“THE COHERENCE AND IMPACT OF RICH COUNTRIES’ POLICIES ON DEVELOPING COUNTRIES”
Experts’ Seminar
jointly organised by the OECD Development Centre and the Global Policy Project with the support of the governments of the Netherlands and Sweden


SUMMARY

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JT00147674

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1. On 23-24 June 2003, with the aid of sponsorship from the governments of the Netherlands and Sweden, the OECD Development Centre and the Global Policy Project convened an experts’ seminar at OECD Headquarters on the development coherence and impact of rich countries’ policies. The agenda took account of the results of the Global Policy Workshop that had taken place in Cairo in January 2003 under the aegis of the Global Development Network Annual Conference. The seminar brought together policy analysts from developed and developing countries, civil society organisations, bilateral donors, multilateral organisations as well as staff from the OECD Secretariat and Permanent Delegations.

2. The first session of the seminar addressed policy coherence. Robert van den Berg (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands) described the evaluation study of the three Cs (coherence, coordination and complementarity) being launched by European development evaluation units. Alexandra Trzeciak-Duval outlined the coherence dimensions of the analytical and collaborative program of the OECD. Torgny Holmgren (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden) brought out the coherence theme embedded in the development policy statement recently endorsed by the Swedish parliament. Otto Genee (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands) briefed participants about the distinctive “Dutch” approach to the design and monitoring of national policy coherence.

3. At the next session, Stijn Claessens (University of Amsterdam) identified the research gaps associated with the current global financial architecture and Tom Palley (Open Society Institute) proposed an institutional approach to the assessment of international capital flows, exchange rate volatility and trade protectionism that transcends market based paradigms. The thematic session was followed by regionally focused sessions featuring impact research proposals by Chia Siow Yue (Singapore Institute of International Affairs), Satish Chand (Australian National University), Arvind Virmani (Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations), Mohamed A. Chemingui (Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research), Michael Clemens (Center for Global Development) and L. Alan Winters (University of Sussex).

4. At the wrap-up session, Lyn Squire (Global Development Network) expressed the strong interest of the Global Development Network in sponsoring research about the development impact of rich countries’ policies. In their conclusions the co-chairs of the session, Robert Picciotto (Global Policy Project) and Ulrich Hiemenz, noted that the diversity of development concerns articulated by participants did not stand in the way of a substantial consistency of views about knowledge gaps and research priorities. Specifically, and despite the complexity of the technical issues discussed, the impact research proposals tabled for discussion converged around common themes.

5. In particular, they emphasised trade, migration, aid and foreign investment while acknowledging the need to consider other policies as well (e.g. security, intellectual property, environment, etc.) on a case-by-case basis. The general sense of the meeting was that, beyond a “core” of relevant policy questions in four of the policy vectors examined during the workshop, the precise delineation of the impact research at country level should be left to the researchers concerned. However, a single research umbrella should be constructed to tap synergies, economise in the use of scarce advisory skills and provide quality assurance geared to consistency and excellence in research methods.

6. Coherence research also featured in some of the presentations. Here too, the consensus was that trade-offs, synergies and welfare implications of reform in OECD countries should be handled on a case-by-case basis and with a clear focus on political economy constraints. However, the sense of the meeting was that coherence work, while coordinated with the impact studies, would best be managed by northern policy research institutions and funded separately.
7. In sum, it was agreed that a single research proposal for country impact studies should be designed drawing on the major features of the proposals presented at the seminar. Specifically, the proposed research would:

- Assess the relative importance of changes in rich countries’ policies;
- Examine the impact of selected OECD policy reform actions on sustainable poverty reduction within a broadly representative sample of developing countries; and,
- Evaluate potential developing countries’ policy and institutional responses to shifts in rich countries’ policies.

8. A summary of seminar deliberations and a draft research concept paper (including organisational options) will be prepared and circulated to seminar participants. Methodological refinements and organisational details will be incorporated in the light of a follow up workshop to be hosted by the Centre for Global Development in Washington D.C. in October 2003. The research proposal will then be finalised, costed and reviewed by the Global Development Network Board prior to its submission to potential donors.