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Development in Cooperation ? Tendencies and Consequences for Research and Teaching in European Development Studies

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Development in Cooperation? Tendencies and Consequences for Research and Teaching in European Development Studies

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by*

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Is development cooperation a serious sector in Europe? This is the question that I pose you, and that I pose myself in this lecture¹. There is no way of escaping the question after the Director General for Development and Humanitarian Aid in the European Commission recently said: “*Development cooperation is not a serious sector.*”

The point is not new. Indeed, it has been raised in one way or another ever since the start of our discipline. In his seminal study *World Economics: Comparative Theories and Methods of International and Development Economics*, professor Tamás Szentes (2002: 12) has argued that such doubts regarding the value of development economics may “induce some scholars to announce its ‘requiem’ while others ... celebrate its renaissance.” Following Todaro and Meier, Szentes (ibid.: 43) defines development as

a multidimensional process extending over the entire society ... involving not only the economy but also the institutional and political system, improving the techniques and skill of production, the cultural and educational level as well as social attitudes and the quality of life, the conditions of freedom and free choice, eradicating poverty and inequalities, meeting the environmental challenge and ensuring “sustainability”, too.

Given this definition, Szentes finds that the discipline of development economics has gained, instead of lost, significance. Due to the changes occurring in Central and Eastern Europe after the late eighties and due to the manifold forces of globalisation “development economics seems to have gained not only a substantially and geographically broadened subject area of research, but also a new, additional level of analysis, namely the global one” (Szentes 2002: 49). The same goes for the interdisciplinary field of development studies (ibid.). Conceptually, Szentes follows Paul Streeten and favours constructive eclecticism, going beyond yesteryear’s ideologically coloured paradigms, “since no one-sided ideologically motivated ‘recipe’ for development policy ... has been verified in practice” (ibid.: 384). Globalisation and its challenges call for “more realistic approaches and against ideological narrow-minded concepts” (ibid.).

Gilbert Rist (2002), a Swiss political scientist who has written the authoritative *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, takes a quite different tack. He shows that the notion of development has undergone fundamental transformations in the sixty years of its existence. Like Szentes, he notes the great diversity of theories, which appear to adapt themselves continuously to changing political circumstances. Although the term “development” had been in use ever since the nineteenth century in the works of Marx, Lenin (*The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, 1899), London (1905), Schumpeter (*The Theory of Economic Development*, 1912), it gained a new meaning with the notion of “underdevelopment” first used by Truman in his 1949 inaugural address (Rist 2002: 72–73). It is this continuous adaptation or innovative repetition that characterises the field of development, be it in development studies or in development practice. As another radical critic, W.F. Wertheim, has said of

¹ Part of this lecture overlaps with a speech given (in French) for the opening of the academic year at the Graduate Institute of Development Studies (iuéd) in October 2004. See: Louk Box, *L'Europe du développement: tendances et conséquences pour la recherche et la formation*, Itinéraires Leçons inaugurales, no. 10, Genève, iuéd, 2005, 15 p.

development: “A constant interaction of repetition and novelty, the repetition ever appearing in a new garment and the novelty ever fit for a repetitional scheme.” Its adaptation in the seventies was to an increasingly secular society, leading paradoxically to critics who state that the notion of development became an element in the “religion of modernity” (Rist 2002: 21) or a “religion of development” (Salemink 2004: 121 ff.).

The discipline of development studies can therefore hardly be criticised for being uncritical of its main object. The discipline, or inter-discipline, was based on fundamental economic questions, but has transformed itself through the contributions of anthropology, history, sociology, political science and psychology. It has profited as well from contributions by philosophers, lawyers, agronomists and other engineers.

Back to Director General Richelle, who went even further in his critique before a public of European parliamentarians, academics and practitioners all concerned with problems of development and cooperation. He added, “It is not a serious sector because it lacks roots in academia and sound empirical data.” Richelle, a Dutchman, is known for speaking his mind; but is he right? Does our discipline lack an academic base and a body of empirical findings on which a sufficient consensus exists? If Richelle meant that this sector lacks professionalisation, is he right? Where do we stand with regard to professionalisation at a European level?

It would be too easy to just refer Richelle to the thousands of books and articles distributed by reputable academic publishers. Or to the existence of well-established research centres like Szentes’ Institute for World Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences or Rist’s Graduate Institute of Development Studies in Geneva. Or, for that matter, to the oldest and largest European professional association of development studies, EADI, celebrating this year its thirtieth anniversary. Koos Richelle knows us better: he is, in fact, one of us and he wishes us well but says nevertheless: “*Development cooperation is not a serious sector.*”

Allow me to start with the conclusion that I shall draw:

Europe’s development cooperation is being radically transformed: the classical notion of development has become inapplicable, classical development policies unfeasible, and classical organisational arrangements irrelevant.

Given the changes in the international relations landscape and in the educational context (due to the Bologna Declaration), research and training professionals face radical changes in their discipline. Flexible alliances need to be forged to maintain and develop the “knowledge capital”, adapting it to the changing context in which it will be used.

I shall try to show that Richelle is wrong in his disqualification, because the sector is grounded in the fertile soil of development studies, which has spurred public debate on key notions and theories for over thirty years. If his intention was, however, to wake us up to the new realities facing the discipline, he is right to do so. Our discipline’s intellectual capital needs to be reinvested in global research and training ventures requiring new paradigms and new forms of organisation. Projects like trans-European alliances among the strongest institutes to promote student mobility, like the establishment of a professional quality stamp based on institutional “peer review”, or like the establishment of a virtual development studies library, easily accessible to both Southern and European students of “development”.

Radical Transformations

If the number of conferences is anything to go by, European international development cooperation is in full swing. The aforementioned Koos Richelle spoke at a conference on *Europe and the South: A New Era*, organised by the SID² and EADI in August³. During the Irish Presidency of the European Union (EU), significant meetings were held⁴, and during the current Dutch Presidency one was held of the EU NGDO⁵ Network⁶ and another one about Corporate Social Responsibility⁷. At the same time the EC⁸ Directorate General for Development is preparing a revision of its Development Policy Statement and EADI is cosponsoring a series of meetings on European Development Cooperation 2010⁹ with the two main think tanks in this area, ODI¹⁰ and ECDPM¹¹. Having participated in a number of these events, I will draw some conclusions on the basis of an emerging consensus. It is striking to see how participants from new Member States, especially Czechia, Hungary and Poland, are rapidly becoming integrated into these events.

1. Europe will play, for better or for worse, an ever-larger role in international relations: from a virtual giant it will have to transform itself into a responsible real one

Actually Europe is the principal global actor in terms of trade and aid relations with countries in the South, but it is only a virtual giant. It has the option to become a trusted real giant, or turn itself into insignificance. With the emergence of new actors like China, and new alliances like the one between India, Brazil, and South Africa (the IBSA alliance)¹², North-South relations are changing radically.

Take the example of these IBSA countries; they develop into important markets, and develop new technologies or products hitting the European market. If Iron and Steel was one of the bases for Northern industrialisation, it is sobering to realise that the main actor is now an Indian family-based enterprise, the Mittal Empire¹³. If software exports are an indicator of strength in the information age, India stands lonely at the top. "India's IT export services are worth \$9.5 billion per year, which is more than the combined software exports of the next five leading countries – Canada, Ireland, Israel, the Philippines and South Africa."¹⁴ In pharmaceuticals and

² Society for International Development.

³ <www.euforic.org/sid-europe/>. (To facilitate student's use, web-references are made whenever possible.)

⁴ <www.dci.gov.ie/Uploads/INFORMATION%20NOTE%20on%20Development%20Cooperation%20under%20the%20Irish%20Presidency%20July%202004.doc>.

⁵ Non-Governmental Development Organisations.

⁶ <www.europaindewereld.nl/detail_page.phtml?page=debat_26e>.

⁷ <www.minbuza.nl/default.asp?CMS_ITEM=3E3FB45A1F5948E7BBEA6FD5FAC9BA59X3X52749X62>.

⁸ European Commission.

⁹ <www.odi.org.uk/publications/briefing/edc/index.html>.

¹⁰ Overseas Development Institute.

¹¹ European Centre for Development Policy Management.

¹² <www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=7250>.

¹³ <<http://news.ft.com/cms/s/728bf9d4-2948-11d9-836c-00000e2511c8.html>>.

¹⁴ <www.techweb.com/wire/26804351>.

biotechnology Brazil, India and South Africa play leading regional roles¹⁵ and are working in the IBSA alliance on joint plans in tourism, passenger planes, and increased trade flows to \$10 billion by 2007¹⁶. This might well lead to powerful South-South scientific and technological cooperation among these three giants, ultimately outstripping the present Triad of EU, Japan and the US. In so doing, these countries take on a responsibility in international cooperation, which was considered an impossible dream only a decade ago¹⁷.

How will Europe face the challenge of these Southern giants? If it is able to develop a coherent external and development policy, it can profit from its long-term trade and aid relations and its "soft power" (Nye 2003: 39–40). Europe certainly still has good will, and can mediate in international conflicts through its contribution to the UN. Is such policy coherence and coordination likely?

Europe stands at a crossroads in this fascinating year in which the Union expanded with ten new members and saw the power-balance change between the Parliament and the Commission. The Constitution was signed and a decision will be taken about Turkish membership. The Union can opt for the right turn with a minimum of social policy coherence, or for the left turn leading to the Rhineland model. Or will it just carry on in the same direction, "muddling through", continuously adapting policies to interests at hand? Do we stick to the Confederacy we are, move to a Federal State or to "something altogether new" as Ulrich Beck (2003) asks? Beck (ibid.: 252–253) argues that capital cities should "recognise that handing over certain areas of authority to Brussels does not weaken but rather strengthens them ... because this cosmopolitan turn increases the global influence of all the EU states."

The longer we wait, the less likely the transformation of Europe's virtual power into real power. If the European Commission creates for itself a complementary role to the Member States through a coherent international policy, the virtual actor may become a respected one. This is not an illusion, witness the role of the European Commission in the Monterrey Negotiations and currently in the debate on the Millennium Development Goals¹⁸. The role of the EU in such multilateral fora is generally weak, but some positive experiences do exist which point the way. Although coordination is generally lacking (Lehtinen and Sindzingre 2003: 16), the role of the Presidencies in Washington (IFI¹⁹), New York (UN), Geneva (WTO²⁰) or elsewhere can provide some guidance in bringing the various Member State agendas together.

The implication for our profession is clear: development studies will link up with the study of international relations, or they are doomed to insignificance. Yet this relation needs to be reciprocal: the discipline of international relations was always strongly focused on competition and conflict, and could benefit from the complementary approach of cooperation and development.

¹⁵ <www.tradepartners.gov.uk/biotechnology/brazil/profile/overview.shtml>.

¹⁶ <www.dfa.gov.za/docs/2004/ibsa0305a.htm>.

¹⁷ <www.scidev.net/Editorials/index.cfm?fuseaction=readEditorials&itemid=95&language=1>.

¹⁸ See Irish minister Tom Kitt, <www.euforic.org/sid-europe/detail_page.phtml?&username=guest@euforic.org&password=9999&groups=SID&&username=guest@euforic.org&password=9999&groups=SID&page=conf2004_speeches_kitt>.

¹⁹ International Financial Institution.

²⁰ World Trade Organisation.

2. European international cooperation will increasingly be oriented to structural issues, within a context of global negotiations

The three principal issues will be trade, security and migration and their interrelations. The prevalence of classical development projects is on the decline. A European approach becomes ever more important, once the Washington Consensus has disappeared²¹, as it did in the eighties and nineties. Other viewpoints have come about both in the rich and the poor countries and Europe has the opportunity to help shape a new consensus possibly in New York or Geneva (the UN), Paris (OECD²² and Paris Club) or Brussels (EC, NATO²³). The latter option is not a fictitious one, as has been argued by Nye (2003: 43) allowing for “European experiment within the Atlantic Alliance” and by Beck (2003: 249) as a “cosmopolitan *realpolitik*”.

Trade: the need for a development linkage

On the trade-front, one of the largest stumbling blocks has been the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Recent initiatives have reduced the negative consequences of this policy, but others will be needed to make the WTO meeting in Hong Kong a success²⁴. European market access (Maxwell and Engel 2003), infrastructural support and capacity building²⁵ remain essential for the poorest countries²⁶. Initial steps for Economic Partnership Agreements have met with success²⁷, yet the need remains for adapting them to the conditions in the poorest countries²⁸. It has been interesting to note how Trade Commissioner Lamy has taken an active role in the relations with poor countries, building links at the policy and personal levels²⁹, which are proving to be effective.

Security and development: the new debate

The security issue is the next one in importance, not because the Union has a clear policy as in the case of trade, but rather because it lacks one. The notion of security has come to be redefined over the past decade along three dimensions: human security, conflict prevention and the “fight against terrorism”. The Union is involved in each, and each has relevance for its international cooperation policies. “Human security” appeared as a notion in the post-1989 discourse, linked to the decline of strict notions of national security; development policies were re-aligned with security policies and a so-called “peace dividend” was expected which could be invested in sustainable development programmes. Elaborated by Ul Haq in the *Human Development Report*

²¹ <http://conte.u-bordeaux4.fr/Enseig/Lic-ecod/docs_pdf/Webconswash.pdf> and <www.commerce-monde.com/040/sommaire/s012.html>.

²² Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

²³ North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

²⁴ <<http://agritrade.cta.int/capreform/>>.

²⁵ See Solignac Lecomte (2001). See also Bouzas (2004); Bilal and Laporte (2004); Dunlop, Szepesi, and Van Hove (2004).

²⁶ <www.euforic.org/docs/200409301650121028.pdf?username=guest@euforic.org&password=9999&groups=EUFORIC&workgroup=>>.

²⁷ <www.ecdpm.org/Web_ECDPM/Web/Fr_Content/Navigation.nsf/index?readform&http://www.ecdpm.org/Web_ECDPM/Web/Fr_Content/Content.nsf/0/05dc6f7a24705f38c1256cf300485378?OpenDocument>.

²⁸ <http://stopepa.org/stopepa/campaign_english.php>. For a good independent review of the current situation, see <www.acp-eu-trade.org/TNI_EN_3-5.pdf>.

²⁹ <http://europa.eu.int/comm/commissioners/lamy/speeches_articles/spla122_en.htm>.

1994, it made the link between the notions of global security and human development. A UN Commission for Human Security was created and a fund established; it currently is one of the cornerstones of the UN's security policy³⁰.

Conflict prevention is the second security notion, both articulated in the UN's and the EU's policies. Regional partnership agreements, like the one in Sudan, link the EU to the UN's role and thereby require the Union to be clear about the "how" of its contribution. Funding the African Peace Facility is one way, but more is needed to prevent civil wars from occurring (Alexander et al. 2003). It is these wars, as Paul Collier has argued, which lead poor countries into a "conflict trap" and the concomitant "reverse development"³¹.

The third security notion is associated since 2001 with the so-called "fight against terrorism", which has had immediate effects on development aid (funding increase for some countries) and on the link between "homeland" and "global" security. The US elections formed a graphic example, in which this foreign policy issue, for the first time in decades, dominated the discourse of both candidates. For the EU's external policy, the related phenomenon of the Iraq invasion meant a test, which dramatically failed: coherence or complementarity was nowhere to be found. Marginalisation was the consequence, both at the level of the Union and of the Member States, as Epstein has bitterly concluded³².

All in all, European external policies will be confronted increasingly with security issues, however defined. The question is whether the link is made with the cooperation and development side (soft power) or with a traditional approach involving troops and violence (hard power). As it stands, the EU has no tested mechanisms to do the latter, yet has experience and good will to do the former. This may mean a "cosmopolitan realpolitik" based on soft power as outlined before by Beck and Nye.

Migration: a missing link

This leaves us with the third main issue: migration. As much attention as Brussels has given to the free circulation of workers within the Union, as little has it given to immigration, or the controlled entry of workers from outside³³. Europe has actually become an immigration area, without wanting to recognise or regulate it³⁴. This provoked negative international reactions³⁵.

In fact only very recently a certain consensus was achieved³⁶ on a European immigration policy, which should have been implemented in 2004³⁷. A new relation was foreseen with poor "sending" countries, i.e. in Africa, but little was realised. This very issue proved to be the final stumbling block in the negotiations on the Cotonou agreement between the European and the ACP countries, due to the resistance of certain countries like the Netherlands.

³⁰ <www.humansecurity-chs.org/finalreport/outline_french.html> and <www.un.org/millennium/sg/report/full.htm> (section 4).

³¹ <www.un.org/esa/documents/Development.and.Conflict2.pdf>.

³² <www.du.edu/gsis/spotlight/archive/may/isa%20papers/epstein_europe.pdf>.

³³ <www.tiger.edu.pl/publikacje/TWPN070.pdf>.

³⁴ <www.ex.ac.uk/politics/pol_data/undergrad/jsimpson/amsterdam.htm>.

³⁵ <<http://209.157.64.200/focus/f-news/1240106/posts>>.

³⁶ <www.statewatch.org/news/2004/nov/com-sec-1349-ill-imm.pdf>.

³⁷ <http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/fsj/immigration/wai/fsj_immigration_intro_en.htm>.

Three priority issues for EU external relations policies: trade, security and migration. The experience with each issue varies widely. Trade is a full-blown part of EU policies, in classical terms: it belongs to the first pillar³⁸ and the European Commission has a clear mandate. Nevertheless the linkage with development cooperation policies is fairly limited³⁹. The security issue has been with Europe ever since political unification started (Etzioni 1965: 242–243), but could not be resolved. Relations with development policies have not been explored, but are becoming ever more important in the light of Paul Collier’s arguments on reverse development due to the mentioned conflict trap. Both the Irish⁴⁰ and the current Dutch Presidencies⁴¹ have placed this item high on the agenda. Migration, by contrast, is an area in which the Union has precious little experience – and in which the linkages with development policies have hardly been explored.

How do these compare to the existing type of European development cooperation? This is not the place to dwell on the details, but it can safely be said that large differences occur. First, traditional project aid has declined in favour of programme or budget support. Second, traditional partners have lost ground to new ones: the Cotonou Convention, once the most progressive instrument in international cooperation linking the EC with over seventy former colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, is gradually giving way to new partnerships on a regional basis. Its financial base is under review, due to the so-called Budgetisation of the European Development Fund (Mackie et al. 2004). Third, the type of organisation has changed drastically at the European level: the power of the old DG8/Development has virtually disappeared, at the benefit of other Directorates General and new institutions (EuropeAid) (Box 2004).

The implications for the field of development studies are multiple. One thing is clear: the research agenda in our discipline will have to change if we wish to contribute to public debate and policymaking. The notions of security and development will be increasingly related to each other and to migration, marginalisation and globalisation. This new tendency is reflected in recent work, like the fascinating review of the field edited by Max Spoor, *Poverty and Conflict: A Critical “Development” Reader* (Spoor 2004), which is recommended reading – especially the chapters by Pronk, Murshed and Salih.

3. In the absence of a well-structured public opinion on European issues, public debate on the future of European international cooperation is indispensable; civil society will have to lead the way, or it will not come about

Civil society in general, and NGOs in particular, have played an increasingly important role in setting the themes for European development cooperation. What is amazing in Europe is that European issues are hardly discussed at a European level: most of the time the debates occur in a strikingly national context. Abram de Swaan has pointed out that a European public space does not exist. This may partially be due to cultural differences between the Member States; it results, however, in a lack of democratic participation at the European level. In de Swaan’s words: “Democracy

³⁸ In Community parlance people often refer to the three pillars of the EU Treaty. These are the Community dimension, i.e. Union citizenship, Community policies, economic and monetary union, etc. (first pillar); the common foreign and security policy (second pillar); police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters (third pillar). (Source: <<http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cig/g4000p.htm>>.)

³⁹ <www.odi.org.uk/iedg/Projects/ATPP.html>.

⁴⁰ <www.eu2004.ie/templates/news.asp?sNavlocator=66&list_id=489>.

⁴¹ <www.eu2004.nl/default.asp?CMS_TCP=tcpAsset&id=B8C7CFC83E384538A7019152FAF60B9A>.

cannot work if the major decisions are taken at a higher European level without political debate taking place on a corresponding European scale. If that is indeed the case, a European public space will in the end turn out to be a necessary condition for the survival of national democracies."⁴²

Neither the Member State Governments nor the European Commission have been able to fill this European void. One might say that this is normal in a Confederacy of States, since the electorates do not feel involved. From the outside, however, Europe is getting more and more an identity, in terms of trade agreements or visa requirements. This ever-clearer external identity therefore contrasts with the lacking internal identity, in the sense of an articulated public opinion. Especially in the area of international development cooperation these two identities appear to stand far apart and can be fatal for a credible external relations and development policy.

The role of NGOs is crucial in the process of public opinion formation. In the area of international development cooperation umbrella organisations like Concord, Eurostep, Eurocidse and Aprodev, facilitated by an Internet cooperative called Euforic, have had a significant role. By providing information and viewpoints, they articulate opinions in an emerging European electorate. They maintain interest among parliamentarians, politicians and the press. Especially in the new Member States this is essential, given the fragmented and negative public opinion in certain countries with regard to development cooperation. The work done in Hungary by Ferenc Miszlivetz and his colleagues forms an excellent basis for further study and teaching, given especially the number of civil society organisations in this country⁴³.

A special case is formed by the academic part of civil society. Institutes and researchers work together in the professional association EADI, which also hosts an ambitious and long-term programme aimed at public debate. This EDC2010 (European Development Cooperation 2010) programme is an independent activity, which has not been funded by the European Commission, but through Member States and EADI member institutes. Public debates have been held already in Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands; on the basis of common position papers, experiences are exchanged and links are made with local NGOs and representatives from Southern organisations⁴⁴.

The implications for development studies are great: researchers feed and are being fed by NGOs (or their umbrella organisations like Concord) and think tanks (like the already mentioned ECDPM and ODI). This means that researchers and civil society activists will have to find each other in effective knowledge networks, on the basis of mutual respect for their different roles. If our profession is to be taken seriously, the academic base needs to be solid, yet at the same time the opening to public debate needs to be there.

Developmental Europe therefore finds itself in a radical transformation: the classical notion of development has become inapplicable with the emergence of other issues; classical policies have become unfeasible, with the need to make a stronger link with external and security policies; the classical organisation has become irrelevant with the decline of traditional instruments like project aid and large parts of the Cotonou Convention.

⁴² <www.europamet.org/past_newsletters/200206/deswan.htm>.

⁴³ <www.adata.hu/_Kozossegi_Adattar/DOKUMENT.Nsf/0/18c6df953d0dcfdbbc1256e920029970c?OpenDocument>.

⁴⁴ <www.eadi.org/edc2010/detail_page.phtml?page=edc2010_index>.

Conclusion

Research and training professionals in the field of development studies face drastic changes both in their discipline and in the international relation context. Strong alliances between institutes will need to be forged to face these changes, to maintain and develop intellectual capital to adapt it to the changes. New academic alliances will need to be forged at the European level, involving top-institutes in all parts of Europe. In Hungary, a respectable tradition in development studies exists in this Academy and its Institutes; I referred to Tamás Szentes's work, but could have as well to the contributions by others. If anywhere development cooperation work can be linked to academic and empirical studies, it is here.

But what of Koos Richelle's statement with which I started? I have tried to indicate that development cooperation is a serious sector, and is likely to become an even more serious one in an emerging European Common Foreign and Security Policy. If Europe wishes to go for *soft power*, and if Europe wishes to profit from a *cosmopolitan realpolitik* based in long-term *social concerns*, then surely the field of development studies can continue to contribute. It does mean, however, that a new professionalism is to develop, and that new alliances emerge which can guaranty the quality of research and training.

As President of EADI I have good news for you: the profession is alive and kicking – producing books and scientific articles like never before; encountering students who are motivated; working with global civil society organisations which take our findings seriously; engaging in new ventures across disciplinary and practitioners' lines; forming a "Star Alliance" of leading institutes.

With Tamás Szentes I therefore note the transformation of the discipline into one which deals with global issues of inequality, from a previous restricted focus on the ills of underdevelopment in poor countries. This means that both the intellectual focus of the discipline and the organisation of the profession are rapidly adapting themselves to the changing circumstances.

European international cooperation: a serious sector, grounded in experience and solid academic soil with an open agenda to tackle the increasing inequalities that face us at the global level.

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⁴⁵ All the ECDPM papers listed below are also available on <www.ecdpm.org/Web_ECDPM/Web_Content/Navigation.nsf>.

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