

It is time to review public development aid goals

Author: Louis Caudron



The European Union and its Member States finance more than half of public development aid which totalled 153 billion dollars in 2018. These funds however have not had any significant impact on the development of the countries in the south. Just as France and the Sahel countries are discussing their future cooperation, the present goals of the public development aid policy should be reviewed and more concrete goals should be set for the short and mid term which would serve both the interests of the donor countries and the beneficiaries.

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Front page! :

Europe and Crisis: advantages and shortfalls



Whether in Iraq, Libya, Yemen or Afghanistan, Europeans are not the global players that some would like to see. But the European Union embodies a vision of a peaceful, multilateral and law-based world. It must make the most of this asset to defend its interests and make itself indispensable, says Jean-Dominique Giuliani... [Read more](#)

Elections :

Zoran Milanovic, former Prime Minister, is elected president of the Republic in Croatia



Former Prime Minister (2011-2016) Zoran Milanovic (SDP) won the second round of the presidential election held in Croatia on 5 January, beating outgoing President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, who was standing as an independent candidate with the support of the HDZ party.

According to a final tally, Zoran Milanovic won 52.73% of the vote and Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic 47.27%... [Read more](#)

Foundation :

La Fabrique Défense



The first edition of "Fabrique Défense", a forum on European defence organised by the French Ministry for the Armed Forces is taking place on 17th and 18th January in Paris. The Robert Schuman Foundation, one of the event's partners will be present... [Read more](#)

Competition Policy and Industrial Policy: towards a reform of European Law



On 21 January in Brussels the Foundation will be presenting the report "Competition policy and industrial policy: towards a reform of European law", written by Bruno Deffains, Olivier d'Ormesson and Thomas Perroud. The presentation will be followed by a discussion with the authors, Olivier Guersent, Director General for Competition at the European Commission, and Stéphanie Yon-Courtin, MEP, rapporteur on "EU competition policy in 2019". Participation upon registration... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Meeting between Ursula von der Leyen and Boris Johnson



Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met British Prime Minister Boris Johnson in London on 8 January. In an earlier speech at the London School of Economics, she warned that negotiations on the future relationship between the Union and the UK after Brexit will be "tough" but that the Union will always be "a reliable friend and partner"... [Read more](#)

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Swearing in of European Commissioners



The College of Commissioners was sworn in on 13 January at the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. Ursula von der Leyen reiterated her wish to protect and respect European values and to work for every citizen of the Union. She underlined the Union's strength which is typified by the reconciliation of national interests at regional level and stressed the Commission's aim to be transparent and accountable in order to preserve the confidence of Europeans... [Read more](#)

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Council :

Start of the Croatian Presidency of the Council



The opening ceremony of the Croatian Presidency of the Council took place on 9 January in Zagreb, in the presence of the College of Commissioners. The President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen and the President of the European Council Charles Michel stressed the importance of the negotiations on the next multiannual budget and the various challenges such as climate transition. Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic stressed the importance for his country to move closer to joining the Schengen area and the euro zone. Croatia, the last country to join the Union in 2013, holds the six-month Presidency of the Council for the first time... [Read more](#)

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Diplomacy :

Conclusion of the Foreign Affairs Council



Foreign Ministers meeting on 10 January discussed the escalation of tensions in Libya and Iraq. They said they hoped that these crises would be contained and that peaceful solutions would be found. They reiterated that the fight against the Islamic state remains a priority and condemned the attacks against coalition forces in Iraq. They also called on Iran to respect the nuclear agreement and instructed High Representative Josep Borell to conduct negotiations with the various parties... [Read more](#)

Press release on the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean



On 8 January, the Foreign Ministers of Egypt, France, Cyprus and Greece met in Cairo to discuss recent developments in the Eastern Mediterranean in the light of increasing tensions that threaten peace and stability in the region. They underlined with their Italian counterpart their deep concern over Turkey's recent violations of international law in the Eastern Mediterranean... [Read more](#)

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Joint declaration on Libya



In the light of the recent worrying military escalation in Libya and in view of the Foreign Affairs Council scheduled for 10 January, the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy and the High Representative met in Brussels on 7 January to reaffirm their commitment to an immediate end to the fighting around Tripoli and elsewhere and to discuss how the Union can further contribute to UN mediation and an early return to political negotiations... [Read more](#)

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Joint declaration on the security situation in the Middle East



In a joint statement issued on 6 January, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson condemned the recent escalation of violence in Iraq following the death of Iranian General Soleimani in a US raid and called for an easing of tensions... [Read more](#)

ECB :

Christine Lagarde's Priorities



Christine Lagarde gave her first interview as President of the European Central Bank (ECB) to the French magazine Challenges on 8 January. In it, she defends the application of a fiscal stimulus plan in the euro zone to accelerate European GDP growth, which should reach 1.1% in 2020 and 1.4% in 2021 according to ECB projections, which remains below the European potential. She also expressed her wish to bring the ECB closer to Europe's citizens by establishing dialogue and explanations... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

Stepping up aid operations for asylum



The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) announced on 7 January the doubling of its operations in 2020, in particular to strengthen its presence in Greece, Cyprus and Malta, where the influx of migrants exploded in 2019. Operational deployments will double in 2020 to reach 2 000 people on the ground, as a result of an agreement signed in December with these countries and Italy... [Read more](#)

Illegal immigration at lowest level since 2013



The number of irregular crossings of the European Union's external borders detected last year has fallen to its lowest level since 2013, due to the decrease in the number of people reaching the European coasts via the central and western Mediterranean Sea. Preliminary data for 2019 collected by Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, showed a 6% drop in the number of illegal crossings of the Union's external borders to just over 139 000. This figure is 92% below the record set in 2015... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Visit by the Chancellor to Moscow



German Chancellor Angela Merkel met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on 11 January. The two leaders discussed relations between their countries, including the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project. They also discussed international crises, in particular Iran, Syria and Libya, about which the Chancellor announced that a conference would be held in Berlin in the near future... [Read more](#)

Report on migration 2018



In 8 January, the German Council of Ministers adopted the Migration Report 2018 presented by the Federal Ministry of the Interior. 1.59 million people arrived in the country in 2018, a figure equivalent to that of the previous year. However, the reasons for immigration have changed, as fewer people have come for humanitarian reasons, while the number of people coming to work or study has increased... [Read more](#)

Austria :

Investiture of the Right-Green government coalition



On 7 January, the new Austrian government was sworn in by President Alexander Van der Bellen. The government, which is the result of an unprecedented alliance between the People's Party (ÖVP) and the Greens (Grünen) and led by Sebastian Kurz (ÖVP), comprises more women than men (9 to 8). The Greens have four ministries including Environment and Justice. A firm and secure line on immigration and the goal of carbon neutrality by 2040 are the government's main objectives... [Read more](#)

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Croatia :

Visit by the Prime Minister to Paris



On 7 January, President Emmanuel Macron received the Croatian Prime Minister, Andrej Plenković, in Paris to discuss the priorities of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the Union: Brexit, enlargement, multiannual financial framework and the Green Pact. Emmanuel Macron announced his intention to visit Croatia... [Read more](#)

Spain :

Narrow majority for Pedro Sanchez as head of government



On 9 January, Pedro Sanchez, President of the Government (PSOE), was sworn in before King Felipe VI of Spain, after his investiture on 7 January by 167 votes to 165 in the Congress of Deputies, the lower house of Parliament. At the head of a coalition government, for the first time since 1975, with the radical left-wing party (Podemos), the government comprises 22 members, 11 of whom are women... [Read more](#)

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The Supreme Court does not acknowledge Oriol Junqueras as MEP



The Spanish Supreme Court refused on 9 January to recognise as an MEP Oriol Junqueras, who was sentenced to prison in October, despite a ruling by the European Court of Justice that had ruled in favour of the Catalan pro-independence activist. As a result, Spain's highest court will not release him to take up his duties as an MEP. The President of the European Parliament David Sassoli has followed the decision of the Supreme Court and has asked the Spanish authorities to notify him of the name of a new Spanish MEP... [Read more](#)

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Malta :

Robert Abela becomes Prime Minister



On 12 January, Robert Abela became the new Prime Minister of Malta following his election as leader of the Labour Party in replacement of Joseph Muscat. The son of former President George Abela, he won 57.9% of the party members' votes, beating Chris Fearne. Joseph Muscat had to resign following the investigation into the death of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, which revealed a link with some of his associates... [Read more](#)

UK :

Government in Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Assembly resumed session on 11 January, after three years of political deadlock, and a new regional government was formed under the leadership of the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) Arlene Foster. The institutions were re-established after the parties in the region agreed to a proposed political deal put forward by the British and Irish governments. Under the 1998 peace agreement, Unionist Arlene Foster is supported by a Republican Deputy Prime Minister, Michelle O'Neill of Sinn Fein... [Read more](#)



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Green light by the House of Commons for the Brexit Agreement



On 9 January, the House of Commons approved by 358 votes to 234 on third reading the agreement for the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. The bill will now go through the House of Lords. Brexit will take place on 31 January, after ratification of the agreement by the European Parliament... [Read more](#)

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Belarus :

Visa Agreement



The European Union and Belarus signed a visa facilitation and readmission agreement on 8 January. Short-stay visa prices and issuing times will be reduced for Belarusian citizens coming to the EU. Several categories of persons, including students, will be able to benefit from multi-entry visas. Belarus has already granted facilities for EU citizens... [Read more](#)

North Macedonia :

Resignation of Prime Minister Zoran Zaev



Northern Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev resigned on 3 January to prepare for the parliamentary elections which he has convened for 12 April following the European Union's refusal to open accession negotiations. His Interior Minister, Oliver Spasovski, was given the task of heading a provisional government to manage day-to-day affairs... [Read more](#)

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Turkey :

Inauguration of the TurkStream pipeline



On 8 January, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin officially inaugurated the TurkStream gas pipeline in Istanbul, which will bring gas extracted in Russia to Turkey and Europe... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

Report by the Anti-Torture Committee on Denmark



The Council of Europe's Anti-Torture Committee (CPT) published a report on 9 January calling on Denmark to improve living conditions in two of its migrant detention camps, which it considers "unacceptable and prison-like". The report follows the Committee's visit to Denmark to ascertain whether the recommendations previously made in 2014 had been taken into account by the government... [Read more](#)

GRECO report on France



In a report published on 9 January, the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) calls on France to strengthen the effectiveness and practical application of the framework in place to prevent corruption within the Executive and law enforcement agencies... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Unemployment at its lowest level since 2000



According to a Eurostat study published on 9 January, the unemployment rate in the Union is at its lowest since January 2000 at 6.3%. The unemployment rate in the euro-zone stands at 7.5%. The lowest rates were registered in the Czech Republic (2.2%), Germany (3.1%) and Poland (3.2%). The highest rates were recorded in Greece (16.8% in September 2019) and Spain (14.1%), where youth unemployment is particularly prevalent, affecting 32.5% and 32.1% of this population respectively in the third quarter of 2019... [Read more](#)

Increase in inflation in the euro zone



Euro-zone annual inflation was estimated at 1.3% in December 2019 by Eurostat on 7 January. It was 1% in November. Food, alcohol and tobacco are the main components of this inflation, followed by services, industrial goods excluding energy and finally energy... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Report on the protection of European intellectual property



In a report on the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights (IPRs) in third countries, published on 9 January, the Commission identifies 13 countries, including China, Turkey, Russia, Ukraine and Brazil, where the EU must act to reduce the level of economic damage suffered by European companies. In particular, the report notes that more than 80% of counterfeit and pirated goods seized by EU customs authorities come from China and Hong Kong... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Rijeka and Galway, European Capitals 2020



The cities of Rijeka (Croatia) and Galway (Ireland) are the European Capitals of Culture for 2020. They succeed Plovdiv in Bulgaria and Matera in Italy. Rijeka launched festivities at the same time as Croatia's rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The events will start on 2 February in Galway... [Read more](#)

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Celtic Music in Glasgow



The International Festival "Celtic Connections" is held from January 16 to February 2. More than 300 events will bring together 2,000 artists to celebrate Celtic cultural heritage... [Read more](#)

Museum Night in Basel



On 17 January, from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m., the museums in and around Basel will open their doors to visitors during the night. A unique opportunity to rediscover the city's cultural wealth... [Read more](#)

Reading Night in France



The French Ministry for Culture is organizing the 4th edition of Reading Night on the evening of January 18. France's libraries and bookshops will be open from the afternoon and throughout the evening so that readers can discover their rich collections of books and take part in free events... [Read more](#)

American Artists in Brussels



Until 21 March, the Patinoire Royale/Galerie Valérie Bach in Brussels is hosting "American Women, the infinite journey", an exhibition bringing together the works of 16 American women working on women's issues... [Read more](#)

Once upon a time there was Sergio Leone



The Aras Pacis Museum in Rome is organising a retrospective of Italian film director Sergio Leone until 3 May to mark the 30th anniversary of his death. The exhibition retraces his artistic universe, evokes the high point of his career with the release of "Once upon a time in the West", and takes stock of the director's cinematographic legacy... [Read more](#)

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Agenda :



13-16 January 2020

Strasbourg

Plenary Session at the European Parliament



20 January 2020

Brussels

Eurogroup Meeting



20 January 2020

Brussels

Foreign Affairs Council

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