



MIGNEX Background Paper

Examination of internal incoherence in European policies in the field of migration

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MIGNEX

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MIGNEX Background Papers

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List of acronyms

CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CSO	civil society organisation
DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
EC	European Commission
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EU	European Union
GAMM	Global Approach to Migration and Mobility
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCD	policy coherence for development
PICMD	policy and institutional coherence for migration and development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Examination of internal incoherence in European policies in the field of migration

Drafted a decade apart, the 2011 Global Approach to Migration and Mobility and the 2020 New Pact on Migration and Asylum demonstrate a clear shift in European migration policy. How has the concept of policy (in)coherence played a part in this, and have its meaning and aims changed over time?

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The study of policy incoherence in European migration policies reveals discrepancies between understanding of coherence among policy-makers and understanding in academic analyses.

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Coherence in the policy world primarily concerns the ‘coordination’ of policies (‘horizontal coherence’), ‘cooperation’ between actors (‘vertical coherence’) and as an ideal to strive towards.

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The EU’s understanding of coherence has shifted from a polysemic approach to the migration–development nexus, to coherence for the more efficient return of irregular migrants.

Introduction

On 23 September 2020, the European Commission (EC) unveiled a proposal for a **New Pact on Migration and Asylum** (hereafter the ‘New Pact’) (Commission to the European Parliament, 2020). The New Pact responded to broader concerns about the functioning of the European approach to migration that had increased in the years following the so-called migration ‘crisis’ of 2015. It is too early to assess the extent to which the New Pact will live up to its ambition of being the long sought-after coherent strategy on migration. However, it is possible to critically examine the New Pact in light

of policies past and, in particular, by examining how the concept of policy coherence has evolved in the European context.

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Accordingly, in this paper, we unpack what is meant by the concept of (in)coherence and use narrative policy analysis methods to examine the internal coherence of key European migration policy documents, namely the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) (European Commission, 2011) and the New Pact on Migration and Asylum (Commission to the European Parliament, 2020).

We argue that the evolving concept of a ‘migration and development nexus’ has facilitated the adoption of the concept of coherence in migration policy. But, in travelling from one policy sector to the other, we demonstrate how the meaning of policy coherence has changed over time and how its initial aims have also been reformulated. We argue that the primary shift has been from policy coherence for development (PCD) that included migration as part of a set of ‘development-relevant policies’, to development policies being mainly understood as ‘migration-relevant policies’.

In order to elaborate this argument further, the remainder of the paper is structured as follows. In the section Background and relevance we first provide a brief account of the emergence of PCD as a concept in the European context, before considering how the link between PCD and the migration–development nexus occurred. Despite this empirical reality, the concepts of policy coherence and migration are rarely connected in the academic literature. As such, we go on to operationalise the concept of internal coherence and embed our research within the academic literature by drawing on relevant theoretical and empirical literature (Conceptualising (in)coherence). We present our methodological approach and the key findings of our analysis (From GAMM to the New Pact on Migration and Asylum: the evolving links between policy coherence and the migration–development nexus), before concluding the paper with reflections on our findings and potential avenues for further research.

Background and relevance

This section provides a brief conceptual history of PCD and policy and institutional coherence for migration and development (PICMD). It goes on with a critical discussion of the migration–development nexus that informs the subsequent analysis in the section The migration and development nexus.

Policy coherence for development

The concept of **policy coherence for development** (PCD) originally comes from the development sector. PCD can be traced back to a High-Level Meeting of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1991 (Carbone, 2013; Verschaeve et al., 2016). Although it is beyond the scope of this MIGNEX Background Paper to delve into this history in detail, it is important to note that PCD emerged from a broader discussion on the effectiveness of aid that came in the wake of declining aid budgets (Carbone and Keijzer, 2016). PCD

has since been institutionalised within the work of the OECD, with its Member States formally committing to PCD in a Ministerial Declaration in 2008 (OECD, 2016). This act was further strengthened by the recognition of PCD in the OECD Strategy on Development in 2012 (Verschaeve et al., 2016).

Policy coherence has also received noteworthy attention in Europe and was enshrined in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 (European Parliament, 1992). The concept can be found in the Maastricht Treaty's '3Cs' of Complementarity, Coordination and Coherence, alongside a commitment to 'take account of' the external dimensions of EU policies (Carbone, 2013). The concept was further operationalised in the Lisbon Treaty (European Parliament, 2012: article 208), which 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 countries¹'. Despite this official recognition in EU legislation, however, the principle of coherence did not make much headway during the 1990s (Carbone, 2008).

In the early 1990s the EC was urged by Member States to prepare a report on the implications of coherence, but it did not do so, citing lack of manpower and political will. Civil society organisations (CSOs) arguably contributed to the development of the concept, however, by advocating against policies and practices that they viewed as undermining development in non-European countries. This included subsidies for meat exports to West Africa in 1993, which caused disruptions to local markets (Hebinck, 2008). Other campaigns drew attention to the overcapacity of the European Union's (EU) fishing fleets in 1996 and in 1997 to the Chocolate Directive, which served the interests of the manufacturers and distributors of chocolate over those of cocoa-producing countries (Carbone, 2008).

Perhaps in part fuelled by these advocacy efforts, the early 2000s saw several initiatives launched with a view to operationalising PCD, most notably with coherence being included in the OECD DAC peer review process (Carbone, 2008; Verschaeve et al., 2016). Indeed, the 2005 European Consensus on Development identified PCD as a key strategic priority (ibid.). Initially, the intention was to focus on addressing policy coherence for development in 12 thematic areas (trade, environment, climate change, security, agriculture, fisheries, employment, migration, research and innovation, information technologies, transport, and energy). This was later narrowed down to five priority areas: trade and finance, climate change, food security, migration, and security (Seters et al., 2015). Yet the fact that migration remained a priority area for PCD lends weight to the idea that migration policies have an impact on different aspects of the development agenda (European Commission, 2015a).

In other words, migration has long been viewed as a policy area of relevance to the discussion of PCD. More recently, PCD was defined as one of the core 'means of implementation' of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through its incorporation into SDG Targets 17.13–17.15 (UN,

¹ Article 208 of the consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12008E208:EN:HTML>

2015).² Similarly, migration has been well represented across Agenda 2030 and the SDGs with a dedicated paragraph in the preamble; several explicit references to migration and trafficking;³ and many more implicit references. Questioning who will benefit from the inclusion of migration in the SDGs, Bakewell (2015) argues that migration and mobility are being primarily discussed in terms of management and control – especially in clause 10.7 of the SDGs – instead of as drivers that could potentially reduce inequality. In a review of several exercises that map migration across the SDGs, Lebon-McGregor (2020a) identifies discursive connections between migration and 100 of the 169 Targets in the SDGs. One such connection, and the focus of the next section of this paper, is the relationship between the concept of PCD and the migration–development nexus.

Policy and institutional coherence for migration and development

Different approaches to operationalise the migration–development nexus are apparent in policy efforts to operationalise the concept of PICMD. **Policy and Institutional Coherence for Migration and Development** is defined by Hong and Knoll (2016: vii) as policies for migration and development that ‘pursue synergies to advance shared objectives, actively seek to minimise or eliminate negative side effects of policies, [and] prevent policies from detracting from one another or from the achievement of agreed-upon development goals’. In developing this definition, the authors build conceptually on the OECD’s work on PCD.

The concept of PICMD has been most strongly advocated by the World Bank’s Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD). The OECD and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were co-leads of the KNOMAD Thematic Working Group on Policy and Institutional Coherence for Migration. One of the outputs of this group has been a tool kit of indicators purporting to measure PICMD. While the toolkit does focus on economic aspects of PICMD, including reducing the costs of migration and remittances, it also captures policies related to enhancing the integration of migrants, addressing discrimination, promoting pathways to citizenship and so forth, which point to a broad understanding of the relationship between migration and development.

In the EU context, the approach to the migration–development nexus from a coherence perspective has been more theoretical than practical. From its foundation with the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 to the early 2000s, the EU formulated its policies on immigration from outside the EU in terms of what has often been called the ‘migration–security nexus’ (Geddes, 2000; Guiraudon, 2000; Kostakopoulou, 2000; Lavenex, 2001; Huysmans, 2006).

² Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. Target 17.13: Enhance global macroeconomic stability including through policy coordination and policy coherence. Target 17.14: Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.

³ Migration is mentioned explicitly in the Goals on reducing inequality (Goal 10 Targets 7c), promoting decent work and economic growth (Goal 8 Target 8), and in the context of data disaggregation in Goal 17 (Target 18). Human trafficking is mentioned in the context of gender equality (Goal 5 Target 2) and decent work (Goal 8 Target 7) and in promoting peaceful societies (Goal 16 Target 12). Mobility for higher education is also included in Goal 4 (Target 4b).

Thereby, it framed migration in terms of security issues for the destination countries (Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002; Faist, 2004; Lavenex and Kunz, 2008).

In the mid-2000s, however, the EU changed the framing of its migration policies and adopted an approach that emphasised the positive impact of migration on the development of both the sending and receiving countries (Lavenex and Kunz, 2008). This shift was preceded by growing evidence of the multifaceted linkages between migration and development (aid) (Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002), as well as the efforts of international organisations to emphasise development in order to depoliticise the highly contested issue of migration and thereby find international agreement (Lebon-McGregor, 2020a, 2020b; Pécout, 2021). In 2002, the UN launched a Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) which – among other things – highlighted possible linkages between migration and development. The same year, the World Bank took up the topic and highlighted the scale of remittances (Lavenex and Kunz, 2008; Lebon-McGregor, 2020a). The EU followed three years later: ‘From the summer of 2005 onwards, [EU] initiatives proposing a closer coordination of migration and development goals proliferated’ (ibid: 450).

However, as Lavenex and Kunz (2008: 451) show in their analysis of the EU’s Mobility Partnerships, the framing of migration policies in terms of development did not lead to any substantial change: ‘a closer look at the intended contents of [the] mobility partnerships confirms the enduring predominance of migration control elements and the near absence of development goals’. In other words, what Joppke (1998) and others found to be the EU’s core issue in migration policies for the nineties – hindering immigration from ‘unwanted’ third-country nationals through various means of securitisation – still held after the purportedly paradigmatic shift towards a development frame. Therefore, the discursive framing of migration in development terms in the EU was simply an exercise of the same narrative in a new wrapping – old wine in a new bottle – rather than a real shift in priorities.

The persistent dominance of securitisation and prevention of migration also holds true for the 2016 Migration Partnership Framework, an agreement between the EU and mainly West and North African migrant-sending and transit countries (European Commission, 2016). However, its narrative around the migration–development nexus omits positive effects of migration on development: Martens et al. (2020) conducted a narrative analysis of the Migration Partnership Framework and showed how the policy focuses on strengthening border control, fighting migrant smuggling, providing humanitarian aid, and addressing the root causes of migration through development aid. Security issues and curbing migration are thus dominant, while possible positive development effects of migration for the sending state are no longer included in the Framework. The only development aspect of the Migration Partnership Framework is the EU’s offer of additional development funds for states that cooperate on migration control. The migration–development nexus is thus reduced to a bargain: offering development aid in return for curbing emigration (ibid.).

The migration and development nexus

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It is evident that increasing attention to both PCD and its application to the field of migration (through PICMD) can be traced to the mid-2000s. However, both PCD and the migration–development nexus as related concepts have earlier roots.

As de Haas (2010: 227) argues on the migration and development debate, it ‘should be primarily seen as part of more general paradigm shifts in social and development theory’. It is likely that the emergence of both concepts of PCD and the migration–development nexus can be linked to evolving perspectives on development, which increasingly focused on the limitations of overseas development aid in addressing the challenges facing developing countries (Carbone, 2013). However, the versatility of both concepts to capture a range of different views has also arguably fuelled their widespread adoption. Accordingly, we now turn to a critical discussion of the migration and development nexus before moving in the next section to deconstructing the concept of (in)coherence, which subsequently informs our reading of how the concept of PCD has been applied to migration policy in the European context.

The evolution of the migration and development discourse has been well documented by other scholars (Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002; Faist, 2008; Lavenex and Kunz, 2008) and it is beyond our scope to provide a full discussion here. However, a few words of context are required. Historically, interpretations of the migration–development nexus have oscillated between optimistic and pessimistic readings, often mirroring both the political zeitgeist of an era and global economic trends (Ghosh, 2010; de Haas, 2010, 2012; Gamlen, 2014; Lebon-McGregor, 2020c). While far from a new discussion (Ravenstein, 1885), the connection between migration and development became somewhat of a policy vogue in the early 2000s having, at least within the UN context, received renewed attention at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994 (Lebon-McGregor, 2020b). More recently, migration has also been reflected in several places in Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, as described previously (see also Bakewell, 2015; Lebon-McGregor, 2020a).

The linkages between migration and development are as manifold as the terms ‘migration’ and ‘development’ are broad. In order to systematically analyse how policy coherence has been linked to the migration and development discourse, we identify a continuum of applications ranging from broad to narrow that capture variations in how the relationship between the two fields can be understood. Overall, we consider the relationship between migration and development to be both bi-directional (migration influences development and development influences migration) and multidimensional (economic, cultural, political).

A **broad definition of the migration–development nexus** considers migration as enabling development (‘development enablers’) and development as enabling migration (Lebon-McGregor, 2020c). In other words, a broad definition of migration and development captures the bi-directionality of the relationship. Furthermore, a broad definition recognises the multidimensionality of particularly development as a concept, and

accordingly considers the impacts of migration on development and vice versa in multiple spheres. For example, it emphasises the role of diasporas and examines how ‘diaspora networks do not only lead to more financial resources and investments, but also to cultural exchange and political advocacy which – can play an important role in boosting development in the countries of origin’ (Misceac, 2015, in Martens et al., 2020: 208). This definition encompasses both the economic and non-economic factors through political, cultural and social remittances that equally contribute to the development of both countries of origin and destination.

A **narrow definition of the migration–development nexus** acknowledges the bi-directionality of the relationship between migration and development but focuses primarily on a one-dimensional view. For example, it focuses solely on the economic impacts of migration such as through remittances, informal economies along migration routes and the mobility of skilled populations – often referred to as ‘brain drain’.

The **narrowest definition of the migration–development nexus** takes an instrumental approach and looks at how development policies can address the ‘root causes’ of irregular migration. In other words, this perspective focuses on how development can prevent migration and ignores what the other two definitions underscore, namely, how mobility and migration contribute to development. This approach has been the subject of much critique. First, talking of ‘root causes’ is an overly simplistic reduction of complex migration processes (Gent, 2002). Second, the ‘root causes’ approach serves a political agenda that tries to curb migration (McKeon, 2018). Third, the ‘root causes’ assumption that economic development reduces migration is inconsistent with research evidence (de Haas, 2007, 2010; Martens et al., 2020). Many authors have argued that the EU’s interpretation of the migration–development nexus has shifted towards a development-against-migration definition (McKeon, 2018).

Having reviewed the history of PCD as a concept, its application to the topic of migration and development, and offered some insights into different ways in which the migration and development relationship can be conceptualised, we now turn to focus on deconstructing our main variable of interest: incoherence.

Conceptualising (in)coherence

Despite migration being a priority of the European policy coherence agenda for several decades, scholars have rarely considered the relationship between ‘policy coherence’ and ‘migration and development’ (KNOMAD et al., 2020). A slow but burgeoning body of literature is starting to emerge, however, which we review here in order to conceptualise internal (in)coherence.

Unpacking coherence: different perspectives in academia

Policy coherence is an inherently complex concept. At its simplest, **policy coherence** can be defined as ‘the non-occurrence of effects of policy that are contrary to the intended results or aims of policy’ (Hebinck, 2005: 13). This

can occur, for example, because of interactions between policies developed in different policy areas, or because of unexpected external events. Its antonym, **incoherence**, has become a catch-all term used to describe the many different conditions that lead to ‘unintended outcomes’. Efforts to enhance policy coherence can accordingly be targeted to enhance cooperation and coordination between different actors and levels within governance systems (KNOMAD et al., 2020).

However, this is somewhat of a narrow definition that makes a strong assumption regarding the internal logic of a policy, firmly placing the ‘cause’ of incoherence at the implementation stage of the policy process. It neglects an important source of incoherence, which is that policy is the product of compromise between different actors, based on (ideally) the best available evidence. Additionally, it assumes that all incoherence is, by definition, bad; however, this is also not always the case.

In order to operationalise coherence, we first conceptualise different kinds of (in)coherence before reviewing how policy coherence has been viewed in the migration policy context.

Internal policy incoherence can be understood as what occurs when the internal logic of a policy reflects faulty underlying theoretical assumptions. Identifying internal incoherence within a policy requires tools to reveal the underlying assumptions and causal chains that are embedded within the policy’s design. It also requires an understanding of how different configurations of policy and non-policy factors affect migration processes and how migration processes affect development outcomes, and vice versa.

For example, the EU Agenda on Migration (European Commission, 2015b) has, among other things, a stated goal of reducing migration to Europe from the Horn of Africa. In this context, authors Crawley and Blitz (2019: 2261) have argued that ‘...the lack of coherence between Europe’s ambitions to control irregular migration and co-operation with rights-violating States, threatens to create further political destabilisation and repression which will ultimately increase, rather than decrease, outward migration from the region’. Here we see an example of internal policy incoherence at work, wherein the internal logic of a policy of migration control and governance seemingly contains underlying theoretical assumptions that embed a risk of reproducing the very same conditions of instability that are known to produce outward-bound migration. On a fundamental level, it can be argued that European migration policy overall is internally incoherent, because of its focus on ‘irregular’ and ‘illegal’ migration, despite demand for migrant labour and no corresponding legal channels for many categories of migrants.

In order to make sense of different levels and types of incoherence, the scholarly literature generally distinguishes between **horizontal and vertical incoherence** – which we can take here as causes of internal incoherence in a given policy, and as indicators of different types of internal incoherence (see Figure 1).

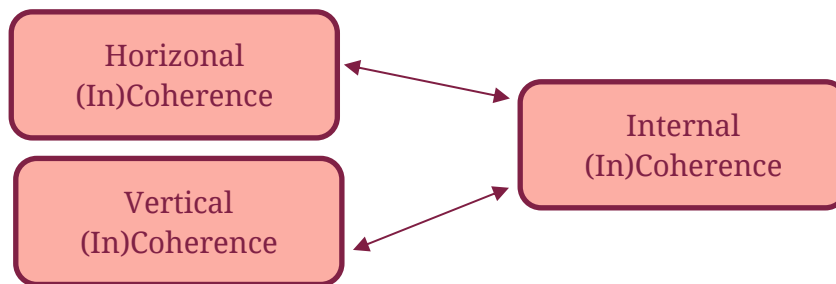


Figure 1. Conceptualising internal (in)coherence

Source: The authors.

Horizontal incoherence can be understood as the incoherence between migration policy goals and development policy goals. Horizontal incoherence can also exist between related fields of migration policy, such as the focus on migration management and governance that contrasts and sometimes hinders stated goals of migrant integration (Erdal et al., forthcoming). A policy can thus be understood as internally incoherent if it seeks to achieve competing goals or if it is based upon competing assumptions. At the national level, a policy in one country can be incoherent with the objectives of another country. Based on a broad conceptualisation of policy capturing ‘laws, interventions, practices and initiatives, as well as the broader policy environment’ (Godin and Vargas-Silva, 2020: 5) we can, in particular, think about how development interventions may serve donor-country interests and be at odds with the policy objectives in recipient countries.

Vertical incoherence occurs between different governance levels. In the EU, this could be incoherence between processes at the EU level and those at the national level in its Member States (see Marangoni and Raube, 2014; Hong and Knoll, 2016). For example, EU Member States may take unilateral decisions that affect the governability of mobility for other EU Member States. Incoherence can occur when national policy is made on certain premises and with certain objectives, and then the policy needs to take into account overarching EU policies as well, which might not be entirely aligned. A policy can also be incoherent with commitments made in the context of multilateral (e.g., UN) and supranational (e.g., EU) cooperation. This is the common way that policy coherence is mobilised as a concept by organisations such as the OECD (KNOMAD et al., 2020). Finally, policies made at these various levels may lead to unintended outcomes when implemented at the local level. Accordingly, coherence is also a question of how policy is interpreted and implemented.

While we primarily focus in this background paper on the internal coherence of policy documents, another type of incoherence is **institutional incoherence**, which points to two different challenges. On the one hand, inter-institutional conflicts can lead to incoherence when, for example, a policy is developed or implemented by two different parties with different underlying values or understandings of the policy problem being addressed. On the other hand, intra-institutional incoherence can occur when different actors in the same organisation implement the same policy in different ways. This can also lead to internal incoherence in a given policy. In sum,

institutional coherence is often used to refer to institutional and procedural mechanisms that are designed to improve policy coherence. Such mechanisms are often considered to be critical to ensuring coherence over time in a continuously changing policy environment. Attention to institutional and procedural factors can help to identify the causes of incoherence and to formulate remedial measures (see Carling, 2019). This distinction between policy coherence and institutional coherence is important when addressing the causes of incoherence.

Empirical evidence

Having considered the more conceptual and theoretical discussions of policy coherence, it is relevant to consider how far these have been applied in practice. Some authors have joined the call of policy-makers to strengthen coherence (Angenendt et al., 2017) – echoing policy-maker enthusiasm for the overall goal and potential positive effects that coherence can bring to the fields of migration and development policy. Others, in turn, have pointed to the inconsistencies and risks inherent in the pursuit of coherence, with some questioning the ideal of coherence itself (Wunderlich, 2013; den Hertog, 2018).

First, looking specifically at policy-level coherence (the linkage between EU migration policies and other EU policies such as those on trade, agriculture, security and so forth), several academics have made important contributions, if not always providing clear alternatives. Arguing for a more granular understanding of coherence and building on previous work from other researchers in doing so, Wunderlich (2018) distinguishes between external and internal policy coherence in EU external migration policy. Regarding the former, Wunderlich sees **external coherence** as referring to ‘the ways in which the complex nature of international migration makes it sensitive to interactions with other policy areas such as external affairs, conflict prevention, development and trade policies’ (ibid: 27).

Internal coherence, according to Wunderlich’s definition, is in turn formed by two key components, namely ‘migration control’ (understood as the restrictive measures in the fight against ‘illegal migration’), and ‘preventive’ or ‘root-causes’ measures (which aim to influence why people leave their country of origin and where they migrate). The author argues that internal coherence becomes tangible when the implementation of policy components brings about a minimum of contradictions with regard to the fundamental objectives of the policy.

The limited understanding of the interrelations between migration and development, despite their wide recognition, also remains a challenge for policy coherence. A lack of understanding is often argued to be one of the most common reasons why (unintended) incoherence can occur (Picciotto, 2005). Applying the principles of PCD to the area of migration and development can essentially imply that all policies recognise the interrelationships between migration and development. The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), for example, have evaluated policy coherence for development in the EU context with respect to migration (ICMPD and ECDPM, 2013). They find that, while migration aspects

are often included in development policies – such as in the aspects of remittances, skilled migration or diaspora engagement – development considerations are rarely taken into account in the formulation of migration policies. For example, some European countries have made involuntary return programmes a component of their PCD strategy in migration, while their link to development is highly ambiguous.

Common examples of incoherence can be found in the migration policy field as a result of *contradictions between EU development policies and EU external migration policies*. Such contradictions cause tensions between the migration–development nexus and the migration–security nexus. Discourses are also prevalent around ‘tackling the root causes of migration’, such as poverty reduction and improvement of human and civil rights in migrant countries of origin, combined with critiques of the repurposing of development aid to impose border externalisation and return agreements (Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002; Chou, 2006; Nyberg-Sørensen, 2016; McKeon, 2018).

In defence of incoherence

Given the potential challenges of coherence, some scholars have warned of what coherence ‘at all costs’ might entail. Den Hertog (2018), for instance, argues that calls for more policy coherence, not only between EU policies but also between policies of EU Member States and the EU – as seen in the New Pact, for instance, and elsewhere in the policy world – have become a mantra over the years. The author argues that the EU seems to suffer from a ‘coherence syndrome’ (ibid: 365), a form of chronic disease that can even lead researchers to fail to critically examine the *political uses of ‘policy coherence’*. Instead, den Hertog, writing about EU migration policy externalisation to third-party countries, argues that ‘widespread incoherence is a normal and inevitable feature of EU governance in this field, and of any pluralistic, democratic and rule of law-based system of government. Divergent interests, values, and actors can only be accommodated in policies by allowing for some degree of policy incoherence’ (ibid: 366).

Of particular relevance here is den Hertog’s mention of how coherence can mean that certain political goals and concerns take precedence over others, under the guise of being coherent with each other. Writing about this political usage of policy coherence, den Hertog states that it ‘... can develop over time, changing the underlying relationships between competing objectives that aim to subordinate others in the name of policy coherence’ (ibid: 370). This, the author argues, has been the case in the migration and development field, where, initially, migration (policies) was seen to help development processes in countries of origin and are now more often enlisted as a way of reducing migration. In other words, *coherence can be a way of bringing different policy fields together in a hierarchical fashion*; here development aid is apparently subsumed under the aegis of a European desire for reduced migration.

Den Hertog is not alone in warning of what entails when the priorities of one policy field dictates another in the name of coherence. Writing about the security–development policy nexus, Picciotto (2004: 545) says that ‘in the real world, policy coherence for defense always trumps policy coherence for

development, so the case for switching expenditures from defense to development budgets will have to be made on strict security grounds'. Wunderlich (2013: 28) is another voice in academia who has critiqued the continued emphasis on coherence. When speaking of the negotiations needed between migrant countries of origin and countries of destination in the EU if one were to truly achieve migration policy coherence, the author includes a salient question that in many ways sums up the debate, namely whether it 'is desirable if legitimate interests on either side would have to be abandoned'. In other words, if achieving coherence comes at the expense of the interests, of, for example, partner countries of the EU, then one must critically question whether it is a truly useful concept. We explore this argument further in a companion paper (Godin et al., forthcoming).

The costs of subsuming one policy field into the priorities of another are clear. To den Hertog (2018), they are first and foremost *a crisis of values, generating incoherence of another sort*, namely between European norms and ideals related to human rights and a humane treatment of migrants, and the sometimes-harsh realities of what restrictive migration management might mean. Pointedly, den Hertog argues that 'the EU–Turkey Statement has resulted in a relatively coherent policy, where a clear objective is pursued: to stop migration flows to Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean Route. This is an emblematic illustration of why coherent policies are not necessarily leading to good policies in line with EU values' (ibid: 377). With this warning, we turn to a case-study examination of how the term 'coherence' is applied and how it has evolved over time, illustrated through a narrative policy analysis of two key documents issued by the EC a decade apart.

From GAMM to the New Pact on Migration and Asylum: the evolving links between policy coherence and the migration–development nexus

In this section, we investigate how the concepts of policy (in)coherence and the migration–development nexus have been deployed alongside one another and how this relationship has evolved over time in EU migration policies. To achieve this, we rely on qualitative content analysis of two documents published by the EC: the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) (European Commission, 2011) and the New Pact on Migration and Asylum (Commission to the European Parliament, 2020).

Academics have often examined what the concept of a migration–development nexus means in EU migration policies. Some have looked at one particular document at one point in time, such as Martens et al. (2020), who analyse the Migration Partnership Framework in order to assess whether the implementation of EU migration policies is development-friendly. Others have drawn on extensive longitudinal and interpretative content analysis, such as in the case of Faustini-Torres' (2020) study (from 1995 to 2018, covering 143 EU official documents) looking at how the main narratives of the migration–development nexus (Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002) and the migration–security nexus (Pinyol-Gimenez, 2021) – which are often used to

characterise the external dimension of EU migration policies – have come to overshadow other narratives such as the migration–democratisation nexus. Similarly, but going beyond a Eurocentric perspective, Hagen-Zanker (2019) examines diverging approaches in African and European migration governance by focusing on the representation of the nexus of migration with security and migration with development in 76 documents (including EU documents, African documents and EU–Africa documents) between 2005 and 2016.

Further building on the insights gained from these important studies, we have chosen to look specifically at the GAMM and the New Pact, as two of the main documents produced by the EC almost a decade apart. The EC is one of the leading actors shaping EU external migration policies with the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs of the European Commission (DG HOME) at the front seat, both setting the tone for and reflecting what other institutions – and Member States – develop and implement in terms of policies. Consequently, these reference documents provide two key analytical vantage points into how policy (in)coherence, the migration–development nexus and the linkages between the two concepts have evolved over time. To date there has been little (if any) effort in the literature to compare the GAMM and the New Pact (both against each other, as well as in relation to other EU documents).

Methodology and objectives

To investigate how the two concepts of the migration–development nexus and policy (in)coherence have been deployed by the EC over time, we rely on a narrative policy analysis approach (Roe, 1994; Faustini-Torres, 2020; Pécoud, 2021). This approach was developed by Roe (1994) as an analytical tool to help understand how policy-makers make sense of ‘the uncertainty, complexity, and polarization’ of policy issues. It asks what kind of stories and arguments are used in the definition of policy issues and their configuration (Faustini-Torres, 2020).

Our understanding of **policy narratives** follows Faustini-Torres’ (2020: 4) definition (inspired by Wolmer, 2006) that policy narratives are ‘simplified and programmatic tales of cause and effect, which provide a diagnosis of the problem as well as definition of its solutions’. Simplifications inevitably and necessarily come with omissions. As Pécoud (2021) stresses, consensus on a divisive issue, such as migration, can only be achieved through the omission of points of contention. For the analysis of policy narratives, the main task is therefore to ‘unearth [...] the contradictions and dilemmas that are silenced in the text’ (Pécoud, 2021: 22) – in other words: to reveal its internal incoherencies.

We have conducted a content analysis of two major EU migration policies, the GAMM (European Commission, 2011) and the New Pact (Commission to the European Parliament, 2020). As described earlier, the EC has embraced PCD as a priority, moving from the development sector to the migration policy field. In keeping with the broader approach to policy analysis applied in the MIGNEX project (Godin and Vargas-Silva, 2020), we consider the GAMM and the New Pact to get a snapshot of EU migration policies

approximately a decade apart. Before presenting the results of the analysis, we take a step back to briefly introduce each case.

The **Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM)** (European Commission, 2011), which was submitted by the EC to the European Parliament, the European Council, and the Committee of the Regions, was formally adopted by the Council's Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) in May 2012. It followed the Global Approach to Migration (GAM) (European Council, 2005), and built on existing regional fora for cooperation on migration, namely: the Euro–Mediterranean Partnership (also known as the Barcelona Process); the African, Caribbean and Pacific–EU (ACP–EU) Migration Dialogue; the Budapest Process; the Rabat Process; the Prague Process; and the Eastern Partnership. The GAMM also addresses cooperation with EU agencies such as Europol and Frontex (the European Border and Coast Guard Agency) (Martin, 2012).

Both the GAM, and the GAMM were products of crisis. The GAM was launched following the increasing number of migrant deaths crossing the fenced borders of Ceuta and Melilla as well as the ocean to reach the Canary Islands from the shores of Mauritania and Senegal (also referred to as the *Cayucos* crisis) in 2005. And the GAMM was drafted following the ‘Arab Spring’ and the threat of the EU facing a mass influx of migrants. Both are important documents as they have shaped EU-based cooperation with third countries through mobility partnerships, for example.

Both the GAM and the GAMM marked somewhat of a shift in focus of EU migration policies, from internal coherence across Member States to a focus on the external dimension of migration in which the EU could arguably play a more significant role (Lavanex, 2006). The GAMM linked migration management and development policies by addressing the so-called ‘push factors’ that compel people to migrate, while promoting development-sensitive migration through mobility packages purportedly designed to prevent ‘brain drain’ and to promote development in the country of origin. The addition of the term ‘mobility’ refers explicitly to this particular dimension of circularity. The notion of a ‘more for more’ approach (Pace, 2014, cited in Martin, 2012: 1) was also introduced in the GAMM, which refers to the idea that ‘the more third countries cooperate, the more advanced visa facilitation will be for their nationals, making mobility conditioned upon “cooperation” on border control and readmission agreements’.

Similar to the GAM and GAMM, it was the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ in 2015 that prompted the drafting of the New Pact. At the peak of the crisis, the previous Commission tried to reform the Common European Asylum System (CEAS)⁴ as well as the EU Dublin Regulation,⁵ but without success. Against this backdrop, the idea of a New Pact was announced by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at her opening statement in July 2019 and later unveiled on 23 September 2020. This New Pact is the result of

⁴ See https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system_en

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/country-responsible-asylum-application_en

consultations and informal discussions with the European Parliament, all Member States and a variety of stakeholders (i.e., CSOs, business and social partners) but the initiative has been led mainly by the Commission, and there is still no agreement between the different parties involved. An analysis of policy coherence needs to scrutinise the New Pact, not only because of its relevance and topicality, but because achieving more coherence is positioned as a central goal of the Pact. At least, this is what the EC communicated to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions:

To be effective, border management, asylum and return policies must work well at the national level, and in the case of the integration of migrants at the local level. National policies therefore need to be coherent with the overall European approach. The new Asylum and Migration Management Regulation will seek to achieve this through closer European cooperation. (Commission to the European Parliament, 2020: 6)

While this particular quote reflects an emphasis on vertical coherence within the EU, given the multitude of ways that one can examine policy coherence (as discussed in the section Conceptualising (in)coherence), we now systematically assess how policy coherence has been understood in these two key EU policies and we specifically examine how this relates to the migration–development nexus. See Annex 1 for a list of the documents used in the analysis (Table A1).

As we see in the following subsections, the comparison of the GAMM and the New Pact shows how the EU's understanding of coherence has shifted from a polysemic approach to the migration–development nexus and other policy domains, towards coherence for a more efficient return of irregular migrants and thus moving away from the legacy of coherence as rooted in the development policy field. As we elaborate further, in comparing the GAMM and the New Pact, we observe a shift in how policy coherence is used: from a focus on horizontal coherence to a focus on vertical coherence, and from coherence to a greater emphasis on efficiency.

From coherence to efficiency between the GAMM and the New Pact

In this section, we compare the use of the term 'coherence' in the GAMM and the New Pact and show how the GAMM's focus on coherence of migration and development policies no longer exists in the New Pact. In addition to 'coherent/coherence', we also look at other key words that clearly indicate a shift not only in terms of coherence between policies ('horizontal coherence') but also in terms of the actors being targeted in the two documents ('vertical coherence').

First, the term 'coherence' is used with much greater prevalence in the GAMM than in the New Pact. Although coherence is mentioned an equal number of times in both documents (n=29), owing to the much lengthier nature of the New Pact (281 pages as opposed to 51 pages), it is much more prevalent in the GAMM (see Table 1 and extended version in Annex Table A2).

Table 1. Frequency counts for key terms in the GAMM and the New Pact

	GAMM (2011)	New Pact (2020)
Coherent (including stemmed words)	29 (0.09%)	29 (0.01%)
Efficiency (including stemmed words)	10 (0.03%)	112 (0.05%)
Effectiveness (including stemmed words)	33 (0.10%)	400 (0.20%)
Return	19 (0.04%)	958 (0.31%)
Migration	425 (1.3%)	942 (0.44 %)
Mobility	156 (0.42%)	13 (0.01%)
Rights	56 (0.11 %)	389 (0.11%)
Partner / partnership	192 (0.56%)	120 (0.06%)
Member states	89 (0.18 %)	2471 (0.77%)

Source: Authors' own calculations. Notes: See Table A2 for an extended version of this table.

Second, in the GAMM, the concept of 'coherence' is more often used to refer to horizontal coherence, compared to the New Pact where coherence is more frequently employed to refer to vertical coherence (see Table 2). Out of the total 26 occurrences in the GAMM, we coded 20 as 'Horizontal coherence for migration and development', five as "Vertical Coherence with External Partners", and one as "Vertical Coherence between the EU and its Member States". Out of the total 29 occurrences in the New Pact, we coded three as "Horizontal Coherence between Asylum and Return Policies", 21 as "Vertical Coherence between the EU and its Member States", two as "Vertical Coherence between the EU and the UN level", and one as "Vertical Coherence between the EU and External Partners".

Table 2. Horizontal versus vertical (in)coherence

	GAMM (2011)	New PACT (2020)
Horizontal coherence	20	3
Vertical coherence	6	24
Total	26	27

Source: Authors' own analysis. Note: (1) When the word coherence/coherent occurred twice in one sentence, we coded the entire sentence once, this is the reason for the small discrepancy between the total number of occurrences (29) and the total number of codes (26 in GAMM and 27 in EU PACT); (2) see Table A3 for an extended version of the table.

The GAMM stresses horizontal coherence between migration policies and other policy areas, such as development or trade policies:

The Global Approach should be even more linked and integrated with the EU's external policies. The Global Approach is to be defined in the widest possible context as the overarching framework of EU external migration policy, complementary to other, broader, objectives that are served by EU foreign policy and development cooperation. Major progress has been

made in this direction since 2005, but more efforts are needed in order to harness fully all potential synergies between these policies and with trade policy. The EU and its Member States should develop strategies and programmes that address migration and mobility, foreign policy and development objectives in a coherent and integrated way. (European Commission, 2011: 3).

The New Pact, on the other hand, pushes for vertical coherence by the EU Commission vis-à-vis its Member States:

An effective system to ensure return is a common responsibility and it will need strong governance structures to ensure a more coherent and effective approach. To this end, the Commission will appoint a Return Coordinator, supported by a new High Level Network for Return. The Coordinator will provide technical support to bring together the strands of EU return policy, building on positive experiences of Member States in managing returns and facilitating a seamless and interlinked implementation of the return process. (Commission to the European Parliament, 2020: 8).

It is of relevance to note that, of all 27 occurrences of the term ‘coherence’ in the New Pact, not one deals with coherence between migration and development policies. Instead, the policy area where the New Pact perceives a need for more coherence is asylum and return. This is not only true for the three coded instances of calls for horizontal coherence between asylum and return policies, but it also applies to the 25 calls for more vertical coherence. The focus on coherence in the field of asylum and return is primarily directed towards the need for the EU to address incoherence resulting from parallel national policies on asylum, return, readmission and general migration management. A closer look at the policy areas in which the New Pact hopes to increase coherence reveals that the majority (n=11) relate to asylum and return. A further 10 references relate to either the field of return (n=4) or asylum (n=6) with the remaining 4 references used in the context of migration and/or border management (see Figure 2).

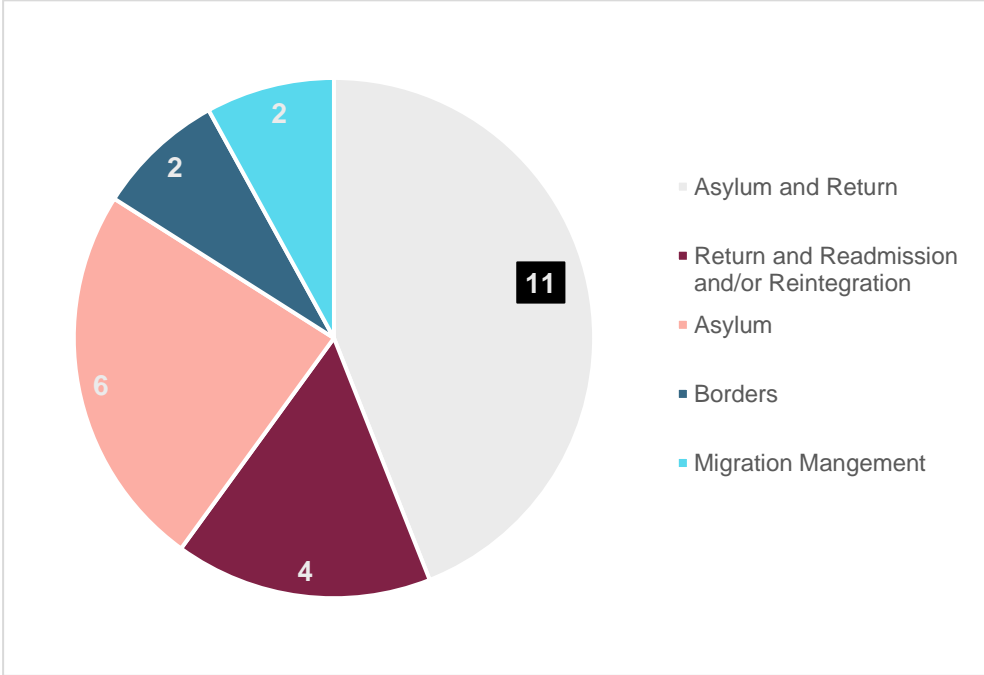


Figure 2. References to ‘coherence’ in the New Pact, by policy area

Source: Authors’ own analysis.

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Another change that is evident in the way coherence is applied relates to the actors who are described as being of relevance to the achievement of coherence. The GAMM, for example, presents a more inclusive framework of external partners while the New Pact describes a more exclusive framework that only concerns EU Member States. Overall, the New Pact advocates more vertical coherence between the EC and EU Member States, which, they argue, would result in more horizontal coherence. It is through achieving more vertical coherence between the EC and EU Member States that horizontal coherence across different policies can be achieved.

Apart from the shift from horizontal coherence (stressing the linkages between different policies and more inclusive of external partners) to vertical coherence (stressing the importance of achieving coherence across different levels of governance and less inclusive of external partners) between the GAMM and the New Pact, there also seems to be a semantic shift from ‘coherence’ to the term ‘efficiency’. Contrary to the Commission’s announcement of wanting to achieve more policy coherence through the New Pact, ‘coherence’ is not a term used very often in the document. Instead, economic terms like ‘efficiency’ and ‘effectiveness’ seem to have become substitutes for ‘coherence’, thereby shifting the narrative. ‘Efficiency’ and its stemmed words (‘efficient’ and ‘efficiently’) are used 112 times in the New Pact, while ‘effectiveness’ and its stemmed words (‘effective’ and ‘effectively’) 354 times, making them the 32nd most used word stem and ranking these terms even before ‘right’/‘rights’ (mentioned 389 times).⁶

In contrast, the GAMM only uses the term ‘efficiency’ once within a sentence about external borders. Efficiency is thus used in a clearly different context than coherence. Moreover, the GAMM adds to that sentence that efficiency should be based on ‘common responsibility, solidarity, and greater practical cooperation’. It thus does not seem to value efficiency by itself. The New Pact, however, uses ‘efficiency’ in the same policy context as ‘coherence’, namely in dealing with irregular migration, particularly compliance with the Dublin system and the return of migrants. This lack of differentiation between ‘coherence’ and ‘efficiency’ indicates that the latter may be gaining ground over ‘coherence’. Moreover, ‘efficiency’ is often prefixed to become ‘procedural efficiency’ and ‘operational efficiency’, which blurs understandings and differentiation even more.

⁶ It is also interesting to note how the language of ‘rights’ strongly differs between the GAMM and the New Pact (see Table 1). Looking more closely, the GAMM offers a more positive understanding of migrant rights that often refers to the portability of social and pension rights as a facilitator for mobility and circular migration as well as a disincentive for irregular work. In contrast, the references to ‘migrant’s rights’ in the New Pact are often negative. It highlights, for instance, the rights that migrants do not have – such as not having ‘an automatic right to enter’ despite acknowledging that asylum applications made at the EU’s external borders must be assessed as part of EU asylum procedures or, for instance, in balancing the credibility of the EU migration rules on the effective return of migrants who do ‘not have the right to stay’.

From policy coherence for migration and development to policy coherence for return

In this section, we compare the meaning of the migration–development nexus in the GAMM and the New Pact using the definitions developed in the earlier section The migration and development nexus. Overall, this reveals a narrowing of the EU’s understanding and application of the migration and development nexus (see Table 3).

Table 3. The polysemic nature of the migration–development nexus⁷

	GAMM (2011)	New Pact (2020)
Broad	9	1
Narrower	5	1
Narrowest	2	11
Blurred – everything and its opposite	4	7
Total	20	20

Source: Authors’ own analysis.

Overall, the exercise reveals the polysemic nature of the migration–development nexus. This became increasingly evident during our efforts to clearly categorise some references to migration and development. It is not just that different notions – broad, narrower and narrowest – of the migration and development nexus can be used concomitantly in the same document, but sometimes the three types of definition can be found simultaneously in one paragraph. For example, in the GAMM, several mentions are made about the Global Approach that it ‘should be firmly embedded in the EU’s overall foreign policy, including development cooperation, and better aligned with the EU’s internal policy priorities’, a catch-all phrase that makes it hard to categorise between ‘broad’, ‘narrow’ and ‘narrowest’ definitions of the migration–development nexus (European Commission, 2011: 5). Similarly, in the New Pact, the same type of catch-all phrase can also be found, for example: ‘comprehensive, balanced and tailor-made partnerships, can deliver mutual benefits, in the economy, sustainable development, education and skills, stability and security, and relations with diasporas’ (Commission to the European Parliament, 2020: 17).

⁷ Coding: for the GAMM, we went through all the occurrences of ‘coherence for migration and development’ (n=20) and checked each time if the term ‘development’ was mentioned in the full document (n=235; 0.86%). In the New Pact, the term ‘development’ was mentioned 103 times (0.05%) in total. We went through all occurrences systematically (including stemmed words also) and coded each using the Qualitative Data Analysis Software NVivo in light of the theoretical definitions set out in the section The migration and development nexus It is also worth mentioning that the concept of the ‘migration and development nexus’ is mentioned six times in the GAMM whereas ‘migration and development’ is used 48 times. On the other hand, both groups of words are never mentioned in the New Pact. The explicit reference to the concept of Policy Coherence for Development is also mentioned seven times in the GAMM whereas it is absent in the New Pact.

Such catch-all phrases led to our inclusion of an additional category to capture references that present a blurred definition of the migration–development nexus. This occurred four times in the GAMM and seven in the New Pact. As well as providing further evidence in support of Lebon-McGregor’s (2020c: 129) argument that migration and development is ‘a unifying frame, subsuming the interests of actors from conflicting frames’, this blurring clearly demonstrates how the complexity of the term ‘migration–development nexus’ leaves room for diverse interpretations that can serve contradicting purposes.

Our examination of the GAMM reveals complexity in the way that the migration–development nexus is portrayed. Overall, a broad definition is often applied that stresses the bi-directional nature of the relationship (n=9), as evidenced in the following illustrative quote:

Development objectives are being taken into account more and more in the EU and partner countries’ migration policies. At the same time the migration dimension is increasingly being taken into account within development strategies. (European Commission, 2011: 23)

The GAMM also calls for ‘successful mainstreaming of migration in development thinking’ which would require ‘making it an integral part of a whole range of sectoral policies (on agriculture, health, education, etc.)’ (ibid: 19) and calling for greater horizontal coherence, as described above. There is also a general emphasis on maximising the positive impact of migration on development in partner countries (both of origin and destination) while limiting its negative consequences.

Alongside this broad understanding of the migration–development nexus in the GAMM (n=9), narrower definitions are also present which focus on the economic dimension exclusively (n=5) (in particular private remittance flows and diaspora investment and the win-win potential) as well as more restrictive ones that makes it clear that the migration–development nexus needs to first align with EU priorities (n=2), and ‘firmly embedded in the EU’s overall foreign policy framework, including development cooperation, and well aligned with the EU’s internal policy priorities’ (ibid: 5).

Looking at the New Pact, there is a clear tendency towards the use of the narrowest definitions of the migration–development nexus (n=11) in comparison to the GAMM (n=2). The New Pact understands the migration–development nexus in the same way as in the 2016 Migration Partnership Framework, namely, in the sense of development aid as a tool to curb migration. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

The root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, as well as the immediate factors leading people to migrate, are complex. The EU is the world’s largest provider of development assistance. This will continue to be a key feature in EU engagement with countries, including on migration issues. (Commission to the European Parliament, 2020: 19)

However, while this narrative classically implies a ‘tackling the root causes’ approach, the New Pact also expands the narrative by including three instances in *which return and reintegration aid is framed as development aid*. The wording seems carefully chosen, being almost identical on each occasion. In these instances, reintegration projects are not directly called

‘development aid’. Instead, the formulation is structured as ‘reintegration projects and other development strategies’, so that reintegration aid is only indirectly labelled development aid:

...the strategy will also look into new approaches to EU-funded reintegration actions in third countries, and better linkages with other development initiatives and national strategies, aiming to build third countries’ capacity and ownership. (ibid: 88)

While reminiscent of conditionality discussions, whereby development aid is conditional on adherence to a specific agreement (often relating to reducing irregular migration), the word ‘conditionality’ is not mentioned once in the New Pact. This does not mean, however, that the Commission ceased to make development aid dependent on a certain condition – namely, collaboration on readmission. Instead of speaking of ‘conditionality’, the New Pact cites and reaffirms the European Council’s call for better ‘leverages’:

More should be done to facilitate effective returns. Existing readmission agreements should be better implemented, [...] while creating and applying the necessary leverage by using all relevant EU policies, instruments and tools, including development, trade and visa. (ibid: 88)

While this formulation remains vague regarding the intended meaning of ‘leverage’, when we look at the New Pact’s proposed visa policies, it quickly becomes clear that ‘applying the necessary leverage’ means making readmission a condition. If States do not sufficiently cooperate on readmission, the Commission reserves the right to propose the application of ‘restrictive visa measures, or in case of good cooperation, propose favourable visa measures’ (ibid: 21). This is fairly unsurprising given that readmission agreements have arguably become ‘a standard EU foreign policy tool’ (Trauner and Kruse, 2008) – which we also unpack further in Godin et al. (forthcoming). The Commission thus intends to penalise non-cooperation in one field (readmission) with restrictions in another field (visa policies), which makes cooperation on readmission a condition for the EU’s cooperation on visa issues. Since development is also named a potential lever, a logical conclusion is therefore that readmission is also intended as a condition for development aid.

Strikingly, only one sentence in the New Pact explicitly addresses the positive effects of migration on development. Moreover, the Commission’s tone in this sentence about positive effects is astonishingly cautious:

Comprehensive, balanced and tailor-made partnerships, can deliver mutual benefits, in the economy, sustainable development, education and skills, stability and security, and relations with diasporas. (ibid: 17)

With such a formulation, the Commission tentatively admits that there are positive effects, but restricts its admission with two qualifications. First, the Commission holds that for migration to be beneficial, it requires ‘[c]omprehensive, balanced and tailor-made partnerships’ with countries of origin and transit. Second, even if such conditions were in place, the Commission apparently remains sceptical that migration could be mutually beneficial. Otherwise, the New Pact would not restrict itself to indicating that it ‘*can* deliver mutual benefits’ (our emphasis).

Similarly, another example in the New Pact is a reference to the implementation of the EU Talent Partnerships that can be beneficial for both origin countries and countries of destinations. However, again, this is mainly referred to as a way to reduce irregular migration rather than contributing to the development of the country of origin. Consequently, the New Pact is ambiguous in terms of its aims, giving precedence to reducing irregular migration rather than supporting development in the country of origin.

Although announced as the long-awaited ‘fresh’ reform of the EU’s immigration and asylum system, the 2020 New Pact centres on only one specific type of migration: irregular migration. And the Pact offers three ways of dealing with irregular entries: 1) determination of irregular migrants’ right to asylum, 2) return of irregular migrants with unsuccessful asylum claims, and 3) overall prevention of irregular entries. This narrow focus on irregular migration is probably best reflected in what we see as the New Pact’s central narrative and of the meaning of coherence moving from coherence for migration policies and other policy fields (such as development policies), towards coherence – or perhaps more aptly, efficiency – for return schemes, or a ‘deportation–development’ nexus.

Conclusion

In this MIGNEX background paper we have argued that the evolving concept of a ‘migration and development nexus’ has facilitated the adoption of the concept of coherence in migration policy. However, in travelling from one policy sector to the other, we have also demonstrated that the meaning of policy coherence has changed over time and its goals have been reformulated.

Taking the cases of the GAMM (European Commission, 2011) and the New Pact (Commission to the European Parliament, 2020), we have argued that the primary shifts have occurred in the *type of coherence* referred to. The GAMM is more concerned with horizontal coherence in the interest of responding to a broad understanding of the connections between migration and development; the New Pact is more concerned with vertical coherence to ensure that the EU and its Member States ‘efficiently’ cooperate to manage irregular migration through enhanced policies in the areas of asylum and return. In doing so, the New Pact alludes to the use of development aid to leverage enhanced coherence.

Accordingly, the primary shift that we have observed has been from PCD that includes migration as part of a set of ‘development-relevant policies’, to development policies being mainly understood as ‘migration-relevant policies’. In order to reach these conclusions, the background paper has been guided by several research questions:

- How has the concept of policy coherence evolved in the European context?
- How has the linking of PCD to the migration–development nexus occurred?

- How has the concept of (in)coherence evolved and how has it been employed both theoretically and empirically?
- How has the concept of the migration–development nexus been used over time in EU policy documents, but more importantly how it has been used in relation to the concept of (in)coherence?
- What does the focus on policy coherence, in the field of migration in particular, tell us about the EU’s understanding of itself as a policy actor?

The focus on the need to achieve more coherence in EU policies in the field of migration, as we have seen throughout this paper, is indicative of how the EU sees itself: as a policy entity that strives towards more unity in its external actions, despite being composed of a multitude of agencies, intergovernmental fora and individual Member States. Because the focus on policy coherence has been a central theme since the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, coherence appears as the ideal, which, if reached, would allow the EU as a political project to reach its full potential. In the meantime, pointing to incoherence – or not enough coherence – is used to explain all that is not achieved, without necessarily blaming anyone in particular. In this regard, coherence in the policy world is seen mainly as a matter of ‘coordination’ of policies (‘horizontal coherence’) and ‘cooperation’ between actors (‘vertical coherence’) and as an ideal to strive towards. But the study of policy incoherence in European migration policies reveals discrepancies between the understanding of coherence among policy-makers and the understanding within academic analyses.

That being said – and building on our review of existing scholarly studies on EU policy coherence in the field of migration as well as the GAMM and the New Pact – there are three points that we want to emphasise in this conclusion: 1) there seems to be a shift away from a focus on ‘coherence’ to an increasing focus on ‘efficiency’, 2) the migration –development nexus, while polysemic, is increasingly employed in a narrow way, and 3) ‘coherence’ in the most recent New Pact seems to be more about coherence in order to achieve efficient return policies, rather than coherence between different concerns within the migration–development nexus.

1) Moving away from ‘coherence’ towards ‘efficiency’

As this paper has shown, the concepts of PCD and the migration–development nexus have a shared history. While rife with challenges, the coupling of PCD – an already ambiguous concept – to migration and development has offered the potential to approach the latter from a perspective that recognises the role of different actors and interests and associated power structures in development of policy. However, as we have argued, the pursuit of policy coherence in the field of migration and development, in a broad sense, has lessened over time. The concept of PCD and migration implies that one considers how migration aspects are included or not in development policies, such as through the consideration of the role of remittances, skilled migration or diaspora engagement. Similarly, development considerations should also be taken into account in the formulation of migration policies. However, in adopting the concept of

PCD within the field of migration policy, the risks are too high to systematically question the extent to which migration-relevant policies can not only contribute to development but also undermine it, therefore creating an incentive to move away from the concept.

Interestingly, as noted above, the terms ‘efficiency’ and ‘effectiveness’ – which are symptomatic of a general shift in governance rather than being specific to the migration case – have become more prominent in the recent New Pact. Migration is primarily seen as something that can and should be controlled and managed. The means to this objective are then to ensure that the relevant policies that are likely to have an effect on migration in one way or another are coherent and aligned, in order to avoid loopholes, grey zones or contradictory policies (which would reduce the ability to prevent or ‘manage’ migration). The observed shift towards ‘effectiveness’ and ‘efficiency’ supports this point. And thus, EU migration policies are more often seen as needing to be coherent in order to be as effective and efficient as possible, as opposed to being coherent with development or any other external normative frameworks. It then logically follows that the emphasis is placed on a need for more vertical coherence (more EU-wide policies and fewer Member State policies), as well as in co-opting ‘development policies’ to achieve migration management goals. This hierarchy between policies as well as among actors is more obvious in the New Pact than it is in the GAMM, moving from the notion of coherence for development towards coherence for efficiency.

2) The polysemic nature of the migration–development nexus

While not a new finding, our analysis of the GAMM and the New Pact lends further credence to the argument that the migration–development nexus is a polysemic concept. Its application in EU migration policies has not remained static over time, and, at least in recent history, it has increasingly been applied in a very narrow sense, which essentially involves the instrumentalisation of development policies to achieve migration management goals.

As argued by Pécoud (2015, 2021), international migration is a highly complex and divisive topic. International migration narratives, the author argues, aim to enable cooperation by providing a ‘shared vision of migration to overcome the divergences between states’ (Pécoud, 2015: 13). Disagreements on a divisive issue such as international migration cannot be dispelled, however. International migration narratives – including the migration and development nexus – can only serve to dispel disagreement between policy actors if they also depoliticise the issue. And according to Pécoud (2021), this can only be achieved by deploying technocratic terms and by actively remaining silent on points of contention. PCD shares this conceptual ability, and accordingly, the coupling of PCD with the migration–development nexus has offered a powerful discursive tool to disguise internal incoherence in EU migration policies.

3) Coherence for return policies versus migration and development

The emphasis on policy coherence can also be viewed in connection with addressing the ‘root causes’ of migration, and the ensuing policy focus on identifying ‘push and pull factors’. Despite research indicating that migration processes are much more complex than something that can be reduced to a push or pull factor, this focus remains dominant in policy circles, and identifying and managing these factors become objectives in their own right. The emphasis on ‘policy coherence’ can thus also be seen as a means to reduce so-called pull factors that supposedly make people migrate in the direction of Europe. And hence, a fully coherent policy is understood as one that does not create pull factors.

Emphasising policy coherence is potentially less divisive and less politically contentious than an explicit focus on limiting what makes people migrate, however. Consequently, emphasising policy coherence, in this context, can be viewed as making a highly contentious policy more palatable, since it is harder to argue against a concept with generally positive connotations. This point has also been argued by den Hertog (2018), who points to the politics involved in invoking the need for more policy coherence.

It is useful here to draw a parallel to the field of development and international cooperation, where calls for coordination among agencies and development programmes are frequently made. In academia, critical voices have shown that the concept of coherence is often used as a way to not only ‘hierarchise’ one policy over the other, but also to ‘subordinate’ one actor over another. For example, the concept of ‘coherence’ can be used as a way to hide power asymmetries and hierarchies between the so-called global north and global south. And this is evident in the New Pact’s focus on policy coherence for return, as opposed to policy coherence for development.

Future research

Although we have focused primarily on internal coherence (i.e., the internal coherence of the GAMM and New Pact within the realm of EU migration policies), it would also be relevant to consider external coherence with other norms – such as international norms. This would allow us to situate the most recent EU policies in their broader international context. For instance, during the drafting process of the New Pact, civil society actors had the chance to comment during a four-week window on the Commission’s ‘Have your Say’ portal. One section of the New Pact briefly summarises the feedback they received and states: ‘regarding the external dimension of migration, some NGOs called for policy coherence and coherence with the UN Global Compacts’⁸ (Commission to the European Parliament, 2020: 28). However, the New Pact’s documents do not comment on the extent to which this plea for more coherence with the UN Global Compacts was taken into consideration. Both Compacts have been widely criticised (see, for instance, Pécoud, 2021) for their vague catch-all terminologies, among other things. While beyond the scope of the current paper, we can highlight the absence of

⁸ The UN Global Compacts refer to: (1) the Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration (UN, 2019); and (2) the Global Compact on Refugees (UN, 2018).

references to the UN Global Compacts in the New Pact pointing to a potential source of incoherence, especially in EU cooperation with third countries in the field of migration and development. A comparison of the framing of the links between migration and development in the New Pact and within the two UN Global Compacts could be conducted using policy narrative analysis.

In addition, while global south views on coherence do not seem to be particularly present in the literature reviewed, some authors have pointed to the cost that European migration and/or development policy incoherence can have for target countries in the global south. Smith and Schapendonk's (2018) writing about European migration management initiatives in Western Africa formulate several poignant questions in this regard:

Irrespective of the success of policy measures to actually contain people, we seriously question whether in the long run these policy measures are truly effective and/or morally sustainable. Why is it that a survey in Agadez indicates that 70% of the local population sees negative effects of EU projects subsumed under a development fund? Why is it that nobody seems to talk anymore about lowering the barriers to movements, as suggested by the UNDP report of 2009? (ibid: 1196)

We pick up on some of these limitations and questions – and more – in our forthcoming MIGNEX background paper ‘Comparative experiences of third-country cooperation’ (Godin et al., forthcoming) in order to contribute to a broader and more nuanced perspective.

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Annex

MIGNEX
Background
Paper

Table A1. List of documents reviewed (GAMM and the New Pact)MIGNEX
Background
Paper

GAMM (2011)		New Pact (2020)	
Document reference	Pages	Document reference	Pages
Brussels, 18.11.2011 COM(2011) 743 final Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility {SEC(2011) 1353 final}	25	Brussels, 23.9.2020 COM(2020) 609 final Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee of the Regions on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum	28
Brussels, 18.11.2011 SEC(2011) 1353 final Commission Staff Working Paper Migration and Development Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility {COM(2011) 743 final}	19	Brussels, 23.9.2020 COM(2020) 609 final Annexes to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum	3
MEMO/11/800 Brussels, 18 November 2011 Frequently Asked Questions: Fostering strategic dialogue and partnership with non-EU countries	4	Brussels, 23.9.2020 SWD(2020) 207 final Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the document. Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on asylum and migration management and amending Council Directive (EC)2003/109 and the proposed Regulation (EU)XXX/XXX [Asylum and Migration Fund] {COM(2020) 610 final}	106
European Commission - Press release Stronger cooperation and mobility at the centre of the renewed EU migration strategy (3p.)	3	Brussels, 23.9.2020 COM(2020) 610 final 2020/0279 (COD) Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the council on asylum and migration management and amending Council Directive (EC) 2003/109 and the proposed Regulation (EU) XXX/XXX [Asylum and Migration Fund] (Text with EEA relevance) {SWD(2020) 207 final}	110
		Brussels, 23.9.2020 COM(2020) 612 final ANNEX to the PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL introducing a screening of third country nationals at the external borders and amending Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/817	2
		Brussels, 23.9.2020 COM(2020) 611 final 2016/0224 (COD) Amended proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU	32
Total	51	Total	281

Table A2. Frequency counts for key terms in the GAMM and the New Pact (extended version)

	GAMM (2011)	New Pact (2020)
Coherent (including stemmed words)	29 (0.09%)	29 (0.01%)
Efficiency (including stemmed words)	10 (0.03%)	112 (0.05%)
Effectiveness (including stemmed words)	33 (0.10%)	400 (0.20%)
Return	19 (0.04%)	958 (0.31%)
Migration	425 (1.3%)	942 (0.44 %)
Mobility	156 (0.42%)	13 (0.01%)
Border / border control	18 (0.04%) / 19 (0.04%)	642 (0.21%) / 731 (0.24%)
Irregularity	30 (0.09%)	293 (0.14%)
Remittances	68 (0.25%)	2 (0.01%)
Diaspora	59 (0.16%)	4 (0.01%)
Rights	56 (0.11 %)	389 (0.11%)
Partner / partnership	192 (0.56%)	120 (0.06%)
Member states	89 (0.18 %)	2471 (0.77%)

Source: Authors' own analysis. Notes: (1) The number in brackets indicates the percentage coverage that the keyword represents in the documents included in the analysis (see Table 1).

Table A3. Coding of horizontal versus vertical coherence in the GAMM and the New Pact (extended version)

	GAMM (2011)	EU PACT (2020)
Horizontal coherence	Horizontal Coherence for Migration and Development (20)	Horizontal Coherence between Asylum and Return Policies (3)
Vertical coherence	Vertical Coherence between the EU and its Member States (1)	Vertical Coherence between the EU and its Member States" (21)
		Vertical Coherence between the EU and the UN level (2)
	Vertical Coherence with External Partners (5)	Vertical Coherence between the EU and External Partners (1)
Total	26 (out of 29)	27 (out of 29)

Source: Authors' own analysis.