

**Gender equality in EU development policy in times of crisis**  
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**Abstract**

Gender equality is firmly established on the EU development policy agenda. However, a series of inter-related crises, including migration, security and climate change, are becoming more prominent in EU development policy. This article asks whether development objectives have been subsumed under these crisis-driven EU priorities; whether this is compatible with efforts to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment through development cooperation; and whether it will affect the ability to keep gender equality high on the EU's development policy agenda. The theoretical framework draws on horizontal policy coordination and nexuses. The analysis of EU development policy documents shows how migration, security and climate change are constructed as crises; how they intersect in various nexuses; and how gender intersects with each of these nexuses. This research finds that gender equality is absent from the migration-security-climate nexuses, which are increasingly driving development policy priorities. The article argues that it is quite straightforward to keep gender equality on the development policy agenda, but it is difficult to retain a focus on gender equality when multiple policy areas intersect. The research suggests that the discourse of crisis has blocked the way, and this will have an impact on the EU's internal and external activities.

Gender equality is firmly on the EU development policy agenda and has been for more than two decades. Development policymakers were amongst the first and most enthusiastic advocates of gender mainstreaming, and since 2010, efforts have been made to translate into practice the well-established rhetorical commitment to gender equality in EU development cooperation. This has taken place in an evolving context, in which a series of inter-related crises have become more prominent in EU development policy. These crises include migration- and climate change. The threat of these external crises is used to justify prioritising expenditure in particular focus areas, including addressing the root causes of migration. So development aid is diverted to refugee support, to border control and to other controversial security-orientated costs. Have development objectives been subsumed under these crisis-driven EU priorities? Is this compatible with efforts to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment through development cooperation? And will it affect the ability to keep gender equality high on the EU's development policy agenda?

The analytical framework through which the impact of the discourse of crisis is understood is built on three levels. First, how are migration and climate change constructed as crises in development policy? Second, how do they intersect in various nexuses, such as development-migration and development-climate change-migration? Third, how does gender intersect with each of these nexuses? The research combines a content analysis of key gender and development policy documents and eleven semi-structured interviews with gender and development policy actors and civil society advocates in Brussels. It finds that gender equality is absent from the migration-security-climate nexuses, which are driving development policy priorities. I argue that it is quite straightforward to keep gender equality on the development policy agenda, although admittedly it is more difficult to make it a priority and to implement it (Debusscher, 2013). The real problem, however, is how to retain a focus on gender equality

when multiple policy areas intersect. This research suggests that the discourse of crisis has blocked the way, and this will have an impact on the EU's internal and external activities. It also suggests that development objectives are being subsumed under the goals of migration and security policy. Since development policy had the strongest gender profile, this means that the presence of gender equality in EU external action is fading (see Welfens this issue). The article is structured in the following way: First it outlines the theoretical framework which informs the analysis. It then gives an overview of the relation between gender equality and EU development policy. Thirdly, it describes the methodology. Finally, it presents the findings of the analysis and the conclusions.

### **Crisis and securitisation**

The analysis of gender equality in EU development policy is informed by the scholarly literature on crisis, which contributes to our understanding of whether and how issues remain on the policy agenda in times of crisis; and what factors influence prioritisation. Scholars argue that crises are socially constructed through narrative and discourse (De Rycker and Don, 2013: 11; Hay, 2013: 23; Manners and Rosamond, 2018: 28), and that the way they are constructed determines how we respond to them (Hay, 2013: 23). The discourse of crisis has an impact on the policy agenda and on decision making. For example, Falkner's (2016: 961) study of crisis-induced pressures in nine EU policy areas found that other issues were pushed down the agenda, with the 'urgent crowd[ing] out the important'. Policy actors' narrative constructions of crisis 'may foreground particular political claims over others' (Manners and Rosamond, 2018: 28), and actions that were once considered exceptional can be normalised in times of crisis (Otto, 2011: 7; Warner and Boas, 2017: 204).

The way an issue is framed has an impact on how it is treated, including the venue where it will be discussed and the instruments used to address it. Powerful actors (whether individuals or institutions) are better able to impose their frames than less powerful ones: 'It is often the dominant stakeholders in society [...] that define crisis and rhetorically frame crisis to mobilise action and to formulate and generate support for certain policies, even though those definitions, frames, actions and policies themselves might be contested by other cultural systems and spaces' (De Rycker and Don, 2013: 10).

The crisis literature therefore exposes the effects of crises on policies and policymaking. A related literature on securitisation shows that when an issue is securitised, it is 'presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure' (Buzan, Waever and De Wilde, 1998: 23–4). If a policy area is framed as a security issue, it becomes prioritised over other policy areas (Boin et al., 2017: 24; Warner and Boas, 2017: 203).

In order to avoid the conflation of securitisation and crisis, we can draw on the useful conceptual tool 'crisification' ('t Hart et al., 2001; Paglia, 2018; Rhinard, 2019). Crisification serves a similar function to securitisation and operates in similar ways (Paglia, 2018: 98). Issues are constructed as crises and thereby gain importance and urgency. Crisification has changed the way issues arrive on the EU agenda, the way decisions are made, and which actors make these decisions (Rhinard, 2019: 625–7). In contrast to securitisation, however, crisification does not suggest the need for a response involving security or militarised measures (Paglia, 2018: 100). It therefore enables us to focus on the effects of a discourse of crisis which is not limited to its securitised elements. This can help us understand how norms such as gender equality can be pushed to one side (Otto, 2011: 4–5). The insights from these theoretical

contributions complement the literature on how issues are kept off the agenda (Cobb and Ross, 1997; Princen, 2011). This article uses these theoretical insights to analyse the use of a discourse of crisis in key policy documents and its effect on policy priorities and framing.

### **Horizontal policy coordination and nexuses**

The analysis of EU development policy, and of the interconnected crises (migration-climate change) that are referred to within it, draws on the literatures on horizontal policy coordination and policy nexuses. These help us understand how policy issues interconnect and what happens when they do. This section provides a brief overview of these literatures, starting with horizontal policy coordination.

Horizontal policy coordination (sometimes referred to as policy integration) is used here as a generic term encompassing all attempts to coordinate policy across sectors, including those which aim to mainstream or integrate crosscutting issues throughout all EU policy making. Well-known examples of horizontal policy coordination in EU policymaking are environmental policy integration and gender mainstreaming. They have been defined in many different ways, but are based on the idea that the issue in question (environment, gender) cannot be addressed in isolation, but must be an integral part of policy design, formulation and implementation in all other policy sectors. The form of horizontal policy coordination which integrates development objectives into other areas of internal and external policy is policy coherence for development. Policy coherence for development originated in the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 1991 and was introduced into the EU by the Maastricht Treaty (1993). Article 208 of the Lisbon Treaty states that: ‘The Union shall take account of the objectives of development cooperation in the policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries’ (Article 208 TFEU). Commitment to policy coherence for development was reiterated in the European Consensus on Development (2005) and again in the new European Consensus on Development (2017).

The academic literature on horizontal policy coordination is useful because it considers how crosscutting issues are integrated into policy sectors. It shows where this works and where it fails, and suggests explanations for these outcomes. It suggests that successful policy coherence requires a strong shared vision which acts as a strategic goal and maintains focus on the objective, not on the procedural tools and instruments. The studies suggest that process has often taken precedence over substance (Meier and Celis, 2011; Carbone and Keijzer, 2016); that resources rarely follow rhetorical commitment (Jordan, Schout and Zito, 2005; Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2010; Nunan, Campbell and Foster, 2012); that institutional obstacles and resistance can be insurmountable (Rao and Kelleher, 2005; Gupta and van der Grijp, 2010); and that power struggles around definitions and priorities have significant impact (Allwood, 2014). This work reveals, for example, that the more powerful Directorates General and Council configurations were able to ignore policy coherence for development, either failing to conduct the impact assessments which are the primary tool for implementing it, or leaving out the section on the anticipated effects on developing countries and development objectives (Allwood, 2013). The substantial literature on gender mainstreaming shows that, despite repeated rhetorical commitments by EU actors, it is still absent from key policy areas (Abels and Mushaben, 2012) and is often treated as procedural, rather than substantive (Squires, 2007; Woodward, 2008).

In all of these examples, horizontal policy coordination refers to a crosscutting issue being integrated into another policy area. One objective is given ‘principled priority’ (Mickwitz and Kivimaa, 2007: 71). In the case of policy coherence for development, the objective which has

priority is development, and policymakers in other areas are under a Treaty obligation to ‘take account of the objectives of development cooperation’ (Article 208 TFEU). A different way of describing the intersection of two or more issues is through the term ‘nexus’, which is becoming increasingly common in EU policy documents and an accompanying scholarly literature (Lavenex and Kunz, 2009; Carbone, 2013; Furness and Gänzle, 2017; De Roeck, Orbie and Delputte, 2018). Nexuses do not suggest an inherent principled priority. Nevertheless, studies show that, in practice, power relations between the policymaking institutions give precedence to certain policy objectives. Lavenex and Kunz (2009), in their study of the migration-development nexus, found conflicts between and within the various institutions involved over competing ways of framing the links between migration and development. They also found that, despite a changing rhetoric, there was an ‘impressive persistence’ of the original policy frames. They argue that the migration-development nexus prioritises the EU’s migration policy goals (Lavenex and Kunz, 2009).

Furness and Gänzle (2017: 478) argue that:

Horizontal policy objectives do not always co-exist harmoniously but are often contested. [...] Conceptualising policy coherence requires an understanding of goal hierarchies, while working towards more coherent policy requires trade-offs between objectives as incoherencies become apparent. Political constituencies with interests in particular outcomes are unlikely to accept unfavourable trade-offs easily, even when there is clear evidence of the negative effects of incoherence for others. The impact of institutional reforms on policy coherence is therefore likely to be marginal unless they are the result of a political decision to prioritise certain outcomes, reinforced by an adequate system of incentives that can induce actors to behave in a certain way.

In other words, we need to consider the influence of both development objectives and gender equality within the broader set of external priorities. If they are not accorded as much importance as migration and security, for example, policy coherence in their favour (policy coherence for development and gender mainstreaming) will not work.

In summary, horizontal policy coordination gives principled priority to one objective, but can fail for a number of reasons, including the relative power of institutions and policy agendas. Nexuses do not *a priori* suggest principled priority, but one policy area can dominate another. Drawing on these literatures, we can ask how crisis issues intersect with development and what happens to gender equality at these intersections. Development policy is widely regarded as occupying a weak position in EU decision-making institutions (Carrera, 2011), and its objectives can therefore be subordinated to those of more influential sectors, such as trade, energy and transport. This is significant because development policy has been much more responsive to gender equality concerns. So, if development policy loses influence, gender equality is likely to become even less visible. The extensive literature on gender mainstreaming has analysed in depth the gap between rhetoric and reality in numerous areas of EU policymaking, including development. The much smaller literature on gender equality in policy coherence for development or other nexuses (Allwood, 2013, 2014, 2015) finds that gender is absent from the intersections between policies on development and other related areas.

### **Gender equality on the development policy agenda**

For nearly two decades, gender equality has been present in EU development policy. The first explicit commitment appears in the Cotonou Agreement (2000/483/EC), which governs relations between the EU and the 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. Further

commitments have been articulated in the core development policy documents: the 2005 European Consensus on Development (Council, the representatives of the governments of the member states meeting within the Parliament and European Commission, 2006), the 2011 Agenda for Change (Council of the European Union, 2012), and the 2017 New European Consensus on Development (European Parliament, Council and European Commission, 2017). Gender equality is justified on the grounds that it is an important goal in and of itself, but is also essential to the achievement of development objectives. Important documents have focused specifically on gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation, establishing development policy as a frontrunner in this respect. These include the 2007 Commission Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation and the related Council Conclusions (Council of the European Union, 2007); the 2010 Gender Action Plan (GAP) (European Commission, 2010), and the 2015 second Gender Action Plan (GAP II) (European Commission; High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2015).

The first Gender Action Plan (2010-15) (European Commission, 2010) was designed to translate the now well-established commitment to gender equality into practice. It set out clear plans for implementation. However, despite its innovative nature and the drive and commitment of those who brought it to fruition, its success was limited, as reported in a number of internal and external evaluations (O'Connell, 2013; Watkins et al., 2015). The second Gender Action Plan (2016-20) (European Commission; High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2015) extends its reach to all areas of external action, rather than just development cooperation. It was adopted in 2015, a year in which a number of important and relevant international agreements were concluded, including the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda. This context exerts a significant influence on the way in which efforts to promote gender equality are framed. The EU's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-19 (European Commission, 2015b: 16) states that:

The protection and promotion of women's and girls' rights and gender equality is a policy priority for the EU's external relations, and the EU is strongly committed to playing a lead role in this respect. These are essential pre-conditions for equitable and inclusive sustainable development, and important values and objectives in themselves. They are also a pre-condition for peace and security worldwide and help to counter radicalisation and extremism, which denigrate women and violate their rights and dignity.

The UN's 2030 Agenda, with its universally applicable Sustainable Development Goals, functions as a critical reference point for the EU's gender equality strategy and for its development policy.

GAP II has three thematic pivotal areas: ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity; promoting the economic and social rights/empowerment of girls and women; and strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation. It also has a crosscutting pivotal area: 'shifting the Commission services and the EEAS's institutional culture to more effectively deliver on EU commitments.' This is an effort to address one of the fundamental failings of GAP I. Institutional cultural shift aims to instil gender knowledge and commitment throughout the relevant institutions at all levels, including the most senior. This is to avoid responsibility for gender equality being assigned to a junior, often temporary, member of staff and having little impact at higher levels or in priority sectors, such as agriculture and energy. The European Commission's first annual report on the implementation of GAP II showed that

some progress had been made, but that more remains to be done. There is little evidence that gender is featuring in political dialogue with partner countries or that it has more presence in the sectors selected as focal areas for development cooperation in the partner countries, such as agriculture or energy (European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2017). The EC's second annual implementation report (European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2018) shows that gender equality is still rarely included in political and policy dialogues with partner governments on topics such as trade, energy and transport.

In EU development policy, 'gender' often means women, and 'gender equality' often means equality between women and men. Efforts to incorporate an intersectional approach are emerging slowly. GAP II, for example, states that 'The gender gap is even larger when gender inequality intersects with other forms of exclusion, such as disability, age, caste, ethnicity, sexual orientation, geographical remoteness or religion.' However, the European Parliament's report on the implementation of GAP II 'calls for a greater focus on the implementation of GAP II on girls and women who suffer additional discrimination on account of ethnicity, sexuality, disability, caste, or age, and for data to be broken down accordingly' (European Parliament Committee on Development and European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, 2018: 9). In a clear reference to Agenda 2030 and its commitment to 'leave no-one behind', the new European Consensus on Development states that:

The EU and its MS will continue to play a key role in ensuring that no-one is left behind, [...] regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, disability, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation and gender identity, migration status or other factors. This approach includes addressing the multiple discriminations faced by vulnerable people and marginalised groups.' (European Parliament, Council and European Commission, 2017 Paragraph 16).

This incorporation of an intersectional approach from Agenda 2030 could help the EU's construction of gender equality as equivalent to 'equality between women and men' to evolve.

The place of gender on the EU's development policy agenda has benefited from the actions of policy actors, engaged member states, and gender and development advocacy coalitions (Allwood, 2013: 47–8). This has been reinforced by the presence of internal gender champions, for example, Development Commissioner Neven Mimica, who declared that he would be 'the most feminist Commissioner' (Gotev, no date). The profile of gender in the EEAS has been raised due to the commitment of Catherine Ashton and Federica Mogherini, efforts to bring about institutional cultural change, and the appointment of a Principal Advisor on Gender, Mara Marinaki. Within the EEAS, there is a reported perception that the Women, Peace and Security agenda has benefited in particular (Interview EEAS 8 December 2016), although Guerrina and Wright (2016: 298) argue that the absence of key actors championing this agenda in the EEAS means that gender 'remains peripheral'. Secondly, the influence of international agendas, including more recently those of UN Women and the Sustainable Development Goals, has been important. Thirdly, development policy has perhaps benefited from its low profile within EU foreign policy:

I think to some extent it is almost luck that development policy is not that high up on the political agenda, so we can actually maybe do some more work there without being subjected to the political interest of all the MS and some of the other political forces in the Commission' (Interview with development NGO, 21 March 2017).

However, despite its established place on the development policy agenda, gender equality still suffers from poor implementation, limited resources and poor buy-in at senior level. Relative power imbalances between different EU institutions mean that the agendas of some institutions are more directly linked to the decision agenda than others (Allwood, 2018a: 131), and, as stated earlier, development policy occupies a weak institutional position (Carrera, 2011).

This article asks whether the promotion of gender equality in EU development policy is affected by the discourse of crisis, and in particular, the migration-climate change crises, as they appear separately and, more challengingly, as they intersect in a number of complex nexuses.

## Methodology

The research is based on content analysis of key policy documents, combined with eleven semi-structured interviews conducted in Brussels in November-December 2016 and February-March 2017 with gender and development policy actors and advocates. The documents selected for analysis were the key strategic and implementation documents on EU development policy; the main gender and development documents from the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament; key gender equality documents from the Commission; and the document setting out the EU's overall external policy: the Global Strategy. A full list of the documents analysed appears in Table 1. Interviews were conducted with key actors closely engaged with gender and development in the European External Action Service (4 respondents); the European Parliament (3 respondents), and Brussels-based gender and development NGOs (4 respondents). They were asked how gender is integrated into EU development policy; about individuals and institutions; about policy formulation and implementation; and about the relation between development, migration, climate change and security. Questions centred on who were the key actors; what were the institutional facilitators and obstacles; how gender equality and women's empowerment are framed, and how this has changed over time; and what contextual factors have affected its framing and its visibility in key policy documents. A preliminary survey of the main development policy documents and a keyword search for crisis/threat/challenge revealed an association between the idea of crisis, security, migration and climate change. This informed the design of the coding used to analyse the documents and interviews. The documents and interviews were coded for gender; women; nexus; climate; migration; crisis/threat/challenge; coherence and security. The use of each of these terms was analysed, then the relation between them. Particular attention was paid to the intersection of these terms. The following sections present each of these findings in turn.

### Table 1. Policy documents analysed

Council Conclusions on 'Increasing the Impact of EU Development Policy: An Agenda for Change', 14 May 2012.
Council Conclusions on 'Policy Coherence for Development', 14 May 2012.
Council Conclusions on 'A Transformative Post-2015 Agenda', 16 December 2014.
Council Conclusions on 'Gender in Development', 26 May 2015.
Council Conclusions Outcome of Proceedings Gender Action Plan 2016-2020, 26 October 2015.
Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development DG DEVCO, Management Plan 2018.
European Commission 2015 Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-20.
European Commission Communication 2011 Increasing the Impact of EU Development Policy: An Agenda for Change.
European Commission Communication 2013 A Decent Life for All: Ending Poverty and

Giving the World a Sustainable Future.  
 European Commission Communication 2016 Next Steps for a Sustainable Future. European Action for Sustainability.  
 DG International Cooperation and Development – DG DEVCO 2016 – Strategic Plan 2016-20.  
 European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Joint Communication 2016 A Renewed Partnership with the Countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.  
 European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy 2017 Annual Implementation Report 2016 on EU Gender Action Plan II Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020.  
 European Parliament Committee on Development 2014 Report on the EU and the Global Development Framework after 2015.  
 European Parliament Committees on Development and Women’s Rights and Gender Equality 2018 Report on the Implementation of the Joint Staff Working Document Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020.  
 European Parliament, Council, and European Commission 2017 The New European Consensus on Development: Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future.  
 European Parliamentary Research Service 2017 EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 at Year One. European Implementation Assessment.  
 High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy 2016 A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy. Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe.

The research finds, firstly, that migration and climate change feature in development policy as crises, challenges or threats that development policy needs to address. Secondly, these crises are presented as intersecting, using the language of nexuses. Finally, where these nexuses occur, gender is always absent

**Finding 1: Migration and climate change are increasingly featuring in development policy as crises, challenges or threats that development policy needs to address.**

A broad discourse of crisis and threats infuses the policy documents and establishes the context in which strategies and plans are introduced and justified. For example, the Global Strategy (High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2016) paints a picture of growing crisis, instability and insecurity, which is then used to justify proposed EU actions. The threats evoked include terrorism, violence and climate change. The Communication on the renewed partnership with the ACP countries (European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2016: 6) is couched in a discourse of crisis:

This comes at a time characterised by persistent situations of fragility and vulnerability, the uneven progress within and between countries, and the rapidly growing negative effects of climate change and environmental degradation, which are undermining social and economic stability in various parts of the world [...] This challenging environment [is] one of the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement.’

Migration has risen to the top of the EU’s external agenda. It is constructed as a crisis for the EU, and development policy is seen as an important element of the response. DG DEVCO’s



own documents have embraced this approach. For example, ‘The current refugee crisis affecting Europe and its neighbours is not just a humanitarian challenge, but a political, developmental and economic one.’ (European Commission, 2016). The problem of the ‘migration crisis’ is presented in such a way that development policy is tied into the solution. The issue is portrayed as both serious and urgent. EU development policy is constructed as an important element of the required response, and if it does not address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, migration policy will fail (European Commission, 2016):

The EU’s development cooperation has a central role to play in addressing the key drivers of migration, through eradicating poverty, improving the socio-economic situation, and supporting favourable environments for economic and political stabilisation around the world. There is a direct link between development cooperation and tackling the causes of irregular migration, specifically by addressing political, economic and social instability, in a number of sectors.

Climate change is also constructed as a crisis that development policy needs to address, often in order to prevent migration. According to the policy documents, climate change: leads to migration/forced displacement ; leads to conflict; threatens the security of the EU; is a threat multiplier; threatens the achievement of sustainable development; and causes poverty. The documents suggest that the climate change crisis must be addressed via: energy security; climate change mitigation and adaptation; building resilience; and the mainstreaming of climate change throughout EU and member state development cooperation strategies. This last point illustrates the complexities of intersecting policy areas. The need to mainstream climate change appears alongside the need to mainstream migration, as well as other crosscutting issues, including gender and human rights. The following section shows how the migration and climate change crises intersect.

## **Finding 2: These crises are often presented as intersecting, using the language of nexuses**

External policy refers to complex intersections of issues, some of which are presented as global challenges, threats or crises. For example, the new Consensus for Development (European Parliament, Council and European Commission, 2017) refers to the need to ‘strengthen the nexuses between development and security, humanitarian and migration issues.’ The Global Strategy (High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2016: 36) talks about ‘blend[ing] development efforts with work on migration, health, education, energy and climate, science and technology.’ Development policy is described as closely linked to two of the Commission’s priorities: migration and climate change.

The Lisbon Treaty enhanced the standing of EU external action and at the same time reduced the profile of development policy within it. Although policy coherence for development remains a commitment in principle, it is no longer the primary way of describing relations between development policy and other areas of internal and external action. The DEVCO Strategic Plan 2016-20 (European Commission, 2016: 13), for example, states that, ‘Since the Lisbon Treaty came into force, all of these policies must be pursued within the framework of general principles and objectives. In addition to eradicating poverty, these objectives include *inter alia* fostering sustainable development [...] and strengthening security.’ The Global Strategy (High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2016: 11) states that ‘Development policy needs to become more flexible and aligned with our strategic priorities.’ The creation of the EEAS changed the development policymaking structures and processes and increased the intersections between development and the other areas of external

activity. The revised European Consensus on Development (European Parliament, Council and European Commission, 2017) illustrates the increased pressure on development policy to contribute to other EU priorities, especially migration and security. The proposed Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-7 (European Commission, 2018) creates a single funding instrument for external action, blurring the distinction between EU foreign policy and EU development policy. It also increases the share of migration and security-related expenditure.

Three of the nexuses which appear frequently in development policy documents and broader EU external action documents are: development-migration; development-climate change-migration; and development-climate change-security. This section will show how these nexuses are represented.

### *Nexus 1. Development-migration*

The most visible nexus which has transformed development policy since the Lisbon Treaty is the development-migration nexus. Migration was declared a priority area for policy coherence for development in 2009 (European Commission, 2009). This meant that migration policy must not undermine the objectives of development policy which are, according to the TFEU Article 208, the reduction and, in the long term, the eradication of poverty. In a reversal of priorities, it is now explicitly required for migration to be mainstreamed into development cooperation. In other words, development policy now serves migration policy priorities. DG DEVCO (2018: 19) confirms its commitment to this in its Management Plan: ‘DEVCO will directly contribute to the achievement of EU commitments in the European Agenda on Migration, in full alignment with the migration-related objectives of the European Consensus on Development.’ If we compare this with the Agenda for Change (European Commission, 2011), which set out the EU’s development policy at the time, we can see the marked change in emphasis. The Agenda for Change (European Commission, 2011: 12) states:

In terms of the development-migration nexus, the EU should assist developing countries in strengthening their policies, capacities and activities in the area of migration and mobility, with a view to maximising the development impact of the increased regional and global mobility of people.

The European Parliament (7 June 2016) calls for the prioritisation of development objectives within the new EU migration policy, as a preferable way of strengthening the link between migration and development policy. The European Parliament stresses that development aid should not be used for migration control purposes, and it opposes aid conditionality dependent on partner countries cooperating on return and readmission (European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), 2016: 1). Instead, it argues that development policy should stick to its main goal, which is the alleviation of poverty, rather than promoting the European interest. The European Parliament warns that policy coherence for development is being redefined ‘to include some potentially competing issues that have grown in importance on the global agenda, such as security, environment and migration’ (European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), 2016: 8).

The Brussels-based federation of development NGOs, CONCORD (2015: 4), similarly argues that EU approaches to migration and development are dominated by security concerns, thus undermining development goals, both financially and politically. Development policy is used to prevent migration (CONCORD, 2015, p. 4). For example, the European Council (June 2015) decided that development tools should be used to reinforce the capacity of developing countries for border control, asylum, and counter-smuggling. CONCORD (2015: 5) argues that this conflicts with the EU policy coherence for development commitment to make external

migration policy coherent with development objectives, and in fact seems to promote the opposite, which is making development policy coherent with migration policy objectives.

### *Nexus 2. Development-climate change-migration*

Climate change is represented as one of the root causes of migration, and development policy is called upon to address it as such (European Commission, 2015a: 7; European Parliament, Council and European Commission, 2017 Paragraph 71). The prevention and mitigation of climate change is declared to be ‘of primary importance for the migration debate’ (European Commission, 2015a: 7). Development policy is expected to mainstream climate change adaptation to render partner countries more resilient to coping with climate change consequences in order to address the root causes of the migration crisis (European Commission, 2016).

### *Nexus 3. Development-climate change-security*

Climate change is represented as a ‘threat multiplier’ for security, increasing the risk of conflict and displacement. In a section of its Conclusions on Climate Diplomacy (Council of the European Union, 2018) entitled ‘Addressing the nexus between climate change and security’, the Council:

‘4. RECOGNISES that climate change has direct and indirect implications for international security and stability, chiefly affecting those in most fragile and vulnerable situations, contributing to the loss of livelihoods, reinforcing environmental pressures and disaster risk, forcing the displacement of people and exacerbating the threat of social and political unrest. [...] 6. RECONFIRMS that as climate change acts as a threat multiplier, development responses need to become more conflict sensitive as much as security approaches need to become more climate sensitive, particularly for countries which are especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and are already under pressure from natural, societal or political sources. *RESOLVES to further mainstream the nexus between climate change and security in policy dialogue, conflict prevention, development and humanitarian action and disaster risk strategies*’ (my emphasis).

This upgrades the challenge of mainstreaming. Not only are climate change, migration and other crosscutting issues to be mainstreamed in development cooperation and policy dialogue, but the nexus between them must also be mainstreamed. This raises questions about the practicalities of addressing complex webs of intersecting issues, especially when some of them are accorded priority status. It also creates a context in which the mainstreaming of gender becomes even more challenging.

### **Finding 3: Where these nexuses occur, gender is always absent**

Development policy’s commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment is well established and regularly reaffirmed, for example, it was clearly articulated in the Council Conclusions of May and October 2015, in GAP II and in the European Consensus on Development, which states (Paragraph 15) that ‘the EU and its member states will promote women and girls’ rights, gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and their protection as a priority across all areas of action.’ However, development policy is increasingly intertwined with, and arguably subsumed under, other areas of EU external action, including migration and climate change. Where these different policy areas intersect, gender is always absent. The EU’s foreign policy is set out in the 2016 Global Strategy, which emphasises the importance of ‘coherence’ (10 references); ‘joined-up policy’ (12 references) and ‘coordination’ (18 references). For example, it states that ‘the EU will adopt a joined-up

approach to its humanitarian, development, migration, trade, investment, infrastructure, education, health and research policies’ (p. 26). It states that the Union will make development and climate policy ‘migration-sensitive’ (p. 50). With regards to gender, it states that ‘we will systematically mainstream human rights and gender issues across policy sectors and institutions’ (p. 11 and again on p. 51), but the rest of the Strategy remains gender-blind. The proposed Multiannual Financial Framework (European Commission, 2018: 82) states that ‘important cross-cutting priorities such as environment and climate action and gender will be mainstreamed throughout the [Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation] instrument.’ However, it then immediately accords precedence to migration, stating that ‘Migration is a priority which will be identified and addressed across the instrument and in the different pillars, including by drawing on unallocated funds.’

Gender experts in Brussels-based international development NGOs highlight the negative impact on gender equality of the new priority nexuses. For example:

I am not very hopeful for the coming couple of years. Not while this Commission is in place. Even though you have the individual champions of gender equality, like Commissioner Mimica, who is trying to do his best, they’re fighting against this tidal wave which is that we’ve got to address security and migration issues. [...] Just look at the EU Global Foreign and Security Policy. You get gender stuck in a box. It’s stuck in a few pages rather than understanding what gendering all the different issues would look like (Interview NGO, 2 February 2017).

There has been a huge focus on migration and development policy, and a lot of ODA is being shifted from traditional programmes to big trust funds to be channelled into stopping migration [...] Development cooperation is definitely being negatively affected by this and issues such as gender equality are not that high on the agenda due to this extreme focus on migration. So I think this is the challenge (Interview NGO 21 March 2017).

Policy changes in the area of migration in the last couple of years are extremely negative from a human rights perspective in general and from a gender perspective. I think a lot of forces in the European Parliament are trying to highlight the very negative gender consequences that the new migration policies have had. [...] There are obviously other interests that determine what happens in the migration area, and I find it difficult to imagine [...] that the EU would change its stance on migration based on what consequences it has for gender equality (Interview NGO 21 March 2017).

Gender is currently absent from these nexuses, with the exception of some sweeping general statements about the importance of integrating it throughout all policy sectors and institutions. The Union’s commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals could represent a way of putting gender equality at the centre of its response to these interconnected crises. Gender equality and women’s empowerment are a precondition for achieving all of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as being a free-standing issue (SDG5). The European Consensus on Development (European Parliament, Council and European Commission, 2017 Paragraph 10) states that: ‘policy coherence for development is a fundamental part of the EU’s contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.’ The corollary of this is that gender equality and women’s empowerment have to be taken as seriously in other areas of EU internal and external action as in development cooperation. In some areas which are priorities for the EU, such as trade, this still requires significant improvement (CONCORD and WIDE+,

2018; European Parliament, 2018). In the nexuses between priority areas, it requires a fundamentally new approach, so that gender does not drop off the agenda as soon as these nexuses appear.

## **Conclusion**

The crisis and securitisation literature tells us that crises are constructed through narrative and discourse; that they are characterised by threat, urgency and uncertainty; and that they can push other issues off the agenda. This article has shown how migration and climate change are constructed as crises in EU development policy, and how they intersect in a series of nexuses, from which gender is always absent. The discourse of crisis attached to the crosscutting priorities of migration and climate change adds urgency and importance to them. This contributes to the inversion of the principle of policy coherence for development, identified by Lavenex and Kunz (2009). Instead of migration, security and climate change serving development objectives, development policy is required to serve migration, security and climate change objectives, as is illustrated by the Commission's proposal for the new budget 2021-27 (European Commission, 2018: 82). Development policy has responded to the various crises constructed as priorities in EU external policy. In doing so, the focus on the single objective of reducing and ultimately eradicating poverty has been expanded to include global challenges and EU priorities, as set out in the policy documents analysed in this study. These global challenges and EU priorities normally feature migration, security and climate change, and sometimes include democracy and human rights. Although all of these issues are gendered, the policy documents address them in a gender-blind fashion, with the exception of sweeping statements about the need to mainstream gender throughout all policy sectors.

This article shows that nexuses are driving development policy, but that, in contrast to development policy itself, they are gender-blind. This is a regressive step for EU gender and development and, because it has been a frontrunner, a regressive step for the EU as a whole and for organisations and states which the EU argues will look to it as a model. For example, in the EC June 2018 MFF proposal, the Commission states (p. 80):

With its leadership position in humanitarian and development cooperation, the EU is in a unique position to project its values, promote the Sustainable Development Goals throughout the world and respond to global challenges, including migration, conflict, instability, security, poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation and energy security.

As policymakers increasingly refer to the nexuses between multiple policy sectors and priorities and challenges, theoretical understanding of these complex intersections needs to keep pace. The existing literatures on various forms of horizontal policy coordination, including policy coherence for development, gender mainstreaming and climate change integration, need to take into consideration how these forms of coordination relate to each other. This article contributes to this emerging area of research, building on existing work (Lavenex and Kunz, 2009; Furness and Gänzle, 2017). If we look at the research findings using the theoretical insights of the literature on horizontal policy coordination, we can identify two key problems: firstly, how can the complex intersections between migration-security-development-climate change be managed in the context of crisis? Secondly, how can gender be kept at the heart of them? This second problem is much more challenging than simply keeping gender on the development agenda. In the case of development policy, gender equality is firmly on the agenda. However, commitments to gender equality have not yet been fully implemented in such a way that their positive effect can be seen (Allwood, 2018b). GAP II has maintained or raised the profile of gender equality on the EU development agenda. It is a strong

statement combined with efforts to achieve meaningful implementation. However, this article has shown that the discourse of crisis blocks gender equality's access to the agenda, particularly when multiple policy areas intersect. If, as the Sustainable Development Goals suggest, gender equality is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development, peace and security, and climate change mitigation and adaptation, then it must be integrated into all of these policy areas, including at the intersections between them. Having a place on the development policy agenda is necessary, but not sufficient.

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