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Italy and the south of the world: still a laggard in international development?

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Abstract

This article analyses Italy's approach to international development, focusing in particular on why Italy gives (so little) foreign aid to developing countries. The first part explains

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European Union (EU) level, which are deemed to have a significant impact in the future of all Member States of the EU.

Keywords: International development foreign aid tangentopoli Berlusconi Prodi financing for development EU development policy

Notes

In September 2000 world leaders of 191 countries, including 147 heads of state and government, signed the Millennium Declaration, which embodied eight Millennium Development Goals. The MDGs, to be achieved by 2015, are: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; develop a global partnership for development. Most of these goals had been agreed at previous conferences, but the Millennium Declaration gave them a new authority.

The literature on foreign aid is extensive. Recent contributions include Degnbol-Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen (2003), Burnell and Morrissey (2004), Lancaster (2007) and Riddell (2007).

For a comprehensive history of Italian development cooperation between the 1950s and the early 1990s, see Rhi-Sausi et al. (1994) and Isernia (1995). In particular, Isernia

distinguishes three phases of Italian development policy: the 1950s - 1960s, the 1960s - 1987, the 1987 - 1990s; early 1990s onwards.

Other authors distinguish between two phases of Italian development policy, which are: the 1950s - 1987, the 1987 - 1990s; early 1990s onwards. In the 1950s - 1987, the Italian government was directly involved in development projects. In the 1987 - 1990s, the Italian government was indirectly involved in development projects. In the 1987 - 1990s, the Italian government was indirectly involved in development projects. In the 1987 - 1990s, the Italian government was indirectly involved in development projects.



The majority of Italian NGOs are part of one of the three NGO federations: FOCSIV which is Catholic-oriented, CIPSI (Coordinamento di Iniziative di Solidarietà Popolare, which is left-oriented), COCIS (Coordinamento delle ONG per la Cooperazione Internazionale allo Sviluppo), which emphasizes partnership with southern NGOs, and they are grouped under an umbrella organization (Associazione delle ONG Italiane). These NGOs are heavily dependent on public funds: most of their resources in fact come from Italian public agencies or from the EU. Another umbrella organization is the CINI (Coordinamento Italiano Network Internazionali), which groups the Italian branch of international organizations such as ActonAid International, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes: These NGOs receive very small amounts of resources from public funds (Il Sole 24 Ore, 12 January 2005, 29 June 2005).

The conclusions of the bi-cameral commission, reported in Van der Veen ([2000](#): 423 - 4), leave no space to the imagination: 'Among donor countries, Italy not only distinguishes itself by having committed itself rather late (from the end of the 1970s) to organizing a coherent cooperation policy, but also by the particular seriousness of malversations, in the use of cooperation funds, that have been revealed by a lively media campaign as well as by judiciary inquiries. It appears proven beyond any reasonable doubt ... that an illegal system of funneling financial resources to parties or individuals operated in the context of development cooperation.'

In reaction to the EU pledge, President Bush announced the doubling of the US foreign aid program, but only for those countries that performed well on various economic and political indicators. See Carbone ([2007b](#)).

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An interesting study is that of Tajoli ([1999](#)), who focusing on Italian aid program in 34 developing countries over the 1982 - 91 period, showed that tying aid did not seem to work as commercial policy: the correlation between Italian market shares and tied aid was statistically non-significant.

For a discussion of the impact of the DAC recommendation in Italy, see Zupi ([2004](#)).

The regulations established that EC aid to LDCs will be unilaterally untied. Technical cooperation and food aid will also be untied. The remaining part of EC aid will be open to donors upon the condition that they open their own aid, according to the principle of reciprocity.

For an analysis of the application of the DAC recommendation on untying of aid in Italy, see La Chimia (2004).

The Institute for Foreign Trade (ICE) helps Italian enterprises establish better economic ties in developing countries, supplying information and technical assistance on legal and financial issues. The Italian Society for Enterprise Internalization (SIMEST) offers financial, technical and organizational support to Italian companies that intend to invest in developing countries. The Italian Export Credit Agency (SACE) provides insurance to cover against political risks related to investment abroad. Mediocredito Centrale acts as a sort of development bank for Italian investors, through project finance and corporate finance schemes (DAC [2004](#)).

A major achievement in international development, which was influenced by what had been previously achieved in the EU, was the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness, which was designed to improve the quality of aid. It is organized around five pillars: leadership over their development efforts; aligning donor support; harmonizing procedures; reducing transaction costs; and ensuring that donors are held accountable for their results, i.e. that they will hold them to account (see [2007b](#)).



For a comprehensive analysis of the recent reforms in EU development policy, see Carbone ([2007b](#)).

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