



**“Shaping Global Development Cooperation – the role of the EU in the United Nations”  
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**Presentation by**

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*(please check against delivery)*

Ladies and Gentlemen, colleagues,

I would like to thank the organizers, the German Development Institute, for the invitation to this Workshop. Of course, my views will reflect the interests of a donor country being a member of the EU. I will only reflect on the issue of development policy, not on general EU issues.

**Overview**

My main points are: The EU punches below its weight in many UN settings. Close coordination helps to strengthen EU's impact. Overall, coordination works well. But there are obstacles to EU coordination. One such obstacle is that every EU member state has a right to veto against EU coordination, which results in the Lowest Common Denominator problem. There are ways to overcome this and other obstacles.

**Does the EU's influence in the UN in the field of development policy match its collective weight?**

No, quite frankly the EU's influence matches its weight at least not enough. There are topics where the EU has significantly influenced UN discussion and outcome, but my view is that generally the EU punches below its weight. In terms of economic weight or ODA or contributions to the UN the EU should be more influential. The important question in our context is: Does EU coordination help to increase this influence?

**What are the current opportunities and challenges for close coordination of EU member states?**

Every country asks itself the question: “Do I gain power and influence in the UN through EU coordination and empowering the EU – or do I lose?”

Let me start with emphasizing that my overall view is clearly positive.

**Positive experience with EU coordination**

First, where EU coordination on development issues takes place – eg in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Committee of the UN General Assembly, in ECOSOC and on the Rio+20 Outcome Document –, the overall experience is positive in my view. A routine has been developed in the different settings which works quiet well. One piece of evidence is the fact that the veto possibility is rarely used.



Coordination can always be frustrating as you have to give in on some of your ideas. There is a tendency of sticking to the Status Quo, to the “agreed language”. In development cooperation, however, this problem with EU coordination is not as big as in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Committee or in the Human Rights Council. And even there one has to acknowledge that most of this frustration takes also place in the settings without EU coordination, as there are still 192 other UN member states you have to deal with.

In my view there are good reasons to believe that the “synergy factor” from EU coordination is in most UN settings very positive, even when taking into consideration the many EU coordination meetings:

- **division of labor:** as a EU member state you don't have to be in those meetings where discussions run for hours on the question whether “recognizes” or “welcomes” is more appropriate
- **wisdom of crowds:** under specific circumstances crowds outperform every single decision maker; and these circumstances prevail in EU coordination; related items are “bulk of experience”, “wealth of networks”, and “awareness of risks and opportunities”
- **influence / power:** 27 actors joining forces in pulling a rope into the same direction have more impact than 27 actors pulling 27 ropes into different directions
- **visibility:** the EU as a whole is less likely to be overlooked or ignored than an individual EU member state; admittedly, this argument is very much disputed as sometimes your own country loses visibility

Nevertheless, the full potential for EU's influence is currently not exploited, and this has to do with less-than-optimal EU coordination.

### **What are the obstacles to EU coordination?**

Please consider the fact that an EU member state can ask itself the question “Do I gain or lose from EU coordination?” Isn't that a strange question? Why isn't EU coordination simply a must? To the contrary, even in those instances where EU coordination is the usual way of doing business – like in the UN General Assembly's Second Committee – the situation is strange:

- In the current setting, every EU member state can decide unilaterally against EU coordination. In this case, no EU statement is possible. This happened in the 66<sup>th</sup> General Assembly when UK decided that the EU Delegation in NY did not have the legitimacy to speak for the EU as a whole.
- And it can do so for every single negotiation process.
- And it can do so at every moment during the negotiation process.

Every EU member state has a veto right against EU coordination in the negotiations in NY. You know what this means: You face the “lowest common denominator” problem.



No wonder that EU coordination can sometimes be a nightmare and EU's influence is too weak. If we want to make progress, we have to overcome the problem of the lowest common denominator, in the EU as well as in G77. There is another aspect which contributes to EU's weakness on development issues in NY: Traditionally, the G77 introduces draft resolutions in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Committee. There are very few resolutions introduced by EU member states when compared to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Committee or the UN Human Rights Council.

To get a more sophisticated answer, please consider the following power model:

**Without EU coordination:**

$$P(i) = \frac{UN\ contribution\ (i) + GNI\ (i)}{2} * UN\ mainstream\ (i)$$

where

“P (i)” is the power or influence of country i in the UN

“UN contribution” is the (mainly financial) contribution to the UN

“GNI” is economic and political weight in the world

We have to divide by 2 for reasons of mathematical consistency: A three times bigger country should not get six times more power in the model

“UN mainstream (i)” is the percentage of UN negotiation items on which country i has the same views as the majority of UN member states; a country which often supports the majority decision is in my view more likely to gain support for its own issues

Examples are

- Governing Bodies of most UN Funds & Programmes (eg UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women)
- Governing Bodies of some UN Specialized Agencies (eg IFAD)
- Coordination on the ground with other donors as well as partner countries' governments

Now compare this to the situation

**With EU coordination:**

$$P(i) = P\ (EU)\ without\ EU\ coordination * Synergy * \frac{GNI\ (i)}{GNI\ (EU)} * EU\ mainstr.\ (i)$$

where

“Synergy” is the increase (or decrease) of EU power from coordination

GNI (i) / GNI (EU) is country i's share in EU power



Examples are

- Negotiations in the UN General Assembly's Committees
- Negotiations in ECOSOC
- Negotiations at UN conferences like Rio+20
- Governing Bodies of some UN Funds & Programmes (eg UNCTAD, WFP)
- Governing Bodies of some UN Specialized Agencies (eg FAO, WHO)

But keep in mind that every EU member has the right to go to the "Without-EU coordination" model.

If these models are correct, they have some interesting implications for our discussion:

1. From an individual member's financial point of view, EU coordination has a great merit: You can diminish your UN contributions without equivalently losing power in the UN (free rider problem). In my view, this consideration may exist, but other factors are predominant, at least for Germany.
2. If you pay high contributions to the UN compared to your economic and political weight you tend to avoid EU coordination. Fortunately, for Sweden, Luxemburg and other EU member states other considerations are more important.
3. If your views or interests deviate from the EU majority but are closer to the world's majority you tend to avoid EU coordination. In my view, this applies to a very limited number of topics. One example is SRHR.
4. If you think that the "Synergy" factor is much smaller than 1, you tend to avoid EU coordination. Some countries seem to believe this for some critical themes where national visibility is important or a no-compromise-policy exists.

#### **Outlook: Is there a need to refine coordination?**

Let us first have a quick look at the example of Rio+20:

#### **Has Rio+20 been a success for the EU?**

No, I do not think so. Rio+20 has been a step forward, but compared to the issues at stake like the bottom billion and planetary boundaries the progress is too small. But the question here is: Would the outcome have been better from an EU member state's perspective if there would have been no EU coordination? To cut a long answer short: I believe that this would not have been the case. The more interesting question is:

#### **How should coordination be improved?**

In my view, coordination has to be improved in five ways:

1. Where EU coordination exists already, veto rights and opt-out possibilities have to be reduced. At least de facto and step-by-step a practice of accepting majority decisions



wherever possible has to be established. The lowest common denominator should not be the EU's hallmark. In the spirit of the EU Treaties, especially the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU should achieve coherent, comprehensive and unified external representation. The cooperation within the EU should be close and sincere. In the "General Arrangements for EU Statements in multilateral organisations" from 22 October 2011 it is stipulated that Member States and EU actors will coordinate "to the fullest extent possible".

2. The rights and possibilities of the EU as an actor in the different settings have to be strengthened step by step. In the General Assembly, the EU as a body has only an observer status, although enhanced since 3 May 2011.
3. In the long run it might be good to have EU coordination for the Funds & Programmes. This might imply the necessity of EU Commission's core contributions.
4. The EU needs to assure coherence and coordination between the different UN consultation processes at the capital and the mission level.
5. The EU should cooperate and coordinate more with other stakeholders and regions. In practice, this takes place already now to a certain extent as EU member states are also members of other groups such as WEOG. But couldn't we intensify the outreach to other groups (G77, GRULAC, African States, Arab Group), e.g. through more often jointly introducing draft resolutions, having joint statements, organizing joint side events in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Committee and other settings?

Instead of a summary, let me come back to the overarching issue of this two-day symposium, the post-2015 development agenda. EU coordination on the process to get to a post-2015 development agenda as well as ensuring coherence with the SDG process will be strongly supported by Germany. In addition we are seeking to support the process through bilateral German contributions in many areas. These include support to the UN and its broad global consultation process, putting forward innovative ideas, and cooperation with many other actors world-wide.

Thank you for your attention.