SETTING THE SCENE

The globalization of the world economy and the elimination of the Cold War has fundamentally changed the geopolitical context of Europe’s relations with developing countries. Moreover, the European Union itself has undergone profound transformation in the process of enlargement to fifteen member states. The myriad network of ‘special relationships’ contracted with more than a hundred countries in Africa, the Mediterranean, Asia and Latin America has created a pyramid of preferences within which Europe’s obligations to one region often seem incompatible with those to another. These obligations, in terms of both aid and trade concessions, cumulatively constitute the threads from which the tapestry of European development cooperation is woven.

Europe has a colonial legacy that continues to shape these relationships. The original Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) recognized the African colonial legacies of the then six member states. During the last forty years the principal participants in the European integration process have exerted varying degrees of influence, often in contradictory directions, on Europe’s relations with developing countries. The result is an essentially regional set of relationships that has become, according to Enzo Grilli of the International Monetary Fund, ‘both an anachronism and a straightjacket of EC Europe’.

The European Community (EC) remains in strict legal terms the partner of the developing countries rather than the European Union (EU). It is the EC treaties that define the competence of the Community institutions and those of the member states regarding trade and common aid provisions. In the late 1990s, however, the Union dominates both the conceptual high ground and the perception
of third countries towards the now fifteen member states. To what extent does the EU have an active development cooperation policy? What are the main influences that shape its aid and trade relations with developing countries? Will the twenty-first century usher in a major metamorphosis of these relations? This volume of essays addresses these important questions, focusing especially on EU–developing country links in the mid 1990s, within the overall historical perspective of forty years of common endeavour in external economic relations.

THE CONTENT OF THIS BOOK

This volume contains the written papers presented by the students at the College of Europe, Bruges, who participated in the interdisciplinary course ‘The European Union and Developing Countries’ during the academic semester January–June 1996, which is part of the course leading to the Masters Degree in European Studies. The students work mainly within one of three major disciplines – law, economics and political science – and come together for selected classes where they bring their common analytical skills to bear regarding important aspects of the EU’s development. External relations in general and relations with developing countries in particular demand a knowledge of all three major analytical approaches and the essays collected here display a unique mix of both academic and national backgrounds. The authors of the papers come from fifteen countries – Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Working closely together, they have succeeded in creating a varied and interesting survey of contemporary developments in this important area of EU external relations.

The volume comprises five parts: Part 1, on The Forces Shaping EU Development Policy; Part 2, on the Lomé Convention; Part 3, on the Mediterranean challenge; Part 4, on EU cooperation with Asia and Latin America and Part V on commercial instruments of EU development policy.

Part 1, which includes this opening chapter, examines the forces shaping the macroeconomic and political determinants of EU priorities towards developing countries. It goes on to analyse the respective roles of the European Commission and the European Court of Justice in development cooperation. Chapter 2 indicates