



# BUILDING AN INDEX TO MEASURE THE POLICY COHERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT<sup>1</sup>

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Plataforma 2015 y más

## 1. A RESEARCH PROGRAMME ON PCD SERVING AS THE BASIS FOR A PCD INDEX

Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) is now compulsory in all discourse on development. However, PCD still lacks the conceptual definition and subsequent practical application necessary for it to be anything more than just a rhetorical reference. The aim of this article is to present an overview of the work that has led to the Plataforma 2015 y más in regard to endowing the PCD with a broad yet applicable conceptualization that will ultimately serve to guide the design and implementation of public development policies.

We need to start by looking at the dictionary definitions of each of the three terms contained in the expression “policy coherence for development”. The Royal Academy of the Spanish Language (RAE) defines coherence as a “*connection, relationship or union of certain elements with others*” which in our case refers to relationships among policies and relationships between policies and development. The RAE defines policy as that which “*refers to both doctrine and political activity*” and defines development as “*economic, social, cultural, moral or political progress of the human community*”. It goes without saying that these definitions lack precision when it comes to conceptualizing PCD and its potential applications to development policy but they are a suitably broad starting point, as they help underscore the interrelated, multi-dimensional and applicable nature of PCD.

For several years the Plataforma 2015 y más has taken into account the impact of PCD on redefining development policies and their potential for tackling global challenges such as the fight against poverty and inequality, climate change and the loss of biodiversity and the advancement of justice, human rights and equality. That is why an ambitious applied

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research programme was created to contribute to the conceptualization and application of PCD<sup>2</sup>. The research programme addresses PCD from different perspectives and analyses whether countries take account of and promote PCD and, if so, the mechanisms used and the results achieved. Research has also been conducted to gain insight into what elements need to be analysed to determine a specific policy's degree of PCD. So far, trade, energy, diplomatic, gender equality and investment policy have been addressed, among others. Based on these analyses, the programme attempts to offer policy recommendations suggesting how PCD can serve to reorganise political agendas and practices so that their impact and results are more consistent with the aims of development. Similarly, the impact of the PCD policies implemented by non-state actors such as transnational corporations has been addressed as has the degree to which PCD can serve to re-focus the agendas and the work of social organisations and the administrations of decentralised governments. The research programme includes all these different lines of research and the conclusions reached are contributing to the building of an index to measure PCD, although the potential and the scope of the research extend beyond the programme. Although these measurements may give us a sufficiently accurate way to compare PCD performance in different countries, reality is much more diverse and rich than any attempt to measure or quantify it. Therefore, this approach in the form of a PCD index is solidly based on research. The PCD index has been built with pedagogical and political aims in mind insofar as it seeks to offer greater insight into what policy elements are most appropriate in response to development challenges, and to encourage the policy changes needed to enhance those responses.

## 2. CHANGES IN THE SYSTEM OF AID, INTERNATIONALISATION OF DEVELOPMENT AND COSMOPOLITANISM

Generally speaking, there are many diagnoses regarding the main challenges currently facing development. Following a period of intense economic globalisation, the global nature of the challenges has become evident as has the ensuing need for greater coordination among the different actors in the international system. A clear imbalance is seen among states in regard to their ability to be able to direct their policies towards effectively coping with shared challenges.

On the one hand, we have an international system in which the principal protagonists are countries, taking for granted that such

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<sup>2</sup> See the publications from research conducted in the 2015 y más virtual studies centre, <http://2015ymas.org/paginas/editorial-2015-y-mas>.



countries act mainly on the basis of “national” interests. Furthermore, this system is divided into “developed” and “developing” countries, i.e. donor and recipient countries. This North-South division is mostly established on the basis of the availability of wealth, which we measure with a composite indicator attempting to represent a monetised aggregate of a country’s goods and services, i.e. Gross National Product (GNP) or any of its variants in which the monetised value of aggregate income is the dominant variable. Countries are ranked on the basis of this figure, and a hypothetical scale of development is established, making this a key figure in policy design and implementation given that the aim of such policy is basically to raise that figure.

On the other hand, however, there is evidence indicating that this international system, based on the interest of nations to constantly increase their income, is not in tune with reality. We must first define exactly what it is that economic growth indicators fail to consider: environmental factors and changes in ecosystems; the care economy; assets furnished by community; neighbour or family relations, etc. These are all monetarily unquantified elements and are therefore not considered in the measurement of a country’s “wealth” despite being essential underlying elements contributing to development in all territories and groups. Regardless of whether these underlying elements are biological, community, social or cultural, the fact remains that we should not speak of development without including them in the core of the analysis. What’s more, territorially circumscribing development problems to the political borders defined by nation-states has already proven to be obsolete and ill-suited to understanding let alone addressing climate change, the energy issue, hunger, the financial crisis or the increasing hardships being caused by weather fluctuations or the Ebola virus. Moreover, so-called “global interdependence” shows that neither the diagnosis nor the solution of development challenges can be addressed from a strictly national perspective, thus calling into question the close link between national interests and public policy. This body of evidence is clearly reflected in the system of international development aid which, on account of its inability to overcome the limitations that the interests of donors impose on the entire system in practice, has been unable to attain the proposed amount of aid much less overcome the arbitrariness and discretionary nature of the system in practice, rendering it an irrelevant rather than an influential system in terms of overall development policy. The system of development aid is both depleted and overstretched. There is no choice but to acknowledge the influx of new and different actors, along with new interrelated issues showing how complex development issues are—debt, trade, finance, migration, natural resources, democratic participation, etc.—and of new instruments beyond the ones used traditionally in Official Development Assistance (ODA).



There is an indisputable imbalance between the systems and mechanisms countries use to address global and multi-dimensional challenges, which accounts for the clear gap between correct diagnoses and inefficient solutions, and between normative discourse and policy implementation.

### 3. WHY THE NEED FOR AN INDEX TO MEASURE POLICY COHERENCE WITH DEVELOPMENT?

As already mentioned, the PCD index is being built with both pedagogical and policy aims in mind. It might actually be more accurate to consider it a pedagogical-policy aim. The PCD index seeks to offer a new framework for understanding development policies in regard to how they relate to development and in contrast to the current framework that can be defined by how policies relate to growth in national income. It is a new framework that enables us to evaluate the performance of countries by analysing their development policies. These analyses are both complex and multi-dimensional, i.e. including the limits imposed by the biological nature of reality and a universal rights ethic into our concept of development. This new framework of understanding should contribute to generating a new type of common sense that goes beyond the fictitious link between growth and development, in which political accountability demands on the different actors can be based. In short, the aim is to come up with a tool able to provide us with pedagogical routes and options for reorienting policies that offer alternative paths out of the crisis. This implies a cosmopolitan understanding of such paths that is free of “individual” interests, be they national, private or a combination of the two which account for so much of what we see today.

### 4. FIVE APPROACHES UPON WHICH TO BUILD THE PCD INDEX

A task of these dimensions should commence with a meticulous selection of the underlying principles and premises as well as of its potential scope. It is therefore essential to take stock of the real criteria and principles to be used to analyse countries’ public policies, i.e. degree of coherence with development. In other words, we must first define *what* coherence, *what* policies and *what* development. To do so, based on the conclusions reached in the different research projects conducted through the Plataforma 2015 y más programme, we believe it important to combine sufficient focus on the five approaches on which the analysis is built with subsequent application of a quantification tool.



To start things off, we acknowledge the importance of the *Human Development* approach established by Amartya Sen and his concept of development as capability expansion. The vital importance of opportunity and personal capability steers us towards a different concept of development and away from that which views development as a goal attained by some countries and a work in progress in others. It highlights the need to incorporate different aspirations and different conditions of access for people to be able to take advantage of available opportunities, bearing in mind that individual freedom and capabilities cannot be considered in isolation but rather as embedded in those of society in general.

However, the centrality of humankind cannot and should not be interpreted from a perspective in which human beings are considered as superior to and isolated from their biological and evolutionary reality. Quite the contrary; the *Sustainable Development* approach highlights the inescapable and inseparable multi-dimensionality of a proper conceptualisation of development. Hence, development can only be considered as situations or processes in which the four dimensions of development (ecological, economic, social and governance) are dealt with. In line with this approach, development emerges as a virtuous inter-dimensional relationship in which none of its dimensions can be usurped by the others without endangering the overall possibilities of development.

In terms of the results that public policies are expected to generate, the *Human Rights Based Approach* provides a suitable framework for analysis. It allows us to ask what the minimum or essential requirements are and whether the maximum available resources are going into guaranteeing peoples' rights. This approach is also instrumental in analysing progress in terms of human rights realization as well as the equality and non-discriminatory nature of their enjoyment and the transparency and participation involved in their establishment.

*Cosmopolitanism*, focuses on development as a responsibility shared by all countries. Problems such as extreme poverty, exclusion, loss of biodiversity and climate change affect all humankind despite being felt more in some locations than in others. Responsibility should be shared but not necessarily equal. The different governments would therefore not govern solely on behalf of "their" citizens but rather be accountable to all of the inhabitants of the Earth, and to the Earth itself.

Lastly, the fifth approach entails an effort to integrate all the dimensions set forth by others into policy analysis. This is referred to as the *Policy Coherence for Development* approach that we have been developing through the research programme designed to increase the view and scope of PCD. This approach involves analysing public policies from four interrelated perspectives: a policy's coherence vis-à-vis its own objectives



(vertical dimension), the coherence of a set of policies as a joint action of an entire government (horizontal dimension), the degree of policy consistency over time given that development requires a long-term horizon (time dimension) and the degree of policy commitment to global governance mechanisms (cosmopolitan dimension). In short, the aim is to incorporate a transnational and intergenerational logic into a whole government vision as opposed to a compartmentalised logic of political endeavours more focused on electoral deadlines and cycles and narrow-sighted “national interests”.

## 5. TWENTY-ONE DIFFERENT POLICIES “COHERENT” FOR DEVELOPMENT

A broad range of policies have been defined for analysis as part of the PCD index. The process began with 21 policies grouped into 5 blocks of policies featuring common matrices and considered likely to facilitate certain aspects of the analysis (table 1).

TABLE 1: ANALYSIS OF 21 POLICIES AS THE BASIS ON WHICH TO BUILD THE INDEX	
Monetary and Financial Tax	Education and Culture Health-Care Social Security Equality Employment Science and Technology
Industry Infrastructure and Transport Tourism Urban Planning	Cooperation Peace and Security Human Mobility and Migrations Justice
Environment Agriculture (Rural Dev.) Fisheries Energy	


Source: own data.

Work was based on an analysis of the relationship between each of these policies and the aforementioned approaches. The aim, for example, is to discover the connections between education or tax policy and the spread of



human rights, or dealing with climate change, or eliminating discrimination against women. A systematic analysis of the connections and relationships between each policy in each of the four dimensions of sustainable development is conducted. This provides us with a complex opinion (albeit as synthetic as possible) on the most relevant aspects of each policy for the purpose of assessing its degree of coherence with development considering its multiple dimensions, i.e. economic, social, ecological and governance. As explained above, the important issue is not each policy's individual performance with respect to each dimension but rather being able to assess their performance with regard to the structured multi-dimensional concept of development that we share. It is not a matter, for example, of assessing economic performance that may compensate for social or ecological disasters. That would make no difference. The aim is to highlight the policies which best address development as a multi-dimensional problem. It is also a matter of bringing to light the main policy changes that need to be implemented so as to be more coherent with development.

The end result of this policy analysis work provides us with the core conceptualisation of the index. Based on that, we have begun to seek indicators that are accessible, sufficient in scope and relatively useful with which to proceed for the quantitative analysis. Naturally, this transfer into a measurable dimension was part of the process right from the start and in some cases has made it possible to clearly identify aspects which are especially difficult to quantify but which, nonetheless, are important in our view. Therefore, the use of qualitative indicators, where feasible, has not been ruled out. While the relevant aspects that cannot be included in any way still need to be taken into account, at least by openly admitting where our measurement goals cannot be met and then explaining how to contrast the results with those issues.

A statistical analysis of the work done with indicators, weighted as dictated by conceptualisation, standardisation, contrasting, and testing are the next steps needed before making this policy instruction tool, designed to build global and cosmopolitan citizenship, publicly available. 

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