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Article — Published Version

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Development Policy Review

Provided in Cooperation with:

John Wiley & Sons

Suggested Citation: Berger, Alexandra (2022) : Development as non-migration? Examining normative and policy coherence in EU external action on migration and development, Development Policy Review, ISSN 1467-7679, Wiley Periodicals, Inc., Hoboken, USA, Vol. 40, Iss. Supplement 1, pp. 1-16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12589>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/264517>

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Development as non-migration? Examining normative and policy coherence in EU external action on migration and development

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Funding information

The author received no financial support for
the research, authorship, or publication of
this article

Summary

Motivation: Within the efforts of the European Union (EU) to govern migration, the nexus between migration and development has moved centre stage. Analysing how the EU has approached the migration–development nexus in its foreign policy from the perspective of policy coherence for development (PCD) allows this study to examine how far the EU migration–development nexus is coherent at the policy and normative level.

Purpose: How does the EU conceptualize PCD? To what extent does the EU's external action in the migration–development nexus strengthen or undermine its normative commitment to coherence for development?

Methods and approach: This article develops a conceptual framework of overall coherence for development, which consists of: (a) policy coherence; and (b) normative coherence for development. Both aspects are analysed through a qualitative content analysis of 18 expert interviews and EU policy documents.

Findings: The analysis shows that the EU perceives PCD as a policy-making tool and a technical mechanism to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, the EU's approach to the migration–development nexus is incoherent both at the policy and the normative levels. In its policies, much of the focus is on containment of migration to Europe. At the normative level, the EU proclaims a sedentary and place-bound notion of development.

Policy implications: The article contributes to the current debates on PCD in the EU and on the EU's external action in the migration–development nexus. In order to foster PCD, the EU should approach the migration–development nexus more holistically.

KEYWORDS

EU development policy, EU migration policy, migration–development nexus, policy coherence for development (PCD)

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Over the last 15 years, the European Union (EU) has focused on root causes as a way to mitigate migratory pressures on the EU. Such aspects as poverty reduction, livelihood improvement, and stability in countries of origin and transit, play a central role in this strategy, and development co-operation with such countries might contribute to tackling these root causes. Since 2015, the EU has increasingly used its development co-operation funds and instruments under the umbrella of migration governance and the strategy of addressing the root causes (Castillejo, 2017; van Houte, 2019). Initiatives, such as the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (“Global Europe”), and the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, illustrate the prominence of this approach within the EU’s broader efforts to govern migration. One of the current trends within EU development policy is thus the focus on migration and its root causes.

Simultaneously, the EU is one of the leading institutional promoters of policy coherence for development (PCD). PCD refers to “the synergic interaction between foreign aid and all other development-related policy areas” (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016, p. 30). These might be fields such as trade, agricultural and environmental policy, human rights, and migration. In addition to reducing the possibly harmful effects of these policy fields in third countries, development and non-development policies should ideally reinforce each other in order to achieve the defined goals in synergy (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016). This requires that the different non-development policy fields be geared towards global development as a primary objective. The EU views PCD as a policy tool for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are the central objectives of EU development co-operation (European Commission, 2019b; European Union, 2018). In that context, the European Commission (2019a, p. 13) underlines that “PCD is no longer perceived as being a stand-alone policy specific to development cooperation, but a key element in the overall EU efforts to implement [the SDGs].” Furthermore, the EU’s commitment to PCD is codified as a legal obligation in the Lisbon Treaty. Yet, research has established that the EU’s *de facto* commitment to PCD and its performance in implementing it is not very strong (Carbone, 2008; Häbel, 2020; Koff, 2017b). However, precisely how the EU understands PCD has not been studied in depth.

This article argues that PCD is an ambitious political requirement. As such, it is directly related to normative coherence for development (NCD), which in this context means that different policy fields are both in synergy and geared towards global development regarding the normative foundations of policies and underlying general normative positions of political actors. This study contends that PCD and NCD are two dimensions of overall coherence for development (see Figure 1). While PCD and NCD are intimately connected, PCD is a political requirement, whereas NCD is a normative requirement. Understanding PCD as a political requirement means acknowledging that policies promote certain norms, and that these norms are determined via political processes. NCD advocates these norms’ compatibility with development goals, in this case EU development goals, such as poverty eradication, equality, and environmental, economic, and social sustainability. NCD puts the focus on the normative dimension of coherence for development, a dimension that is largely overlooked in the conceptualization of PCD (Siitonen, 2016). Specifically, the EU understands PCD in a rather technical manner as a policy-making tool to achieve the SDGs. Hence, the value of adding NCD to the conceptualization of coherence for development is that it uncovers the normative dimension.

Another merit of the concept of NCD is that it centres on the discussion about the *type* of development that lies at the basis of coherence efforts, bringing the question “which kind of development?” back into the debate. One of the shortcomings of the PCD debate both in the practitioner and the academic realms is that this important question is usually left unanswered. NCD opens up the arena to discussions about what development practitioners, policy-makers, and scholars mean by development, and what the ontological bases are of their discussions on development. While NCD is a theoretical concept, it is relevant for development practice and policy-making insofar as it is able to re-centre the coherence debate on the normative aspects in the very normative field that is development co-operation. Nevertheless, this article does not discard PCD to focus solely on NCD. The EU’s

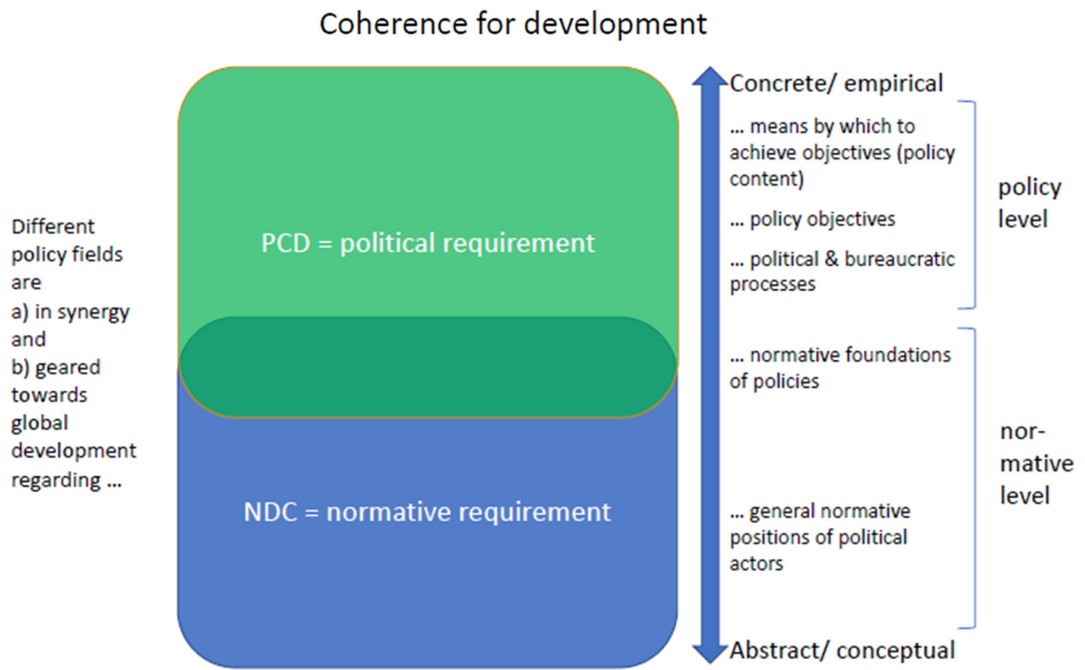


FIGURE 1 Coherence for development

Source: compiled by the author

efforts centre on PCD, and while PCD is not mentioned literally in EU primary law, guiding documents—such as the new European consensus on development (European Union, 2018)—build on it. As it is one of the aims of this article to find out how the EU conceptualizes coherence for development, PCD as the central concept guiding the EU's coherence activities should not be cast aside.

EU external action in the nexus between migration and development is an instructive case for understanding the EU's conceptualization of PCD, as it illustrates what horizontal PCD is about: addressing connections between development policy and other policy areas (Carbone, 2008; cf. Koff, 2017a). The migration–development nexus is also relevant for examining NCD, as migration is a strongly normative field, especially in the context of the EU (cf. Koff, 2017b). Furthermore, this nexus is highly political and has received considerable attention from policy-makers, particularly in the last decade. Research suggests that the EU's securitized migration policies undermine its own PCD efforts (Koff, 2017b). Since an overly securitized migration policy might be to the detriment of development in third countries, there seems to be a clash of EU norms on migration and development. Given that coherence for development is about synergies between policies, a potential clash would undermine coherence.

This leads to the following research questions: *how does the EU conceptualize policy coherence for development (PCD)? To what extent does the EU's external action in the migration–development nexus strengthen or undermine its normative commitment to coherence for development?*

In order to grasp the complexity of the EU's conceptualization of PCD and its approach to the migration–development nexus, this research is qualitative in nature. While the nexus extends to concrete implications in countries of origin and transit, the article focuses on the level of the EU as an important PCD agenda-setter and development actor. The data set for answering the research questions consists of 18 qualitative semi-structured expert interviews with officials working for the European Commission's Directorate-Generals International Partnerships (INTPA), Migration and Home Affairs (HOME), and Neighbourhood and Enlargement (NEAR), think tanks, non-governmental organizations, the European Parliament, and representatives of member states (see

Table A1 for a list of interviewees). The interviews were conducted in May and June 2019. In addition to the expert interviews, data consist of documents such as European Commission communications and staff working documents, reports, European Parliament resolutions, and Council conclusions. These documents were collected, first, on PCD in order to grasp the EU's understanding of PCD, and second, on EU initiatives addressing the migration–development nexus. Both the interviews and the documents have been analysed by means of a qualitative content analysis in MAXQDA.

2 | EU MIGRATION–DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES AND PCD IN THE LITERATURE

Scholars of the concept of policy coherence for development have developed a considerable body of knowledge, highlighting how the notion rose up the agenda of international organizations (Carbone, 2008; Carbone & Keijzer, 2016; Hoebink, 2005; Verschaeve et al., 2016). In comparison to the PCD research agenda, EU migration–development action represents a more recent topic of research (see e.g. van Houte, 2019; Zanker, 2019; Zau & Nantermoz, 2021). Considering that development actions form one of the key pillars of the EU's response to increased immigration, the small number of studies focusing on the development aspects of the EU's migration co-operation with third states is noteworthy. There is even less scholarship that examines EU migration policies through a PCD lens, which is surprising given that migration is part of the five PCD priority areas of the EU, and the EU as a regional organization has been one of the foci of PCD research (Carbone, 2008; Carbone & Keijzer, 2016; Hoebink, 2005).

Precisely what the European institutions mean when they refer to PCD has not been studied in depth. In their analysis of the agricultural and fisheries policies reform, Carbone and Keijzer (2016) uncover some aspects of the EU's understanding of PCD. They point out that the EU centres on bureaucratic arrangements and on processes against outcomes and results, viewing PCD as a policy-making tool. The authors show that PCD is actually not a technical process but is rather inherently political, through the balancing of different interests (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016). However, Carbone and Keijzer do not pay attention to the normative dimension of coherence for development. Moreover, the SDGs have come into force since the publication of their work. The relationship between PCD and the SDGs is relevant because the EU frames PCD as a tool for reaching the SDGs (European Commission, 2019b; European Union, 2018). This article seeks to fill this research gap by providing an in-depth focus on the precise understanding of PCD within the EU. This is policy relevant as it will foster evaluations of concrete PCD achievements in EU policy-making and decision-making processes. In order to know where the EU stands on PCD, it is first necessary to evaluate what its PCD target looks like.

Another contribution that this article aims to make is to pay attention to the kind of development that the EU's approach to PCD promotes. The migration–development nexus represents an excellent case for analysing the conceptualization of development that the EU endorses, because it uncovers the “sedentary bias” (Bakewell, 2008, p. 1342) present in EU policy-making and discourse on development in third countries. Moreover, one of the strengths of the concept of NCD is precisely its emphasis on the conceptualization of development, which is why this article not only looks at PCD but also incorporates NCD in its effort to examine overall coherence for development.

A third contribution refers to EU action on the migration–development nexus, which is still too much of a blank spot in PCD research on the EU. While a few authors study coherence-related questions in EU migration policies, these works focus on incoherence at the policy level and do not examine the conceptual level (Koff, 2017b; Lavenex & Kunz, 2008; Wunderlich, 2013). Moreover, in his analysis of the migration–security–development nexus, only Koff (2017b) pays attention to normative aspects. Research on the normative side of EU initiatives in the area of migration and development is policy relevant because both development co-operation and migration governance are very normative and contested fields in which the EU is a global player and norm promoter. In

addition, the political salience of migration governance in the EU and the member states increases the political scrutiny of migration–development initiatives, which in turn increases the importance of normative analysis of these initiatives for policy-making. Koff (2017b) shows that the EU and the US tend to focus on the securitization of migration policy and leave aside transformative potentials. Yet, he does not explicitly examine the EU's understanding of PCD. Similarly, while Lavenex and Kunz (2008) trace the existence of different and competing frames in the EU regarding the relationship between migration and development, they do not study the notion of PCD. Hence, a third contribution of this article is to shed light on the EU's initiatives on the migration–development nexus through a PCD lens.

3 | COHERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPT, REQUIREMENT, AND POLICY TOOL

3.1 | Disentangling policy coherence and normative coherence for development

This article argues that *overall* coherence for development consists of, first, policy coherence and, second, normative coherence for development. This section will start with PCD and then turn to NCD, before exploring their relationship.

From a “do-no-harm” approach centring on possibly harmful effects of industrialized states' policies towards low-income countries (LICs), lower-middle income countries (LMICs), and upper-middle income countries (UMICs), as defined by the World Bank (Hamadeh et al., 2021), PCD evolved into a more positive notion of accounting for these countries' needs in the policies of industrialized states (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016, p. 31). In its historical trajectory, the concept has thus progressed “from a criticism against existing practices towards a new organizing narrative for development debates” (Verschaeve et al., 2016, p. 50). Since the 1990s, PCD has thus become a buzzword in the development parlance of organizations such as the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the EU. However, the notion's very character is still under discussion. PCD is definitely a theoretical and empirical concept, but it might also be a policy-making tool, a political objective, an outcome describing policies, or a methodology (cf. Guerrero & Castañeda, 2021; cf. Koff et al., 2020). Indeed, one might approach the notion from a critical standpoint at the conceptual level. Seeking to link PCD with different aid discussions, Sianes (2017) places it on a scale with the aid effectiveness, harmonization, and alignment debates. Similarly, Thede (2013, p. 784) argues that PCD, aid effectiveness and the development–security nexus are all part of a “continuum of aid policy responses.” These two studies point to an important feature of the development discourse: alignment, harmonization, aid effectiveness, and PCD are all informed by the logic of coherence for development (cf. Sianes, 2017). This article advances a similar conceptualization of PCD as a component of *general* coherence for development (see Figure 1).

A new strand of PCD research analyses PCD's abilities to stimulate transformative development (cf. Koff, 2017b; Koff & Maganda, 2016; Siitonen, 2016). To date, PCD's potential to change global power relations and asymmetrical structures has not been realized due to a focus on technocratic policy-making (Siitonen, 2016). Building on this line of research, this article contends that PCD is, above all, not a policy-making tool or a methodology, but mainly a political requirement. This perspective “departs from the conventional technical approach to policy coherence by shifting the focus [...] to power relations and structures that have an impact on developing countries” (Siitonen, 2016, p. 2). Viewing PCD as a political requirement makes clear that, “given that policy coherence is a relation between different policies, what really matters is the combined effect of policies on processes that enable (or disable) development” (Siitonen, 2016, p. 4). For any analysis of coherence *for development*, it is thus fundamental to examine whether respective policies are geared towards global development. This includes policy objectives, the means by which the objectives are to be reached, political and bureaucratic processes, the normative bases of specific policies, and the general normative standpoints of political actors. Hence, coherence for development involves both a concrete policy level and a normative level.

So far, the normative level has not received much attention. PCD is instead conceptualized as a policy-level commitment or policy-making mechanism by researchers and international organizations alike. This underlines the usefulness of NCD, which is better placed to illustrate the normativity and the characteristic as a requirement. Moreover, NCD pays particular attention to the question “which kind of development?” and hence to the underlying normative positions in discussions on development. In examining overall coherence for development in EU actions regarding the migration–development nexus, this article thus adds the notion of NCD to the analysis. In doing so, the nature of coherence for development as both political and normative and as spanning both concrete/empirical and abstract/conceptual dimensions becomes clearer. Accordingly, by using the concepts of PCD and NCD together, this article argues that NCD is an important addition to the PCD-centred debate on *general* coherence for development.

Coherence for development, as it is defined here, consists of PCD and NCD, with PCD focusing more on the policy level and NCD addressing the normative level. Both PCD and NCD are defined in this article as different policy fields while being both in synergy and geared towards global development. They differ with regard to the level of both aspects. While PCD deals with the policy content, political and bureaucratic processes, and policy objectives, NCD addresses the general normative positions of actors in the polity. They overlap with regard to the normative foundations of concrete policies. PCD centres on the questions “which processes?” and “which policies?”, while NCD focuses on the question “which kind of development?”. Including PCD as a political requirement in general coherence for development makes clear that promoting coherence at the policy level is, first and foremost, a political endeavour (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016; Núñez-Borja et al., 2018). In this context, political will and political processes are central. One of the main advantages of NCD, in turn, is that it opens up the discussion to the underlying ideologies regarding “development” and development interventions, which are not neutral but subject to decision-making processes. In the specific case of the EU, realizing NCD means that all policies that have an impact on LICs, LMICs, and UMICs should centre on the implementation of EU norms on development, such as environmental sustainability, social and economic equality, and economic prosperity (cf. Häbel, 2020). In addition, the general normative orientations of EU institutions should be geared towards these development norms. Since development co-operation and the notion of “development” itself are highly normative fields, centring the debate on the underlying norms and ideologies is an important added value of NCD. In the concrete case of the EU, it allows us to examine whether agreed development norms such as environmental sustainability are really the guiding foundations of policies and the general normative foundations of EU action. However, it should be noted that PCD and NCD differ with regard to the spheres in which they originated: while PCD is a policy-making tool or concept and is used, refined, and validated by international organizations and other donor institutions, NCD originated in the scholarly debate and operates at the conceptual level. Yet, this article contends that NCD is a fruitful concept for practitioner analysis as well, because it emphasizes the normative aspects of overall coherence for development. These aspects do not receive enough attention in the technical debate on PCD, which brushes over the fact that coherence for development is a highly normative notion.

3.2 | Policy coherence for development as conceptualized by the EU

While the previous section has suggested that coherence for development consists of PCD and NCD and hence of a policy and a normative level, the EU’s conceptualization of coherence for development is much less demanding. Specifically, rather than understanding PCD as a political requirement, as it is conceptualized here, EU actors are committed to PCD but focus rather on technical policy-making aspects. They thus leave aside coherence for development’s emphasis on the normative foundations of policies. PCD thus becomes a tool, a mechanism, and a procedure during the policy cycle (cf. Carbone & Keijzer, 2016). Furthermore, the EU views PCD as a tool for reaching the SDGs. Understanding EU actors’ notions of PCD thus requires examining PCD’s relationship with the SDGs in EU policy-making. In order to grasp their conceptualization of PCD, this section will, first, examine the

EU's general approach to and definition of PCD, second, look at concrete mechanisms for implementing PCD in EU policy-making, and third, explore the relationship between PCD and the SDGs.

First, a defining feature of the EU's approach to PCD is the lack of emphasis on evaluation and results measurement (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016). There are no generally agreed targets or baselines for measuring results or impact. This is in line with the EU's conceptualization of PCD as a process and a mechanism, rather than an outcome or impact. However, this inhibits evaluating concrete PCD achievements in EU policy-making. A reason for this disregard of evaluation, results, and impact might be the lack of a clear definition of PCD in the European Commission. For example, in a staff working document, the Commission (2010, p. 4) refers to ensuring "that development objectives are taken into account and [are] reconciled with other EU objectives." In another document, the Commission (2019b, p. 6) gives the following definition: "trying to minimise the negative impact that non-development policies can have on development objectives of developing countries." This points more in the direction of the minimal "do-no-harm" approach to PCD rather than a proactive understanding and a focus on synergies. One of the core problems is thus that EU actors regularly state their commitment to PCD, but do not engage deeply with the question of what PCD means, except for the minimal definition given in the Lisbon Treaty. The very different meanings and conceptual ambiguities that the European Commission, as the main implementing body, attaches to PCD prevent it from developing a strong answer to the challenge of ensuring PCD not only as a procedural objective but also as a political requirement.

As a second step, examining the concrete procedures in place for implementing PCD in the EU is instructive for understanding its general approach to PCD. Of the available instruments, some are specifically PCD-related, while some are non-PCD mechanisms that still play a significant role for implementing coherence between different policies. The latter consist of impact assessments and inter-service consultations, which are part of the general policy-making process inside the Commission. The PCD-specific mechanisms do not belong to the ambit of policy formulation but are rather awareness-raising tools, such as the Commission work programme screening for PCD, staff member training, and consultations with partner countries (Núñez-Borja et al., 2018, p. vii). Since they are awareness-raising rather than policy-making procedures, they do not contribute much to implementing PCD (Núñez-Borja et al., 2018). The EU thus lacks PCD-specific mechanisms capable of contributing to PCD implementation.

An instructive case for illustrating the role of specific mechanisms in policy formulation are impact assessments, since they are one of the tools that could contribute to PCD implementation in concrete policies. The impact assessment procedure confirms that EU institutions view policy-making as technical problem-solving and also approach PCD from this procedural, technocratic perspective (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016). However, impact assessments are not neutral technocratic tools but very politicized endeavours (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016; Núñez-Borja et al., 2018), underlining that PCD is not a technocratic procedural tool but rather a political requirement. Also, impact assessments often do not take PCD into account. For example, while following highly standardized procedures, they do not always include DG INTPA, as the directorate responsible for development co-operation, in PCD-relevant areas nor do they systematically analyse expected impacts on partner countries (Núñez-Borja et al., 2018). Thus, while impact assessments are one of the few policy-making tools that the EU has adopted to ensure coherence, they do not systematically ensure PCD. Accordingly, "PCD is not a matter of solving problems, but more of managing different interest groups, with the more powerful ones generally prevailing" (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016, p. 39). In the same vein, research concludes that it is ultimately political will that decides whether PCD commitments are taken seriously (Carbone, 2008; Carbone & Keijzer, 2016; Núñez-Borja et al., 2018). Addressing controversial issues, such as the actions of European transnational firms in LICs, LMICs, and UMICs, requires a very strong normative commitment to coherence for development. Political will is the determining factor in this context.

Third, while the EU presents PCD as a technocratic policy-making tool, it is in fact highly political. While not explicitly addressing the questions "which development?" and "development for whom?," EU actors favour a certain kind of development. In this context, it is important to examine the relationship between the EU's approach

to PCD and the SDGs. EU institutions understand PCD as a tool to reach the SDGs. For example, according to the European Parliament, it is crucial that all EU policies and instruments be designed, implemented and evaluated as to their contribution to the SDGs (European Parliament, 2019, March 14). Furthermore, the Commission (2019a, p. 13) proclaims that, in the context of working towards the SDGs, PCD is a “key element.” Hence, the EU’s engagement with PCD is often a part of its activities relating to the SDGs and PCD is viewed as a tool for the EU’s contribution to them (cf., e.g., European Commission, 2019b; European Union, 2018). Accordingly, the norms and the kind of development that the EU aims to implement—through the tool of PCD among others—are the ones enshrined in the SDGs, viewing PCD through an SDG lens. As the notion of NCD uncovers, coherence efforts always proclaim a certain “ideal type” of development. In the case of the EU, this is the technical, indicator-based form of development enshrined in the SDGs. The SDGs, and with it PCD as conceptualized by the EU, thus aim at rationalizing development, thereby giving less attention to structural transformations. Specifically, in the context of the nexus between migration and development, Nijenhuis and Leung (2017) show that while the SDGs take migration and mobility into account, they still envisage development as a mostly territorialized phenomenon, as being bound to specific regions or localities. This does not adequately reflect the situation in a globalized world, where development is often connected to movement between places. For example, in West Africa, which is one of the focus regions of the EU’s migration–development activities, development is tightly interwoven with human mobility (Marfaing, 2011). As an alternative, it might be relevant to engage with the question of how migration policies could contribute to general coherence for development, thereby incorporating mobility in the notions of development underlying these efforts. While it might be demanding to expect the SDGs and hence PCD, as conceptualized by the EU, to aim for more structural transformations, it is important to uncover the meanings that the various EU actors attach to development via their understanding of PCD as a tool to implement the SDGs. This is exactly the strength of NCD.

In general, the EU is good at setting normative frameworks, but its compliance record is often poor (Häbel, 2020). With its aim of being a normative power, the EU has taken up the commitment to PCD. Yet, EU actors ignore the fundamentally normative dimension of coherence for development, instead focusing on PCD and conceptualizing it as a technocratic policy-making tool and a procedural mechanism. Furthermore, the EU views PCD as a tool for reaching the SDGs. While PCD and the SDGs give a rationalistic appeal to development, they are fundamentally normative notions that promote a certain type of development. The notion of NCD is better placed to uncover this. Following the conceptualization of general coherence for development proposed here, it is important to examine its two components, PCD and NCD, in the EU’s action on the migration–development nexus. This will be the focus of the next section.

4 | (IN)COHERENCE IN EU MIGRATION–DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

In recent years, the EU has centred on the migration–development nexus in its efforts to govern migration. However, even before the high influx of irregular migrants around 2015, this nexus was a cornerstone of EU migration governance. For example, the Stockholm programme (European Council, 2010, para. 6.1.2.) adopted in 2009 states: “The European Council recognises the need for increased policy coherence at European level in order to promote the positive development effects of migration within the scope of the Union’s activities in the external dimension.” Similarly, one of the four pillars of the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility of 2011 (European Commission, 2011, p. 7) is “maximising the development impact of migration and mobility.” Thus, while the increased influx of migrants in 2015 has put the political spotlight on solutions that aim to address migration at its roots, the connection between migration governance and development co-operation has already been prominent before. In a similar way, the new European Consensus on Development (European Union, 2018, p. 53), as the guiding document for current EU development co-operation, declares: “The Consensus will guide efforts in applying PCD across all policies and all areas covered by the 2030 Agenda, seeking synergies, notably on trade,

finance, environment and climate change, food security, *migration* and security” [own emphasis]. More recent initiatives within the migration–development nexus concern instruments such as the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (“Global Europe”).

4.1 | Examining policy coherence for development: Policies of non-migration?

Since the increased influx of migrants in the years around 2015, public attention on migration issues in Europe is very high and the EU at times struggles with the reputation of being unable to handle immigration of third-country nationals. The expert interviews conducted in 2019 accordingly show that migration policy is extremely politicized in the EU (interviews 2; 8; 9; 11). In the external dimension, where governance depends on third countries and their willingness to comply with the EU’s requests, this is even more the case (interviews 8; 9; 11). Aspects of policy coherence and normative coherence for development play a central role in this politicized field.

Under the umbrella of the migration–development nexus, a central focus of the EU’s initiatives lies on the effort to constrain migration to the EU. For example, the European Council concludes that the focus of the Partnership Framework on Migration, a central migration–development instrument that uses development co-operation money from the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and other development sources, lies on “stemming the flows and improving return rates” (European Council, 2016b, para. 2.). In the same vein, interviewees reported “stories about stopping migration to Europe” (interview 1) and a focus on a reduction in immigration numbers (interviews 2; 3; 4; 5; 8; 9; 10; 12). A Commission employee overheard development ministers using phrases such as “we don’t understand. You have launched a trust fund and migrants are still coming. You must do something wrong” (interview 1). This illustrates the persistence of the idea that development co-operation will help reduce migration towards Europe, which is not only present in member states’ home affairs ministries but also among development officials.

Even if this refers to irregular migration, the dominant EU perspective on regular migration is not entirely different. While this article does certainly not argue that all forms of migration, and particularly all forms of *legal* migration, are unwelcome for all—or most—member states, opening up legal pathways into the EU is partly seen through the perspective of containment of irregular migration. Thus, at the general level, the centrality of containment remains an aspect of the European approach to legal migration. For example, according to one interviewee, “the official line is that you first need to stop illegal migration before you look at legal migration, there is a before and after” (interview 13). In this sense, legal pathways into the EU are made conditional on a reduction in irregular mobility. In various EU initiatives on migration–development, the focus on deterring any form of irregular migration becomes clear. For example, the Valletta Action Plan states: “engage [...] in the creation of positive synergies between negotiations on visa facilitation and discussions in other areas such as readmission, as an element of the comprehensive logic of the Action Plan” (Valletta Summit on Migration, 2015, para. 2.). While the linkage between readmission of *irregular* migrants and visa facilitation for *regular* entry is presented as indicating a comprehensive approach, it is also an element of conditionality. Along the same lines, the Action Plan undertakes to (Valletta Summit on Migration, 2015, para. 5.): “Provide comprehensive and developmental packages for safe return and reintegration, whereby a partner country commits to cooperate closely with the EU on return and readmission, [...] and receives support for the individual reintegration of its own nationals, *visa facilitation* and a tailor-made package of support” [own emphasis]. In this case, legal migration options in the form of visa facilitations are used as a “positive incentive” (interview 4) for return co-operation. Buttressing these findings, several interviewees emphasized elements of conditionality (interviews 1; 5; 18), particularly in the context of return and readmission (interview 1). This conditionality discards development co-operation principles (interview 18), notably ownership (interviews 3; 13). Thus, return, readmission, and the containment of irregular migration are central, even within the perspective on legal migration.

The implications of this political focus on containment within most member states and the ensuing sedentary bias are visible in countries of origin and transit. With regard to the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, for example, an external evaluation commissioned by the EU (Altai Consulting, 2021, p. 217) found that several actors "lamented the lack of projects on legal migration, including labour migration and aspects of migration for development." Hence, the evaluation concluded that there is "too much focus on 'negative' aspects of migration" (Altai Consulting, 2021, p. 217), because the possibly beneficial aspects of mobility for development are not addressed as much in trust fund projects as are irregular migration, return, or border management. This often has adverse effects in regions of "hypermobility" (Jegen & Zanker, 2019, p. 12), where local livelihoods and socioeconomic activities depend on (cross-border) movements (Marfaing, 2011). For example, in Niger, the central government, supported by the EU, has increasingly focused on limiting and irregularizing migration, which has had adverse social and economic effects in regions such as Agadez, in which mobility had always played a central role in the local economy and socioeconomic structures (Jegen & Zanker, 2019; Tubiana et al., 2018). Furthermore, one of the main priorities of instruments such as the Trust Fund for Africa is border management. While border management belongs to the core tasks of a sovereign state, it is often treated less from a developmental and more from a security point of view (Altai Consulting, 2021, p. 192). Hence, these projects reflect the EU focus on sedentariness, on border-crossings as something rather undesirable, while "[t]here would be a tremendous advantage in taking a positive view of borders and borderlands" (Altai Consulting, 2021, p. 192), in which crossing a border is seen as something normal in people's everyday lives. EU actors thus perceive the legal migration of third-country nationals through a containment lens, reinforcing the EU focus on immobility. Yet, it is important to mention that there are nuances between EU member states. The extent of the debate between them ranges from the position that migration to Europe should be altogether reduced, to the stance that migration should be an option rather than a need for people from lower-income countries. The latter position sees potential development benefits for third countries through intraregional mobility, which is, however, accompanied by the expectation that this will improve regional livelihoods so that people are less inclined to move to Europe. While this is very different from the idea of limiting all forms of migration, the basic premises still follow overly sedentary notions of progress. Continent-to-continent mobility hence receives much less attention in implementation efforts.

Development co-operation has of course often been instrumentalized for such purposes. Indeed, interviewees stated that one of the objectives for aid giving has long been to reduce migration towards Europe. The difference with current times is merely that this is now openly recognized (interviews 2; 12). Moreover, even development organizations follow the argument that development projects in third countries contribute to limiting migration (interviews 15; 16). "So the idea that, if you do development and it really works, it will already limit migration and then you don't really need to work on [migration]" (interview 15) is a perception that is very persistent in development agencies. Thus, even within development organizations, development projects follow the standard perception that people are usually sedentary (Bakewell, 2008).

Forging the link with coherence for development, the Commission (2016, p. 9) notes: "Increasing coherence between migration and development policy is important to ensure that development assistance helps partner countries manage migration more effectively, and also incentivises them to effectively cooperate on readmission of irregular migrants." The Commission thus views coherence for development as a tool for readmission and for limiting migration to the EU. Similarly, interviewees reported that PCD plays a central role in actions on migration and development (interviews 8; 14; 17). One interviewee stated that, from a PCD perspective, the EU's migration and development policies have not been "very successful" (interview 14) because they are not coherent. Hence, while EU institutions approach the connection between migration governance and development co-operation from a PCD perspective, this is mainly seen as instrumental for achieving migration objectives. Policy coherence for development thus achieves an instrumental value, while the political dimensions of PCD are reduced. Thereby, political will as the most important factor for implementing policy coherence for development is overshadowed by the conceptualization of PCD as a tool for achieving migration policy objectives.

Seen in this light, EU external action on migration and development undermines coherence for development through policies focusing on migration control. Hereby, “the EU implements a carrot and stick approach, in particular in its dealings with Africa” (Akkerman, 2021, p. 1). Through a lack of emphasis on regular labour migration and other forms of mobility, these kinds of activities have contributed to irregularizing migration in third countries. In the EU, which is founded on the value of internal free movement, the centrality of curbing third-country nationals’ migration towards Europe presents a paradox.

4.2 | Examining normative coherence for development: Development as non-migration?

One of the advantages of NCD is that the focus on normative coherence gives rise to the question “which kind of development?”. The *kind* of development forms the ontological basis of coherence for development, because any analysis of coherence for development requires taking a stance as to what is understood by development, along with what is understood by coherence. While defining the coherence aspect of PCD has been the focus of research and policy-making activity alike, defining the development aspect is neglected so far. Policy-makers and scholars thus concentrate on measuring, evaluating, and delineating the concept of “coherence,” but they do not pay as much attention to defining “development” in the context of policy and normative coherence *for development*. According to Bakewell (2008, p. 1342), this is exactly the problem of both policy interventions and research on migration–development issues: “questions are posed about how migration affects the process of development, without asking what development means.” NCD as a concept mitigates this shortcoming. Supplementing a PCD analysis of EU external action on migration and development with a focus on NCD thus uncovers EU actors’ conceptualizations of development informing these initiatives.

Within migration–development activities, the dominant notion of development among EU actors is built on an overly sedentary understanding of progress. Hence, this article argues that EU institutions understand the “development” part of the migration–development nexus as place-bound and territorialized. While this does not regard all EU institutions and all member states to the same extent, it is the dominant conceptualization of development within the EU. The logic underlying the EU approach to the migration–development nexus is to stimulate increased livelihoods and improved living conditions in origin countries so that people would have no incentive to be mobile and would stay in one place or at least in a region. In this context, the dominant approach among EU actors underlines that “tackling” root causes will reduce emigration (European Council, 2016a; Valletta Summit on Migration, 2015). Eventually, this will lead to a reduction in migration towards Europe. For example, the European Council (2016a, p. 2) “recalls the need to tackle the root causes of migration in the region, including by supporting displaced persons in the region, thus helping to prevent illegal migration, and underlines the contribution of the Valletta Action Plan and the proposed External Investment Plan in this context.” In these migration–development initiatives, development acquires the meaning of non-migration, and a territorialized form of living becomes the standard and the objective to be reached. A sedentary notion of development thereby permeates the dominant European approach to the migration–development nexus.

The EU perspective is at odds with the notions of development in many LICs, LMICs, and UMICs. Similarly, migration is conceptualized rather differently in Africa, for example, than it is understood in Europe, and borders and places of residence have different meanings (interview 18; Rainieri & Rossi, 2017; Tubiana et al., 2018). Indeed, in some contexts, development might actually require mobility, since migration is often a development strategy for local populations (Rainieri & Rossi, 2017; Tubiana et al., 2018). Yet, this understanding does not go along with EU member states’ preferences regarding third-country nationals (Jegen & Zanker, 2019; Tubiana et al., 2018). Instead, the majority of member states reinforces the “persistent sedentary bias” (Bakewell, 2008, p. 1342) of mainstream development thinking. EU actors thereby frame mobility of third-country nationals as a problem to be addressed and reinforce the expectation that development means an increase in the place-bound population of L&MICs. Consequently, “[t]here remains an underlying assumption that development is about enabling people to

stay at 'home'" (Bakewell, 2008, p. 1342). In response to this, an external evaluation of the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (Disch et al., 2020, p. 94) recommended that "[t]he EU should strengthen the treatment of migration in its bilateral and regional programmes, ensuring that the entire Valletta Action agenda is covered". The response of the EU services (European Union, 2020, p. 4) was that "it is important to ensure that the EU's migration agenda is equally attuned to Europeans' as well as to partner's needs. It is relevant to ensure that all pillars of the Valletta Action Plan, including the pillar on legal migration, are addressed and to find ways to do so through country and regional programmes."

Considering that the EU is built on the value of free movement and mobility as enshrined in the Schengen regime, its conceptualization of development in LICs, LMICs, and UMICs as place-bound is paradoxical. It also is at odds with the EU's support to the free-movement regime of the Economic Community of West African States. There seems to be a double-standard regarding European mobility and mobility by third-country nationals towards the EU. In this context, one interviewee cited the example of Europeans travelling to foreign countries being perceived as "big cosmopolitans" (interview 18), while Africans travelling to foreign countries are seen as "difficult migrants" who have to be controlled and contained. "Migration is thus either glorified or demonized" (interview 18). This is particularly interesting in the context of the EU and of its Schengen regime of internal free movement. Certain types of mobility, such as circular labour migration or highly skilled migration and mobility for educational purposes, are stimulated both at the EU internal level and at the level of third-country nationals moving to Europe. However, most other types of migration of third-country nationals towards the EU are equated with the failure of development (Bakewell, 2008) and highly disregarded. These concern all forms of irregular migration, but also regular forms of migration such as low-skilled labour migration. Notwithstanding the very diverse conditions in which such forms of mobility are situated, they are seen as a result of the lack of development and a problem to be addressed. For most types of international migration, the standard and the target to be reached through development interventions is non-migration and the encouragement of sedentary populations.

Their notions of the right kind of progress allow EU actors to present their focus on non-migration as a development concern. Controlling mobility, registering people, and patrolling borders is hereby portrayed as the core task of the functioning state (cf. interviews 6; 7; 15). "Even if you take border management, it reinforces the capacity of the state. If you don't build up the state in migration management, you are missing something on development. So, it has a strong development component" (interview 6). Thus, "the idea is to reinforce the governance of migration. The idea is that it's really a state capacity and a strong, functioning state issue, a good governance issue" (interview 15). While the aim of this article is not to deny that population registries and border control belong to the tasks of a contemporary functioning state, it is important to analyse these notions of statehood, which are equated with development by development actors such as the European Commission and EU member states. These implicit notions about the "right" kind of development and about the "right" kind of individual lives permeate the EU's development interventions. In this context, EU external migration actions have played a role in disrupting mobility patterns in African countries, such as Chad, Niger, and Sudan (Tubiana et al., 2018). "Altogether, therefore, there is a real need for critical engagement with European discourse as it pertains to [...] 'development' in Africa" (Langan, 2018, p. 171).

This place-bound notion of progress is further reinforced through the international discourse on development (Marfaing, 2011; Nijenhuis & Leung, 2017). In international development thinking, "the mobility of people is generally framed as a problematic imagery" (Nijenhuis & Leung, 2017, p. 60). This is problematic in itself, because mobility might also be a social security and livelihood strategy. For example, in Northern and Western Africa, political and economic structures have historically adapted to mobile forms of living (Marfaing, 2011, p. 65). This contrasts with the perspective of the majority of EU member states, for which development is an overly territorialized phenomenon and migration represents the lack of development in a specific place of origin. In conclusion, EU action on the migration–development nexus is incoherent at the normative level since it promotes a sedentary

understanding of development. In this way, development in LICs, LMICs, and UMICs partly acquires the meaning of non-migration.

5 | CONCLUSION

“Few examples capture the EU’s reputation and credibility in the international arena as well as the concept of policy coherence for development” (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016, p. 39). The EU has committed to PCD as a legal obligation, consistent with its claim to be a norm promoter and development actor in the international arena. However, an in-depth examination of the EU’s action on the migration–development nexus and EU actors’ understanding of PCD reveals that the EU often undermines its own normative commitment to coherence for development. While PCD is understood here as a political requirement calling for concerted action by all parts of government, EU actors conceptualize PCD as a bureaucratic policy-making and problem-solving mechanism and as a tool for reaching the SDGs. One might also wonder why the EU does not provide a clear definition of PCD, even if the concept is enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty. This leads to the question whether EU actors deliberately “muddle through” PCD, to avoid the need for policy change and to give them political space to manoeuvre. This question testifies to the importance of thinking of PCD as a political requirement.

Through external action that focuses on limiting migration of people living in LICs, LMICs, and UMICs, EU actors make non-migration for different categories of migrants towards the EU one of their central migration policy objectives. Thereby, the EU inhibits normative coherence of its development interventions and proclaims a sedentary understanding of development. Moreover, the EU advances a notion of coherence for development that is more technical than normative, which makes it possible for EU institutions to rationalize the concept without looking at more fundamental development issues and without a critical engagement with EU action in the world. Yet, any substantial engagement with coherence for development would require a self-critical engagement with EU activities and the EU’s own role in sustaining global inequalities. This would be an ambitious undertaking for a regional organization that often has to justify its activities to its own member states, particularly in the area of foreign action. However, coherence for development is indeed an ambitious requirement. Precisely why EU institutions do not present a concise and operationalizable definition of PCD and, in so doing, acknowledge that coherence for development is a highly ambitious requirement, remains an interesting avenue for further research. With the help of NCD, this article contributes to reconceptualizing PCD as a political requirement. It is hoped that this will lead to unleashing PCD’s transformative potential, thereby becoming “an element of transformative development” (Siitonen, 2016, p. 7).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article is partly based on my PhD research which focuses on the EU approach towards the migration–development nexus but uses a different theoretical perspective and a slightly different empirical focus. I am grateful to Sandra Häbel and Harlan Koff, as the guest editors of this special issue, and to Christof Roos, Jan Orbie, and the anonymous reviewers whose feedback and support greatly benefitted this article. Special thanks also go to the organizers of the RISC-RISE Consortium conference 2019, during which a first conceptual sketch of this article was presented.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the author upon reasonable request.

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How to cite this article: Berger, A. (2022). Development as non-migration? Examining normative and policy coherence in EU external action on migration and development. *Development Policy Review*, 40(Suppl. 1), e12589. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12589>

APPENDIX A

TABLE A1 List of interviewees

1	European Commission
2	European Commission
3	European Commission
4	European Commission
5	European Commission
6	European Commission
7	European Commission
8	General Secretariat of the Council
9	European Parliament
10	European Parliament
11	Member state representative
12	Member state representative
13	European External Action Service
14	International Organization
15	Development co-operation implementing agency
16	Non-governmental Organization
17	Non-governmental Organization
18	Non-governmental Organization