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### **NEW CHALLENGES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION:**

#### **EU AND AFRICA DIALOGUE <sup>1</sup>**

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# **NEW CHALLENGES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: EU AND AFRICA DIALOGUE**

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## **Abstract**

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*Development cooperation policy has been managing the relationship between the EU and Africa throughout years of implementation with very questionable results. To some extent, the economic aid from the richest countries suffers important cutbacks in times of crisis and in general is managed according to the possibilities and interests of the donor or investor countries more than the real needs of the recipients. This system of cooperation must be overcome through the establishment of true instruments of bilateral cooperation in which all actors are in conditions of equality. These instruments can cover objectives such as job creation, improvement of technical capacities of disadvantaged populations, construction of infrastructures and, in general, solid economic progress integrated in the territories in which it is implanted.*

*The European Union, as the generating centre of this kind of aid and cooperation, would thus promote stable bonds that avoid the risks of less than transparent investments in countries. As the Commission has recognized, the EU is Africa's largest trading partner and represents 36% of the continent's trade, with more than 200 billion euros invested. These investments can no longer materialize in the traditional formulas of donor-recipient countries.*

*The aim of the communication is to evaluate the cooperation systems currently in force and formulate different proposals to make them more efficient and effective.*

*Several issues will be addressed to this purpose: structures of the programs and agreements, participation of the private sector, conditions of implementation, monitoring and administrative control, cooperation channels... All of this with the purpose of drafting a paradigm shift in an increasingly globalised and interdependent world.*

## **Development Cooperation: Different acceptations.**

An approach to the literature about cooperation and international development, both regarding the contents of the agreements and the instruments of cooperation as well as scientific literature that has addressed the subject, produces the result that we are facing a situation for which we have still not found guidelines that offer sufficiently efficient and effective instruments.

The continuous agreements, political decisions, and work instruments in general usually have contents from which we can deduce the subliminal message that they must overcome past mechanisms of cooperation that did not produce the expected results, establishing increasingly ambitious new objectives. It is a kind of flight forward that justifies itself with the excuse of having definitely taken the determination of a real and effective cooperation and with the setting of absolutely optimistic objectives that are in keeping with the renewed enthusiasm that is announced in the implementation of the policies that are necessary to achieve them.

In this conduct, the greater or lesser awareness of the plausibility of what is proposed is usually reflected in the date, as a slogan, is marked for the achievement of the objectives that are established: the more optimistic they are and less confidence we have in their achievement, the further the fixed date for the achievement of the specific “agenda”, “action”, “programme”, etc.

There is no greater coherence or confidence in the doctrine and public opinion in general, about the contents, methods and purposes that must preside development cooperation. In a globalised and changing world, each international political fluctuation determines a change in the approaches of how we must handle the relationships between those who have the most and those who lack more things<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Vid. BALLBÉ, M.: “*The future of Administrative Law in globalisation: between the Americanisation and the 76 globalization*”, in the Journal of Public de Administration number. 174. Madrid, 2007.

It must be acknowledged that it is not easy to reach an idea of “development cooperation” in the current international situation. In the first place, nowadays the world is no longer a world of the rich and the poor. The consolidation of these two poles with the second colonisation operated by the Europeans at the end of the XIX century has been dissolved with the progressive development of many countries that, after the First and Second World War, have reached different levels of development and economic independence in the face of the traditional hegemonic nations. It is true that wealth is distributed unequally in the world, but heterogeneity is greater nowadays than eighty years ago. Not only is the distribution of wealth diverse but so are the growth rates and their soundness. Any long-term economic forecast envisages a scenario in which the current economic power centres are going to undergo considerable changes: in this sense the emergence of China and the possibilities that economies like Brazil’s, India’s etc show are a reality<sup>5</sup>. In not so many years’ time, many other countries will be revealed as economic powers and this will occur with similar but not identical axiological parameters to those of the European (those of market economy). Neither are the expectations of the inhabitants of the different countries the same. Societies have become diverse, with different thresholds regarding the socioeconomic conditions they demand<sup>6</sup>.

The distribution of power has also been blurred. Relocation of the workforce and the production centres is a reality that in many occasions creates small areas of development and social change around very specific production centres or commercial flows that gravitate on the fringes of state policies or international organizations that, undoubtedly, are unaware of the corporate decisions that are made by those who have promoted aforesaid areas.

Finance sources are also diverse and the impact of their fluctuations on the economy does not have the limited effect as in the past. If the stock market crash of 1929 in the United States of America was doubtlessly the most important risk of final collapse of capitalist economy, it was resolved by the same actors that had caused it and apart from the rest of the world that was not affected by the crisis. Contemporary crises have very diverse and

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<sup>5</sup> KEELEY B. OECD Insights Income Inequality: The Gap between Rich and Poor. OECD Publishing, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> COLL, J.M., FERRÁS, X.: *Economy of Happiness*. Plataforma Editorial. Barcelona, 2017.

unpredictable effects and can occur in scenarios in which third countries profit from them or being unaffected by them do gain a competitive advantage from them.

All these variables make the reconsideration of the so-called “development cooperation” necessary in the context of this diverse complex and variable reality<sup>7</sup>. However, to a large extent, the principles and approach on which the great systems of development cooperation rest on, in our opinion, still owe a lot to that world of the rich versus the poor; to unilateral and programmatic determination of the cooperation instruments; to the essentially unidirectional character of rent transfers; and to the attention to political criteria more than to the requirements that paying attention to the reality that surrounds us demands. The result, as we say, is unsatisfactory: after one “agenda” or “programme” comes another more ambitious one, following an apparent assessment of the imperfections, failures and deficiencies that were diagnosed in the previous, but with a repetition of the model. The only true achievement is the fleeting delight in the establishment of objectives and in the proclamation of intentions; later, the more or less scanty results, will be prettied up by a new action, more “ambitious” than the previous one.

### **Development Cooperation: Instruments and national initiatives in international scenarios.**

A reflection of this complexity that we have succinctly referred to, is *Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations the 25th of September of 2015*. In the same, 17 goals are established, of a varied nature, that are considered decisive for the prosperity of the world population. At the same time as its proclamation, a resolution was sanctioned that stated, “*the greatest global challenge is eradicating poverty which is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development*”. Poverty and economic inequality place populations in a situation of complete inability to achieve other objectives, that necessarily require having minimum conditions of safety and subsistence. The Agenda, of ambitious contents, establishes 17 areas of action in which as many objectives are defined and that are composed of 169 more specific targets;

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<sup>7</sup> Vid. about such issues SANTANDER CAMPOS, G.; AGUIRRE CARMONA, P; ANTONIO ALONSO, J.: *The new face of international development cooperation, actors and emerging modalities*. Los Libros de la Catarata. Madrid, 2019.

all of them must work as guidelines for the designing of the political and economic programmes of the Member States of the European Union. The Agenda wishes to, “*put an end to poverty and hunger all over the world between now and 2030, to combat inequalities within and among countries, to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources*”. These objectives make no sense if they are set out as policies to be developed inside frontiers, logically.

Four years after being sanctioned, the Agenda has become a guideline to be followed in the different development programmes of countries and international organizations, but it has proved to be unable to redirect the international dialogue to the terms of cooperation and sustainable development it advocates. It is doubtlessly a document that foresees a long term action and that has to go through different phases depending on each moment; but, in the time it has been in force, its ability to redirect the international discourse to terms of multilateralism, flexibility, participation of the private sector, commitment, responsibility, etc. has been revealed to be scarce.

In the presence of this reality, we must not succumb to ineffectiveness. The *tribalization* that the world is undergoing nowadays, with the return to protectionist policies (us, first), of confrontation and not solidary, as well as in the European Union, must make us focus on replies and propose ways and intervention areas where we can implement actions conducive to the achievement of the proposed goals. The European Union, Spain and Andalucía have, from this perspective, options of establishing those actions, that must, in our opinion, abandon the traditional guidelines of international development, to which we have referred, introducing other criteria that in addition we already know about because they have had positive outcomes both in Spain as in the European Union. It is not enough to transcend aid with cooperation, understood as a more or less monitored donation, but what is necessary is to find ways of integration and commitment with the establishment of common goals.

We were saying before that traditional development cooperation understood as action State-State and in a unidirectional sense had not produced sufficiently satisfactory

results<sup>8</sup>. The area in which we find ourselves is a sample. The instability of neighbouring countries and the bilateralism with which relationships between the EU and North Africa, and with the rest of Sub Saharan Africa are still formulated are enough proof. And no doubt that this is like that because over the years we have not been able to establish the necessary bonds and agreements to ensure the confidence and stability that are the basis of any shared development.

During a recent visit to Madrid, the Director- General for Cooperation of the European Commission declared that the model donor-donee had to be overcome to go on to speak about “*alliance*” that means “*think and do together*”<sup>9</sup>. The Director-General defended the opportunity of implementing mechanisms of cooperation that would boost investments of private foreign capital, and local in the future local, in Africa.

In the organisation of this new perspective, national and international regulations are necessary that allow this new dialogue that is the foundation of the integration with the countries and territories that are the targets of the action. Spanish regulations are not presided over by the appropriate spirit to create instruments of such dimension. Spanish Law on cooperation is the Law 23/1998, of 7th of July, of International Development Cooperation. In its Statement of Motives, it reflects in some way this new mark of international cooperation in which the integration of diverse actors is necessary: “*The large number of institutions and organisations that participate in the policy of cooperation has promoted the development of a decentralised aid programme and where it is precise to reach the appropriate collaboration, complementarity and coordination between the different Public Administrations and the different cooperation actors, capable of ensuring and guaranteeing the greatest effectiveness and coherence of the aid programme itself.*” But later, its articles, follow the guidelines of the traditional instruments of unilateral action, donation, occasional character...

In the Statement of Motives there is also emphasis on the necessity of providing international cooperation with participatory criteria. It says: “*Furthermore , the basic*

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<sup>8</sup> OSTROM, E.: *The administration of common goods. The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Fondo de Cultura Económica. México, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> [https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/10/12/planeta\\_futuro/1539360549\\_306655.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/10/12/planeta_futuro/1539360549_306655.html).



*consensus that must be at the basis of international development cooperation policies can only be achieved by means of the active involvement in the same of the diverse operational social agents, with a special mention of the non-governmental organisations, redirecting an effective and coherent plan of the different efforts in favour of the development that Spain carries out.*” However, it is found lacking in enough reference to the integration of private entities as actors in the organization of cooperation, that it is limited to a great extent to the forecast of tax exemptions of the funds that are contributed and to the possibility that the actions can be channelled by private entities in collaboration with State Administration.

Regarding the specific contents of what must be understood as international cooperation, the article 1 establishes that *“the set of resources and capacities that Spain provides developing countries are integrated within international development cooperation, with the purpose of facilitating and promoting their economic and social progress, and contributing to the eradication of global poverty in all its manifestations”*.

As for their part, all the Autonomous Communities have their own Cooperation Law, that follows the same guidelines that we have outlined in State Legislation. Andalucía’s is the Law 14/2003, of 22nd of December, of International Development Cooperation, that includes a definition of “international cooperation” similar to the other Autonomous Governments’ laws: *“To all effects in the present Law, international development cooperation is understood as all the actions that the Administration of the Government of Andalucía carry out in developing countries to contribute to the fulfilment of the objectives established in the present Law. The scope of this Law comprises the actions that the Autonomous Administration direct to raise awareness and inform the Andalusian population about the situation of aforesaid countries, thus incentivizing their solidarity towards other peoples.”*

As for its part, the European Union, the result of an integration process and clear exponent of how the establishment of effective cooperation instruments, moderate in their approach but correct in their implantation, can produce optimal results, does not abound in the implementation of mechanisms of true integration with third countries. As we already know, the process of European integration, unlike previous experiences, had as its presupposition the initial cooperation in the coal and steel market. From that formula emerged an unexpected success that widened the scope of integration instruments to

include all types of goods and introduced the effective validity of four economic rights, those of free circulation of goods, capital, services and establishments and workers. From these cooperation mechanisms, surprising results of growth and development were obtained, that still nowadays are unique in the whole world regarding the ability of the States to integrate economically, rendering sovereignty and establishing solidarity agreements from which there has been as a result an unprecedented economic progress.

No doubt that there are substantial differences between the scenario in which the European integration mechanisms were established and those that can regulate international cooperation, but the philosophy and mechanisms that produced results in Europe can be useful as a model for a greater effectiveness and a new philosophy in international cooperation. The investigation of some of the principles on which the cooperation criteria were based on, can be useful in facing the new challenges posed by the new international scenario we have referred to.

### **Some considerations and proposals.**

A first postulate would be to assume that the fortune and outcome of cooperation systems results from the effectiveness of the instruments that we provide the economic and social operators, more than the ambitious targets and volume of resources that they are allocated.

As we have said, action in cooperation still revolves around the principle of certain resources, certain funds, that are allocated to certain actions in order to obtain certain results. With a greater or lesser level of implication of the recipient of the funds, the approach is still unilateral and in debt to certain ends that, as they were established deductively, are as a result unattainable and definitely unachieved. The European Union is maybe the biggest donor of funds allocated to Africa, but this is not enough. What perhaps should be changed is the scale with which we assess the importance of international cooperation in the neighbouring continent. Cooperation is still being implemented through means of finance (the most important is the European Development Fund, based on the Agreement of Cotonú<sup>10</sup>) that undergo the fluctuations characteristic of the budgetary availability of the centre issuing the funds.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Ar12101>.

As aforementioned, the planned mechanisms and instruments for the organization of the system are expected and effectiveness and efficiency that are not attained later on. Once the action has been completed, the failures of the system are overcome with a new and more ambitious plan or project. It is an action from the supposition that the guideline or plan has to be complied with and that it will be feasible because of its nature and that thus reality will be transformed.

This generally does not occur, because reality is complex and is the result of guidelines and structures that are not easily modified. In contrast to this proceeding, is those who operate “taking into account the reality on which they operate” and under the assumption that it implies a constant dialogue from which must stem the expected changes and goals. Once the issue is posed in this way, there will be much more efficiency in the creation of spheres of cooperation that will be attract private and public sectors. It is about establishing specific and functioning cooperation mechanisms that can attract, in terms of competitiveness with the rest of the market, economic and social activity for the utility and results that they offer, in coexistence with the rest of the environment in which it is introduced.

The model, the establishment of specific cooperation channels, demands an important economic provision, without a doubt, but not allocated to a unilateral transfer of rent from a donor to a donee; but to the establishment of cooperation mechanisms, that must offer efficiency and safety for the action that is channelled through them.

The efficiency of the models will be thus guaranteed due to the interests of the agents that cooperate and that become active subjects in the cooperation and of the virtuality of the same method in which it is introduced<sup>11</sup>. The mechanism of cooperation will be participative because the agents become the actors of the same. In the words of the President of the European Commission on the occasion of the speech delivered on the State of the Union in 2018: *"Africa does not need charity, but authentic and fair*

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<sup>11</sup> AXELROD, R: *The complexity of cooperation. Models of cooperation and collaboration based on agents*. Fondo de Cultura Económica. México, 2004. An organised cooperation is advocated on reciprocity understood as a convergence of mutual interests on which we can build long-term integration projects. It is a model of cooperation that takes into account competitiveness and private interests upon which individuals choose the options they are more interested in, that are at the same time those that go to the established terms in the cooperation. Interest in cooperating can also be an individual interest.

*cooperation*".<sup>12</sup> However, the terms of the action are still being established according to traditional models: objectives to attain and the funds that are allocated to them. The investment "*by means of the Alliance*" (sic) is foreseen to create up to 10 million jobs in Africa in the next 5 years. The prevision is of 24 million people having access to roads, planning the organization of necessary investments towards their construction. It is also foreseen that 105.000 students and academics will benefit from the Erasmus+ programme until 2027, that 750.000 people will receive vocation training for capacity development (sic) and that 30 million people and businesses will benefit from the access to electricity thanks to investments of the EU in renewable energies and an increased generation capacity of 5 GW.

For all this to function there must be a previous investigation about the spheres where cooperation is demanded by the situation in which it is going to be introduced. Non-distorted democratic determination and after a dialogue on equal terms of these areas are instrumental for the success of the action. This is not so on many occasions, cooperation action is frequently established in agreement with the decisions of the issuing organization, and according to its system of principles and values and even its interest

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<sup>12</sup> State of the Union, 2018. Reinforcement of the association of the EU with Africa (Jean-Claude Juncker, Summit of the African Union- European Union, Abiyán, 27th November 2017): "*Whatever happens in Africa is important for Europe and whatever happens in Europe is important for Africa. Our association is an investment in our common future. It is an association between equals that mutually support each other and help each other to prosper and to make the world a safer, more stable and more sustainable place to live in*". Jean-Claude Juncker, Summit of the African Union- European Union, Abiyán, 27th November 2017.

## Conclusions

The success of cooperation will reside in its attractiveness, in its ability of attracting the different economic and social agents that could take part in it<sup>13</sup>. This success cannot be achieved without supplying the scope with superior levels of efficiency compared to those in their environment, with a profitability, not only economic but also , logically a social one...<sup>14</sup> that makes it attractive in regard to other surrounding realities. Even the channels and instruments of rent transfer that have as a result a net enrichment of specific recipients, regular or irregular ones, are headed to fail if they do not produce results in the mid and long-term that were established at the time of their implementation.

With the launch in 2014 of the Pan African Programme, announced by the then President of the European Commission, Mr. Barroso, in the 4th Summit Africa-EU that was held in Brussels in the month of April of that year, it was stated that the continental integration of Africa had become a fundamental priority for the EU and also for the African Union. About aforesaid programme, that is being financed charged to the budget of the EU<sup>15</sup>, we must highlight that it is the first programme that included the African continent as a whole<sup>16</sup>. In the words of the Development Commissary of the EU de Desarrollo de la UE

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<sup>13</sup> Ascame Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan of the Association of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Mediterranean (2018-2022). It states the following: *“Today, the growing involvement of the private sector in the elaboration of the strategies and the implementation of the initiatives and projects of the Union for the Mediterranean, the European Union and other multilateral organizations, confirms its importance for the Euro-Mediterranean integration and the status of the region. Widely recognized as the advocate of a sustainable and inclusive growth, the private sector is becoming today a vital complement of the public sector in the decision process regarding the future of the region.”*

<sup>14</sup> OLSON, M. *The logic of collective action*. Noriega editores. México, 1992. It is of special interest the theory of the author regarding the *“selective incentives”* that are expressed as penalties and rewards that are useful for mobilising the participants of a latent group. These incentives may have an economic, social or another type of nature.

<sup>15</sup> The Pan-African Programme (PanAf) has its foundation in the Regulation No 233/2014 establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation (DCI) for the period 2014-2020.

<sup>16</sup> Vid. Pan-African Programme 2014-2020. Multiannual Indicative Programme 2014-2017. In its initial synthesis it states: *“Furthermore, the PanAf will, in line with the JAES, address the external dimension of EU policies. Through the PanAf, the EU operationalizes Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) and puts into practice the principle of building synergies between EU policies and development cooperation. This is being done by widening the scope of the EU cooperation and by involving all concerned services in the programming and implementation processes.”*

at that time, the Latvian Mr Piebalgs: *“The main innovation of this programme is that it facilitates the establishment of bonds between the EU cooperation and Northern Africa, Southern Africa and Sub Saharan Africa. It will also help us achieve a greater coherence of development policies due to the creation of synergies between development cooperation and other policies of the EU.”*

Cooperation thus understood must mean a real commitment between the sphere in which it is promoted and its destination sphere: there must be a climate of dialogue in which to establish the areas and desired objectives; there has to be an organization of cooperation mechanisms and instruments in terms of co-responsibility, foreseeing the co-active mechanisms that are necessary to guarantee their functioning; a non-distorted intervention must be allowed and the free expansion to other spheres; finally, the system must be submitted to a constant assessment. All this requires the sharing of powers, renouncing to great statements in the establishment of international cooperation, and the establishment of objectives and ends that on principle may not coincide with those that a traditional donor would want to use as a symbol of identity of its exterior action.

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