

Towards consistency of EU external policies? : a case study on the European commission

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TOWARDS CONSISTENCY OF EU EXTERNAL POLICIES?
A CASE STUDY ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

van Anne-Claire Marangoni
Maastricht, 24 September 2014

1. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the setting-up of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the creation of the position of High Representative-Vice President (HRVP) have renewed the consistency challenge within the Commission.
2. The internal functioning of the Commission affirms the centrality of coordination to put into effect the consistency requirement. However, the presence of coordination instruments does not systematically guarantee a consistent policy output. The coordination of the different dimensions of an action may be challenging, a question that is at the centre of this research with respect to three core external policies of the EU – external trade, development cooperation and the Common Foreign and Security Policy.
3. The combination of the Treaty framework, the policy framework and the Commission's internal decision-making process express at different levels the consistency requirement and details how this requirement is put into effect. The Treaty and the policy frameworks define the consistency requirement in general terms. The internal decision-making process specifies how the requirement is implemented.
4. The assessment of the consistency of selected Commission's proposals is based on the absence or existence of contradictions between their respective primary objectives and the rest of their provisions. However, assessing consistency is not a binary choice – consistency or inconsistency – but a matter of degree. In turn, to explain the outcome, the research studies the extent of the success of coordination.
5. Despite the recurrent criticisms against internal fragmentation and the assumed resistance to coordination attempts in the European Commission, the different steps taken in the decision-making process have the potential to ensure that coordination takes place systematically and, as a consequence, to avoid the existence of contradictions, within a proposal, with the primary objective of this proposal.
6. The criticism of the inconsistency of article 96 measures against Mugabe's regime echoes the general criticism of the inconsistency of article 96 of the Cotonou agreement by ACP countries, which denounce it as a highly political and unilateral mechanism.

7. By refocusing import preferences on those countries most in need, the revision of the GSP aimed at addressing the inconsistency criticisms formulated against the previous scheme.
8. Process-tracing allows a sufficient degree of precision and an in-depth understanding of decision-making.
9. International conferences provide young researchers a unique opportunity to present their findings. Their participation should be encouraged.
10. The Marie Curie framework should be continued as it provides a supportive environment for Ph.D. candidates. In particular, the dissemination colloquia provide a valuable opportunity to PhD candidates to discuss the relevance of their research with an academic and non-academic audience.