



**“Shaping Global Development Cooperation – the role of the EU in the United Nations”  
Bonn Symposium 2012: workshop organized by the DIE, 14 November 2012 (11.30-13.30)**

Discussions at the workshop focused on the perceptions of the EU as an actor within the UN, EU coordination at the UN, and the expectations for the Rio+20 follow-up and the Post-MDG processes. Panelists were Kristin de Peyron, head of multilateral relations at the European External Action Service (EEAS), Dr. Simon Koppers, head of the UN division at the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and Prof. Dr. Jan Wouters, University of Leuven). Dr. Stephan Klingebiel, head of the department for bi- and multilateral development policy served as moderator.

**EU within the UN:** Against the background that the collective weight of the EU in the UN does not correspond to its collective financial and political weight and voting power, speakers saw a need to significantly enhance EU coordination. The positive perception of the EU within the UN in recent years suffered from the political impasse over the EU’s external representation which paradoxically took place at a time when the EU was granted an enhanced status within the General Assembly. At the same time, it was pointed out that the EU’s positive image had suffered a setback through the protracted financial crisis in Europe. It was cautioned that the EU should therefore abstain from postulating its values and approach in a righteous fashion as this might be ill-received by partners.

**EU at the UN:** While the value of a collective approach to bargaining at the UN was universally recognized, it was also recognized that member states frequently act on the basis of cost-benefit considerations that could also go against coordination, thus resulting in the use of the veto right or opting-out (collective action problem). Too often, the existing working routine would result in agreements at the level of least common denominator, and going little beyond the status quo (*“agreed language”*). In order to *“punch its weight”* the EU would need to be more responsive and engage with other actors and groupings earlier in the process (*“smart diplomacy”*). Currently, EU coordination was seen to be too internally-focused, resulting in a situation where *“we negotiate ourselves to death before engaging non-EU actors”*. What would be required of future coordination processes was to focus on *“red lines”* and broad guidance instead of too detailed instructions. Internally, a strengthening of majority decision-making and a corresponding reduction in member states opting-out would be called for. Finally, burden-sharing mechanisms should be expanded towards member states that enjoyed privileged relations with other groupings.

**Sectoral Experience:** All speakers stressed that the sectoral experience with different UN bodies varies greatly. Against this background, an expansion of EU coordination to the UN funds and programmes was seen favorably, but might require a corresponding shift towards more EU (core) contributions in those agencies. The Rio+20 conference was mentioned as a case in point where the EU had invested significantly in preparation, but during the negotiations engaged *“too little and too late”* with other stakeholders as the focus was on its internal coordination. Mixed signals from member states on the institutional lead had further complicated effective EU positioning. Regarding the Post-MDG process, speakers saw a strong will among member states to develop a common position, but overcoming the divergence between the SDG and the Post-MDG processes remains challenging. It was suggested that the Council presidency should put forward a proposal on how to streamline institutional responsibilities in this respect.

- Timo Mahn and Heiner Janus