

Conference EC-EU Panel IVDEV

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The EU-ACP relationship, institutionalised through the Lomé, and then Cotonou Conventions, has been described as “one of the EC/EU’s most significant and enduring external activities”, the centrepiece of the EU’s efforts to provide help to the developing world”. Today, we have a more balanced view on the output of Aid and Development policy.

A considerable academic debate has taken place as to the significance and effectiveness of EU Aid and Development policy both to the process of EU integration itself and to the expression of the EU’s collective interests on the world stage.

The first question concerns the colonial legacies of the EC’s aid and development policy which cannot be ignored.

It was whilst colonialism was under threat, under French and Belgian pressures, that the Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) was signed in March 1957, with a fourth section which explicitly stipulated that the overseas territories of the Six would be associated with this new community.

The second question is about effectiveness: from Lomé to Lisbon, has the long series of agreements on aid and trade ensued between the European Community and the ACP and multilateral aid means (DG VIII, EDF funding) and practices (projects or programmes focused) proved efficient and more productive for growth and human development than bilateral aid?

We should also assess how EU development policy has shifted from an innovative but regional model of north-south relations to an assertion of the EU’s soft power in a globalized world.

It would be also interesting to trace back the radical change which affected Aid and Development purposes in a global context and to evaluate to what extent it has brought fruit: from the old shocks, the end of the New International Order, to the promotion of neo liberal theories, the end of the Cold War and the creation of the WTO, long-term development gradually gave way to other paradigms and priorities, such as good governance, emergency humanitarian aid, adaptation to globalization (liberalization of trade and structural adaptation, change from public funds to private investment) peace and security, and sustainable development.

Finally we could legitimately question about the meaning of EU – Africa partnership in 2014, when the African continent is the focus of all the “major dangers” facing the modern world: uncontrolled migration, new epidemics, climatic and environmental catastrophes and the threat of terrorism, but at the same time shows the most potential whether we are talking of natural resources or of future consumer demand and investment. European Union is still Africa’s leading economic partner and also its primary donor. But this historical monopoly is now being breached by “emerging countries”, such as China, India and Turkey, as well as the USA, which is anxious to protect its energy supplies, counter terrorist threats.