

Bernard Hack

bernhard.hack@gmail.com

Evaluating policy coherence for development in Austria: Towards building a measurement tool

Policies other than development cooperation have a strong impact on developing countries. The European Union (EU) concept of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) aims to build synergies between those policies and development objectives to increase the effectiveness of development aid (EC 2007). Failing to implement the EC's ambitious PCD agenda will mean failing to reach the Millennium Development Goals (EC 2005). Yet, there is no tool available to measure PCD in the member states. This paper reviews the debate on PCD and aims to lay the methodological foundations for building an innovative evaluation tool to measure PCD in Austria in order to inform knowledge-based governance for sustainable development.

The EU aims to maximise the positive effect of non-aid EU policies while minimising their negative impact on developing countries progress towards the MDGs. The European Consensus devotes considerable attention to PCD and takes a series of strong commitments (European Consensus). Achieving greater policy coherence demands sustained efforts to improve the integration of sectoral policies, to ensure policy integration across levels of government, and to ensure consistency in the choices made by the various stakeholders (OECD 2002).

Two strategies are usually pursued: On the one hand, NGOs and other stakeholders demand accountability and transparency by publishing case studies of incoherence when e.g. trade and development policies are in conflict (CONCORD/EVM 2007). On the other hand, policy integration for development (DPI) needs to build institutional capacity in order to create coordination mechanisms across government departments. This approach relies to a large extent on best practices and making lessons learned transferable (Ashoff 2005, Obrovsky 2007). Even in countries following a 'whole government approach' to PCD (Picciotto 2004, OECD DAC 2006) such as Sweden, assessment of actual coherence is limited to an annual report to parliament.

In its recently released PCD report the EC states that "the analysis of the degree of PCD remains both analytical and empirical" and that establishing a measurement system of a country's coherence is proving difficult. "None of the existing ones have achieved a degree of maturity that provides a sufficient level of reliability and credibility (EC 2007)."

Reviewing initiatives such as the 'Commitment to Development Index' (CGD 2006) and the recent assessment of the EU's Impact Assessment System (ECDPM 2005, 2007, CEPS 2006), the paper points out further avenues for research towards an innovative tool evaluating PCD particularly suited to the Austrian context. Taking clues from the literature on Environmental Policy Integration (Lafferty & Hovden 2002, Hertin & Berkhout 2003, Nilsson & Persson 2003) the tool seeks to assess three dimensions of PCD in combination: institutional capacity of PCD, coherence of policy impact and political will to implement PCD.