The European Union in Africa: Incoherent Policies, Asymmetrical Partnership, Declining Relevance?
by Maurizio Carbone (University of Glasgow)

Maurizio Carbone is Professor of International Development and holds the Jean Monnet Chair in EU External Relations in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Glasgow. He has previously taught at the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, Duke University and has held visiting research positions at the University of Cambridge, Sciences-Po (Paris), European University Institute, University of Canterbury (New Zealand), Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium), and University of Trento (Italy). He has also worked for the European Commission in DG Development between 2001 and 2004. His main research interests are on the external relations of the European Union, foreign aid, the politics of international development, as well as European and Italian Politics.

On the eve of the fourth Africa-EU summit to be held in Brussels in April 2014, this paper discusses how the relationship between the European Union and Africa has evolved since the beginning of the twenty-first century. In particular, it seeks to challenge three widely-held assumptions. Firstly, the EU has made incremental progress in making its policies towards Africa more coherent. Tensions between EU member states and supranational institutions still persist in a number of areas, which ultimately questions the EU’s international legitimacy and its self-proclaimed identity as a champion of the interests of the developing world. Secondly, the EU–Africa relationship is less asymmetrical than it is generally believed. However, this is not because of the EU’s rhetorical commitments to partnership and ownership, but mainly because Africa has become a more assertive actor and has used any opportunity to widen its policy space in negotiations with external actors. Thirdly, despite the fact that the EU has increasingly faced competition from a number of ‘emerging powers’, it is still a major player in Africa – and it is still perceived by its counterparts as such – because of its comprehensive approach. Comprehensive approach, however, does not equate with coherent approach, nor does it mean that the EU has managed to take full control of its paternalistic reflexes. It simply means that the EU has cooperated with Africa in a large number of fields, or at least larger than any other established and emerging power on the continent.

When
Monday, December 2nd 2013
16:00 – 17:00

Venue
Nile Room
Institute for Development Policy and Management (IOB)
University of Antwerp
Lange Sint Annastraat 7
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