

Policy Coherence for Development: Exploring and Learning from European Approaches to PCD

Executive Summary

Introduction

The EU, OECD and UN have all set out commitments to Policy Coherence for Development (PCD), the principle that all government departments and policies should act coherently to comply with, and contribute to, the goal of an equitable and sustainable global development.

Building on NIDOS' report on Scotland's Place in Building a Just World and support for PCD across the Scottish political spectrum, this report explores how six other European countries have implemented PCD and how civil society in each of these countries has engaged in the process, through research and conversations with civil society representatives. The result is a series of findings and recommendations setting out how best to implement PCD.

PCD Approaches in other European Countries

Examining the path of PCD in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden highlights PCD approaches going back over a decade, lessons learnt, ongoing challenges and current practices.

In **Belgium**, policies and measures to implement PCD go back to the early 2000s but were limited in scope and effectiveness. Learning from this, a new law was passed in 2013 introducing stronger mechanisms and structures for implementing, delivering and assessing PCD, including an Inter-Ministerial Conference, Interdepartmental Committee, Advisory Council and system of impact assessments. As of 2014, many of the mechanisms have yet to be introduced and there are questions over the commitment of the new government to PCD.

In **Denmark**, there have been positive statements of PCD since 2004. A new action plan in 2014 introduced more concrete measures, including annual reporting, the embedding of PCD within a parliamentary committee, setting goals, and screening policies for PCD implications. However,

this and previous commitments only refer to EU not domestic policies.

In **Finland**, commitments to PCD go back to 2001 and were strengthened during the Finnish Presidency of the EU in 2006. Finland has an inter-ministerial network for awareness raising and exchanging information on PCD, a Development Policy Committee (DPC) which reviews progress on PCD, reference to PCD in annual reports on Development Cooperation, and they have conducted a PCD pilot on food security. 2014 also marked the first ever government report on PCD, though it is not clear whether this will be repeated.

In **Luxembourg**, references to PCD go back to the 1990s though it has only been since 2012 that any real progress has taken place. Explicit reference to PCD in 2012 legislation led to the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Development Cooperation (CID) covering PCD, inclusion of PCD in the annual report, a debate on Development Cooperation in parliament and a focus on thematic issues in relation to PCD.

The **Netherlands** was one of the first countries to adopt PCD, introducing a Policy Coherence Unit to input into decision-making as far back as 2002. An interdepartmental committee, with representatives from every government ministry, is responsible for considering PCD for all EU legislation. More recently there have been two PCD case studies on the impacts of policies on Ghana & Bangladesh.

Sweden is lauded as a world leader on PCD, discussing it as far back as 1999 and, in 2003, introducing the world's first ever legislation on PCD, the Policy for Global Development (PGD). It has a Unit for Development Cooperation Governance that coordinates between ministries; inter-ministerial working groups; biennial government reports to parliament on PCD; and a focus on six thematic issues against which progress is assessed.

Civil society engagement in PCD

To assist NIDOS' work on PCD, PCD engagement by civil society in Belgium, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden was explored through conversations with representatives of NGO platforms in each of these countries.

In **Belgium**, NGO platforms have played a major role in implementing PCD, taking part in official working groups and meetings. Beyond these fora, they have focused engagement on specific issues, both with member organisations and politicians, through one-to-one and roundtable meetings.

In **Finland**, NGO platforms are represented on the PCD advisory body and have long called for more government action. They engage members through thematic working groups and have sought political commitments in advance of elections.

In **Luxembourg**, NGO platforms have been instrumental in progressing PCD, taking part in consultations through an NGO policy forum, seeking political commitments prior to elections and producing their own PCD reports. They have also learnt that they need to seek support for PCD at the highest political level.

In the **Netherlands**, there is little formal engagement with civil society by Government but NGO platforms continue to push for progress through lobbying, their own PCD working group and their own PCD reports.

In **Sweden**, the NGO platforms' own Barometer PCD report has been crucial in progressing PCD. While engagement with government has been informal, they too have a PCD working group for members as well as thematic groups and have called for political commitments in advance of elections, targeting not just development spokespeople.

Recommendations for implementing PCD

The key findings and recommendations of the report for implementing PCD include:

- A strong legal, or at least policy, commitment to PCD to prevent loss of support if and when governments change
- A clear definition of PCD that makes it relevant to national and EU policies to avoid confusion
- The involvement of all ministries and leadership from the highest level to aid arbitration and to prevent it becoming a 'development' issue
- The involvement of southern partners to ensure credibility and measure impacts
- The identification of thematic issues to focus PCD work
- Annual or biennial government reporting on PCD with scrutiny by parliament and civil society to ensure transparency
- A strong role for civil society built in to mechanisms to ensure accountability and information exchange
- Appropriate funding committed to ensure a PCD system can operate effectively.

Recommendations for civil society engagement in PCD

The key findings and recommendations of the report for civil society engagement in PCD include:

- Focusing on thematic issues to make PCD relevant to members and decision-makers
- Referencing PCD in all work and events
- Establishing a working group for engaged member organisations to take forward work on PCD
- Use upcoming elections to secure commitments to PCD from political parties
- Produce civil society reports on PCD progress to hold government to account
- Develop positive formal and informal working relationships with government to share expertise and information.

Read the full report online: www.nidos.org.uk/files/pcd-europe

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