrast between JAES expectations and available new funding.

3. Governance

3.1. The rapid rise of governance as a development priority

Another interesting case to illustrate the challenges involved in delivering on policy innovations is the area of governance. In less than a decade, governance moved to the ***forefront of the development agenda***. The Millennium Declaration makes a specific link between governance and an effective fight against poverty. The

[7] See the above-mentioned Communication to the Commission from Commissioners Michel and Ferrero-Waldner, p 3.

need for governance reforms has also been formally embraced by most ACP governments. As a result, home-grown initiatives are developing, both at national and regional level. Interestingly, there is also a growing societal demand for governance in the developing world. Increasingly, citizens as well as civil society organizations are manifesting themselves as actors in the governance debate, contributing ideas, claiming rights and demanding accountability.

Several ***push factors*** help to explain the rapid rise of governance on the international development agenda. The mixed track record of international aid has led to a growing awareness of the limits of the financial and technical cooperation model that prevailed for many years. Experience has clearly demonstrated that injecting funds or supporting capacity building programmes in political systems that are not inclined to respect democratic principles and human rights does not generally lead to sustainable development results. In a number of cases, this type of aid has had the perverse effect of prolonging the lifetime of authoritarian regimes and of postponing much-needed reforms. Slowly but steadily, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of 'politics' and 'right-based approaches' to development. The existence of legitimate and effective systems of governance is now perceived as crucial in order to secure peace and stability, to reduce poverty and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Governance is also at the centre of the new modalities for aid delivery. The proposed transition towards (sector) budget support aid modalities cannot be done in an effective and accountable manner if overall governance conditions, including public financial management, are not improving. Furthermore, it has been argued that the promise of substantially increasing the volume of aid to the poorest countries would have little impact in the absence of concomitant progress in the governance of the beneficiary country.

As in the case of other donors, the ***EC gradually embraced the governance agenda***. The first formal definition appeared in the Cotonou Agreement. It was the product of lengthy and difficult negotiations with the ACP Group. The revision of the Lomé IV Convention was used by the EC as an opportunity to integrate governance in the political dimensions of the ACP-EC partnership. Governance is defined as the "transparent and accountable management of human, natural, economic and financial resources for the purposes of equitable and sustainable development, in the context of a political and institutional environment that upholds human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law"[8]. This definition clearly puts the primary focus on the technical/economic aspect of governance, i.e. the way resources are managed by the public institutions and administrations. The link with the broader political dimensions is recognized as an important contextual element.

The 2003 Communication on Governance and Development took stock of the evolving governance debate and sought to further elaborate the overall EC approach to governance. One outcome of this process was a new definition of governance (see Box 2). There is a broader focus when compared to the Cotonou Agreement. The starting point is still the way power is exercised and public resources are managed, but the political and societal dimensions of governance become more prominent. This broader interpretation of governance was used to elaborate the Draft EC 'Handbook on promoting good governance', which identifies six governance clusters[9].

[8] Cotonou Agreement (2000), article 9.3

[9] Including (i) support for democratisation; (ii) promotion and protection of human rights; (iii) reinforcement of the rule of law and administration of justice; (iv) engagement of the role of civil society; (v) public administration reform, management of public finances and civil service reform; and (vi) decentralisation and local government reform.

Box 2: The EC definition of (good) governance

"Governance refers to the rules, processes, and behaviour by which interests are articulated, resources are managed, and power is exercised in society. The way public functions are carried out, public resources are managed and public regulatory powers are exercised is the major issue to be addressed in that context."

"In spite of its open and broad character, governance is a meaningful and practical concept relating to the very basic aspects of the functioning of any society and political and social systems. It can be described as a basic measure of stability and performance."

"As the concepts of human rights, democratization and democracy, the rule of law, civil society, decentralized power sharing, and sound public administration gain importance and relevance as a society develops into a more sophisticated political system, governance evolves into *good* governance."

In recent years, the ***politicisation of European development cooperation*** has gained an increasingly prominent profile, as exemplified in the European Consensus on Development (2005) and the new Communication on Governance (2006). The move from primarily financial and technical cooperation to an increasingly politicised cooperation amounts to a ***Copernican revolution*** in the international aid system. It invites the EC as well as other donor agencies to:

- become a 'political animal' focusing primarily on supporting complex and sensitive political and institutional reforms;
- adapt intervention strategies, operational approaches and procedures to the requirements of a more political approach to development cooperation
- develop a wide range of new skills to deal with the 'politics' of aid interventions in a variety of countries, sectors and intervention scenarios;
- create incentives for EC staff (in headquarters as well as Delegations) to engage in (risky) governance reforms.

3.2. Implementation approach followed and progress achieved

The ***implementation strategy***, elaborated by the EC to respond to the new governance priority, was built on ***six main pillars***: (i) an increasingly sophisticated policy framework to deal with governance; (ii) a set of guiding principles for intervening in governance; (iii) policy and political dialogue; (iv) financial support to a wide range of governance programmes in each of the six clusters; (v) the use of various approaches to promote governance, including budget support; (vi) incentive mechanisms to promote governance reforms in partner countries.

Let us briefly consider each of these innovations. First, the EC put significant effort into further defining a ***comprehensive policy framework*** on governance for intervening in the various governance clusters, in focal sectors such as education, health, water and sanitation, HIV/AIDS (see Box 3); or in difficult

partnerships as well as fragile states. It also sought to integrate the governance priority in all regional agreements (ALA, MEDA, TACIS, CARDS).

Box 3: EC Communication on HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis (2005)

This policy document provides a clear illustration of the ***scope of the governance agenda*** in particular sectors. It recognises the need to:

- support public sector reforms in the health sector;
- involve local governments, civil society and the people directly affected by the diseases in policy formulation and implementation;
- use the instrument of political dialogue to promote effective implementation ;
- ensure a link between government commitments to achieving the MDGs in health and EC financial support (so as to enhance both the effectiveness of public finance management and the sustainability of projects and programmes);
- foster complementarity and coherence with other sectors and donors;
- apply the principle of policy coherence by ensuring good governance at global level on health-related issues, (e.g. by promoting effective regulation and corporate responsibility of pharmaceutical industries).

Second, the EC sought to define a set of ***common principles*** to guide EC support in governance related processes across the board. These include: (i) the need to see governance as endogenous processes of political and social transformation: (ii) the focus on country ownership and dialogue on required governance reforms; (iii) the adoption of a 'holistic' approach to governance (see Box 4); (iv) the use of all available instruments to promote governance; (v) capacity building measures at the level of the EC to cope with the (expanding) governance agenda; as well as (vi) an improved 'governance of aid' –including the recognition that governance is not only an issue "over there, in developing countries" but also a set of rules that should apply to donor agencies themselves.

Box 4: What does it mean to adopt a holistic approach to governance?

The EC defines governance as a multi-dimensional concept, which goes beyond the support to specific governance programmes. In a holistic approach to governance due attention is also given to :

- mainstreaming governance principles in all EC-supported programmes and instruments (e.g. budget support);
- supporting (simultaneously) various categories of actors (e.g. central and local governments; civil society in all its diversity; private sector, etc.);
- ensuring coherence between actions undertaken at different governance levels (i.e. local, national, regional, continental, global);
- respecting the 'do-not-harm' principle when intervening in the governance area (e.g. by recognising the legitimate role division between state actors and non-state actors).

Third, a much more systematic use was made of political and policy dialogue with partner countries as a positive tool for advancing the governance agenda (as opposed to a focus on dialogue as a negative response in the case of crisis).

Fourth, a growing amount of EC funding is dedicated to support governance reforms in a variety of areas, often through innovative modalities. This included venturing into relatively new areas such as support to the justice sector or the political society (e.g. parliaments).

Fifth, the shift towards sector policy support programmes (SPSPs) and budget support has resulted in more emphasis on governance issues. The box below illustrates the possible linkages between budget support and the promotion of governance.

Box 5: Using budget support to promote good governance practices

Budget support is a potentially powerful instrument to foster governance. If properly used, major governance benefits could be yielded by using this tool:

- *Respect for national systems and processes*. The purpose of the general budget support and SPSPs is to increasingly work through the partner countries' own budgetary and planning systems/procedures. This should help to reinforce the credibility, effectiveness and legitimacy of key domestic governance processes.
- *Incentives to reform-particularly public financial management*. Budget support, by providing funding linked to agreed outcomes (based on indicators of progress) in public financial management, tends to create additional incentives for reform (including coherent and comprehensive national planning and budgeting processes). Many countries (particularly those with a PRSP) are encouraged to take steps to enhance the sustainability of public spending by introducing Medium Term Expenditure or Budget Frameworks (MTEFs/MTBFs). Furthermore, by providing funding through national budgets, the donor agencies become stakeholders in the dialogue on the national budget, thus increasing their leverage capacity.
- *Improving accountability*. Rather than imposing policies, budget support focuses on results. Injecting resources into the budget should help governments to respond to pressing development challenges. At the same time, it could enhance the scope for a democratic debate on the allocation of resources at the national level. Budget support should be used to improve regular reporting to, and monitoring by a wide range of national stakeholders (parliament in particular, but also civil society and external donors)[10].
- *Institutional support and capacity building*. In addition to financial assistance, general and sectoral budget support programmes comprise substantial amounts for capacity- and institution building, with particular emphasis on improving public resource management, developing policy and monitoring performance and results.
- *Governance on the donor side*. Budget support should also contribute to improving the efficiency of aid by reducing transaction costs and through better co-ordination and harmonisation of donor approaches.

Sixth, the EC also sought to create a new ***(financial) incentive scheme*** to promote governance. The Governance (Initiative) Incentive Tranche is an ambitious and innovative mechanism which has been in operation for a relatively short period (18 months). It is designed to give ACP partner countries access to additional funding based on commitments to achieve concrete results in democratic governance reform programmes. An amount of € 2.7 billion was set aside from the 10th European Development Fund for such initiatives.

[10] Critics of budget support argue that the instrument tends to 'recentralise' development while turning accountability even more one-sided (i.e. upstream to donor agencies, rather than downstream to local actors).

What ***progress*** has the EC achieved with the implementation of this ambitious governance agenda? What ***results*** have been obtained?

It is not easy to evaluate the impact of external assistance to governance. A wide range of conceptual and methodological results arise when attempts are made to measure or attribute the effects produced by support programmes in complex transformation processes such as governance. Furthermore, programme documents generally lack adequate indicators for measuring progress in relation to governance while systems for an ongoing monitoring and evaluation of governance outcomes are not yet in place at the level of the Commission. The time factor furthermore compounds the problem, as one cannot expect major changes to take place (e.g. in the functioning of the justice sector) in a short period of time.

However, a growing number of evaluations of all sorts (e.g. EC Country Strategy evaluations; programme or sector evaluations) are available and shed light on the results achieved with direct or indirect governance interventions. They contain a wealth of information and reflect the huge diversity of experiments and innovative approaches developed by the EC in the governance domain. In 2005-2006, a Thematic Evaluation of EC Support to Good Governance was carried out. It sought to understand "the relevance, the efficiency, the effectiveness and the sustainability of the impacts on good governance processes and in encouraging and promoting good governance approaches and practices, in third countries". Its conclusions with regard to the impact of governance programmes clearly illustrate the limits of external interventions, as currently conceived and implemented, in the area of governance.

According to the report, the multiple governance initiatives supported by the EC have generally helped to trigger/consolidate positive dynamics in third countries. Yet there are few indications, at this stage, that these positive effects have contributed to ***systemic changes***, i.e. in profound and sustainable changes in the prevailing governance culture.

It is important to stress that this ***sobering lesson*** also emerges from evaluations dealing with governance programmes supported by other bilateral/multilateral donor agencies intervening in the field of governance[11]. This, in turn, strongly suggests that improving governance is "extraordinarily difficult" and even getting "***good enough governance*** is fraught with ambiguities, challenges and the potential for failure and less-than-anticipated results"[12].

3.3. Major gaps observed

According to the above-mentioned EC Thematic Evaluation, the mixed track record of the first generation of EC support governance programmes is related to the existence of major gaps between the officially adopted EC governance policies, strategies and guiding principles on the one hand, and their effective application in the field, on the other hand. Such a gap between policy intentions and practices is not uncommon when new topics quickly move to the forefront of the agenda. It generally takes time for the system and the actors involved to digest the new ideas, policies and approaches. However, these gaps tend to remain prominent in EC practice, thus hampering the impact of EC supported programmes and processes. Some of the ***key gaps*** observed include:

[11] For a more detailed analysis, see Bossuyt, J. 2008, in: "La gouvernance à la croisée des chemins". Contribution to a compendium of articles on governance, produced in the framework of the French Presidency of the EU. See : La gouvernance démocratique : un nouevau paradigme du développement?, MAE, 2008.,

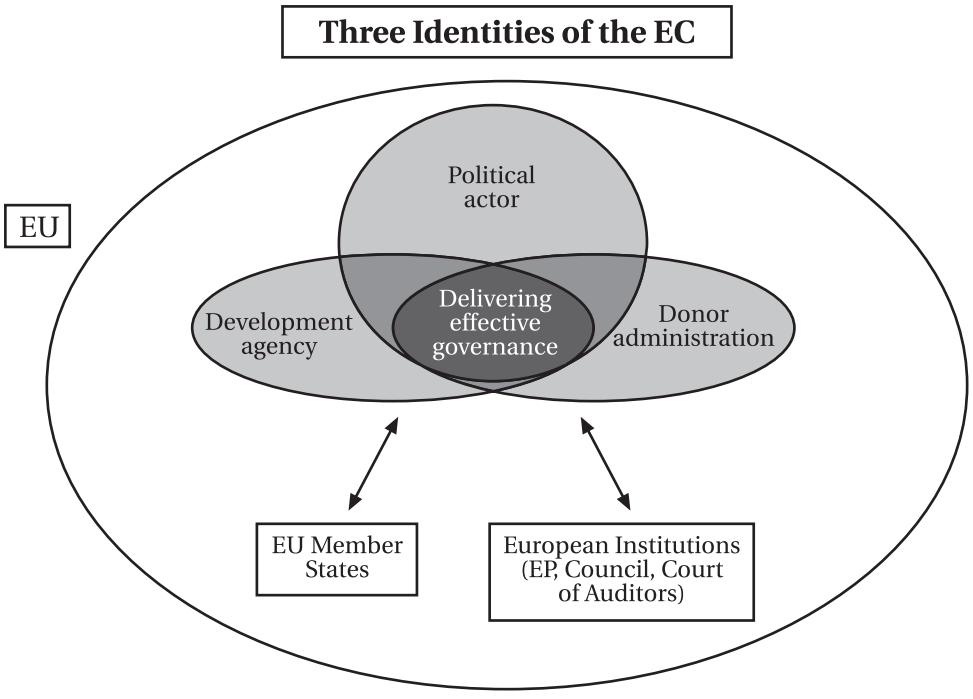
[12] See Grindle, M. 2002. *Good Enough Governance: Poverty Reduction and Reform in Developing Countries*. World Bank

- *Ownership deficit*. The EC attaches a central importance to ownership of governance processes. To this end, it generally seeks to align its governance support to national agendas and programmes. Yet this is a necessary but not sufficient step to ensure ownership. In most third countries, the governance agenda itself is a hugely contested issue. Governance has become a ***societal issue***, with a variety of actors seeking to influence its agenda (civil society, the private sector, socio-economic actors, the media, etc.). In this context, the slogan of 'country ownership' often seems quite hollow and of limited operational relevance. The EC, much like other donor agencies, finds it difficult to position itself in this open, often conflicting field. In practice, the tendency is rather to assume ownership on the basis of formal criteria (e.g. the existence of a national policy on governance, a reform plan for the justice sector). The instrument of 'multi-actor dialogue' often remains under-utilized as a tool to generate truly owned and agreed governance agendas that could form the basis for meaningful EC support programmes. A concrete example of the danger of such practices is the recently launched ***Governance Facility***. It could be argued that this instrument presents a number of ***major flaws***, both in the design of the instrument and its application in the field. Specifically, the Governance Facility is based on the rather naïve belief that additional funds provide a powerful incentive to improve governance. It uses a Governance Profile (based on a list of formal governance indicators) as well as Governance Action Plans, submitted by governments, to determine the allocation of the incentive tranche. The whole process is primarily driven from within the EC and characterized by limited dialogue and connections with other governance initiatives. In these conditions, it is hard to see how the extra funds will act as an incentive to accelerate reforms.

- *Technocratic approaches*. This is a second recurrent gap. In its policy documents, the EC clearly states that governance is all about power, interests and resources. These elements form the ***hard core of the governance challenge*** to be found in the developing world. External programmes that circumvent or even resolve these critical power issues are unlikely to yield much effect in changing the way institutions perform. For effective action, donor agencies need to come closer to the often invisible 'inner circle' of the governance problem; to better understand the ***informal rules*** that condition the functioning of institutions, politicians, civil servants and other actors as well as the incentives for change that may exist in a given situation. However, in practice, these political factors are generally integrated in a rather superficial manner in EC supported governance programmes. One can equally observe a resistance to ***looking 'behind the façade'*** of formal policy declarations and institutions as well as a preference for technocratic solutions, based on traditional capacity building approaches, to solve deeply seated structural governance shortcomings. In recent years, the EC has sought for ways and means to adopt a more political approach in delivering governance support. A good example is the search for a set of new analytical tools to assess and address governance in sectors (the resulting EC Reference Document will come out early 2009).

- *Limited coherence*. The effective delivery of governance support to third countries depends, to a large extent, on the ***harmonious co-existence and cross-fertilisation between the three identities that the EC displays in its external action***, i.e. that of (i) political player; (ii) development agency; (iii) major donor administration, managing large sums of aid resources and subjected to very stringent financial accountability rules (see Figure 1 below, drawn from the report on the above-mentioned EC thematic evaluation on governance). As governance is all about politics, development staff need solid political back-up to be effective. In a similar vein, development methodologies need to find ways to better integrate the political dimensions in aid interventions. Both are dependent on the existence of a coherent set of institutional incentives and procedures that facilitate effective implementation. However, there are strong indications that the convergence between these three identities is not evident at this stage. In recent years, the EC has made major efforts to better play its political role and to adopt new development methodologies and tools and approaches that help to support governance processes (e.g. budget support for country-led

reforms). Yet the dominant administrative culture seems increasingly at odds with the requirements of delivering effective and efficient governance support.



All this points to the need for the EC to ***revisit some of the fundamental premises of its intervention strategy***, such as: how does political and societal change occur and how can one better understand the local context? How can external agencies contribute to complex processes of political transformation, including through consolidation of legitimate and capable states? How can good governance be nurtured in poor countries, whose institutions almost by definition suffer from weak legitimacy, credibility and capacity? Who are the actors that should be involved and through what type of process? How can one ensure genuine ownership (beyond formal commitments)? What approaches and instruments help to build genuine ownership and local accountability? How can EC provide better capacity support for actors to develop and implement their own (governance) reform programmes? What does it mean to play the role of a pro-active change agent? How can a more coherent EU approach on governance emerge?

4. Participatory development and civil society

4.1. The changing role of civil society

Post-independence development strategies gave a lead role to the central state in promoting growth and development. As a result, only limited opportunities existed for civil society actors to participate in the development process and related cooperation processes. European development cooperation under successive Lomé Conventions (1975-2000) provides a case in point. While special provisions were made for micro-projects under Lomé I (1975-80) and for decentralised cooperation under Lomé IV (1990-95), participation was usually confined to project implementation at local level, involving limited funds. Opportunities for structured dialogue on key policy issues or on cooperation priorities were rare.

During the 1990s, this ***central government monopoly*** was seen as contradicting the major changes taking place in the developing world, including economic liberalisation, multi-party democratisation and decentralisation. As a result, there were growing pressures to open up the partnership to a range of other actors. In response to this, the EC and other donors gradually adopted a much more sophisticated policy towards civil society, particularly from 2000 onwards.

The ***Cotonou Agreement***, signed in 2000, was the first major EC policy document which legally enshrined participation as a ***"fundamental principle"*** of ACP co-operation. New opportunities are created for Non-State Actors (NSAs) to participate in all aspects of cooperation (formulation, implementation and evaluation). The purpose is not to oppose governments, but to foster dialogue and collaboration between the different development players, with due respect for their respective roles. Box 6 below summarises the forms of participation that are possible for civil society (in all its diversity) under the Cotonou Agreement.

Box 6: What participation is possible for non-state actors?

The main guide is Article 4 of the Cotonou Agreement, which foresees that non-state actors, where appropriate, shall be:

- *informed and involved* in consultation on cooperation policies and strategies, on priorities for cooperation and on the political dialogue;
- provided with *financial resources*;
- involved in the *implementation* of cooperation projects and programmes in the areas that concern them or where they have a comparative advantage;
- provided with *capacity building support* to reinforce their capabilities, to establish effective consultation mechanisms, and to promote strategic alliances

The principle of participatory development was introduced in other regional agreements (ALA, MEDA, TACIS and CARDS) and re-affirmed in a stream of EC policy documents. Also in the ***European Consensus on Development*** (2005), which applies to all regions, the EC reiterated its political commitment to ensuring the participation of "all stakeholders in countries' development and in the political, social and economic dialogue processes"; to "building capacity for these actors"; to "strengthening their voice" and to providing aid "through different modalities that can be complementary, including support to and via civil society"

By embracing participatory development as a key cooperation principle, civil society organisations (CSOs) are no longer to be regarded as mere beneficiaries of EC-funded projects but as key domestic actors in the overall development process. This new political agenda towards CSOs reflects a ***paradigm shift in EC approaches towards civil society***. However, decades of centralised management of development and cooperation processes are not erased with the stroke of a pen. Participation is a relatively new concept for all parties involved in ACP-EC cooperation. Attitudes, roles and working methods need to be adapted to the requirements of participatory development.

4.2. Implementation strategies followed and progress achieved

From a development perspective, the opening up of ACP-EC cooperation to non-state actors holds great potential in terms of fighting poverty, promoting growth, delivering social services and fostering democracy and good governance. What implementation strategies were designed to cope with this challenging new

agenda towards civil society? Experience suggests that the EC's response strategies were based on the following ***building blocks***:

- *Recognising the diversity of civil society*. In policy documents and operational guidance related to civil society, the EC insisted on the need to look beyond the traditional (urban-based and northern) NGOs and to recognise the huge diversity and dynamism of civil society. This includes acceptance of the dual role of civil society as implementing agencies (i.e. acting as service providers) and governance actors (i.e. acting as dialogue partners, advocacy organisations, or watchdog agencies).

- *Opening up political space*. In many countries, the EC sought to work with civil society in order to reinforce democratic and participatory trends (where they existed) or to reduce barriers against the involvement of non-state actors (in rather closed political systems). In several countries, attempts were made to move beyond ad hoc consultations and to explore ways and means to introduce a more structured tripartite dialogue between the government, the EC and representative NSA structures on major policy issues or in programming processes.

- *Mainstreaming participation*. With important differences across regions and countries, the EC sought to promote civil society participation in the various pillars of cooperation (i.e. aid, trade, political cooperation), approaches and instruments used (see Box 7) as well as at different levels of intervention (i.e. local, national, regional, global). In the process, a wide range of innovative programmes and practices emerged at the downstream level of implementation in a hugely diversified set of countries.

Box 7: Empowering CSOs to participate in sector and general budget support processes – some emerging good practices

- In Zambia in 2006 the EC started to support civil society involvement in budgetary processes, with a focus on the impact of budget support on poverty reduction. The main watchdog of Zambian public expenditure is the Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR), a civil society network of over 140 organisations working for pro-poor development all over the country. The EC actively supports the CSPR and has also launched an additional project aimed at further involving civil society in the budget process in the coming years.
- The Protecting Basic Services (PBS) Programme in Ethiopia was set up to decentralise the provision of basic services to lower tiers of government after the suspension of direct budget support in 2005. CSOs were involved in this innovative scheme through monitoring and accountability checks of the PBS grants in the field. For this purpose, a civil society fund was set up by the EC to channel aid to CSOs. The PBS is particularly active in sectors like health and education, where CSOs are invited to directly participate in the budgetary process and in the monitoring of service delivery.
- In Uganda the first coherent approach to democracy and civil society support was provided under the 'Democratic Governance and Accountability Programme' which was launched in 2008. Funding is partially earmarked to enhance the role of CSOs in social accountability activities. The programme is closely coordinated with the Partners for Democracy and Governance Group's basket fund, a multi-donor basket fund for CSO grants and service contracts for capacity development.

- *Capacity support*. This is crucial for enabling civil society to participate meaningfully in policy processes or in service delivery. Particularly in the ACP countries, the EC invested heavily in the development of a new generation of capacity building programmes for CSOs.

What ***progress*** has been achieved in the implementation of the participatory development agenda? What are the ***main results*** of the various EC interventions in favour of civil society?

Let us first consider ***experience gained with the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement***, the most progressive EC policy framework for civil society participation. With hindsight and from a broad perspective, it could be argued that the adoption of the participatory development agenda was characterised by complexity, confusion and conflict[13].

Many ACP-EC officials have been discovering the ***complexity*** of dealing with civil society. The concept itself is vague and difficult to operate in hugely different country contexts. In practice, it represents a very diversified and dynamic arena of actors. The rapid increase in donor funding (from all sides) has often had perverse effects, such as an artificial explosion of civil society, including 'fake' organisations interested in tapping aid resources for private interests. Moreover, the lines are often blurred between state and civil society. All this tends to complicate the identification of genuine change agents and the application of existing eligibility criteria for participation in dialogue processes or access to funding. Involving civil society also raises many fundamental questions about the drivers of societal change, the governance-society nexus, the link between elective and participatory democracy and the limits of civil society (in its dual role as provider of services or partner in dialogue processes). An additional factor of complexity is that civil society support programmes should not be delivered in a vacuum, as self-standing actions, isolated from mainstream development processes. Experience suggests that the effectiveness and sustainability of civil society support programmes largely depends on proper articulation with national reform processes (e.g. decentralisation, good governance, public sector reform), with the activities of key institutions (e.g. sector ministries) or with other donor initiatives towards civil society.

There is also no shortage of ***confusion***. The end of the 'single-actor' approach means that the development stage is now occupied by a large number of actors: central governments, (elected) local governments, civil society in all its forms, the private sector, social and economic actors, without forgetting the many external actors that also want to play a part in the development process. Not surprisingly, there is some confusion among these actors about who should do what, compounded by territorial fights, jockeying for position and competition for funding. It remains a major challenge for ACP-EC cooperation to properly manage these types of multi-actor partnerships.

Finally, participation is likely to entail ***conflict***. There is much (dormant, potential) conflict within southern civil society, either among relatively homogeneous groups (e.g. NGOs) or between different categories of NSAs. These tensions often come to the surface when dialogue or funding opportunities arise in the context of ACP-EC cooperation. Furthermore, while the Cotonou Agreement stresses the need to promote dialogue and collaboration between state and civil society (with due respect for the legitimate and complementary role of each actor), in practice this seldom goes smoothly. At the end of the day, NSA participation is linked to fundamental processes such as the exercise of power, the use of resources, the way democratic control and accountability are exercised or the promotion of good governance. In poor and fragile political environments, promoting civil society participation can be a risky business (including for the social activist supported)[14], with huge conflict potential.

[13] For a more detailed discussion, see Bossuyt, J. 2006. Mainstreaming Civil Society in ACP-EU Development Cooperation. In Lister, M and M. Carbone (eds). New Pathways in International Development. Gender and Civil Society in EU Policy. Ashgate Publishing Company.

[14] This issue was amply discussed during a Conference on "Human Rights Defenders and Development Agencies" organised in Brussels by Frontline Foundation

A ***second source*** for obtaining some insights on results achieved with civil society support is the recent ***"Evaluation of EC aid delivered through civil society organisations"*** (whose results will be disseminated in February 2009). Preliminary findings suggest that the participation of civil society in different geographic and political contexts, in various roles (as service providers and dialogue partners/advocates for policy change), and in different sectors of intervention (e.g. health, water and sanitation, education) as well as instruments (geographic or thematic budget lines) has generally produced positive outcomes.

Evidence has also been collected on ***broader (and often intangible) development outcomes*** that were generated through working with CSOs. Examples include (i) the creation of social capital (in the form of empowered communities); (ii) organisational development of CSOs (often through effective partnerships with international CSOs); (iii) new partnership relations between state and civil society (particularly at a decentralised level); and (iv) scaling-up of project outcomes in the form of new public policies being adopted at the governmental level.

However, preliminary findings also suggest that there is less scope for reaching major conclusions with regard to the sustainable impact of these interventions. This is particularly the case when one looks beyond the immediate project outcomes and seeks to assess the influence and impact on broader processes of societal change, institutional reform or improved governance – all of which require a longer time-span to achieve results. In this perspective, ***serious questions*** can be raised ***on the likelihood of sustainable impact*** considering (i) the limited scope and duration of CSO projects; (ii) the lack of a clear-cut strategy to transform the positive dynamics generated by projects into wider processes owned by the various stakeholders; (iii) the limited connection between these projects and broader national programmes or other donor interventions; (iv) the difficulty of ensuring coherent EC support over a longer period of time, partly induced by inadequate procedures; (v) the limited attention generally given to the sustainability of the CSOs themselves.

4.3. Major gaps observed

In order to improve the EC track record in terms of supporting civil society, it will be critically important to address the main gaps between policy commitment and actual practices. Three main gaps merit priority attention:

- *Knowledge gap*. The novelty of participatory development approaches puts a premium on learning for the actors involved in ACP-EC cooperation. This is a precondition for a qualitative evolution of partnerships with civil society. It is also essential for developing a culture of participation and for implementing the necessary institutional changes that go with such an approach to cooperation (e.g. at the level of attitudes, working methods, instruments and procedures). Much remains to be done at the EC level to properly institutionalize learning on participatory development across the board. A priority task is to invest in a better knowledge of 'who is who' in the CSO arena (at regional, national and local levels) through strategic mappings and direct exchanges with CSOs;

- *Political consistency*. Clarity of purpose is essential in dealing with civil society. Why does the EC want to work with civil society? What is the ultimate goal of the support provided? Why do civil society organisations seek to participate? What type of impact is sought? In the text and spirit of EC policy documents, participation is more than an instrument for improving aid effectiveness. It has a clear political

and ECDPM, October 2007.

connotation, i.e. ensuring that citizens can express their voices, participate in public policy processes, and help to construct accountable states and effective democracies. Yet in practice, many EC Delegations still work with civil society from a rather narrow, instrumental aid delivery perspective. The challenge will be to adopt a societal transformation perspective when engaging with civil society. This means recognising that civil society participation is all about empowerment; it is about building social capital to properly use the new democratic spaces[15], and demanding rights[16]. It particularly calls upon the EC to improve its overall capacity to manage the politics of participation[17] and to provide strategic support to the consolidation of civil society as an agent of change.

- *From projects to processes*. EC policy documents stress the need to ensure complementarity between public and private actors, such as civil society. In practice, the public-private divide remains very much a reality. Part of the problem is the continuing ***popularity of project approaches*** to supporting civil society. Evidence suggests that CSO projects can make valuable contributions to key EC development objectives (poverty reduction, local development, governance, decentralisation, peace and conflict resolution, etc.). Yet in order to scale up positive gains at project level and improve the chances of promoting systemic change and enhance sustainability, it is essential to move away from the logic of financing (short-term) projects. The task at hand is rather to accompany multi-actor processes of societal transformation, in which CSOs are supported in order to play a well-defined series of roles (alongside governments and other actors).

5. Some tentative conclusions and pointers of discussion

The three cases clearly illustrate that ***EC/EU policy-makers should mind the gap*** between stated policy commitments and actual implementation. Admittedly, time is required to transform a new policy into a consistent set of implementation strategies and good practices. Yet the major changes, introduced into policy frameworks related to governance and civil society, date from the beginning of 2000. Critical implementation gaps still feature prominently in both areas, potentially reducing the relevance, impact and credibility of EC development cooperation. Furthermore, in the case of JAES, the danger of major implementation gaps is already becoming clear.

A cross-cutting analysis of the three examples reveals a number of ***key challenges in terms of improving EC aid delivery***, including:

- *Rethinking the way to promote ownership*. The notion of ownership remains a most critical condition for development effectiveness and impact. The EC faces the challenge, as do other donors, to fundamentally rethink the way to operationalise this concept. For instance, in order to nurture more ownership for the JAES, creative strategies will have to be devised, providing the necessary scope and incentives to develop new ways of ***working together with all relevant stakeholders*** (beyond central governments). In the case of governance, building ownership will require: (i) moving away from normative/technocratic approaches to supporting governance; (ii) a preparedness to look behind the facade in order to better understand the

[15] A. Cornwall and V. Schattan P. Coelho (Eds), New Democratic Spaces? IDS Bulletin, Volume 35, Number 2, April 2000.

[16] J. Petit and J. Wheeler (Eds), Developing Rights?, IDS Bulletin, Volume 36, Number 1, January 2005

[17] J. Putzel, The Politics of 'Participation': Civil Society, the State and Development Assistance'. Crisis States Development Research Centre, Discussion Paper no. 1, 2004

factors that can induce change (including power, resources, interests, incentives); (iii) supporting the development of locally owned governance agendas as well as (iv) investing in the demand side for improving governance. The call to fundamentally review the approach to country ownership also emerged in the framework of the Accra Agenda for Action process, convened to accelerate and deepen implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (September 2008). Civil society actors sought to influence the process by insisting on "broadening the definition of ownership, so that citizens, civil society organisations and elected officials" should occupy a central position in the aid process (as opposed to current approaches that tend to over-emphasise the role of central governments)[18].

- *Consistent application of political commitments*. This second challenge is particularly visible in the EC approaches towards civil society. EC policy documents contain clear political commitments to engage with CSOs as full-fledged actors in the development process and to support them accordingly. There is also no shortage of political instructions to EC Delegations to translate this mandate into practice (particularly in the ACP countries). Yet in the field, one continues to see a ***co-existence of good practices*** towards CSOs (that are consistent with the EC policy framework) ***and traditional top-down, supply-driven and/or instrumental approaches*** (which reduce CSOs to a conduit for aid or mere beneficiaries/implementing agencies).

- *Realistic implementation strategies*. The challenge here is to find a better ***balance*** between investing time in formulating new policy frameworks and energy spent in terms of elaborating and negotiating realistic implementation strategies. The absence of funding for the implementation of the JAES is a clear example of the mismatch that can exist between grand policy designs and requirements for effective implementation.

- *Changes in the institutional culture*. This is not a new item on the EC agenda. The reform of EC/EU external action, initiated in 2000, may have yielded positive effects in terms of speeding up aid delivery and improving financial accountability. However, the three cases show that there is still much work to be done in order to improve EC delivery capacity of ***quality aid in highly complex processes*** such as the JAES, governance, and civil society development. Further work will be needed to remove institutional bottlenecks for improved EC performance, such as (i) disbursement pressures (which tend to reduce the scope for supporting long-term processes of change); (ii) a lack of incentives to take risks (particularly troublesome when supporting governance and civil society in hostile environments) or to engage in meaningful coordination with other players (as requested by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness); (iii) a narrow focus on short-term results; (iv) the prevailing institutional fragmentation within the EC between those in charge of policy and those responsible for implementation; and (v) the limited progress achieved with policy coherence at the EU level.

- *Donor accountability*. The critical question also arises as to what extent the continuing existence of these implementation gaps reflects a more profound problem, linked to the lack of political credibility of EU/EC development cooperation agendas. In a wide range of key cooperation areas (e.g. Policy Coherence for Development; the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness; Economic Partnership Agreements), the EC/EU has been accused by various actors (including partner countries and civil society actors) of primarily pursuing/imposing its own agenda. lacking transparency, and providing only limited accountability with regard to its overall behaviour as a global player. In this context, it remains to be seen whether the current international trend towards ensuring mutual accountability, as enshrined in the Paris Declaration, will continue in the years to come.

[18] Civil society voices for better aid. September 2008. *Civil Society Statement in Accra wants urgency for action on aid.*

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Resumen: Este documento de trabajo analiza la calidad del proceso de concesión de la ayuda de la Comisión Europea en relación a tres grandes innovaciones políticas, recientemente introducidas por la UE: (i) la nueva estrategia de asociación con África; (ii) el creciente apoyo a la gobernabilidad como clave para la cooperación al desarrollo; (iii) la inclusión del desarrollo participativo en las políticas de cooperación y el acercamiento a la sociedad civil.

En cada uno de los tres ámbitos, la UE desarrolló iniciativas para llevar a la práctica los compromisos de este nuevo enfoque. Esos esfuerzos han llevado a nuevas dinámicas positivas en la relación con África, así como a acercamientos de la UE hacia la gobernabilidad y la sociedad civil. Sin embargo, en cada una de estas áreas, este documento identifica fallos críticos de implementación, que tienden a reducir la relevancia, el impacto y la credibilidad de la cooperación al desarrollo comunitaria. La conclusión es que los que diseñan las políticas comunitarias deberían prestar atención a los objetivos de las políticas y su implementación.

Palabras clave: Reformas institucionales, UE, Acuerdos de Asociación con África, Gobernabilidad y Sociedad Civil.

Abstract: This paper seeks to analize the quality of the delivery process of the EU with regard to three major policy innovations, recently introduced by the EU: (i) the new strategic partnership with Africa; (ii) the growing support for governance as a key priority of EU Development Cooperation; (iii) the adoption of the participatory development agenda and related changes in cooperation approaches towards civil society.

In each of the three cases, the EU undertook a wide range of initiatives to translate the new policy commitments into practice. These efforts have led to positive new dynamics in the relationship with Africa as well as in EU approaches towards governance and civil society. Yet in each of the three policy areas, the paper also identified critical implementation gaps, which tend to reduce the relevance, impact and credibility of EC Development Cooperation. The conclusion is that EU policy-makers should seriously "mind the gap" between stated policy objectives and actual implementation.

Keywords: Institutional reforms, EU, implementation, partnership with Africa, governance and civil society.

Patrocina:

MINISTERIO DE ASUNTOS EXTERIORES Y DE COOPERACIÓN

aecid

Centro de Estudios de Cooperación al Desarrollo (CECOD)
Avda. del Valle 21, 28003 Madrid
Teléfono: 91 514 04 22 / Fax: 91 514 04 28
info@cecod.net
www.cecod.net
www.cecod-fi.net

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