

# POLICY COHERENCE IN THE POLYCRISIS: THE CASE FOR A WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN TURBULENT TIMES

Lukas Schlögl, Robert Zeiner

## INTRODUCTION

The polycrisis, instability, multipolarity, geopolitical tensions and an increasing diversity of interests, norms and institutions characterise the complex situation we find ourselves in today. This is pushing traditional administrative and government systems to their limits. Since the beginning of the millennium, reform approaches in administrative science have been discussed under the heading of “new public governance”, which aim to transcend conventional bureaucratic models. These approaches have also found their way into the development policy debate under keywords such as “whole-of-government”, “policy coherence” or the “nexus” approach. Rather than outdated, this holistic philosophy of governance is well placed to address today’s complex international challenges. Against this backdrop, this paper introduces the debate and identifies areas where action is needed in Austria, with a particular focus on development policy programming.<sup>1</sup>

## HOW THE WORLD OF DEVELOPMENT IS CHANGING

The “world of yesterday” was not better, but in some respects it was somewhat simpler.

Let us look back: in the second half of the 20th century, the world of development policy was characterised by relatively clear geopolitical and economic structures. Economically, there was a clear north-south divide: the “global North” – consisting of the industrialised countries of North America, Europe and Japan – was economically advanced, while many countries in the “global South” were characterised by poverty, inadequate infrastructure and low levels of industrialisation. The economic policy challenge of this period was therefore often to catch up with industrialisation: in this context, development policy was seen as a means of supporting countries in the global South in order to put them on a growth path

modelled on that of the Western industrialised nations. Modernisation theories that assumed linear development paths and the idea that capital transfers and technology transfers would quickly eliminate global inequalities were dominant. Large-scale projects such as the Green Revolution in agriculture and power plant projects symbolised this technocratic and growth-oriented approach.

Politically, the world was divided into a clear East-West divide. The Cold War meant that development policy had not only an economic dimension, but also an ideological one: the US and its allies used development aid to draw countries in the Global South into their capitalist camp, while the Soviet Union and its partners promoted alternative models of socialist development. “Help for self-help” – whether in the form of infrastructure projects, industrialisation programmes or agricultural modernisation – was therefore already geopolitically motivated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Since the end of the Cold War, however, the world described above has changed fundamentally. Geopolitical bipolarity has gradually given way to a multipolar order in which not only the US and Europe, but also new players such as China, India, Russia, Brazil and regional organisations (BRICS, etc.) play an important role. At the same time, the economic dividing lines between North and South have softened: countries such as South Korea, Brazil and China have risen to become global economic powers within a few decades, and classic developing countries such as Vietnam, Ethiopia and Bangladesh have pursued at least partially successful industrialisation strategies, even if these are repeatedly confronted with setbacks. Value chains and financial markets are now so interconnected that the former dichotomy between developing and industrialised countries no longer exists in its old form. However, considerable economic inequalities remain, both within and between countries.

The priorities of development policy have also shifted.

While economic growth and industrialisation were the main focus for much of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this paradigm was initially replaced by a focus on basic needs and “human development”. Now, the focus is increasingly on issues such as sustainability and resilience, good governance, migration and security, economic relations and climate protection. The 2030 Agenda, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has evolved traditional development aid into a more comprehensive concept of global “partnership.” In addition, the understanding of development has changed: whereas growth used to be considered the silver bullet, issues such as social justice, environmental sustainability and participation have gained in importance.

In addition to shifts in content, there have also been recent shifts in power and political tensions. Development policy is under pressure in the face of nationalist and populist tendencies in influential donor countries. In particular, the measures and positions taken by the United States at the beginning of Donald Trump's second term – including the dismantling of USAID, the withdrawal of the US from multilateral institutions and programmes, harsh anti-development cooperation rhetoric and increased trade protectionism – have already had real consequences for North-South relations and could, in the long term, call into question the aid system as we know it (see Haug et al. 2025).

In Europe, too, countries such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands have drastically cut their development aid, thereby weakening international development initiatives. At the same time, there is growing concern that geopolitical rivals are increasingly occupying strategic spaces in global development policy. This dynamic situation adds a high degree of uncertainty to the already complex nature of international relations. From the perspective of a small Central European donor country, this calls for a unified approach with like-minded political partners and for diverse forms of political coordination.

The proliferation of global challenges can be summarised by the term “polycrisis”, which describes how different crises – such as those in the climate, financial or health sectors – reinforce and accelerate each other. For example, climate change not only leads to ecological upheavals, but also intensifies resource conflicts and affects migration movements, geopolitical tensions and economic inequalities. Added to this is the global rise of authoritarian governments, dwindling respect for human rights and democratic institutions and processes, and a

steady increase in fragility around the world. These are political dimensions of the “polycrisis”.

The complex situation is compounded by the fact that the demands placed on states and public administrations have steadily increased in the wake of globalisation and Europeanisation. At the national level, for example, guidelines from inter- and supranational institutions such as the European Union (EU) must be taken into account. Even if these requirements cannot always be enforced with the same rigour as national law, global agreements – such as the SDGs or the Paris Climate Agreement – have clearly gained in importance compared to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which in any case influences the options available to national administrations. With the increasing complexity, differentiation and fragmentation of the stakeholder landscape, the demand for policy coherence is also growing louder, as repeatedly emphasised in publications by the OECD and the EU.

Public administrations are therefore confronted with a multitude of different interests, strategic goals, standards and targets that must be effectively coordinated and implemented both within countries and between countries. The 2030 Agenda is a prime example of this: the 17 SDGs (with 169 targets and 232 indicators) are understood as being of equal importance and inextricably linked, and are also to be tackled in partnership. But also initiatives with a stronger “geopolitical” argument, such as Global Gateway, are by their very nature cutting across policy domains and government departments. Whether motivated by conventional development norms or geopolitical strategy, the forces of global governance, political and economic (inter-)dependence, and pressures from power politics all assert claims on the actions of donor states across various policy domains in one form or another.

It is clear that responding to such pressures and agendas, dealing with the polycrisis and geopolitical challenges, is pushing conventional administrative and governance systems to their limits. Policy-making and administration are faced with a high degree of complexity in terms of the framework conditions (e.g. international requirements and goals, constitution and legal foundations; various interests, political processes, actors, stakeholders, public opinion, time and resources) and issues that are constantly evolving and interdependent. Both internationally and nationally, effectively addressing these problems therefore requires a paradigm shift.

## HOW PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IS CHANGING

How has public administration responded to a more complex and unstable world? Let's take a look back here as well. Starting in the 1920s, Max Weber's "bureaucratic model" was the most important guide for the development of effective approaches and structures in public administration. Policy-making and administrative action were to be carried out according to general, predictable rules, free from arbitrariness, by professional full-time staff, independent of personal relationships with and political attitudes of actors: the state as *an impersonal mechanism*. With the growth of social and political dynamics and complexity, Weber's model increasingly reached the limits of its adaptability. As Schedler and Proeller (2006: 18) explain, "stability, as Weber's bureaucracy deliberately sought to achieve and maintain, (...) has declined in its significance for the quality of administration: Inflexibility towards the environment, disinterested and bureaucratic behaviour on the part of employees, dehumanisation of the organisation, ... have a devastating effect on the performance of the administration."

Since the early 1980s, a movement known as "New Public Management" (NPM) has emerged, which increasingly linked public administration with business management methods and tools and also offered a toolbox for corresponding reforms. The task of administration was no longer just the implementation of political decisions, as had traditionally been the case, but increasingly the formation of political opinion and the preparation of consensus-based solutions. Weber's concept of a quasi-mechanical administrative apparatus was thus to be developed into an organisation geared to dynamic and complex requirements, controlled using tools previously known from business management: the state as *a company*. The aim was to achieve the optimal provision of public "services".

However, at the end of the 1990s, NPM itself came under increasing criticism. Specialised administrative and organisational units, each with their own individual specifications, targets and performance indicators, were said to encourage "silo thinking" and behaviour, as well as a tendency towards fragmentation. This meant that expectations in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and economy, but also with regard to "customer" or citizen satisfaction, were not being met. New threats such as terrorism, cybercrime, natural disasters and financial crises, all of which created a greater need for control and more state coordination

capacity, also reinforced criticism of NPM. The problem of a public administration geared primarily towards efficiency and specialisation arose and continues to arise, particularly with regard to demanding *systemic* government tasks such as security, climate and environmental protection, migration, or global poverty reduction. These goals can only be effectively tackled by multiple political spheres of responsibility and organisation, across borders, and jointly through the collaboration of stakeholders.

This realisation led to the emergence of new, integrative approaches in public administration: the so-called "post-new public management" or "new public governance" (NPG), which manifests itself in approaches such as "whole-of-government", "joined-up government", "policy coherence" or "nexus" approaches (cf. Janus et al. 2014; Milazzo 2023). The desired more holistic approach is being implemented, for example, in an increasing number and depth of interdepartmental working groups, forums, strategy processes, national action plans, structural elements (agencies, specialised financial institutions, etc.) and the like: the state as *a coherently operating network*.

The recent discussion thus places new public governance at the centre of considerations as a reform model for public administration and describes cross-sectoral cooperation, network management and joint value creation as defining features. These distinguish it from earlier concepts, which primarily emphasised performance management and output-oriented efficiency or focused on responsive management and increased user satisfaction. The NPG reform model is understood "as a relatively coherent set of reform strategies, measures and instruments based on ideas, values and assumptions about cooperation as a means of creating public value, for example through network governance, stakeholder involvement, negotiated decision-making, agreements with shared power, decentralised and decentralised authority, resource mobilisation and/or the management of interorganisational conflicts." (Krogh/Triantafillou 2024: 3042).

## WHAT THESE CHANGES MEAN FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY

NPG reform approaches have also found their way into development policy. Since the early 1990s, the OECD has been developing and supporting NPG-based approaches and concepts that understand development policy as a cross-cutting issue. These

approaches promote the cross-cutting consideration of development policy objectives and link the effectiveness of development policy to a more conscious and stronger “coherence” between policy areas.

With the adoption of the SDGs, the guidelines and instruments developed by the OECD for policy coherence are now largely based on the goals and principles of the 2030 Agenda and the accompanying agreements on development financing and aid effectiveness, as developed at international level in the Financing for Development process and within the framework of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC). The corresponding suggestions and guidelines for action are aimed at both OECD members and non-members and refer to cooperation with the European Union, the UN specialised agencies and other actors for their implementation. The OECD-DAC peer reviews systematically examine the policy coherence measures established in the respective countries.

Since the early 2000s, the concept of so-called “whole-of-government approaches” (WGA) has found its way into the policy documents, as well as policy and methodological recommendations of the OECD and its Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Based on the growing recognition that “development aid” or “development cooperation” is insufficient and that the resources and expertise of a wide range of public and non-governmental actors are needed to pursue effective development policy, corresponding government-wide standards have been developed within the DAC.

The concepts of WGA and PC(S)D (Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development), which are often used interchangeably in discourse, differ only in nuances. An evaluation of the WGA approach in the context of Austrian development policy therefore concludes that WGA is “closely related to the PCD concept” and “often difficult to distinguish clearly from it in literature and practice”. In both cases, the focus is on “vertical and horizontal coordination between different government institutions and state institutions”. However, there are differences in emphasis. PCSD, for example, aims to ensure that all of a country’s policies are aligned with development goals and that contradictions are kept to a minimum. WGA focuses on strategic action across departmental boundaries and aims to overcome bureaucratic fragmentation. PCSD appears somewhat more oriented towards *policy effects* (spillovers, etc.), while WGA appears somewhat

more oriented towards *policy processes* (strategic management, etc.). PC(S)D emphasises the primacy of development policy, while WGA emphasises government-wide coordination of government measures. Both concepts pursue the vision of integrated policy-making, “joining forces” and “pulling in the same direction”.

The DAC’s standards and legal instruments are aimed at all ministries involved in development cooperation, such as the recommendations on the removal of restrictions on the use of public development assistance and the conditions for aid. Some DAC recommendations explicitly emphasise the importance of intergovernmental efforts: ensuring policy coherence for sustainable development, joint measures and intergovernmental efforts to combat corrupt practices. The DAC Peer Review Analysis Framework draws attention, among other things, to the need for political coordination and cooperation at the highest level, a clearly defined leadership role and clear, complementary mandates, responsibilities and accountability.

The DAC also provides guidance and resources such as the DAC Peer Review Methodology, guidelines and reports on policy coherence for sustainable development, mechanisms for government coordination and stakeholder consultation, OECD analyses of engagement in fragile contexts, including the link between peace and development. The various recommendations generally share the premise that the interdependence of sustainable development goals requires government-wide coordination and policy coherence in their implementation: measures in different areas should complement each other rather than counteract each other. Against this backdrop, the OECD calls on governments to work together across sectors and set interconnected economic, social, environmental and security goals that go beyond short-term political cycles.

A revised version of the Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development was adopted by the OECD Council in 2019 (OECD 2019). It sets out eight principles for improving policy coherence in three main areas. In implementing the recommendation, countries are encouraged to adapt the guidelines to their respective national circumstances and capacities. The principles are intended to be mutually supportive, and efforts should be made in each area to improve policy coherence. Specifically, the OECD recommends:

*Firstly, developing a strategic vision* that will enable the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs in an

integrated and coherent manner. This means, first and foremost, developing leadership at the highest political and administrative levels and giving PCSD greater prominence as a whole-of-government concept by developing a clear strategic profile (i.e. priorities, clear goals and indicators, time-bound action plans and public communication of results). A long-term perspective for promoting PCSD should be established that provides political guidance beyond election cycles, changes in government and government programmes. Integration and synergies within and between all economic, social and environmental policy areas could be achieved through a stronger, more inclusive application of sustainable development principles, in particular through greater integration of relevant policy planning mechanisms, including the budgetary process.

*Secondly, effective and integrative mechanisms need to be developed* that identify cross-sectoral policy interactions and promote coordination of measures between government levels. Strengthening whole-of-government coordination should identify divergences between sectoral priorities and policies and promote mutually supportive cross-sectoral and cross-institutional measures. As we discuss later, Austria could, for example, build on the growing structures for implementing sustainable development goals (e.g. the interministerial working group Agenda 2030 – IMAG 2030). There are legal foundations (EZA Act) and recommendations from the OECD-DAC regarding the design of content to sharpen the overall profile of development policy and the adequate process of the three-year programme. An inter-ministerial working group for the three-year development policy programme (AG 3JP), which has been in place since 2023, and corresponding thematic groups can provide the substantive basis for involving the respective levels of government, thereby promoting coordinated measures and coherence between the levels of government. Another ongoing challenge is the effective involvement of stakeholders: ensuring proactive cooperation with all relevant actors in various phases of the policy cycle, for example through the exchange of knowledge and expertise.

*And thirdly, to develop a set of responsive and adaptable instruments* to help anticipate, assess and manage the domestic, cross-border and long-term effects of policies. Through careful analysis and assessment in a joint (national) format, potential positive effects on the sustainable development prospects of other countries, in particular developing countries, should be brought to

bear more consciously and more effectively. Building on existing instruments such as environmental, gender and social impact assessments and strategic evaluations, ex-ante and ex-post analyses should provide information on the economic, social, gender and environmental impacts on developing countries and on the promotion and protection of human rights, thereby enabling evidence-based (steering) decisions. This requires strengthening monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems based on a structured collection of qualitative and quantitative evidence on the impact of policies and financing and on progress in PCSD.

## REFORM IMPETUS FROM THE EU

The European Union also repeatedly provides NPG-oriented reform impetus in the field of development policy. In particular Article 210 (formerly 180 EC) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) has to be mentioned, according to which the EU and its Member States shall coordinate their policies in the field of development cooperation and shall coordinate their aid programmes, including in international organisations and at international conferences, so that their actions are more complementary and effective. The Commission is mandated to take initiatives to promote such coordination. Overall, this gives rise to a strong fundamental mandate for the EU and the individual Member States to choose political and administrative procedures that best combine resources across countries, departments, institutions and specialist areas.

One of the most important principles in this context, promoted by both the OECD and the EU, is policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD). The legal basis for this was created at EU level by incorporating PCD into EU primary law under the Maastricht Treaty and further strengthened by the Lisbon Treaty. The focus on sustainability, PCSD, is then adopted with the European Consensus on Development. PCSD means that the EU is committed to taking the achievement of development goals into account in all its policies that affect developing countries. Progress or shortcomings are documented in a regular report by the European Commission (see Obrovsky/Schlögl 2011).

The EU has created a range of instruments to implement New Public Governance-oriented approaches in foreign and development policy. The objectives, interests and

principles for the EU's global engagement are set out in its Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS). The 2017 European Consensus on Development is part of the EUGS and describes the overarching principles for EU institutions and EU Member States in their cooperation with developing countries. The consensus aligns the EU's development activities with the SDGs and the main priority areas of the 2030 Agenda. It emphasises the close links between development, peace and security, humanitarian aid, migration, the environment and climate.

The Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI – Global Europe) is the budgetary instrument for promoting sustainable development and peace and stability throughout the world. Programme planning is the responsibility of the European Commission, which submits its proposals to the Member States in the relevant comitology committee. The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) supports EU candidate countries and potential candidates on their path towards EU integration.

With its Global Gateway strategy, the EU aims to mobilise a total of € 300 billion for investments and infrastructure projects around the world by 2027. The focus is on digitalisation, climate protection and energy, transport, health, and education and research. Global Gateway is to be implemented using the Team Europe approach, i.e. through cooperation between the EU, EU member states and their financial and development institutions, including export credit agencies (see also Schlögl 2022 on the Team Europe approach). In addition to safeguarding Europe's interests, role and influence in the world, this approach aims to combine existing resources and exploit synergies in the development cooperation of the European Union and its member states. In this context, development cooperation is seen as a catalyst and stimulus for private investment.

## WHAT ACTION IS NEEDED FOR A DONOR COUNTRY LIKE AUSTRIA

Austrian development policy has evolved gradually over decades, undergoing several changes to its institutional structures along the way. Its origins date back to the 1950s. A decisive turning point in the recent past was 2003, when the Development Cooperation Act (EZA-G)

created the legal basis for today's institutionally clearly anchored development policy. In this context, the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) was established in 2004 as an independent development cooperation agency. Since then, it has been responsible for the operational implementation of bilateral development cooperation and for ensuring the quality of content (topics and approaches), while the Foreign Ministry is responsible for strategic management. As already mentioned, Austria's development cooperation is strongly integrated into European and multilateral structures. In addition to the bilateral programmes implemented by the ADA in partner countries and regions in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental actors, Austria is involved in EU development policy, UN organisations, international financial institutions and the OECD. The current focus of Austrian development cooperation is determined centrally by the three-year programme (3YP), which sets out the political priorities in line with the Development Cooperation Act.

In the recent past, Austria has repeatedly committed itself to a coherent, whole-of-government approach to development policy (WGA). An evaluation and evidence synthesis of the WGA in Austrian development policy conducted in 2021 (Krämer et al. 2021) attests to the "fundamental willingness" of representatives from various departments to pursue a WGA. However, it criticises shortcomings in implementation: for example, the MFA does not adequately fulfil the function formally assigned to it in the implementation of WGA in practice for various reasons (ibid.: 8). A series of major evaluations of OEZA activities carried out in recent years have also repeatedly identified weaknesses in the overall government approach.

For example, evaluators in Albania identified the problem that WGA plays a less prominent role than envisaged in the country strategy (Christoplos et al. 2020); in Georgia, according to an evaluation, there are "major challenges for deepening the WGA" (Zürcher et al. 2018: 38); in Mozambique, according to the evaluation, "structural constraints" hinder the WGA (Broich et al. 2020); in Kosovo, an evaluation reports that the WGA is perceived as "difficult to operationalise in [the] daily work" (Kacapor-Dzihic 2018: 8). According to the evaluation, WGA does not play a significant role in the area of good governance (Almqvist/Alber 2020). With regard to OEZA's environment-related activities, the evaluators state that the overall national perspective "encounters the same problems as in other sectors" (Ledant 2016: 2).

Overall, the picture that emerges is that, in some respects, the whole-of-government approach has remained an *ideal*. Against this backdrop, the following section identifies a set of actions that Austria could take, based on the general direction of NPG (see Schlögl/Zeiner 2025a for details).

## A COMMON UNDERSTANDING

For the whole-of-government approach to be implemented successfully, it is first necessary for all development policy actors to develop a common understanding of what whole-of-government approach in Austrian development policy should and can encompass – at a time of shifting aid norms in a fragile international system. On the basis of a common understanding, it should be possible to develop a higher level of commitment to joint action. Although there are declarations of intent, there is no clear common framework and no associated concrete goals, indicators or time-bound measures to record the contributions and commitments of development policy actors.

In terms of content, further progress in implementing Agenda 2030 in and by Austria would be conducive to establishing a common understanding of the WGA. The system outlined therein and the structure of the goals and indicators form a sound reference framework, which should, however, be used more systematically in designing Austria's development policy cycle. The international component of SDG implementation is described in particular in Goal 17 (Global Partnerships). However, the reality in Austria is particularly in need of improvement in this area (cf. Obrovsky 2020). The further development of a strategic profile, specific targets, indicators and action plans with clear timelines, which is required both in the implementation of the SDGs and in development policy, calls for a synergistic approach by the experts working on these issues in the individual ministries.

## DEVELOPMENT POLICY LEADERSHIP

Austria's three-year development policy programme can be expanded into a central strategic roadmap for Austria's overall development policy and further developed into a joint strategy and implementation instrument (cf. Krämer et al. 2021: 10). This requires clear leadership and a coordinating role on the part of the MFA (cf. EZA-G, §§ 21-23). The structural conditions for coordinating overall

development policy could be improved, for example, by establishing a State Secretariat for Development Policy within the MFA and giving the policy area as a whole more weight in line with its growing global importance (see also the options presented by Obrovsky and Raza (2012)).

Meaningful joint priorities, targets and indicators, as well as action plans with timelines and financial allocations, should be the outcome of a process that involves all relevant political and administrative levels throughout the entire programme cycle. Methodological developments for designing process structures and procedures (e.g. strategy workshops, SWOT analyses, setting milestones, etc.) and the corresponding communication can be helpful in this regard. This also includes the development of a joint procedure for monitoring (review and control) and evaluating the goals and measures set within the framework of the three-year programme. As a first step, baselines for evaluating the goals and presenting the respective indicators should be developed.

Against the backdrop of new international challenges and in view of the need to sharpen the development policy and overall strategic profile, the tasks, role and current functioning of the Development Policy Advisory Council should also be reviewed. Appropriate adjustments and changes could be made, for example, to its remit, rules of procedure and staffing, in order to create a high-calibre international expert body that is consulted on a regular basis.

## A STRATEGIC PROFILE

A stronger overall government profile can be greatly enhanced by joint work on and increased operationalisation of whole-of-government approaches (e.g. Paris Alignment, human rights-based approach, gender-transformative and intersectional approach, HDP nexus, etc.). There is also considerable scope for further development in the creation of analytical tools for new cross-ministerial policy initiatives consisting of various SDGs, which could shed light on positive and negative, intended and unintended effects throughout the policy cycle, both *ex ante* and *ex post*. The involvement and promotion of science and research and the establishment and expansion of analytical and advisory capacities should play an important role in this context.

Recently created structures such as the Three-Year Programme Working Group (AG 3JP) are an important

step towards the WGA. Such topic- or subject-specific working groups or regional coordination bodies can be utilised and further developed, although a reflection on the structure, staffing, procedures and management of the topic-specific and other working groups and appropriate modifications is overdue.

An effective three-year programme must above all establish a link between the main areas of focus and the financial allocation. This would require a restructuring of the financial forecast for all funds allocated to Austrian development policy and the allocation of financial resources in line with the possibilities offered by the respective modality. This is a complex but manageable task. Generally, under the current conditions of dwindling resources, there is an increasing need to apply coordinated, coherent approaches at the national level in an even more conscious and robust manner.

The second, equally important step would be to further develop joint instruments (e.g. pooling of planning and financing) and implementation structures at the level of the partner countries (e.g. coordination offices, procedures for monitoring and evaluating joint actions), paying particular attention to ensuring that the local structures have the appropriate mandate and adequate resources.<sup>2</sup> Consideration should also be given to the impact that extending the planning horizon from three to five to six years could have on improving the strategic profile, strengthening the involvement and participation of all actors and stakeholders, and increasing the coherence and effectiveness of Austrian development policy.

In line with the recommendations of the OECD DAC, Austria should establish a body or institution and provide it with the necessary resources to systematically review (across departments) which influences and effects the implementation of respective policies and measures has on development policy objectives and the corresponding activities agreed with Austria. Any inconsistencies should be documented, proposals for remedial action drawn up and their implementation reviewed.

In summary, the proposed measures and reform approaches – many of which are cost-neutral or at least budget-friendly – could help to improve the quality and ambition of development policy in the coming years and make them fit for very challenging times. They would continue steps already taken – for example in the design of the three-year programme – and bring the policy area

closer to the ideal of whole-of-government approach. This would not only ensure the effectiveness of development policy but also its political legitimacy in a budgetary and politically highly sensitive period.

## References

- Almqvist, O./Alber, B. (2020): *Evaluation: Strategic Evaluation of the ADC Engagement on Good Governance (2007–2017). Vol I: Main Report.*
- Broich, T./Sacoor, A./Slob, A. (2020): *Evaluation: Strategic Evaluation of Austrian Development Cooperation's Engagement in Mozambique 1992–2018. Final report.* Vienna: Austrian Development Agency.
- Christoplos, I./Trivunovic, M./Rusi, S. (2021): *Evaluation: Mid-Term Evaluation of Austrian Development Cooperation's Albania Country Strategy 2015–2020 (extended until 2021). Vol I – Final.* Vienna: Austrian Development Agency. Report
- Haug, S./Novoselova, A./Klingebiel, S. (2025): *Trump's assault on foreign aid: implications for international development cooperation. Discussion Paper (4/2025).* Bonn: German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS).
- Janus, H./Klingebiel, S./Paulo, S. (2014): *Beyond Aid: A Conceptual Perspective on the Transformation of Development Cooperation.* In: *Journal of International Development.* 27 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3045>
- Kacapor-Dzihic, Z./Hajdari, R./van Caubergh, A. (2018): *Evaluation: Mid-Term Review of the Kosovo Country Strategy 2013–2020. Summary.* Vienna: Austrian Development Agency.
- Krämer, M./Raetzell, L./Röhle, S. (2021): *Evaluation and evidence synthesis of the whole-of-government approach (WGA) in Austrian development policy.* Vienna: Austrian Development Agency.
- Krogh, A.H./Triantafyllou, P. (2024): "Developing New Public Governance as a public management reform model." In: *Public Management Review,* 26(10).
- Milazzo, E. (2023): *The Nexus Approach: bringing together climate, human security, and demographic change in times of permacrisis.* EPC Discussion Paper. [https://www.epc.eu/content/PDF/2023/Nexus\\_DP\\_v2.pdf](https://www.epc.eu/content/PDF/2023/Nexus_DP_v2.pdf) (09.02.2026).
- Ledant, J.-P./Schuh, B./Tordy, J./Gruev, K./Beck, M. (2016): *Evaluation of the Environment Policy of the Austrian Development Cooperation and its implementation by the main ODA Actors 2007–2014. Summary.* Vienna: Austrian Development Agency.
- Obrecht, A./Pearson, M. (2025): *What new funding data tells us about donor decisions in 2025.* In: *The New Humanitarian.* <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2025/04/17/what-new-funding-data-tells-us-about-donor-decisions-2025> (09.02.2026).

Obrovsky, M. (2020): *Global partnership – lip service without ambition: On the implementation of SDG 17 in Austria*. ÖFSE Policy Note 35. Vienna. <https://doi.org/10.60637/2020>

Obrovsky, M./Raza, W. (2012): “Reflections on restructuring development policy in Austria”. In: *Austrian Development Policy 2012. The Future of Development Policy*. Vienna: 15-22. <https://www.oefse.at/fileadmin/content/Downloads/Publikationen/Oepol/OEPOL2012.pdf#page=16> (09.02.2026).

Obrovsky, M./Schlögl, L. (2011): *Politikkohärenz durch Kohärenzpolitik! Bedingungen für Policy Coherence for Development in Österreich*. ÖFSE Edition 17. Vienna: <https://www.oefse.at/fileadmin/content/Downloads/Publikationen/Editionen/Edition17.pdf> (09.02.2026)

OECD (2019): *Recommendation of the Council on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development*. OECD/LEGAL/0381. <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/oecd-legal-0381> (09.02.2026).

OECD (2020): *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Austria 2020, OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews, Paris*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/03b626d5-en>.

Schedler, K./Proeller, I. (2006): *New Public Management*. 3rd edition. Stuttgart: UTB.

Schlögl, L. (2022): *Team Europe: Power shift or mere marketing in EU development cooperation?* ÖFSE Policy Note 41. Vienna. <https://doi.org/10.60637/2022-pn41>

Schlögl, L./Zeiner, R. (2025): *From Polycrisis to Policy Coherence: How New Public Governance can enhance Austria's Development*. ÖFSE Briefing Paper 37a. Vienna. <https://doi.org/10.60637/2025-bp37e>

Zürcher, D./Troxler, R./Manasyan, H./Toklikishvili, G. (2018): *Evaluation: Mid-Term Review of the Armenia and Georgia Country Strategies 2012–2020. Final Report*. Vienna: Austrian Development Agency.

---

1 The Chapter draws on Schlögl/Zeiner (2025), which provides further detail on some of the reform suggestions advanced in the Chapter.

2 See also the relevant recommendations in Krämer et al. (2021: 8-10) and OECD (2020).