

ON THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- FOR A MORE KNOWLEDGE INTENSIVE APPROACH

Notes by Maria João Rodrigues
Draft 2005.07.27

The EU policy for international cooperation can move for a new more effective stage if a better coordination is ensured between the various relevant policies and between the European and national initiatives. The recent proposal by the European Commission on the EU Development policy seems to be an important step in this direction (COM (2005)311 final): shared principles, priority action themes and common guidelines are proposed. This will create a new basis for the EU strategy papers, work plans and road maps regarding each Third country, to be defined for the next period of the EU international cooperation.

Nevertheless, this new stage will be more demanding in strategic management and, therefore, a more knowledge-intensive approach will be required. Some cooperation instruments should be improved in order to ensure a more effective relationship with some of the key target groups in the Third countries, notably:

- policy-makers;
- influential think-tanks;
- researchers;
- civil society (business organisations, trade unions, NGOs, etc.).

Cooperation for development requires a more intensive exchange of expert knowledge with these target groups. In the following sections, two proposals of enhanced instruments for international cooperation will be presented, building on two on-going experiences:

- strategic management for a development agenda, in Brazil;
- strategic management for Science and Technology cooperation in China.

1. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT FOR A DEVELOPMENT AGENDA, IN BRAZIL

A Workshop sponsored by the cooperation project “EUROBRASIL 2000” took place in Brasilia on the 11-14 July 2005 in order to exchange

experience between the EU and Brazil about strategic planning for development.

The participants from the Brazilian side were top officials working in:

- the Presidency of the Republic, in charge of long-term strategic planning;
- the Ministry of Planning and Budgeting;
- the Secretary in charge of the Economic and Social Council;
- other institutions such as the Congress and UNDP office in Brazil.

From the European side, an international consultant was invited, Maria João Rodrigues, taking into account her experience in designing and monitoring the Lisbon Strategy, now as special advisor to the European Commission. In order to prepare this workshop, this consultant has previously read the main Brazilian relevant documents as well as conducted several preparatory talks with her Brazilian counterparts.

The main purpose of the workshop was to develop a cross-fertilisation between this European experience and the ongoing experience of long term planning called “Brasil 3 Tempos” as well as its implications for:

- the design and implementation of a development agenda, involving the civil society;
- the definition of a medium-term plan and budget.

With this purpose, the workshop was deployed in the following topics:

1. Long-term strategic planning: main concept and tools used in the EU;
2. The institutional framework for long-term strategic planning in the EU;
3. Presentation and discussion on the project “Brasil 3 Tempos”: objectives, methodology and recent developments;
4. Case study: the Lisbon strategy, as an experience of long-term planning for a development agenda in the EU;
5. Case study: social and civil dialogue as tool to design and implement a development agenda in the EU;
6. Strategic planning in Brazil: story and possible future developments;

7. An evaluation of the project “Brasil 3 Tempos”.

Some of the main outcomes of this workshop are summarised in:

- the graph detailing the critical path to design, adopt, implement and monitor a development agenda;
- the table detailing the institutional framework for the strategic management of a development agenda, putting the focus on better governance.
- these operational outcomes were a real product of the rich interaction throughout this workshop and can be considered relevant for both the Brazilian and the European side.
- some other follow-up meetings took place immediately after between the international consultant and the main groups attending the workshop, in order to draw more specific implications for their ongoing tasks. A general consensus seems to have emerged on the need to go further in this cooperation under the label “Strategic management for a development agenda”. This further cooperation can be supported by the exchange of relevant documentation, follow-up meetings and workshops as well as mobility of officials and experts.

This kind of more systematic, regular, knowledge-intensive line of cooperation, addressing the central issue of a comprehensive strategy of development, can not only be very useful for Brazil but also to improve the general consistency of the cooperation going on with the EU in more specialized fields (such as industrial, employment, social inclusion, environmental policies).

2. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION IN CHINA

A China-EU High-level Forum on S&T Strategy was held in Beijing on 12-13 May 2005 in order to create a new momentum in the already active cooperation between the EU and China in the S&T field. This event was sponsored by the European Commission and the Ministry of Science and Technology of China and it was able to gather some hundred participants from both sides, coming from the research, the business and the public administration communities.

Along with the draft conclusions, a vision paper had been previously prepared by a European expert, Maria João Rodrigues, working together with a Chinese expert, Zhou Yuan. This paper starts with a presentation of the key development challenges and the main S&T priorities in both China

and the EU, to be followed by a joint identification of some S&T themes of common interest as well the main actions to develop this cooperation.

During the Forum, the Chinese side emphasized the need of evolving to a new stage of the cooperation with the EU, arguing they are both great civilisations, with much in common such as multilateralism and the search of a more harmonious development. Moreover, if China is also recognising that knowledge and innovation are the main sources for growth, it still is in a less advanced level of a knowledge economy and, therefore there is much scope for complementarities with the EU, in a win-win game. The need for strategic planning was very much stressed, along with many others also underlying the need to provide the researchers with the opportunity to meet, for mutual understanding and networking. Initiatives such as the Era-net CO-REACH are a relevant step in this direction.

The European side replied by accepting to raise the political profile of this partnership, putting also focus on the strategic challenges of building knowledge-intensive economies. The final version of the Forum conclusions states clear commitments in this direction.

The Forum clearly confirmed that the conditions are ripe for a new stage which should be underpinned by an enhanced method of cooperation, aiming at a Strategic Partnership on Knowledge for Growth and Development, where the strategic challenges and the S&T priorities are assured on a regular basis. The method to build this partnership can be specified by the following topics:

a/ Strategic planning to define the priorities by ensuring:

- An annual meeting at ministerial level, in the frame of the policy dialogue
- Strategic workshops and strategic papers

b/ Defining concrete research agendas, by organising:

- Thematic workshops and research papers involving key researchers in specific fields
- Technology platforms

c/ Networking by developing:

- Specific support actions
- Era-nets

d/ Developing S&T projects by launching:

- Networks of excellence
- Integrated projects

- STREPS
- Era-nets plus
- Joint calls

e/ Promoting training and mobility, by organising:

- PhD training
- Post-doc training
- Two ways visiting professors

f/ Disseminating information, by providing:

- Dedicated sites
- Data basis
- Help-desks
- Publications

g/ Launching or developing special technology initiatives, such as:

- Galileo
- ITER

h/ Promoting the convergence of standards notably on:

- Consumers protection
- Intellectual property rights
- Environment

This enhanced method for S&T cooperation is building on the existing instruments in the 6th Framework Programme for RTD as well as in the 7th. Nevertheless for a more systematic and effective method, a more strategic and knowledge-intensive approach is needed. The annual meeting at ministerial level in the frame of policy dialogue as well as the strategic workshops are at the core of this new approach, meeting the commitment made in the Forum conclusion regarding a strategic planning of this cooperation.

With this purpose, the strategic workshops should gather key generalist experts and policy-makers from the European and Chinese sides, able to discuss openly the strategic challenges faced by both entities as well as their implications for S&T priorities. A workshop of this kind should be held on the very short term, taking into account that China is about to make key long term choices for its development model, in the frame of its Plan for 2020.