

Chapter 8

A Small State at the Wheel: Malta's Contribution to reaching the New European Consensus on Development

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Introduction

This chapter examines the contribution of Malta's Presidency of the Council of the European Union to EU Development Policy, which culminated with the signing of the New European Consensus on Development (NCD) in the final days of its term.

The essay analyses the processes, influences and demands behind the drive towards the NCD, and explores the role that Malta's Presidency played in concluding the text. Considering that Malta does not have a long track record in development policy, it was interesting to assess how it managed to drive the process to conclusion within the term of its Presidency. This is even more relevant, considering the nature of the NCD, which is not a *typical* EU document (i.e. it is neither a legal act nor a Council conclusion), but a hybrid text of political importance concluded between the EU and its Member States.

The paper also looks into small state influence in the EU, and provides more empirical evidence for the theoretical framework of actor-based institutionalism, while further validating the hypotheses on how small states can influence EU decision making.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Measuring the level of influence that a small member state exerts in the EU is a complex topic, mostly because there are diverse interpretations among scholars of the term "influence", especially when applied to small states.¹⁹⁷ For this reason, the chapter rather looks at how Malta worked to promote its goals in EU Development Policy during its Presidency.

The underlying theoretical framework is based on the paradigm of "actor-centred institutionalism", developed by Mayntz and Scharpf in their work "*Gesellschaftliche Selbstregelung und politische Steuerung*" [*Social self-regulation and political control*].¹⁹⁸ This concept effectively incorporates institutionalist and rational choice assumptions which state that institutions are a crucial factor in affecting the behaviour of states, which provide both

¹⁹⁷ Baillie, S. (1998) p. 94.

¹⁹⁸ Baillie, S. (1996) p. 7-14.

opportunities for, but can also restrict action.¹⁹⁹ This approach was already used by several authors²⁰⁰ to analyse the influence of small states on the EU institutions and different policy areas.

The hypotheses in this paper also incorporate an “actor-centred institutionalist” approach on small state influence which was developed by Baillie in her work on Luxembourg and the EU institutions.²⁰¹ These hypotheses hold that a combination of factors relating to the EU set-up and the specificities of small states can contribute to them achieving their aims. Namely:

- (1) The EU decision making system itself gives small states many possibilities for representation and cooperation to gain from;
- (2) A small state might be specialised or have unique resources in a specific sector;
- (3) A state’s limited resources can allow it to exert more influence, because it is not seen by the bigger states as a threat, and has fewer vested interests which allows it to be an impartial coordinator, i.e. an “honest broker”;
- (4) The size of a small state’s administration creates internal cohesion and solidarity, reduces the lines of communication and facilitates decision making;
- (5) Cooperation and forming alliances with other countries gives small states more chances of safeguarding their interests.

Methodology

Since the NCD was concluded recently, the academic research on the topic is still sparse. Therefore, the empirical research consisted of primary sources (official publications), and third-party commentaries (NGOs and think tanks). The qualitative research consisted of elite interviews with the persons who were responsible for the drafting of the NCD in the EU institutions and the Maltese Presidency. Since there is no public record of the negotiations leading up to the conclusion of the NCD, interviews with officials provided the best way to learn what happened during the negotiations and to test the hypotheses outlined above, as well as assess the role that the Maltese Presidency played.

Literature Review

The available academic literature on the topic mainly concerns the previous European Consensus on Development from 2005, with the respective authors emphasising its importance in the evolution of EU Development Policy since

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Goetschel, L. (2000); Bunse, S. (2009) ; Baillie, S. (1998); Panke, D. (2010); Nasra, S. (2011).

²⁰¹ Baillie, S. (1996).

the late 1990s and early 2000s.²⁰² They highlighted its symbolic meaning for EU Development Policy as the first time that all EU institutions and the MS “agreed on a common view and set of strategies to guide their policies and actions in the promotion of international development”.²⁰³ Moreover, this was also the first time that the EU developed its own direction on development policy, independently from the “Bretton Woods system” and the “Washington Consensus”. This impetus came after the EU was strongly criticised by NGOs and certain MS on the lack of its capacities and accountability in external aid programmes.²⁰⁴

The literature on the NCD itself is mostly composed of contributions from NGOs to the European Commission’s public consultation on NCD as well as position papers on the draft text; papers by the most prominent development NGOs such as Oxfam,²⁰⁵ the European NGO Confederation for relief and development (Concord)²⁰⁶ and the Overseas Development Institute²⁰⁷ outline what the NGO community would have liked to see in the final text of the NCD. Overall, they were positive on the vision set out in the NCD and its comprehensive approach, and their main demands were for stronger prioritisation of issues and the drafting of strategies for the implementation and financing of the vision outlined in the NCD.

What is the New European Consensus on Development?

The NCD created a common framework for European development cooperation which, for the first time, applied in its entirety to all EU institutions and each EU Member State (MS), unlike the European Consensus on Development (ECD) from 2005 which was divided in two parts: one applying to the European Commission and the other to the MS, and focussed on complementarity and coordination of EU development policy, and thus differentiating between EU and MS actions.²⁰⁸

According to development policy academics,²⁰⁹ the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)²¹⁰ and certain civil society organizations,²¹¹ the ECD was a useful tool, fostering a shared and common

²⁰² Carbone, M. (2007); Dearden, S. (2007); Orbie, J. and Carbone, M. (2011).

²⁰³ Carbone, M. (2007) p. 1.

²⁰⁴ Grimm, S. (2006).

²⁰⁵ Oxfam (2016).

²⁰⁶ Concord (2017b).

²⁰⁷ “The proposed new European Consensus on Development – Has the European Commission got it right?” Faure, R. and Maxwell, S., Policy Briefing, ODI, February 2017.

²⁰⁸ Official Journal (2006).

²⁰⁹ *Supra*, note 11.

²¹⁰ OECD (2007).

²¹¹ “The European Consensus on Development”, CARE International, September 2016.

vision for EU and MS development cooperation and holding the EU and MS to account on their commitments.²¹²

The update of the ECD was necessitated by the long period since its conclusion, and the many new developments that occurred since then, both within the EU²¹³ and on the multilateral level.²¹⁴ To accommodate these changes, the European Council proposed the modernization of the consensus on 12th May 2016.²¹⁵ The initiative came from High Representative/Vice President of the Commission (HRVP) Federica Mogherini and Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica, who aimed to use it as “a tool to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.²¹⁶

The Commission (COM) presented its proposal for a new European Consensus on Development to the Council and the EP on 22nd November 2016,²¹⁷ and was preceded by a comprehensive public consultation.²¹⁸ At the start of its Presidency in January 2017, Malta ambitiously took it upon itself to steer the file to conclusion within its tenure.²¹⁹ After a last-minute attempt by one MS to alter the text of the NCD (see below), the final agreement was reached by EU foreign ministers at the Council meeting on 19th May 2017.²²⁰

In essence, the NCD sets down a blue-print on how the EU and its MS will conduct their respective development policies and implement the SDGs, up to 2030. It also recognises the strong links between development and other policies, such as peace and security, humanitarian aid, migration, the environment and climate change.²²¹

According to an EU MS diplomat, the NCD is a “very important document”, likened to a “constitution for EU Development Policy”,²²² and in the words of a development policy practitioner, “the consensus will shape how some 14 billion Euros a year is spent for the next decade”.²²³ This was also underlined

²¹² “The New European Consensus on Development”, European Parliamentary Research Service, 2017.

²¹³ Such as the conclusion of the Lisbon Treaty (2009), and the EU Global Strategy (2016).

²¹⁴ Namely, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015), the Paris Climate Agreement (2015) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015).

²¹⁵ Council of the European Union (2016).

²¹⁶ “EU’s ‘New Consensus on Development’ puts migration control centre-stage”, Johannes Trimmel, Euractiv, June 2017.

²¹⁷ European Commission (2016a).

²¹⁸ “European Commission launches open public consultation on the future of EU development policy,” European Commission, 1st June 2016.

²¹⁹ Interviews.

²²⁰ Council of the EU (2017).

²²¹ “The new European Consensus on Development – EU and Member States sign joint strategy to eradicate poverty”, Council of the European Union, 7th June 2017, Brussels.

²²² Interviews.

²²³ “An uneasy European consensus for development”, Publish what you fund, 9th June 2017.

in an interview with a development policy academic who stated that the NCD provides a basis on which the European Parliament and the European public can measure the EU and its MS achievements in Development Policy.²²⁴

Despite the comprehensive nature of the NCD and the public consultations, it was received quite critically by NGOs and Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs).²²⁵ While most commended it for making a reference to their specific areas of interest, some of the more influential NGDOs (like Concord²²⁶ and Oxfam²²⁷) disapproved of the fact that the final text included language on tackling migration and linking it to security; Oxfam emphatically stated that “EU governments have chosen to put their own political objectives ahead of those of development.”²²⁸ Unsurprisingly, all the EU and MS officials interviewed said that the criticism was unfounded, citing that only three points (39, 40 and 41) out of the 123 in the NCD concern migration. Secondly, the topic of migration and security touches on the difficult debate of ensuring security before development can take place. Nevertheless, while tackling migration does not form part of the SDGs, ensuring security is one of the main goals, and it is enshrined in SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. Overall, it is difficult to argue that the references to tackling migration in the NCD were not included for national political purposes, while the NGDO concerns with the migration and security nexus will only materialise if the EU starts shifting resources from eradicating poverty to funding security contractors, however this paper will not go into that debate.

Starting Positions

Maltese Presidency Priorities

Historically, Maltese involvement in overseas aid was mainly carried out by the Catholic Church which included aspects of missionary work, poverty alleviation but also political engagement.²²⁹ Traditionally, Malta was perceived as a net beneficiary of aid,²³⁰ and it was only in 2004 that it included a development policy heading in the national budget.²³¹ With the country’s entry into the EU, it started building its capacities in this regard, like many other new EU MS.²³² In 2006 development assistance policy was outlined as one of the twenty areas under the Strategic Objectives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.²³³ Subsequently, the 2013 Guiding Principles of

²²⁴ Interviews.

²²⁵ “EU signs new consensus on development amid NGO outcry”, Jessica Abrahams, DEVEX.

²²⁶ Concord (2017a).

²²⁷ Oxfam (2017).

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Calleja-Ragonese, I *et al.* (2014).

²³⁰ Grech, O. (2009).

²³¹ “Malta’s overseas development policy”, Times of Malta, 23rd January 2005.

²³² Lightfoot, S. and Szent-Iványi, B. (2015).

²³³ Malta MFA (2006).

Malta's Foreign Policy mentioned that Malta will "take a more participatory role in the field of humanitarian and development assistance".²³⁴ However, it was only in 2014 that Malta elaborated on its development policy goals,²³⁵ by outlining ten priorities for action through the years 2014 to 2020, highlighting areas such as democratization, good governance, migration and asylum.

With the rise in the numbers of undocumented migrants arriving to its shores, curbing immigration was a top policy challenge for the Maltese Government ever since it joined the EU in 2004. According to the ex-Foreign Minister, Michael Frendo, "the link between migration and development was important from the start of Maltese [Official Development Assistance]".²³⁶

The importance given by Malta to the development/migration nexus is also shown in its Presidency priorities,²³⁷ which stated: "Malta wants to push for a holistic approach to migration, including both the internal and external aspect".²³⁸ Although development policy as such did not feature among the top six priorities of its Presidency, concluding the NCD was nevertheless a main priority in the National Programme of the Presidency.²³⁹ However, in this instance, it also was linked to migration, where Malta explicitly wished the NCD to focus on the "migration and development nexus" in order to "achieve a comprehensive and balanced approach that addresses the root causes of migration and forced displacement."²⁴⁰ Overall, it seems that Malta wanted to address the multifaceted causes of migration in all the possible policy areas, and NCD provided such a platform.

Therefore, at the moment of starting negotiations on updating the NCD, Malta did not have a strongly set agenda like other MS with a long track record in development policy. Moreover, the fact that it held the Presidency also meant that it had to be seen as a "neutral broker" in order to build consensus between the different EU institutions and the MS,²⁴¹ which constrained its possibility to push for any specific foreign policy or development interest. However, Malta did see an opportunity to conclude the NCD file within its term, and according to Maltese officials, "give it the visibility that this important EU policy deserves, in front of [EU] partners".²⁴² This attitude is also typical in the Council, since Presidencies generally try to conclude as many dossiers as possible during their term.

²³⁴ Malta MFA (2013) p.4.

²³⁵ Malta MFA (2014).

²³⁶ Ragonese, I *et al.* p. 108.

²³⁷ Government of Malta (2017a).

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ Government of Malta (2017b).

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 17.

²⁴¹ Bunse, S. (2009).

²⁴² Interviews.

Priorities of the European Commission and Parliament

Along with the Council, both the European Commission and the European Parliament (EP) also wanted to update the EU's development policy to take into consideration the recent developments. There was a tacit agreement between the COM and the EP that the NCD must be finalised by the European Development Days (EDD)²⁴³ that were to be held in June 2017.²⁴⁴ Although the two institutions had similar overarching goals, they disagreed on the technical level of how stringently the EU should keep the MS to their commitments on development policy. For example, while both institutions wanted to have stronger language on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), the EP was adamant to keep the MS's commitment to dedicate 0.7% of their Gross National Income to Official Development Assistance (ODA).²⁴⁵

Priorities of the Council of the EU

While it would be difficult to outline the priorities of each EU MS in this chapter, given their various approaches to development, diverging priorities (including geographical ones) and vested interests (many with a long ODA history), one has to consider that the issue of migration has been very high on the political agenda of most countries over the past few years. The influx of refugees and migrants from Europe's southern and eastern dimensions and the terrorist attacks within the EU, propelled strong public sentiment in the EU. Thus, similarly to Malta, addressing the complex migration/development nexus was also a political priority for the other MS. This is reflected in the COM's proposal,²⁴⁶ which already included language on migration, and thus pre-empting the political priorities of the MS, including Malta.

At this point, it is important to note that Malta adopted the COM's proposal as the base document for discussions in the Council, showing that the COM had taken in advance many of the MS preferences and red-lines into consideration. This also provides evidence that, from a small states' perspective, building on work undertaken by institutions with more resources is often a necessity.²⁴⁷

Reaching the Consensus: How the talks progressed

The hybrid nature of the NCD left the institutions and especially the Maltese Presidency without a blue-print to follow, which increased the initial complexity of how to deal with the dossier. As already mentioned, the COM's proposal was the basis for negotiations at the level of the Council

²⁴³ The EDD are a yearly gathering of the most important actors in the development policy field from the EU, partner countries and international organisations.

²⁴⁴ Interviews.

²⁴⁵ European Commission (2016b).

²⁴⁶ European Commission (2016a).

²⁴⁷ Pace, R. (2015).

Working Party on Development Cooperation (CODEV), chaired by the Presidency. CODEV consists of officials in charge of development policy from the MS Permanent Representations to the EU who meet on a weekly basis. The text was then to be adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council. An issue that added to the complexity was that in CODEV, the MS came to a decision by unanimity, meaning all MS had to agree with the text in its entirety.

On the side of the EP, the lead negotiators hailed from the main parties: Bogdan Wenta (Poland) from the European People's Party (EPP), and Norbert Neuser (Germany) from the Socialists and Democrats (S&D). The EP's negotiating position was based on a resolution penned by the two.²⁴⁸

Secondly, since there was no previous set-up for concluding a hybrid text like the NCD, the Maltese Presidency decided to apply the Community Method to the discussions. This entailed basing the inter-institutional negotiations on the COM proposal as well, while the Council and the EP provided their feedback after internal consultations. This also meant that from the beginning, the inter-institutional negotiations were held in an informal trilateral format (with a rotating chair), composed of representatives from the EP, COM, and the Presidency representing the Council and being its penholder. Such a set-up allowed the stakeholders to save time since all parties involved were familiar with the Community Method and its processes.²⁴⁹

The negotiations progressed smoothly overall, with the major disagreement between the EP and the Council being on the 0.7% GNI threshold for ODA. Considering that many EU MS were still recovering from the effects of the financial crisis, and some have never before achieved such a high level, they were unwilling to agree on a strong language in the NCD urging them to meet the threshold.²⁵⁰ The EP eventually decided not to push for this commitment due to strong resistance from the Council and other political reasons, namely, it did not wish to appear imposing on MS following the UK vote to leave the EU.²⁵¹

After a relatively short but vigorous period of negotiations (discussions were held between January and May 2017), an agreement was reached at the tripartite level on the symbolic date of 9th May 2017 (Schuman Day).²⁵² However, there was an unexpected setback at the final stage in the Council of Ministers; although the Hungarian representatives in CODEV agreed to the

²⁴⁸ European Parliament (2017).

²⁴⁹ Interviews.

²⁵⁰ European Parliament (2017) p.10.

²⁵¹ Interview with MEP Neuser.

²⁵² Interviews.

text in its entirety, the Hungarian Government did not wish to “endorse an EU development strategy that cites immigration as something positive”.²⁵³

This threat of a veto resulted in a flurry of political activity that involved the top levels of the EU institutions and the Presidency. According to sources, the HRVP Federica Mogherini, Commissioner Neven Mimica and the Foreign Minister of Malta, George Vella, held urgent talks with the Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó, to iron out a compromise. In order to keep the consensus and address the Hungarian concerns, the parties agreed to remove “unnecessary repetitive language on migration”, and insert a reference to the Lisbon Treaty’s language on migration (Article 79(5) TFEU).²⁵⁴ Agreement was reached in the Council on 19th May 2017.²⁵⁵

It is important to note that the negotiators also praised the EP for playing an exemplary role at this moment,²⁵⁶ that is, it swiftly gave its approval to the newly amended language. Although the EP and its co-rapporteurs “deplored” the last-minute changes by the Council, they considered that many of EP’s demands were taken up and there were many positive elements in the NCD. Thus, they recommended the EP to endorse the compromise,²⁵⁷ and allow it to be ready for signature. The NCD was signed during the EDD on 7th June 2017 by the Prime Minister of Malta, Joseph Muscat on behalf of the Council and EU MS, the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, the HRVP Federica Mogherini, and the EP President, Antonio Tajani.

How Malta contributed to reaching the NCD

Analysing how Malta contributed to reaching the NCD provides an opportunity to verify the hypotheses on small state influence in EU decision making outlined earlier.²⁵⁸

Initially, the fact that Malta held the Presidency, gave it considerable influence on driving the process forward as the Chair of CODEV and penholder of the document. In line with hypothesis (1), “the EU decision making system”, in this case: the rotating nature of the Presidency, provided Malta with possibilities for representation and cooperation with other MS and EU institutions. What facilitated Malta’s work to an extent was that all three EU institutions were aligned in the large part on what they wanted to achieve. However, it was up to the Presidency to push the document through

²⁵³ Government of Hungary (2017).

²⁵⁴ Interviews.

²⁵⁵ Council of the EU (2017).

²⁵⁶ Interviews.

²⁵⁷ Interview with MEP Wenta.

²⁵⁸ *Supra*. p.2.

to completion in the specified time-frame. To do so, the Presidency increased the number of Council meetings from one, to a minimum of two per week.²⁵⁹

Secondly, although Malta did not have a history of development policy expertise, it did have a unique resource (2) in this case, it was the high quality and competence of its negotiators. Notably, Malta's experienced CODEV chair was also its delegate during the ECD discussions in 2005, which was helpful for the negotiations on the NCD as well. This was confirmed by all the persons interviewed for this research: they unanimously stressed that it was Malta's *human factor* that contributed to reaching the consensus. Apart from the high competence of Malta's representatives, the interviewees singled out their energy and dedication to concluding as many files as possible during Malta's Presidency. A good example of this is that during Malta's term, the Council came to around a dozen conclusions on development policy, while on average it is four or five.²⁶⁰

From the interviews, it was also clear that Maltese negotiators had a good understanding of the functioning of EU's institutions and the legislative processes, as well as of the text in question. According to a COM official, the decision by Malta at the outset of the negotiations to use the Community Method proved crucial; This saved time and allowed the negotiations to be held in a structured manner, which resulted in their ultimate success.

The quality of Malta's negotiators was also showcased in their understanding of the prevailing mood in the different institutions, on which the timeframe of the discussions was conditioned. For example, Maltese Presidency withheld discussing certain COM proposals until the timing was better and the likelihood of accepting them by the MS was higher. Likewise, the skill of Malta's negotiators was showcased during the discussions in CODEV on references to the OECD guidelines on the implementation of the SDGs.²⁶¹ Since there was no agreement between the states on the issue, Malta decided to drop the direct reference to the guidelines, while it included an indirect reference to cooperation with the OECD, in order to reach consensus.²⁶²

Malta also managed to keep the balance and build trust in the Council meetings, which was important given that the Presidency did not have a strict Council mandate for the talks. Namely, both the COM and the EP had their initial proposals, or "negotiating mandates" as one MS diplomat put it, while Malta had no such document in CODEV where it would hold the other MS to account on what they could negotiate. Malta's leadership in the Council on securing compromises at this moment was crucial and ensured that the

²⁵⁹ Interviews.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ OECD (2016).

²⁶² Interviews.

Council was on track during the deliberations and did not get mired in political deadlock. Malta's CODEV chair was apt in reaching agreements in the Council on the positions by using various negotiation techniques, such as regularly breaking off sessions or scheduling informal gatherings when it was clear that compromises could not be found in the official CODEV set-up.²⁶³

Thirdly, the interviews have showed that Malta was considered by all the parties as their main ally, while at the same time they praised its role as an "honest broker" (3) between the various institutional and MS interests. This shows that they did not perceive Malta as a threat or as having any hidden interests, and is in line with a Presidency's role as a "neutral broker". According to Maltese officials, building trust was essential for their work in this aspect as well, and they achieved it through open dialogue and transparent procedures. Moreover, Maltese negotiators fulfilled their duty in finding compromises between the different interests and putting forward realistic proposals, palatable to all the stakeholders. Also, Malta did not pressure the other parties to push through a specific agenda item. According to a MS official interviewed, the Presidency Chair of CODEV was continuously engaged in ensuring that neither side, nor institution, put forward proposals that would not be accepted by the others. A good example of this is the discussion on SRHR, where certain MS did not wish to include it in the NCD while the EP, the COM and other MS did. Here, the Presidency found a solution by proposing previously agreed language (such as from Council conclusions).²⁶⁴

Malta's crucial role as an "honest broker" can best be seen in the discussions in the Council on the issue of migration itself; according to Maltese officials, the Presidency worked tirelessly in CODEV to bridge the gap between MS who see migration as positive and those who wanted to introduce the notion of conditionality between readmission and development aid. The Chair continuously insisted that this was the "European Consensus on *Development*" and not the "European Consensus on *Migration*" in order to dissuade strong language on migration. This also shows that concluding the NCD was Malta's highest priority.²⁶⁵

Fourthly, the top levels of the Maltese Government were also ready to get involved in brokering the deal during the Hungarian veto. This proves that the small size of the administration (4) allowed Malta to promptly respond to unexpected challenges. Malta's Permanent Representative to the EU Marlene Bonnici got involved in the political discussions in COREPER, while the

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Interviews.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Maltese Foreign Minister talked directly with the EU institutions to his Hungarian counterpart to broker the final deal.

Finally, the Maltese interests regarding migration have come to be shared by many other EU MS, so it is difficult to say if the NCD would have included language on the link between migration and development if this had not happened, especially when one considers that the COM proposal already included language on the topic. Nevertheless, this confirms that a small state needs alliances (5) to push through a desired outcome.

Conclusion

In the words of the Member of the EP, Norbert Neuser: “I am not sure that any other presidency would have managed, or willed, to do what Malta has done to conclude the NCD.”²⁶⁶

This sentiment aptly summarises Malta’s contribution and dedication to building consensus between the EU and its MS on the future of EU Development Policy. This chapter provided ample empirical evidence of how Malta helped reach the NCD, such as through its highly skilled representatives and its apt use of EU’s institutional set-up.

The EU’s institutional set-up itself gave Malta a leading role as the Presidency of the Council of the EU, which allowed it to push through its main goal of concluding the NCD within its term. However, looking at whether Malta pushed through any of its policy priorities in the NCD is more difficult since tackling migration, which has been Malta’s priority since accession, is not only an issue for Malta anymore, but for all EU MS.

Overall, it should not be undermined how Malta managed to harmonise the various approaches to development, diverging priorities and vested interests of the other states, many with a much longer history of overseas development assistance, all within a framework of unanimity at the Council and continuous pressure from the EP and COM for stronger commitments. Despite all of this, Malta managed to leave its footprint on EU Development Policy, and conclude a text that will guide EU development policy actions and budgets and those of its MS for years to come.

²⁶⁶ Interview with MEP Neuser.

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