

The EU and International Development

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With over 50% of global ODA (official development assistance) the European Union is now established as the world's largest actor in international development cooperation. Equally the sector is an important element of EU external relations and a core component of what is often referred to as the EU's soft power. Yet, the realisation of this potential power has often been elusive as member states have traditionally been reluctant to give up sovereignty in this sector and the integration process has been slow. This Optional Course thus seeks to introduce students to the role of the European Union in international development cooperation, give them an appreciation of the contribution that the EU makes to this important area of global affairs and help them develop an understanding of how the internal organisation and dynamics of European development cooperation has evolved to its current status as an area of shared competence between the EU institutions and member states. A central thread running through the course will be to explore whether or not further integration in this field of union external action would improve performance and serve the best interests of the EU's developing country partners.

From small beginnings as a side programme to 'associate' a group of overseas states and territories to the new community of the six signatories of the Treaty of Rome, European development cooperation has evolved into an increasingly integrated assembly of bilateral and Community partnership programmes covering all regions of the developing world and with a particular focus on cooperation with Africa. With the growing scale and widening scope of this common effort has also come increased influence in the OECD DAC, the UN and other international development fora where the EU is now a major driver of policy debate and reform. Inside the EU, development cooperation has also had to find its place in the increasingly complex world of EU external relations, working hand in hand not just with external commercial policy, but also, in the past two decades, with other areas of concern such as humanitarian assistance, foreign and security policy or migration policy.