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African and Romanian perspectives on consolidating the European Union: African Union partnership

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European
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African and Romanian perspectives on consolidating the European Union - African Union partnership

Bucharest, November 2022



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The African Union (AU) has become one of the strongest partners of the European Union (EU). The history, geographical proximity and common interests provide the foundation for a continuous enhancement of the EU-AU partnership.

The Africa-EU Partnership was established in 2000 at the first Africa-EU Summit in Cairo and continues to be guided by the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, which was adopted at the second EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon in 2007. The African Union is the EU's political partner at the continental level.

The African Union was established in 2002 as a successor of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) created in 1963. Having as a motto ***“An Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena,”*** the organisation brings together 55 African states and has its headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The AU is an expression of the pan-African vision of a united continent that came into existence following the Sirte Declaration of the heads of state and government of the OAU, which envisioned a more suitable framework of cooperation for integrating Africa and addressing the common multidimensional challenges.

In March 2020, the European Commission presented the vision for a new strategy for cooperation with Africa, taking into consideration that [“new prospects and challenges are emerging from economic, political, social, technological, demographic, climate and environmental changes”](#). Consequently, at the most recent EU-AU Summit, held in Brussels on 17-18 February 2022, a [Joint Vision for 2030](#) was adopted, with four deliverables at its heart:

- (i) Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package - with EUR 150 billion worth of grants and investment supported by the EU budget;
- (ii) renewed and enhanced cooperation for peace and security;
- (iii) an enhanced and reciprocal partnership for migration and mobility;
- (iv) a commitment to multilateralism within the rules-based international order, with the UN at its core.

Against this backdrop, the collective report *“African perspectives on consolidating the European Union - African Union partnership”* was designed as an open platform for African experts to express their views and concerns regarding the potential held by the renewed partnership. The views presented in this report offer a glimpse into how the European Union is perceived in the African states, which is essential for devising appropriate policy instruments benefiting the citizens and overall sustainable development.

To conduct this research, we gathered the contributions of 16 experts from African countries: Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda. All the contributors provide their own views and perspectives based on their vast experience in think tanks, academia, consultancy or public offices.

We invited the experts to think about the aspects that may impact the future of the EU-AU partnership and the implementation of the specific goals included in the Joint Vision for 2030. The ideas put forward by the experts in this collective report focus on the context and challenges for the implementation of the renewed partnership, while providing perspectives and concrete recommendations regarding key sectors of cooperation: peace and security, digital transition, and youth and education. We present below a graphic visualisation of the main ideas included in the sections of the collective report.

Anchoring the EU-AU Joint Vision for 2030: context, challenges and opportunities:

- Managing the historical legacies and enhancing mutual trust;
- Building an equal partnership and ensuring local ownership of the priorities set;
- Establish monitoring mechanisms and design concrete implementation documents;
- Address the multifaceted evolutions impacting the partnership: geopolitical competition, political instability, post-COVID-19 economic and public health recovery, demographics etc.

Enhancing multilateralism for peace and security:

- Ensure African ownership for the solutions to ongoing crises and conflicts;
- Support a better representation of African voices at the global level and in multilateral fora;
- Develop a more integrated and coherent EU approach to peace and security.

Managing the digital transition:

- Invest in sustainable hard and soft infrastructure with the support of all stakeholders concerned;
- Build upon the EU experience in regulating the digital space, while taking into consideration the African realities;
- Address the interconnections between the digital space and the economy and human rights situation.

The role of youth and education:

- Regain youth's trust in governments and bring them on board as drivers of change and innovators;
- Provide better learning opportunities in Africa and through foreign digital education systems to prevent brain drain;
- Develop an overarching vision of *people-to-people* contacts through complementary types of diplomacy.

The collective report concludes with an afterword written by Mihai Sebe, PhD, head of the European Studies Unit within the European Institute of Romania. This section represents a short overview of Romania's foreign policy priorities in the context of the bilateral relations with the African states, as well as within the framework provided by the EU-AU partnership.

FOREWORD


With a troubled legacy and significant multidimensional interdependencies, European-African relations have developed during the past two decades under three main pillars: development aid and loans; trade and investment; and democracy, peace, security, and migration. A [recent study](#) has shown that regionalisation is becoming the norm to the detriment of globalisation, mainly due to technological and demographic evolutions, climate change and geopolitical shifts in approaching global free trade. The recent global challenges, such as post-pandemic recovery, climate change and most recently the Russian unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, have heightened the regionalisation trend and thus profoundly impacted the relations between the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU).

The African Union was established in 2002 and has since become a [leading voice at the global level](#) advocating for a shift towards sustainable development. In this context, the sixth EU-AU summit from February 2022 signalled a change of perspective from financial commitments to working together towards achieving common goals, as shown by the [Joint Vision for 2030](#). The underlying element of the cooperation agenda is the quest for efficient multilateralism which lies at the core of the rules-based international order.

However, more often than not, [Africans feel that more should be done to accommodate their specific interests](#): *“Africa remains poorly understood by the rest of the world and frequently distorted in global conversations, whether in the work of African and Africanist scholars, the reporting of journalists, or the missives of aid workers.”* In this context, as a European research centre, we aim to contribute to the ongoing public debate on the future of this partnership, where the Africans express their own concerns and views on the shared goals of solidarity, security, peace and sustainability.

We gathered contributions from 16 African thinkers with extensive experience as researchers, think tankers, consultants or public officials, presenting various perspectives on consolidating the EU-AU partnership from the overarching political vision to the specific details of implementing sectoral projects regarding digital transition, peace and security or education and youth. Our call was met with positive responses, thus ensuring, as much as possible given the limited amount of space and time, a wider geographical representation of African perspectives, with authors based in Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda.

The report is complemented by a series of four analyses from Romanian leading experts researching Africa, who provided a much-needed Eastern European perspective on the EU-AU partnership. The potential contribution of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries is often neglected by policy analysts and practitioners, despite a history of friendly relations with their African counterparts. A [study from November 2020](#) highlighted the growing but uneven engagement of



senior CEE officials with Africa, in an attempt to capitalise upon their own transition experience and past partnerships. The particular case of Romania's relations with Africa is explored in the final analysis included in this collective report.

The present document follows our [previous collaborative report](#) on the expectations regarding the future of Europe from the EU's neighbouring regions (candidate and potential candidate countries, as well as the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas members). The experts' papers prepared and published in 2021 proved highly relevant for understanding the context and regional impact of the unprovoked and illegal military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Currently, the food and energy crises exacerbated by the conflict have provoked global shockwaves, raising new questions regarding the EU's relations with the African Union.

I would like to express my gratitude to the African experts for trusting us with their work and agreeing to contribute to this collaborative report. We hope this represents a relevant document for researchers and policymakers to promote an equal and trust-based partnership between the European and African counterparts, while also consolidating the engagement of the Central and Eastern European countries in the policy-making process regarding this initiative.

Oana-Mihaela Mocanu
Director General of the European Institute of Romania



Anchoring the EU-AU Joint Vision for 2030: context, challenges and opportunities

The European Union - African Union partnership: some personal insights on opportunities and challenges for regional cooperation and development¹


Safiya Ahmad Nuhu

There is a new momentum in strengthening the regional collaboration and partnership between the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU). One of the major driving forces of this collaboration resides in the desire to promote economic opportunities for both regions, with post-COVID-19 economic recovery and resilience at the heart of these initiatives and engagements. The EU-AU cooperation is premised upon “shared global commitments” arising from multilateral and regional frameworks. Specifically, the [2020 Joint Communication of the European Commission \(Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa\)](#) framed the cooperation within the scope of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the African Union Agenda 2063. The collaboration is reflective of the potential role of SDG 17 “Partnership for the goals” which puts collaboration and teamwork at the heart of achieving sustainable development. The 2020 Joint Communication states the premise of the partnership as follows:

“To benefit both continents, our partnership should be based on a clear understanding of our respective and mutual interests and responsibilities, reflecting the comprehensiveness and maturity of our relationship. These interests include: developing a green growth model; improving the business environment and investment climate; boosting education, research and innovation, the creation of decent jobs and value addition through sustainable investments; maximising the benefits of regional economic integration and trade; ensuring food security and rural development; combatting climate change; ensuring access to sustainable energy and protecting biodiversity and natural resources; promoting peace and security; ensuring well-governed migration and mobility; engaging together on the global scene to strengthen the multilateral rules-based order, promoting universal values, human rights, democracy, rule of law and gender equality.”

The identified areas reflect a wide scope for long-term collaboration between the EU and AU, reflecting the needs of both continents. However, it is essential to go beyond the rhetoric and match the commitment of words with action. Political will at the levels of the EU and AU, as well as at the levels of their individual member states is paramount for ensuring a successful partnership. Although there is an apparent positive effort on the part of the EU to not only initiate, but also to finance

¹ The views expressed in this article are personal and do not reflect the official position of Nigeria, nor of any government agency or institution in Nigeria.



part of this collaboration, the EU needs to demonstrate its commitment through a high level of responsibility in achieving the full potential of the partnership.

A unique feature of the [Joint Vision for 2030 within the EU-AU partnership](#) is that it reflects the inequities between the two regions and incorporates aspects that target reducing inequities, promoting economic stability and sustainability, for the prosperity of our citizens, and future generations. Nevertheless, there are several noteworthy challenges to the implementation of the Joint Vision.

First, the major driving force of implementation is represented by the member states of the EU and AU, with the regional organisations as the coordination centre points for promoting and supporting the collaboration. However, many countries from both continents are left behind in the implementation stages of the strategies. For example, not all EU countries have equal opportunities for accessing the packages envisaged to stimulate private investments in the areas mentioned in the partnership. Emerging economies from Eastern and Central Europe still face the challenges of meeting the requirements of accessing the EU structural funds and engaging with other countries in Africa, thus limiting some opportunities for balanced development with sustainability at its core. The potential investment opportunities of the EU-AU partnership for some of these countries are not fully understood or explored. Even in cultural, scientific and educational programs such as the Erasmus+, there are a multiplicity of EU regulations which restrict education mobility in those countries, and in effect make it cumbersome to access.

Secondly, African countries have a low level of engagement and awareness of the prospects of the EU-AU collaboration. Although all the priority sectors are important for both continents, there are different levels of implementation capacity, especially in the areas of the twin green and digital transition, requiring significant investment in infrastructure, human capital and institution building. These two sectors have emerged as the key areas for which confidence-building is essential and real partnership needs to be forged. There are concerns regarding how COVID-19 had a disproportionate impact and exacerbated existing inequalities between and within countries. Africa's role in global health and the twin green and digital transition needs to be put in the context of a sustainable future for all, as global citizens. Particularly, both the EU and the AU agree that strategies will have to take into consideration these factors.

Thirdly, there is also the problem of standard-setting, monitoring and evaluation in the utilisation of funds that target investments in Africa. The EU has notably some of the best global standards for goods and services, as well as ethical frameworks that ensure compliance within member states. However, different operation standards are allowed in African markets contrary to global commitments targeting sustainability. The real commitment must be accompanied by measures to check violations and sanction breaches related to our common global goals and commitments.

Fourthly, the continents' demographics present different sets of priorities for collaboration. Whereas the [African continent has a majority of a young population](#),




the [EU, on the other hand, has an ageing population](#). Migration and mobility have always in fact, been used as key components in the EU-AU collaboration, with the main focus being on regulation. However, an important factor in this regard is that the economic opportunities envisaged from the partnership with Africa are essentially tied to the peace and stability of African countries and focus also on the employability of Africa's young population. These are the major push and pull factors that influence migration. Thus, the partnership should incorporate concrete measures to promote peace, security, stability and human rights in Africa, as well as create opportunities in the labour market for the African youth. When designing the implementation strategies, the partnership needs to tie the specific component of migration and mobility to investment and economic cooperation. Corporate social responsibility approaches of European companies operating in Africa could target this particular aspect as well.

Digital transition holds immense promise for both continents. In particular, Africa's youthful energetic and enterprising population offer a vast human resource and can represent channels for the economic recovery of both Africa and Europe, since their potential can be used to foster productivity and innovation. However, to fully benefit from this prospect, there is a need to build competition for digital goods and services. A higher purchasing power for Africans means a better market for Europe, and a more prosperous Africa also means fewer migrant crises in Europe.

Another key area for the EU-AU partnership is the green transition. As the impact of climate change is increasingly witnessed across the globe, there is a growing need to act fast and decisively. An interesting aspect of the green transition is that it offers opportunities and solutions to global problems related to agriculture and food security, peace and security, and other cross-cutting issues affecting humanity's survival. In reality, a lot needs to be done to increase climate literacy, boost the communities' capacity to mitigate the effects and support the countries to create context-specific models for countering climate change and transitioning to green energy. Private sector participation is also essential, and companies must be encouraged to develop and implement approaches that avoid and mitigate climate change risks and promote sustainability.

The EU-AU cooperation holds a high potential, paving the way for economic recovery and resilience of both continents in a sustainable manner for the future of Europe and Africa. To enjoy the full opportunities of a sustainable relationship that results in long-term gains, the partnership should be based on mutual trust and partnership, not a mere competition among regions or other nations. Africa's sustainable future is more closely tied to Europe's.

The EU can work together with the AU and the member countries to foster a better environment within which this partnership will develop. This can be done by supporting the driving forces of Africa's development, especially young people and women; providing assistance and support for building strong institutions; providing the much-needed assistance to address socio-economic challenges related to



Africa's peace and security; ensuring that public and private actors accessing the EU funds abide by the standards aligned with the SDGs.

On the common priorities as reflected in the new EU-Africa strategy


Sergiu Mişcoiu, Dan Petrica

The European Commission's and European External Action Service (EEAS)'s vision of the future EU-Africa partnership, as outlined in the [Joint Communication "Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa"](#) (Joint Communication) and supported by the Council Conclusions, sets the main priorities of the European Union (EU)'s engagement with Africa. The document builds on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as well as [on several existing EU, African and common policies and frameworks](#), such as the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, the EU Global Strategy, the European Consensus on Development, and the 2007 Joint Africa-EU Strategy.

The communication emphasizes five key areas in which the cooperation between the partners should be strengthened: (1) green transition and energy access, (2) digital transformation, (3) sustainable growth and jobs, (4) peace and governance, and (5) migration and mobility. These priorities reflect Ursula von der Leyen's goal of strengthening the Commission's geopolitical dimension during her presidency. As a political statement regarding Africa's significance for the EU agenda, von der Leyen paid her first official external visit to Addis Ababa the seat of the AU headquarters, shortly after her inauguration.

The aforementioned Joint Communication reinforces the priority given by the EU to the relationship with Africa, based on geographical proximity, extensive historical ties and shared interests, reinforcing the idea of *kith and kin* as a natural impetus for partnership and cooperation. The general framing of the partnership as shown here is vital, in our opinion, if the EU wants to shed its historically-created identity, which still lingers inside the post-colonial African societies, where the policymakers and citizens alike have reservations about any partnership with Europeans. While the partnership's proposed key areas come after a process of consultation amongst partners in fora such as AU-EU Summits, their order is admittedly marked by EU preferences - reflecting the growing emphasis on digitalisation and climate change, which circumstantially outweigh governance or peace and security.

After a series of delays, mostly caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the 6th EU-AU summit took place in Brussels on 17 and 18 February 2022. A final declaration entitled "[A Joint Vision for 2030](#)" was adopted, with the aim "to consolidate a renewed partnership" focusing on both short and long-term objectives. The immediate challenge identified was providing African counterparts with access to COVID-19 vaccines and medical products, considering that the approach adopted by the EU countries for vaccine procurement and distribution, doubled by their resistance to provide patent waivers, had created tensions and mistrust between the two blocs. The European side also promised some economic support measures,



as the recent pandemic had taken its toll on Africa's economies - in some cases, erasing years of sustained economic growth.

The Summit's most notable outcome was, however, the announcement of the [Global Gateway Investment Package](#) of at least EUR 150 billion directed towards green and digital transitions, sustainable growth and job creation, and health and education - all in the span of the next seven years. The said package tackles the first three priorities of the 2020 Joint Communication and will encompass half of the EU's entire Global Gateway budget, thereby reiterating Africa's importance for EU27, as China, the US and Russia are vying for influence therein. While details on how the investments will be split between grants, guarantees and private sector funding are still to be finetuned, there is hope that the practical side will be given attention and that the funds can reach the countries and communities most in need of support.

The last two areas of cooperation present in the Joint Communication also made their way into the 2022 Summit's final declaration. The two sides confirmed their support for closer cooperation for peace and security, as well as for an enhanced and reciprocal partnership for migration and mobility. The parts also declared their commitment to multilateralism and the preservation of the rules-based international order. Getting the last point on the agenda is particularly important for the EU, especially since state and non-state actors alike challenge the said order's structure.

Even though the agenda leading up to this year's final declaration suffered at times from decreased African input, we think that the EU's representatives realised they had to give leeway to their African partners during the strategy-building process. The EU mediated the risk of crafting a one-sided version of the partnership, one in which Sub-Saharan Africa becomes a block of beneficiaries, rather than one of the equal stakeholders, thereby eliminating the rhetoric of equality. Insufficient attention given to African priorities and values enshrined in the policies put forth by any partnership proposal may result in the rejection of said policies in the later phases of implementation, on account of a no-co-creation pedigree. Moreover, the past initiative of the European Commission "Alliance with Africa" was developed with limited inputs from the EU's supposed Alliance partners, which proved to be one of its major weaknesses.

While the current partnership is less paternalistic than the previous attempts, we claim that it still does not accurately reflect Africa's main priorities; rather, it contains those domains on which compromise was easily reached. Nonetheless, previous iterations show that during later stages, the partnership can be subject to further improvements. Hopefully, in these more concrete later stages, African states can put some more flesh on the strategy's bones, rather than have some of its existing flesh stripped.

The need for mutual trust in developing the EU-AU partnership

Jossam Potel

During the past two decades, the relations between the EU and AU have changed from supervision to social, political and economic collaboration. The EU has come to realise and recognise the role that the AU member states can play in mitigating global challenges. While the Joint Vision for 2030 for the EU-AU partnership highlights priorities for various areas of collaboration, their implementation relies on the sole commitment of each member state. Rwanda, as an AU member, contributes much to the realisation of this partnership, playing a significant role in ensuring security in conflict-prone countries, by deploying peacekeeping forces. In addition, it has incorporated development programmes and implementation plans, and it has contributed to the budget for health, climate, biodiversity, education and security, to facilitate economic recovery on the African continent.

Through the new vision, both the EU and AU committed to changing the perspective of their collaboration from financial support to working together towards achieving common goals. Such a shift in approach gives the AU more confidence in the partnership because it reduces the perception of the EU's supervision which is always invoked by the AU member states. As a developing country, Rwanda has the ambitious goal of attaining a middle-income status and becoming economically independent. Therefore, it has reformed its trade and business sector, stabilised its security situation, and invested in education. The aforementioned developments open many opportunities for the EU investors interested in establishing their companies in Rwanda.

The foreseeable challenges in the EU-AU partnership can be found in the document itself, which never provided an implementation plan, thus risking becoming like other silent agreements and partnerships that have remained only on paper. The 2030 Joint Vision requires a strategic implementation plan that provides certain guidelines for each party to realise and accomplish under this partnership.

Given that the partnership is based on mutual respect, for a successful collaboration, a joint monitoring and evaluation mechanism needs to be established to ensure the incorporation of the specific objectives mentioned by the strategic document in each country's development agenda.

Since both the EU and AU have been negatively impacted by the current global challenges, such as post-pandemic recovery, climate change, and, most recently, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, working together for common goals can contribute to the political and economic negotiating power of the partners, with particular attention given to enhancing the level of mutual trust.


Deepening mutual trust and shared values for inclusive, peaceful and prosperous societies in Africa and Europe

Gilbert Sendugwa

Africa and Europe have strong historical, cultural, political and economic relations that continue to significantly influence current events on both continents. Major European economic and political actors, such as Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Spain and Portugal, played active roles in the colonisation of the African continent and their voices remain important in post-colonial times. Africa and Europe are also geographically close, raising the potential for greater economic ties and opportunities for mutual learning and sharing. But it also means that problems on either continent could have greater impacts on the other, despite the significant cultural differences and the various levels of development.

With greater prospects for shared prosperity and development, during the past decade and a half, the African Union and the European Union have deepened and broadened their partnership for a better future for their citizens. Structured dialogues on areas such as trade and investment, infrastructure development, peace and security, social issues, as well as human rights and democracy had been held with the participation of Civil Society organisations (CSOs). Through this cooperation, both continents have provided their member states with technical assistance, funding and political support in various areas, including election observation, peacekeeping, and infrastructure development in health, energy, and transport education, among other sectors.


The world today faces many new challenges. The citizens' trust in public institutions and leaders across the world has reduced significantly. In other continents, this phenomenon has resulted in the election of populist leaders, while in Africa this deficit has led to the resurgence of military coups in countries such as Chad, Mali, Guinea, Sudan and Burkina Faso, [quite often welcomed by ordinary civilians](#). Additionally, the refugee crisis has intensified, with millions of African young people taking high risks to seek better opportunities which are not available in their countries, mainly because of poor governance. Europe has witnessed higher refugee flows mostly due to large-scale conflicts, especially the ones in Syria and Ukraine. Health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly impacted the world, causing death, overstressing already weak public health infrastructure capacities, and severely affecting economies, while Africa faced new challenges to people's rights to information, expression and association. As Africa is looking for financial support and other types of assistance from China and other countries, trade, not development, has become a major foreign policy instrument for developed countries, changing the focus and character of discussions with African countries, but also unintentionally contributing to the shrinkage of civic space.



The partnership between the African Union and the European Union can play a significant role in the effective and mutually beneficial resolution of the above-mentioned issues in a continuously changing context. This will require some work on their relationship on several dimensions:

- a. **Building and Rebuilding trust:** Africa and Europe have achieved a lot from their partnership but, based on their colonial history and post-colonial relations, there are significant trust deficits regarding the intentions of the parties, especially Europe. Mistrust in the intentions of either party resurfaces occasionally and affects the advancement of the common agenda.
- b. **Major decisions are driven by national governments:** Discussions and negotiations between the AU and the EU are hampered by the fact that, unlike within the European Union, the national governments retain strong decision-making power within the African Union. While the EU may be benefiting from bilateral cooperation frameworks with individual African countries, in many cases this arrangement harms the interests of the EU, the AU, as well as individual member states.
- c. **Shared values and common interests.** Several African countries consider as defiance their protest to the continued (negative) economic and political influence of former colonial masters, and their new relations with other partners. Over the past few decades, China, Russia and India have gained significant political, military, economic and diplomatic influence in Africa and around the world. The three giants have branded their progress as having been defiantly achieved in opposition to the West. The future of the AU-EU relations should be based on issues bringing value to both continents, not just to the best negotiator. These may include, but not be limited to: transformative trade infrastructure in Africa that lowers barriers to Africa's exports to Europe and other regions, job creation in Africa that limits the influx of refugees from Africa, deepening democracy and rule of law in Africa that increases investment opportunities and creates political and economic stability on the continent. It will be of great value for both Africa and Europe to celebrate Africa's success and not Africa to celebrate it as a "defiance" of the West.

In Africa, many people hold the view that Europe and the United States of America expected Africa to support their common position in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has been labelled by Russian propaganda as a conflict with the West. Ordinarily, every African country, like the EU member states would agree that national sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected by their neighbours, weak or powerful. Discussions on the aftermath of the United Nations vote on the matter revealed that the positions were not based on the principles of national sovereignty and respect



for the territorial integrity of states, but rather on how individual states relate with three giants - the EU, the US and Russia. It will be important for the future of the AU- EU relations to be built on the foundation of shared values and mutual trust between the peoples of Africa and Europe.

- d. **People-centred partnership:** Increasingly, trust in institutions by African and European citizens has diminished. In Europe, this weakened trust contributed a lot to Brexit and other political developments. Whereas there have been efforts to create structures for CSO participation in the AU-EU relations, neither the African Union nor the European Union has provided the necessary resources for the effective involvement of CSOs in the decision-making and the legitimization of the partnership as one between citizens. In many African and European countries, CSOs and citizen groups lack awareness about the AU-EU partnership and quite often see the EU countries as part of state structures violating their rights. This lack of awareness has quite often been used by dictatorial regimes against legitimate CSOs questioning the abuses of power, leading to their designation as foreign agents. With rising populist and military leaders on both continents, the risk of a deterioration of the relations between the two Unions could increase.
- e. **Human rights and democratic governance.** The African Union has adopted continental treaties on specific issues, such as human rights, democratic governance, corruption, values and principles of public service, youth participation etc. These treaties could contribute to addressing current challenges and improving people's lives, and may also represent a basis for stronger AU-EU collaboration and partnership upon their ratification and implementation. Unfortunately, the violation of human rights, disputed elections and corruption add up to already existing significant challenges in Africa despite the treaties in force.

Opportunities and challenges to the implementation of the Joint Vision for 2030

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Introduction


The EU-AU Partnership is often described as a “partnership of unequals”, considering the power dynamics between the two continents. In this context, it becomes important to review the renewed partnership and its proposals, to identify fundamental opportunities for Africa and highlight some of the challenges that may hamper the effective operationalisation of the partnership and its goals. We will focus on four of the five broad themes identified under the renewed partnership and provide recommendations to address the identified challenges.

Fair and equitable access to vaccines

At the end of September 2022, out of more than [12.6 billion vaccine doses](#) produced worldwide, Africa has only received an estimated [952 million doses](#). While many countries outside Africa are already administering booster doses, [less than 22% of Africans are fully vaccinated](#). Additionally, empirical evidence shows that low vaccination rates in Africa are not only determined by the unavailability, delayed starts and slow progress in vaccine roll-out, but also by [negative perceptions](#) and lack of confidence in the vaccine’s effectiveness and safety, as well as by the unequal access to healthcare among the African population. Meanwhile, the World Bank estimated that [each month’s delay in vaccination costs Africa USD 14 billion](#).

Under the [renewed partnership](#), the EU expressed its commitment to support Africa’s access and ensure the efficient distribution of COVID-19 vaccines through grants, and infrastructural and human capital development. The major challenges in operationalising this commitment are the lack of funds, as well as the poor scientific and technological base of the majority of African countries, which prevented their engagement in the production of COVID-19 vaccines. This notwithstanding, honest efforts by EU member states in sharing best practices, technology and vaccine patents with African countries are crucial to achieving African health sovereignty.

Under the renewed partnership, the AU and the EU are committed to stepping up their support to scientific cooperation between researchers to develop knowledge together, as well as to share technology and expertise, including through a joint AU-EU Innovation Agenda. Through the expanded Erasmus+ programme and partnerships between universities, young Africans have the opportunity to pursue education and training in European countries. However, this may lead to a brain drain on the continent, as most beneficiaries of these programmes are more likely to gain opportunities to remain in the developed economies, to the detriment of their home countries which cannot compete due to poverty and the lack of basic infrastructure.



A more beneficial approach would be to link some of the educational and training programmes to a commitment to return to the country of origin after some time and give back to their community.

A prosperous and sustainable Africa and Europe

The continental frameworks and initiatives established for the sustainable development of Africa are supported by the new EU-AU partnership, which provided for an Africa-Europe Investment Package of at least EUR 150 billion, in line with the priorities and needs of the African countries. The investment package provides an opportunity for African countries to access funds for some of their planned development projects, especially in energy, transport, and digital infrastructure. However, the major challenge with the investment package is the inadequacy of the provisioned amount of EUR 150 billion to cover the proposed priority projects according to the needs of all African countries.

Another challenge many African countries are likely to encounter is poor accountability and possible misappropriation of funds received. One aspect of poor governance in most African countries refers to the allegations of corruption in spending the foreign aid, grants and loans.

Furthermore, while the renewed partnership seeks to “*boost regional and continental economic integration, particularly through the African Continental Free Trade Area*”, certain trade agreements between the EU and some African countries may undermine some of the objectives of the AfCFTA as a mechanism to foster intra-African trade and facilitate regional and cross-continental value chains. This is because third parties may gain access to the African market without a commensurate gain for the African continent thereby [jeopardising the collective resolve of member states of the AU to further integrate](#), reduce poverty and boost the African economy by liberalising the intra-African trade.

A renewed and enhanced cooperation for peace and security

The renewed partnership aims at enhancing the long-standing peace and security cooperation between the EU and AU, premised on the principle of African solutions to African problems, within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture. The common goals are reflected in the AU-EU Memorandum of Understanding on Peace, Security and Governance (2018), which aims, among others, at fighting instability, radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism, tackling the root causes of conflicts, and addressing the entire conflict cycle through an integrated approach. Yet, insecurity remains a huge challenge in different parts of Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa appears to be the global epicentre of terrorism, accounting for 48% of global terrorism deaths, according to the [2022 Global Terrorism Index](#). More specifically, [Nigeria has witnessed heightened levels of insecurity](#) stemming from Boko Haram religious extremism, climate change-related clashes between farmers and pastoralists, organised violent crimes, as well as rural banditry. There are incidents of armed conflict, ethnic clashes and civil unrest in

different areas of [Ethiopia](#). [South Africa](#) continues to deal with widespread incidents of xenophobic harassment, attacks against foreigners by mobs, and a high rate of violent crime. These threats and vulnerabilities require concerted efforts to ensure peace and security in Africa.

The renewed partnership provides support for the relevant African security and law enforcement institutions in terms of training, capacity building and equipment, while also committing to strengthening and scaling up African-led autonomous peace operations, including through EU missions and assistance measures. These notwithstanding, there is a need for more concrete plans and specific targets in these interventions, adapting them to the tactical and strategic needs of each operation in each African country.

The renewed partnership also aims to “*promote the rule of law and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security, Children and Armed Conflict and the Youth, Peace and Security Agendas, and underpin it with concrete actions to achieve durable peace.*” This provides an opportunity for the participation in conflict resolution of African vulnerable groups like women, children, and youth. Nonetheless, while success has been recorded in the past in incorporating and organising women groups, the challenge would be their effective engagement when in certain instances they act [both as victims and sometimes as perpetrators of conflict](#). Recognising women’s dual role in conflict requires more attention in any EU-AU intervention on peace and security, [to ensure effective reconciliation and peace](#).

Finally, it is important to stress that poor governance and corruption are major challenges limiting governments in African countries from achieving peace and security in their territories. The EU and AU have to establish monitoring mechanisms and accountability processes to ensure the appropriate use of allocated funds. In addition, African countries need financial and technical support within the renewed partnership to address the rising challenge of fake news and hate speech on social media, which [have been a major cause of violent conflict in African countries](#).

An enhanced and reciprocal partnership for migration and mobility

The renewed partnership provides that legal migration opportunities will be further supported. Unfortunately, there have been limited achievements in creating legal pathways for African migrants’ mobility to Europe in the past. For instance, even after emphasising the importance of legal channels of migration in the [AU-EU 2007 partnership](#), the actions were limited to [high-level](#), with few concrete steps on the creation of legal channels of migration for over a decade. Some African policymakers and potential African migrants consider the EU’s legal channels of migration as “[waiting for Godot](#)”, a policy change and action that never arrives.

Therefore, although there is a high level of EU political and financial commitment to countering irregular migration, facilitating return and dismantling illegal immigration networks, reintegration and legal pathways lack appropriate

resources and political will. The challenge is that the effective implementation of return and readmission may prove difficult, considering the political and economic realities in Africa, such as insecurity, wars and coups, lack of basic infrastructure, as well as geopolitical competition. Also, the reintegration into African societies of the vulnerable returning migrants has remained a difficult task. The EU's involvement should be supported by the African governments' commitment to addressing the underlying causes of migration, such as violent conflicts and limited good governance mechanisms, but also the emerging climate-related factors.


Similarly, the renewed partnership should also leverage and facilitate transparent remittances, including through the [reduction of transaction costs](#), for the development of national and local economies. The issue of remittances is very important for Africa, given the fact that in 2020, Africa received about USD 78 billion in remittances, which exceeds the sum of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Official Development Assistance (ODA) during the same year. The cost of transferring remittances to and within Africa is higher than those in other regions, therefore a joint intervention by the AU and EU would contribute to the improvement of the African economies.

Conclusions and recommendations for a mutually beneficial partnership

One of the achievements of the 6th AU-EU summit was the organisation of [the meetings of African and European non-governmental actors](#) with the participation of youth, civil society groups and representatives of the private sector. Unfortunately, the leaders' summit did not take full advantage of these deliberations, since these meetings were not part of the official agenda. We believe that it would be more beneficial for Africa if the top-down decision-making process was replaced with a more inclusive approach where the civil society and private sector were invited to participate to bridge the gap between political narratives and lived realities. Additionally, political leaders at the sub-national level should also be included in the negotiation process, to develop initiatives and networks which could yield stronger and more beneficial connections for the whole African-European cooperation.²

While the potential impact of the Team Europe Initiative in addressing the problem of food security in Africa is significant, the EU's Global Gateway concentrates on mobilising private sector funding and partnering with big agribusiness companies. It is still unclear whether the investment package of the world's largest aid donor will have a real impact on African rural communities, where half of the African population lives, a majority of them smallholder farmers supplying most of the food, but largely operating in informal settings. This calls for the EU and AU to establish mechanisms ensuring that agricultural funds and assistance reach the rural communities of African countries.

² For instance, the African-Europe Mayor's Dialogue is a "platform led by the cities of Milan and Freetown to deliver practical and collaborative solutions for human mobility in and between cities". More information are available here: <https://odi.org/en/about/our-work/the-africa-europe-mayors-dialogue/>.



Lastly, considering the effects of the Russian-Ukraine war, there may be a challenge for the EU to fully commit to the renewed partnership, in terms of financial resources and political will. As the Russian-Ukraine war persists, the EU will continue to financially support Ukraine to defend the international law principles of non-intervention and state sovereignty, which will impact the European economies already affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU may have some difficulty supporting Ukraine, addressing its challenges and meeting all its financial commitments under the renewed partnership with Africa.

The EU-AU renewed partnership: an optimistic outlook and pragmatic challenges

Jesutimilehin O. Akamo

The optimism generated by the joint vision between the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) is not misplaced. Seeking to consolidate the renewed partnership for solidarity, security, peace, and sustainable and sustained economic development and prosperity is a good premise for positivity. Additionally, the renewed partnership founded on geography, acknowledgement of history, human ties, respect for sovereignty, mutual respect and accountability, shared values, equality between partners and reciprocal commitment hints at redress for the irregularities and errors of the past, as well as at the possibility of reconfiguring the power dynamics between the EU and AU for mutual benefit.

Several entry points for the [renewed partnership](#) capture the major issues between Africa and Europe. On one hand, Africa has the opportunity to define its trade needs, receive support to facilitate the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) implementation, and mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, while also boosting human capital to meet its technical and developmental needs. On the other hand, Europe can indirectly mitigate its migration problem and seek to address its gas and food production issues, given the impact of the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

However, there are a few concerns regarding the implementation of the joint vision. The sustainability of the nature of the partnership is questionable, especially about the unequal contribution in terms of funding. The EU providing the funds while the AU member states hardly contribute may, for example, cause a significant setback considering the purpose and objective of the [Kigali Decision on Financing the Union](#) which is a core element of Africa's ownership of peace and security. This is exacerbated by the EU's fragmentation and the fact that individual nation-states pursue separate interests with the AU member states, sometimes outside the scope of the EU¹ In addition, AfCFTA will boost intra-Africa trade, which raises the need for both continents to develop a clear plan on the EU's place in AfCFTA and instruments to address potential conflicts of interest. Implementing AfCFTA will affect vertical trade with the EU in terms of industrial development, which may mean fewer imports from Europe on a long-term basis. Moreover, there is a need to consolidate the success of the 2007 Joint Africa-EU Strategy which is a stepping stone

¹ For further information, see Alcaro, R. (2021), The Constraints on the EU Foreign and Security Policy, JOINT Brief, available at: <https://www.jointproject.eu/2021/05/01/the-constraints-on-the-eu-foreign-security-policy/>; Levallois, A. (2021), Regional Fragmentation and the EU Foreign and Security Policy. JOINT Research Paper 3, available at: <https://www.jointproject.eu/2021/11/08/regional-fragmentation-and-eu-foreign-and-security-policy/>.

to make concrete movements from the donor (EU) - recipient (AU) dynamics between both institutions to [strengthen a true partnership](#).

Furthermore, the health dimension of the partnership seems fixated on issues around COVID-19; meanwhile, not enough attention is paid to the root problem - the structure of the public health sector of the AU member states.² The issues around COVID-19 are a symptom of structural defects in the public health sector. This adds to the conflict of interest caused by medical tourism, which points to the lack of political will to address the challenges in the health sector. For context, a [2017 study](#) provided empirical evidence that medical tourism represents an opportunity for the misuse of government funds and privileges for personal benefits.³ A [2018 study](#) also highlighted how the preference for any foreign medical system is common among political elites. Consolidating the public health sector will likely discourage medical tourism through the reduction or removal of its justifications. The public health sector might therefore be at risk of not receiving its deserved attention.

Despite opportunities, the optimism generated by the Joint Vision should not distract the stakeholders from the challenges raised in this piece, which are by no means exhaustive. Otherwise, the more things seem to change, the more they will remain the same - perhaps with a different outlook.

² Despite the limited attention given by the literature to the structural problems of the health sector within the AU, we mention here several in-depth studies: Awuku, Y. A. (2021), Understanding the Unique Challenges of Africa's Healthcare Landscape - Before and After COVID-19, Futureproofing Healthcare, available at: <https://www.futureproofinghealthcare.com/en/experts-think/understanding-unique-challenges-africas-healthcare-landscape-and-after-covid-19>; Azevedo M. J. (2017). The State of Health System(s) in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities. Historical Perspectives on the State of Health and Health Systems in Africa, 2(3), 1-73; Malakoane, B., Heunis, J. C., Chikobvu, P., Kigozi, N. G., & Kruger, W. H. (2020). Public health system challenges in the Free State, South Africa: a situation appraisal to inform health system strengthening. BMC Health Services Research, 20(1), 1-14.

³ Mogaka, J. J., Mashamba-Thompson, T. P., Tsoka-Gwegweni, J. M., & Mupara, L. M. (2017). Effects of medical tourism on health systems in Africa. African Journal of Hospitality, tourism and leisure, 6(1), 1-25.

European Union - African Union relations: two Unions, a Joint Vision?

Chris M.A. Kwaja


Understanding the roots of Europe - Africa relations

In a globalised world defined by cooperation and alliance formation, no nation-state is an island. In an age where regionalism and multilateralism are holding sway, the notion of nation-states as the sole agencies of collective purpose action has in reality been complemented by an increased power granted to supranational entities such as the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU). Although they are viewed as representing the collective interests of their member states, the dynamism and inequality of the contemporary global economy reveal an unequal power relation in many aspects: several European states were responsible for the partitioning of [Africa between 1884 and 1885](#) to serve their interests; Africa's share and control of global economic and security power are far below that of the EU; none of the 54 member states of the AU holds a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council, while the EU may be considered represented by France.

Even though Africa boasts abundant natural resources and a huge population with a thriving productive force, these assets are not well harnessed by its people. The continent has the fastest-growing demography in the world today, which is estimated to double from about [1.2 billion to 2.4 billion by 2050](#). Unfortunately, Africa continues to battle corruption, poverty, unemployment, disease and conflicts, which are holding back development on the continent. Despite some of the reforms targeting democratic transitions and institutional transformation, not much has been achieved. In particular, Africa's competitiveness and contribution to the [global supply chains](#) are still marginal, despite the abundance of natural resources or raw materials on which the continent prides itself.

The EU-AU relations we want

In the spirit of a joint partnership for solidarity, peace, security and sustainable development, the [Joint Vision for 2030](#) was developed in 2022. The vested interests of the individual EU member states should not undermine or be at variance with the EU's overall vision of support for Africa. The reality is that a fractured relationship between the EU and the AU would be to the advantage of China and Russia, two superpowers that are eager to make new "friends" in Africa, as part of their moves towards projecting their strategic national interests on the continent. As it stands, Russia is expanding its security interests across Africa, using the [Wagner Group](#), a mercenary entity, with vast footprints on the African security landscape. This is supported also by the tense relations between France and Mali, which has enabled Russia to expand its economic and security interests in West Africa. There is no doubt that Russia has come to stay in Africa unless the Joint Vision for 2030 recognises this reality and works out a practical approach to confronting it.



The big question to ask at this juncture has to do with the extent to which the EU-AU Joint Vision for 2030 is different from other bilateral and [multilateral agreements](#) in the past, considering Africa's experience with cooperative agreements that end up as misguided development. This experience was framed by Dambisa Moyo in her [seminal work](#) "*dead aid*", providing a graphic picture of the [African reality](#), pointing to its marginalisation in the global economy.

Any EU policy towards Africa must be designed and implemented based on mutually agreed programmes, anchored in deliberate policy actions towards reversing the spectre of marginalisation that plagues the African continent within the global economy. A well-crafted [relationship](#) is capable of transforming the African continent into a region of cooperation and interdependence for peace, security and prosperity.

Partnership or patronage: a perspective on the AU-EU relations

Steven Gruzd


The European Union (EU) has long considered the African Union (AU) to be struck from the same institutional mould - an African version of itself. Both the AU and EU are constituted of member states, and they both pursue peace, regional integration and prosperity. The member states have ceded a part of their sovereignty to these supranational bodies, each having a Commission as their administrative engine room. However, Africa and Europe share a long and difficult history, informed by the legacies and wounds of colonialism, that can strain ties between the two.

Africa's burgeoning relations with other powers - especially China and Russia since 2000 - do not carry the same legacy. Beijing and Moscow are also much less concerned with the quality of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in their African partners, compared to Brussels and Washington. Today, there are more countries than ever before that wish to expand their trade relations with Africa, extract its minerals and gain its diplomatic support. Some of these countries, including China, India, Japan and Türkiye, hold regular summit meetings with African leaders. Nowadays, African countries have more options than they did during the colonial era and even during the Cold War. It is important for African states to articulate their interests and develop coherent strategies for engagement with outside powers, or they risk becoming pawns in the grand geopolitical games.

In this context, the EU has to compete with others for the attention of the AU. One area that stands out in this relationship refers to peace and security. The EU has provided billions of euros over many years to strengthen the AU, most visibly in the realm of peace operations. [The AU is heavily dependent on European funding](#), despite numerous pledges by African leaders to limit the AU's dependence on EU support, most notably in [the recent reforms of the AU championed by Rwanda's President Paul Kagame](#).

Another area of bilateral concern is that of migration since thousands of people risk their lives to cross the Mediterranean Sea on rickety boats from Africa to Europe every year. The EU has stepped up measures to manage migration, including investing in improving the conditions that cause so many to seek greener pastures in the EU in the first place. Migration has become a difficult and emotion-laden subject of conversation between the AU and EU, with perspectives that are at times considerably far apart. Honest conversations are vital to resolve these thorny, emotional issues.

Another arena with longstanding, complex relations is that of trade. Various trade agreements with former European colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific - the Lomé Accords and the Cotonou Agreement - have been superseded by hard-to-negotiate Economic Partnership Agreements between the EU and African sub-regions. Europe is seeking the best ways to support the new African Continental



Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). Non-tariff barriers and agricultural subsidies, however, adversely affect African exports to the EU. Trade is one possible option to seriously reduce poverty in Africa, but it has to be fair and developmental to be mutually beneficial.

Finally, climate change will be a major issue to be tackled urgently by the EU and AU in partnership. The transition away from fossil fuels has been hampered by the disruptions in energy supply chains due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. African fossil fuels are being sought to replace supplies from Russia to Europe affected by sanctions on the former, perpetuating their extraction and harming the climate. This may benefit energy producers, engendering winners and losers, but ultimately pollute the planet even more.

Relations between the two continents and African and European Unions should be strengthened, based on mutual respect and trust. Differing positions on the Russian invasion of Ukraine should not be allowed to derail considerable progress.

Africa - the desirable strategic partner of the 21st century

Domnica Gorovei

The EU is the main economic partner of Africa and the most important investor, based on a **partnership “of equals”** aiming “[to create a space of solidarity, security, peace and sustainable prosperity](#)”. However, the two continents share a past that has been everything but equal, marked by the slave trade, imperialism, (neo)colonialism etc. The COVID-19 pandemic showed more than ever the gap between the two continents, as [10,2% were vaccinated at the end of February 2022](#).

From an **institutional perspective**, the cooperation framework between the EU and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) for the next 20 years is based on the recent [Post-Cotonou Agreement](#). The protocol on Africa establishes as top priorities the inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development, and human and social development, in a “[time for action](#)”.

Despite significant EU aid for African development (nearly EUR 20 billion every year), the European policies are marked by a lack of results or limited impact (e.g. in the case of the intervention against terrorist groups in the Sahel region), frustration regarding some decisions (the travel ban imposed on southern countries as the new Omicron variant emerged), or the perpetuation of the donor-recipient approach. All these dynamics made Europe lose its position of almost monopoly in Africa.

The French presidency of the Council of the EU has made a priority of the “[renewed relationship with Africa](#)”, one of the highlights being the postponed summit with the African Union. In the changed context of multipolar competition, the president of the European Commission evoked the EU’s desire to be “[Africa’s partner of choice](#)”. Held in Brussels on 17-18 February 2022, the **Sixth EU-AU Summit** consecrated this renewed, special “**partnership**”, a term used 11 times in the [Final Declaration](#), based on “the respect for sovereignty”. The 6-page document mentions only once “democracy”, and two times “rule of law”, whereas “sustainable” is used 16 times, a wording showing the two sides’ commitment to a more focused economic and social cooperation over general engagements.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the vaccine policy illustrates the differences between the EU and AU: on one hand the solidarity, on the other the lack of fairness. Besides the EU’s engagement to increase vaccine donations, six African countries (Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia) received the requested access to the technology to produce mRNA vaccines.

Not least, the EU launched the Global Gateway Program, EUR 300 billion for investments (2021-2027), a reaction to the Belt and Road Initiative that made China one of the largest investors in Africa. Thus, the [Africa-Europe Investment Package](#), amounting to **EUR 150 billion**, devised for investments, health and education, is envisioned as a contribution towards the EU goals for 2030 and the [AU Agenda 2063](#).

From a **functional perspective**, the EU and the AU are two different regional organisations: the first brings together 27 member states and has a very selective accession process (the Copenhagen criteria), while the other has 55 member states and an inclusive approach (a simple request to join, without pre-conditions). The unconstitutional regime changes within the AU (e.g. the recent military coups in some Western African countries), the authoritarian tendencies, or the victories of populist parties in EU member-states (e.g. Italy) could have an impact on the partnership. Not only **internal statal evolutions**¹, but also the **citizens' perceptions** are important, as illustrated by the recent exacerbated anti-French sentiments in Mali, the protests and violence against the blue helmets in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in late July 2022, as well as by the Czech anti-EU protests in September, or the attitude towards African refugees from Ukraine. Thus, one difficult challenge is to find a balance between national interests, bilateral ties, and a more continental logic.

During the past 10 years, Africa has diversified and increased the number of its partners. From **the perspective of international relations**, the Russian invasion of Ukraine dramatically changed the situation, given Africa's dependence on imports from both Ukraine and Russia and the food and energy crises which added to the already existing global recession and insecurity. In what seems to be the logic of the Cold War in a multipolar world, Africa becomes the continent of competition for international support. In July and August, the French President visited Cameroon, Benin, and Guinea-Bissau, the Russian Foreign Minister visited Egypt, Ethiopia², Uganda, and Congo-Brazzaville, while the US Secretary of State visited South Africa, DRC and Rwanda. At the same time, the US unveiled its [new strategy towards Sub-Saharan Africa](#) in August.

From **the diplomatic perspective**, the vote of African countries at the UN becomes even more relevant. In March 2022, [Africa was rather hesitant in condemning the Russian aggression](#): 17 countries abstained, 8 were absent, Eritrea rejected the text, and only 24 approved the UN General Assembly Resolution.

Concerning **military policies**, the European scheme "Everything but Arms" contrasts with the Russian approach. The mercenary [Wagner Group plays a visibly active role in some African countries - Libya, the Central African Republic](#), and more recently Mali.

Thus, the African continent has - once again - the potential of using the international context in its favour and is already a **desirable economic and political strategic partner**, as the EU lost the statute of "natural choice". The February 2022 Summit constituted a first step towards the much-needed rebuilding of trust between the AU and EU. The focus on actions, economy and investments followed an increased pragmatic and vocal stance of the African leaders.

¹ Or continental ones, e.g. after Brexit, the UK becomes another competitor for the EU in Africa.

² Ethiopia is host to the headquarters of the AU. Sergei Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Affairs Minister did not meet any AU official, the organisation emphasising its neutral position.



Enhancing multilateralism for peace and security

European Union's support to security and stability in Africa

Paul Odhiambo

The African Union (AU), through its Constitutive Act from 2000, recognizes the existence of security and stability in Africa as a prerequisite for the continent's sustainable economic growth and development. Thus, the AU has established various institutions and initiatives to address both traditional security challenges and emerging threats on the continent, with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) providing the necessary political oversight, legitimacy, and legal foundation for interventions in Africa.


The AU has highlighted the significance of strategic partnerships with development partners, aligned with the goals adopted under Agenda 2063. Similarly, APSA recognizes how the partnership between the AU and extra-regional powers is critical in fostering security and stability in Africa.

The security cooperation between the AU and the EU is based on the 2018 Memorandum of Understanding, which provides a solid and structured foundation for the partnership on peace and security. To address conflicts and crises, the EU and AU adopted joint strategies focusing on human security and synergies between development, governance, and peace-building activities. As a leading supporter of APSA, the EU has provided EUR 3.5 billion through the African Peace Facility from 2004 to date. With half of UN global peacekeeping missions in Africa¹, the EU-UN partnership in peacekeeping is critical for ensuring security on the continent.

At the end of the 6th EU-AU summit held in February 2022, the two Unions launched the Joint Vision for 2030, calling for a renewed cooperation for peace and security that is extremely relevant to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and Security Sector Reform (SSR) in the UN peacekeeping missions in Africa. As a national process in African countries emerging from conflicts, SSR plays an important role in sustaining peace by strengthening citizens' trust in the capacity of the state to provide effective and accountable security and justice. The EU's support for SSR in peacekeeping missions in Africa includes financial resources, technical knowledge, training and capacity building, and sharing of best practices from other contexts. Furthermore, [the EU also supports the G5 Sahel Joint Force](#), which focuses on tackling terrorism and other transnational crimes in the Sahel and other affected sub-regions. This year, the EU has pledged [EUR 554 million for increasing food security in the Sahel and Lake Chad regions](#).

Kenya's role in fostering security and stability through mediation in conflict situations in the region cannot be disputed. Hence, the EU's renewed commitment to peace and security through the implementation of the [2021 EU Strategy for the Horn of Africa](#) is critical. The ushering of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's

¹ Namely Abyei contested territory (UNISFA), Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), Mali (MINUSMA), South Sudan (UNMISS) and Western Sahara (MINURSO).



administration in Somalia and the establishment of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) to replace the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in April 2022 could provide opportunities for achieving the objectives of the stabilisation process in Somalia. Similarly, concerted support to AU-sanctioned peace processes in South Sudan, Ethiopia and Sudan could be vital for peace efforts in the Horn of Africa. The EU continues to provide financial and technical support to peace processes, consolidation of democratic transition processes and the entrenchment of rule of law in the countries in the Horn of Africa.

New beginnings for the EU in promoting sustainable peace and security in Africa

Ammar Yassin

The issue of sustainable peace and security in Africa is among the priorities of the European Union's foreign policy, because of its profound impact on international peace and security, coupled with the indispensable strategic interest attached to the relations with the African continent. This also explains the fact that the EU is Africa's first trading partner among all other international and global poles.

The EU is committed to ensuring African ownership for developing and implementing constructive approaches based on the principle of African solutions to African problems. As such, the inclusion of the African Union as a key party to any equation of conflict resolution, and even the inclusion of sub-African regional organisations as an actor to the partial equations, are means to ensuring a more effective and sustainable role.¹

Therefore, the EU can support the stabilisation of peace and security in Africa in partnership with the African Union, as well as the sub-regional organisations in Africa, by focusing on and developing several mechanisms, such as:

- 1) **Creating new tracks for the EU development aid to Africa, [which amounted to EUR 150 billion](#)**, such as institutional support for infrastructure upgrading projects in the African regions, overseeing and following up on border demarcation agreements, and encouraging the prevention of radicalisation and extremism leading to terrorism by utilising religious-scientific entities such as Al-Azhar, the world's largest Islamic religious entity.
- 2) **Assisting the AU to settle pending conflicts and/or crises.** A possible example of such an intervention would be the water management crisis in the Nile Basin region, where the EU can propose a mediation mechanism between upstream and downstream countries, and then mobilise the parties through the AU to proceed to a mandatory agreement. The EU could also link the crisis settlement to the allocation of grants and development projects on the banks of the Nile River. In addition, there is a need to activate continental early warning systems focusing not only on issues of election violence but also extending to other essential areas, such as the escalating food security crisis in Africa due to the Russian-Ukrainian war and its impact on the supply chain.
- 3) **Continue assisting the African Union to play a more effective role in preventing potential conflict stemming from climate change, environmental degradation and desertification**, by working to create millions of jobs to ensure the basic human needs in Africa and prevent undocumented migration.

¹ Ahmed, E. Samy (2016), "The EU Policies and Mechanisms towards Peace and Security issues in Africa", Noor publishing, p. 12.

- 4) Encouraging the African sub-regional organisations to take advantage and replicate the experience of the Economic Community of West African states (ECOWAS) by establishing a Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)² as a multilateral armed force with powers to deploy and intervene in intractable unrest and crises in the countries of the region, emphasising the principle of African ownership and one of the African solutions to African problems.
- 5) Reorganising the EU policies and mechanisms on peace and security focusing on Africa and bringing them under the umbrella of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Consequently, the EU should communicate with the African entities concerned through the AU to establish win-win partnerships and expand the membership circle of specific initiatives in this area. For instance, in the *Sustainability, Stability and Security in Africa* (3s Initiative) only [14 African countries](#) participate, out of a total of 54 recognised African states.
- 6) Funding and creating a new approach, based on linking African stakeholders' institutions to each other, to join efforts, share and build on successful experiences and expand the level of cooperation and integration among African member countries within these initiatives and forums³. Additionally, the partners should focus on promoting the role of academic institutions and their teaching and research activities on security and peace issues in Africa.

² Howe, Herbert (1996), "Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping", *International Security* 21(3), p. 145; Pitts, M (July 1999), "Sub-Regional Solutions for African Conflict: The ECOMOG Experiment", *Journal of Conflict Studies* 19(1).

³ For instance, the [Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development](#) and the Sustainability, Stability and Security Initiative (3S), as well as the [Cairo International Centre for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding \(CCCCPA\)](#) in Cairo, Egypt, and the [Institute for the Security and Peace studies \(IPSS\)](#) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Europe-Africa peace and security partnership: from financing issues to politics

Lidet Tadesse Shiferaw

The peace and security objectives of the EU and the AU broadly align. The EU has been a leading funder of the AU's peace and security activities for the past two decades. Between 2004 and 2019, the [EU disbursed EUR 2.7 billion](#) for African peace support operations (PSOs), such as AMISOM and MNJTF. This was possible through a specific EU instrument - the African Peace Facility (APF). In addition, the EU has supported [conflict prevention and peacebuilding](#) activities through thematic instruments (e.g. the Instrument contributing to Peace and Stability) and trust funds (e.g. EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa). The EU has also supported mediation and political dialogue processes in conflict situations through technical, political and financial assistance.

The partnership has been strained by the geopolitical climate, the impact of unbalanced access to COVID-19 vaccines and the EU's new financing modalities.


Shifts in financing modalities

In 2021, the EU changed its peace and security financing modalities and established the [European Peace Facility](#) (EPF), which replaced the APF and is not geographically limited to Africa. The EPF also enables the EU to provide military aid, including lethal weapons, to partner countries, and regional and subregional organisations. The provision for support in lethal weaponry is a first in the EU's history and signals the EU's intentions to add hard power to its pre-existing soft power tools.

While the EU is committed to continuing its financial support to African PSOs, the EPF doesn't have [earmarked funding for Africa](#). By June 2022, 43% of the EPF has already been directed to Ukraine, as the EU has committed [EUR 2.5 billion](#) in military aid to Ukraine (as of July 2022). By comparison, the EU adopted a support measure of [EUR 600 million](#) for the AU to be spent between 2022 and 2024. Moreover, the EPF allows the EU to directly engage with African sub-regional organisations and ad-hoc regional mechanisms without the AU's explicit approval. This risks [side-lining the AU](#) while increasing the EU's political say in peace and security matters in Africa.

From money to politics

Europe and Africa may find common ground on the disbursement of the EPF in Africa through negotiation and formal and informal tweaking of the fund's allocations. Nevertheless, in the current dynamic geopolitical climate, the Europe-Africa peace and security partnership cannot afford to rely solely on technical and financial discussions. The partnership should be leveraged to address other fundamental issues, such as Africa's plea for permanent membership in the United



Nations Security Council, and the AU's efforts to secure UN-assessed contributions for African PSOs.

To engage in a meaningful partnership that is befitting a changing global context, the partnership should deliver tangible outcomes for both continents and their citizens. Both parties should confront their differences, especially those brought to the fore in the context of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) and access to vaccines, and [the war in Ukraine](#). While hiding behind appealing slogans and positivity might be tempting, honest discussions and historical reckoning are needed to move the partnership forward to make it fit for the 21st century.



Managing the digital transformation

The new EU-AU digital economy partnership: challenges and way forward for African countries


Muhammed Tawfiq Ladan, Emmanuel E. Okon,
Osatohanmwon O.A Eruaga, Jane Ezirigwe

Introduction

The digital transition trends make the African continent the latest frontier for significant global opportunities regarding the potential of the digital ecosystem and the unfolding digital economy. Across Africa, digital economies are on the rise, with connectivity being a significant push in this regard. For instance, the continent has recorded the highest growth globally in internet access and connectivity, [rising from less than 1% in 2000 to about 30% in 2022](#), which translates into a viable market for cross-border data flows and e-commerce. Additionally, the member states of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) currently implement the Digital Free Trade Area (DFTA) concept, empowering cross-border trade using ICT tools to enhance internal and global trade among partners in the subregion. Another important example is the intended [operationalisation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement \(AfCFTA\)](#), which has the potential to increase the total trade from 18% to 50% and lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty. Implementing the AfCFTA relies on removing the digital barriers among member states and embracing a single pan-African digital market facilitating trade. Consequently, technologically advanced jurisdictions have expressed interest in establishing global digital cooperation and initiatives within the African geopolitical space, with commitments towards the continent's digital transformation goals.¹

The African Union and its member states have been developing [various strategies, policies and reforms at continental, regional and national levels](#) aiming at creating an integrated and inclusive digital society and economy to secure socio-economic development in Africa, in line with Goal 4 of African Union Agenda 2063 and Goal 9 of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The focus of the actions has progressively evolved from limited handling of ICT and digital concerns in silos to exploring innovative digital transformation processes in addressing poverty and achieving inclusive growth. However, optimal digital transformation benefits only become observable in the presence of appropriate digital infrastructure, digital knowledge and skills, financial services platforms, digital entrepreneurship, and innovation embedded in an appropriate regulatory framework. These foundational requirements necessitate significant funding,

¹ For instance, China's Digital Silk Road, created as part of its Belt and Road Initiative, the United States' Build Back Better World Initiative. For further information see generally Mail & Guardian, "China vs the US: The battle for digital supremacy in Africa", 22 July 2022, <https://mg.co.za/special-reports/2022-07-22-china-vs-the-us-the-battle-for-digital-supremacy-in-africa/> (accessed 18 August 2022); Nanjira Sambuli, "Africa is a strategic techno-geopolitical theatre. Will the continent's leaders take advantage of this?", African Policy Research Institute, 9 June 2022, <https://afripoli.org/africa-is-a-strategic-techno-geopolitical-theatre-will-the-continents-leaders-take-advantage-of-this> (accessed 18 August 2022).



technical know-how transfer and capacity building, as well as the development of the legal framework to regulate the dynamic and multifaceted process of digitalisation. For instance, while the pandemic underscored how widely ICT has permeated the lives of people in various member states in Africa, as well as the relevance of digital tools, the [period revealed the reality](#) that many remain unconnected and unable to experience the full benefits of digital transformation.

The current framework of the African Union (AU) - European Union (EU) partnership is aimed at harnessing joint opportunities and mutual future possibilities, including in Africa's digital space. The Joint Vision 2030, adopted at the 6th EU-AU Summit organised in 2022, introduces a new and overarching impetus for the partnership based on mutual respect, interest, governance, and support for private initiatives. The renewed partnership features Africa's digital economy as a shared priority for both unions. In our contribution, we will focus on the relevance of the renewed partnership to the unions, the challenges affecting its implementation and how they may be realistically circumvented. Additionally, we will further address Nigeria's specific digital development projects as they connect with the renewed partnership.

The background of the EU-AU digital cooperation

Over the years, the AU-EU partnership has developed and implemented several cooperation initiatives that have been key to improving the digital economy and ecosystem, especially in Africa. The prospects of the renewed partnership regarding digital transition provide a platform to define the AU-EU cooperative relationship based on common values and interests, through appropriate policy and political dialogues, highlighting also the need to focus on innovation and research agenda.

The EU has expressed the ambition to be a major actor in the global digital ecosystem beyond its continent, focusing on a “human-centric” approach that emphasizes individual rights and democratic values, such as freedom of expression and user data protection, with [Africa at the centre of this effort](#). The partnership provides the EU with the opportunity to fulfil this value-driven ambition by enhancing its relations with Africa and benefiting from the connectivity prospects. From the cooperation, the African continent would be shaped by the rights-oriented approach to digital management and data flow as opposed to other models which are either strictly market driven or a state-controlled model.

Furthermore, the EU's experience and regulations of digital transformations, such as the strategy for the EU Digital Single Market or the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), serve as a learning model for Africa. Substantive work towards a sustainable and digital transformation is in progress at the national, and regional economic communities (RECs) and the pan-African levels even as the national governments in Africa have committed to accelerating economic integration and creating a digital single market by ratifying the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). More importantly, the ties between the continents would be relevant as

a diplomatic tool during the negotiation of issues relating to the regulation of cross-border data flows between the two continents.

In this context, the European Union already has considerable leverage in shaping the African continent's digital agenda. European companies would benefit from the emerging digital space in Africa, with its young population, while businesses in Africa can gain access to consumers in the European economy.

The EU support for Nigeria's digital transition

Since the early 2000s, the Nigerian Government has sought avenues of economic diversification from its traditional revenue source of crude oil. Notably, Nigeria, which represents Africa's biggest market, has achieved remarkable success in establishing relevant institutional and regulatory strategies and adopting reforms to consolidate its digital transformation drive across various sectors. The government has also invested in establishing a regulatory framework for the digital ecosystem for fighting cybercrime, protecting the consumers' online data, and leveraging the benefits of digital transformation including artificial intelligence, digital infrastructural development and emerging technologies.

As the most populous country in Africa with a progressive technology and mobile market, Nigeria can have a role in shaping European interests in Africa's digital transformation. The country's political stability and economic performance significantly impact peace, security and economic growth in the West Africa/Sahel region. The EU, in recognition of Nigeria's significant influence, has prioritised the improvement of Nigeria's digital ecosystem through several multilateral and bilateral initiatives.

For instance, the EU has been instrumental in implementing Nigeria's inclusive foundational identification system, the bedrock of the e-services models requiring identification within the private and public sectors. In October 2013, the Nigerian government launched a [project](#) focusing on the expansion of the use of the National Identification Number (NIN), issued by a robust and inclusive foundational Identification (ID) system, aimed at improving the citizens' access to e-governance services, as well as safeguarding digital and physical security. The project is implemented with the financial support of the World Bank, the EU and the French Agency of Development.


In July 2022, the EU launched the [Team Europe Initiative \(TEI\) - Nigeria Green Economy](#) project, amounting to EUR 1.3 billion, in line with the green transition and the digital priorities of the renewed partnership. A particular focus will be on creating jobs for the country's youth, reflecting also a priority area mentioned by the [EU-Nigeria Multi-Annual Indicative Programme \(2021-2027\)](#) concerning the use of innovative digital solutions in agriculture, climate change, and energy sector interventions. For instance, through the Nigeria Digital Agriculture Strategy (NDAS), the government has introduced innovative digital solutions in the agricultural sector, which have been as further boosted through the Green Economy project. Additionally, under its Global Gateway initiative, the [EU plans to invest at least EUR](#)

[820 million \(in grants and loans\) in Nigeria's digital transformation](#) in several sectors, such as infrastructure, public services, entrepreneurship, skills and governance.

Challenges to the EU-AU renewed partnership

For Africa, the policies and initiatives developed within the partnership with the EU support the efforts to address several challenges for inclusive sustainable development. In pursuing a closer partnership to address shared interests from a digital context between the continents, we have identified several issues that need to be addressed systematically:

- a) **the lack of a homogenous African digital transformation path:** there is a digital divide within the African Union, due to the divergent pace of investment and the assigned priority level across AU member states. While some member states struggle to invest strategically and systematically in developing digital infrastructure, services, skills and entrepreneurship, others do not see this pathway as a priority.
- b) **the limited regulatory and legal frameworks in Africa,** essential for governing the innovative processes and ensuring the protection of the consumers' rights, not only through the adoption of proper legislation, but also its effective implementation. However, [statistics](#) indicate that out of the 54 African countries, only 16 have legislation regarding electronic transactions, consumer protection, privacy and data protection, and cybercrime, with a third not having legislation in any area. Nigeria adopted appropriate regulations in 3 out of 4 areas, with the framework for electronic transactions still in the process of being deliberated and enacted by Parliament.
- c) **the lack of digital soft and hard infrastructure in Africa,** due to the massive cost of creating the enabling environment for technological advancement within the digital economic space. Start-ups and SMEs in several African countries, including Nigeria, experience issues such as delays in the approval of the Right of Way (RoW); multiple taxations, levies and fees on the same existing infrastructure; fragmented and limited distribution of fibre and telecom infrastructure widening the urban-rural digital divide.
- d) **the geopolitical competition in Africa's digital space,** beyond trade and investment. The EU-Africa digital partnership can be effective only if it is based on a shared and long-term multilateral strategy underpinned by transparency, political commitment and cooperation between European and African stakeholders. Having committed to pursuing a much closer partnership with African governments and the African Union, the EU must consider how it can best contribute to Africa's security and economic prospects.

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- e) **Africa's perception of Europe's intentions for enacting the equal partnership**, considering the significant historical legacies of the relations that prove a potential challenge to the practice of equal partnership as advocated. The Africa-EU Joint Strategy and the subsequent roadmaps, including the renewed partnership of 2022, lack explicit mechanisms to coordinate joint actions that would make the African and European investors equal partners, having more of an EU-centric approach with prescriptive criteria and conditionalities. Additionally, only resources and investments mobilised by the EU are accounted for, with lower attention paid to those from Africa, which may signal the limited consultation on the side of the EU when deciding the areas of priority funding.

Recommendations for a mutually beneficial renewed partnership on the digital transition

For the EU-AU cooperation to remain realistically beneficial to both continents as envisioned in the renewed partnership, the principle of equality must be respected. This necessarily implies that the partnership is implemented taking into consideration the peculiarities and limitations of the African contexts, without indiscriminate transplantation of strategies and instruments from other jurisdictional contexts. For instance, millions of African people are known to suffer from a lack of basic amenities, including electricity, leading to the necessity to adopt specific provisions for addressing digital transformation in the context of possible interruptions in the power supply. National and regional policymakers should propose creative and reasonable partnership strategies and other follow-up documents reflecting the specificities of African contexts.

The African Union member states should commit to addressing the shortage of hard and soft infrastructure to avoid unnecessary dependence on a pathway created by the EU and other major geopolitical blocs. Governments across Africa should invest in human capital by prioritising science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects across the educational curriculum, funding scientific and technological research, enhancing the university-to-industry knowledge transfer, as well as supporting digital entrepreneurship, with a particular focus on women.

The human-centric nature of the renewed partnership is focused on promoting open and accessible cyberspace, which requires interoperable cross-border data flow mechanisms, primarily driven by normative frameworks at national, sub-regional and continental levels. The partnership must support the development of these frameworks, with the AU member states making the necessary commitment to adopting the legal framework, which is imperative for the digital safety and resilience of individuals and the government.

The potential for a successful digital transition through an equitable EU-AU partnership

Kofi Takyi Asante

There are many opportunities for the AU and the EU to cooperate on matters related to digital transitions. Great strides have been made during the past two decades to bridge the wide gap in telecommunication and digitalisation between Africa and the rest of the world. However, limited or deteriorating infrastructure reduces the rate at which the digital transition can be attained across Africa. As a continent with more advanced ICT capabilities, the EU can support the digital transition in Africa with technical expertise, equipment, and the setting up of infrastructure, while benefiting by gaining access to the African market.

Ghana provides one example of the exciting developments in terms of digital transitions in Africa. Since 2017, the Government of Ghana has pursued an accelerated digitalisation agenda involving the implementation of a digital address system and a digital national identification system (called Ghana Card) which may soon double up as a travel document. While these developments are exciting, concerns remain about the security of the generated data, and the country would require robust infrastructure and equipment to support this digitalisation drive. Since the EU has already developed some of the strongest data protection standards, and infrastructure in the digital and internet industry, Ghana could benefit from such assistance in building a robust sector, as well as strong data protection systems.

However, it is not clear whether the partnership between the AU and the EU on this and other initiatives would be mutually beneficial. Unfortunately, the past experiences of Europe's engagement with Africa, from the early days of contact until independence, have been a long history of oppression and extraction with little regard for the well-being of the people of the African continent. Sadly, while the days of the slave trade and colonialism are long behind us, the pattern of exploitation seems to continue today in different guises, through unfair trade agreements and institutional arrangements that [enable illicit financial flows from Africa to tax havens in Europe and elsewhere](#).

African countries would gladly welcome a partnership with the EU on the digital transition and other policy areas. However, given the history of Europe's engagement with Africa, the EU would need to prove that they are willing to enter the partnership in good faith.

Advancing digital equality and transformation in Uganda


Moses Owiny

Digital transformation is key to achieving sustainable and inclusive development that benefits everyone. However, the potential of these technologies for a positive impact on the lives of people is constrained by the existing digital divides and inequalities. According to [the meaningful connectivity for rural communities report by the Alliance for Affordable Internet](#) - a global coalition working to make broadband affordable for all -, people living in urban areas are more likely to have an internet connection and use it compared to those in rural areas. The [International Telecommunications Union \(ITU\) notes](#) that less than 2 out of every 5 people living in rural areas have an internet connection. Yet, due to exclusionary causes based on identity, not everyone having access to digital platforms can have life-changing experiences brought about by the digital revolution. It is necessary to address the digital gap in access, use and utilisation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and ICT-based services. Measures aimed at building capacity and empowering individuals and communities to use digitalisation can be used to positively enable them to survive (build resilience) and thrive (offer positive enablement).

The opportunities from digital technologies must impact people's lives and experiences positively. The February 2022 European Union and African Union (EU-AU) summit in Brussels pledged EUR 150 billion for the development of digital infrastructures, including other sectors such as energy, transport, health and education. Through this cooperation framework, both partners seek to improve connectivity, digital skills and governance frameworks to support an inclusive digital agenda for Africa.

Turning to Uganda's case, the country faces several digital challenges: the rising digital gender gap, limited basic ICT skills and advanced cybersecurity, low basic ICT awareness level, cybersecurity threats, as well as limited cooperation among stakeholder groups. We also witness an unfortunate accelerated trend in strict cybercrime legislation, which is arguably intended to prevent them, but instead cripples and undermines the activities of civil society, activists, minority groups and human rights defenders. The digital challenges in Uganda stated above were re-emphasised in the [2017 AU internet infrastructure security guidelines for Africa](#), which highlighted the importance of the multi-stakeholder model, capacity building in ICT and collaborative cybersecurity approaches in protecting the internet infrastructures that benefit the majority of Africans. The key principles of internet security identified in the guidelines include: raising awareness, responsibility to protect the internet infrastructure, cooperation among the multi-stakeholder groups and adherence and respect for fundamental rights.

According to the [Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 between the Government of Uganda and the European Union \(EU\)](#), digital agenda and digital



transformation are two of the key cross-cutting priorities for Uganda. The implementation of the Programme will be supported by undertaking and addressing a gender-sensitive digital and inclusive society. Given these priorities, a certain need arises: strengthening multi-stakeholder participation in tackling the question of digital inequality requires broad participation of government, civil society, private sectors, technical communities and academia. The EU-AU partnership has a huge potential in addressing the digital inequalities in Uganda and on the continent in general.



The role of youth and education

Youth's contribution to the EU-AU partnership

Jesutimilehin O. Akamo

Youth accounts for [16.5% of the EU's total population](#) (73.6 million out of 447.3 million). With the youngest population on the planet, [Africa has over 400 million young people](#). Youth demography in Africa and Europe develops under different political, economic, sociocultural, normative and legal contexts. Thus, [their demands and aspirations, contributions and resilience](#) require different pathways. However, youth can contribute to the advancement of the AU-EU partnership in various regards, by becoming drivers of change and innovators, especially as a grassroots segment of society, as already proven by youth's involvement in activities in various contexts. For example, youth contributed significantly and innovatively to [African societies' coping with the COVID-19 pandemic's](#) impact. Given the different youth's experiences and knowledge of local needs across continents, the involvement of African young people can bring to the table a real contribution towards a more prosperous partnership.

To leverage the advantage of their involvement, the fundamental issue of youth perceptions needs to be addressed. The AU and EU have a long way to go to ensure that member states support a refined perception of young people. This primary concern was reiterated by the [United Nations \(UN\) Secretary-General's report to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council, presented on 2 March 2020](#). This view was also reiterated by the [AU Peace and Security Council-mandated study](#) on the roles and contributions of youth to peace and security in Africa, and the current [Youth for Peace \(Y4P\) Africa Program](#).

More often than not, governments and institutions perceive and treat youth as a problem to solve or individuals who need saving rather than active partners. This was the understanding upon which various policies and interventions were based in the past. As a result, governments and institutions ended up engaging in tokenism, rather than seeking sustainable redress for the actual problem of youth exclusion in various dimensions. This posed a risk of giving little or no attention to the youth's contribution to society, such that the opportunities they create are left unaccounted for or unsupported. Consequently, they lost the [youth's trust in various regards and rebuilding was required](#).

Mainstreaming youth's contribution to the AU-EU partnership thus begins with a change in perception from governments and institutions. Redefining youth as active partners should take centre stage, as shown in a recent study by [Aslani](#), who argued for shared responsibility and mutual trust. The AU-EU partnership's critical areas are core interests for young people, creating opportunities to showcase the added value that the youth bring to the table. Therefore, to demonstrate responsiveness and be attractive to the youth, institutions and governments need to change their perception of and approach to youth's involvement and participation in the decision-making process.

Consolidating the European Union - African Union partnership through education


Mohamed Tozy

The EU's relations with the African Union are determined by at least two interconnected key factors: the demography, in particular, the high proportion of youth, and the employment level of women. Africa's population is [expected](#) to reach two billion in 2050, accounting for 75% of worldwide births by 2100. With 200 million inhabitants aged between 15 and 24, Africa has the youngest population in the world, but youth unemployment remains a cause of concern, being [at least twice higher than adult unemployment](#). According to a World Bank report, young people represent 60% of all unemployed Africans, while in North Africa, the youth unemployment rate reaches 30%.

In addition, there are other factors which impact the EU-AU relations, notably climate change, which, according to the [latest IPCC report](#) will result in lower agricultural yields, shorter growing seasons and changed rainfall patterns. These effects, coupled with population growth will put an additional strain on the already fragile food production system. In such a context, [experts point out that](#), if the current situation continues, Africa will only be able to meet 13% of its food needs by 2050. Moreover, there is an increasing risk of massive migration due to the decline in family and subsistence farming and accelerated desertification. The World Bank warns in a [2021 report](#) that there will be up to 86 million climate migrants in sub-Saharan Africa by 2050.

While there are many ways to address these problems, in this short text, I will focus on a serious and vigorous action focusing on youth to qualify for African human resources. My recommendations focus on two directions:

- **The development of an intra-African Erasmus programme** that allows the mobility of young people to African countries with an advanced education system (Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, South Africa etc.). For example, [in Morocco, there are over 20.000 foreign students enrolled in public and private Moroccan institutions, more than 85% coming from sub-Saharan Africa](#). Support from the Moroccan Agency for International Cooperation (AMCI), created in 1986, remains limited, especially since it does not cover enrolment in private institutions. The case of Morocco is similar to that of South Africa, Algeria and Tunisia, but such a programme would provide the necessary resources to support students' mobility.
- **Creating international branch campuses for students from the least developed African countries, through partnerships between European and African universities, supported with EU funding.** Such an initiative can aim at developing such branches in Morocco or Tunisia for French-speaking countries and in Egypt and South Africa for English-speaking countries. The



courses and degrees delivered by these campuses should be accredited at the European level and benefit from the pedagogical support (teachers and documentary resources) of the European partner universities of the program. Students should benefit from European scholarships, the costs being on average 50% lower compared to the equivalent expenses in Europe. By pooling together the human and funding resources in such initiatives, the youth of Africa can have more learning opportunities on the continent, thus reducing the risk of brain drain.

African youth and the promise of fulfilment through digital education

Radu Muşetescu


African states have one of the fastest growing populations in the world, thus comprising countries with the youngest populations globally, as shown by the [available data](#). Among the states whose people under 20 years old are the majority (29 of them), only Afghanistan is a non-African country, while the rest belong all to Sub-Saharan Africa. Looking at the average age of the population per country, Afghanistan is also the only non-African country at the top, with the other 24 states with a lower average belonging to the African Sub-Saharan region. The top of the list is Niger, with an average age of the population of 14.8 years old and a ratio of people under 20 years old of 60.5% of the entire population.

This massive demographic potential should be used for the benefit of the development of African countries and not for the benefit of others. If the developed countries are on a path to support African states, they should insist on mechanisms to educate young Africans, who should contribute to their native countries' prosperity by spurring growth and fulfilment. Other forms of classical support - like the promotion of FDI or bilateral trade, but also development assistance - has been sometimes criticised by African analysts and leaders for their unintended economic, social and political consequences and limited impact.

Such support should consist in finding a specific way for individuals and societies in Africa to have access to education. Most probably, digitalisation and mobile technologies can provide such an avenue. The mobile economy in Africa already reached stunning figures as compared to other indicators and the state of the infrastructure. According to [GSMA](#), almost 50% of the population is a subscriber to a mobile network and almost 30% have access to the internet through such networks. Consequently, around 8% of the region's GDP is related to mobile technologies and services. Mobile payments reached a volume of almost 500 billion dollars per year in the region. However, it seems that such a mobile economy still does not include an education system based on mobile technologies. Due to its efficiency, productivity and low costs, such a system would lead to an accelerated transition in technologies and capitalise on the youth's major potential.

The younger population are the ones that have more extensive use of mobile technologies, which provides a huge opportunity for education, but unfortunately insufficiently exploited. For countries like Romania, with a student population in decline, there could be a perfect chance to develop educational opportunities and cultural channels with African countries, through the use of the internet and mobile technologies.

Such a digital education system connecting European educators with African students would provide opportunities from several perspectives as it would encourage the African students to remain at home and put to use the knowledge they gain abroad in transforming things at home. As the last decades have proved,



other traditional approaches (like developmental aid, foreign direct investments as well as the education of African youngsters in Western countries) did not deliver as they reinforced the same political, social and economic structures that prevented development.

Coming to terms with the past for the future of the EU-AU partnership

Simona Corlan-Ioan


The relations between Africa and the Western world are still constructed and deconstructed. The shadow of the past (slave trade, racism, colonisation and decolonisation) is still there, and recent examples are certain ambiguous positions of African countries regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Coming (or not) to terms with the past is going to decide the future of the EU-Africa partnership.

During the past decades, African leaders encouraged the formation of an Asian power centre, and recent examples of cooperation agreements with China, India and Turkey confirmed this trend. Besides the general political and diplomatic aims, these new partners have made investments in infrastructure, developed cultural diplomacy based on networks of schools and cultural institutes, and especially offered grants for future experts. These are some of the keys to understanding the drivers of cooperation between the new partners and Africa. In the process of implementing the partnership with Africa, the EU member states must be aware of these new issues and consider the already working models with the aforementioned Asian countries. Additionally, the EU-African partnership should address the national, regional and continental levels respectively, to be successful.

The EU has the opportunity to find the means to support regional institutions in Africa within the framework of the partnership. These formats of cooperation are increasingly seen as alternatives to fragile national institutions. Moreover, addressing the regional context might bring coherence to the emerging structures based on cultural identities.

European institutions must support complementary types of diplomacy, based on economic, cultural, academic, religious and institutional exchanges. Through these instruments, the EU can partner with and support new renowned actors, such as chambers of commerce, universities and academic consortia, research institutes etc., which can contribute extensively to the success of the partnership. Complementary types of diplomacy proved to be highly efficient in the last years, as many states from both continents have dealt with common challenges, such as migration and terrorism especially, which are otherwise hard to manage only by the national governments. As a response, leaders from the African states affected by migration tried to develop a common strategy based on shared values and a common history, culture and civilisation. Diplomacy with a unique and unified voice can be a facilitating instrument in promoting such strategies based on the acceptance of “the Other” within diverse communities.

In the meantime, another discourse emerged in the African public space, with NGOs and academia as a source: it focuses on the African diaspora, aimed at protecting and advocating in its favour abroad, including in Europe. However, such positive political discourses cannot be entirely successful, considering the role of the Western European mass media in shaping public opinions and that they regularly



present the migrants as a (potential) terrorist threat. In an inflamed public discourse about “clashes of civilisations” and religions, cultural diplomacy has a crucial task, together with humanitarian NGOs: to present the drama of refugees and to gradually change mentalities within the host societies.

Romania benefits from its soft power resources, both within the EU and in its relations with African nations: it has a strong capital of sympathetic former African students from the 1960s to the present. They are part of a significant network in favour of the EU-Africa partnership and are agents of goodwill for developing the relations and supporting bilateral and multilateral exchanges within the partnership, thus representing a solid asset for the future of EU-AU and Romania-Africa relations.

AFTERWORD

Romania's contribution to the consolidation of the European Union - African Union partnership

Mihai Sebe¹

Romania's relations with the African states may be metaphorically represented as a roller-coaster with a steep climbing before 1989, followed by a constant decline in the 1990s and 2000s, and then by a flat and predictable trajectory partially due to the EU membership. Why those differences? Before 1989, in the context of the Cold War, as a Communist state in the Soviet sphere of influence, Romania followed a policy of support for the newly independent African states. It was an economic-based approach, with a strong educational and commercial note, meant to assist the African countries' development, while providing the national economy with much-needed resources and access to foreign markets for local products. Following the 1989 Revolution and the steady shifting of focus and resources toward the Euro-Atlantic integration, Romania's interest in Africa gradually decreased.

After Romania's accession to the EU in 2007, the trade, economic and technical cooperation had to be updated according to the European rules and regulations, thus many agreements concluded before 1989 became invalid. Currently, the legal framework of economic exchanges is regulated by the *acquis communautaire*, respectively by the provisions of the EU - Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Agreement signed in Cotonou in 2000, later replaced by an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). The Romanian-African relations take place within the larger framework of the African Union and European Union framework, guided by the Joint Africa-EU strategy, adopted in 2007. The Africa-EU Partnership was formally established in 2000 at the first Africa-EU Summit in Cairo.²

An important milestone was the adoption in 2020 of the EU's strategy "[Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa](#)" which defined several priority areas for the EU's engagement with the African partners, including peace and governance. In this context, the Romanian Parliament, through an [opinion prepared by the Chamber of Deputies](#), favoured an "*in-depth cooperation with the*

Parliamentary Friendship Groups

- South Africa
- Algeria
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Congo
- Egypt
- Guinea
- Senegal
- Sudan
- Tunisia
- Zambia

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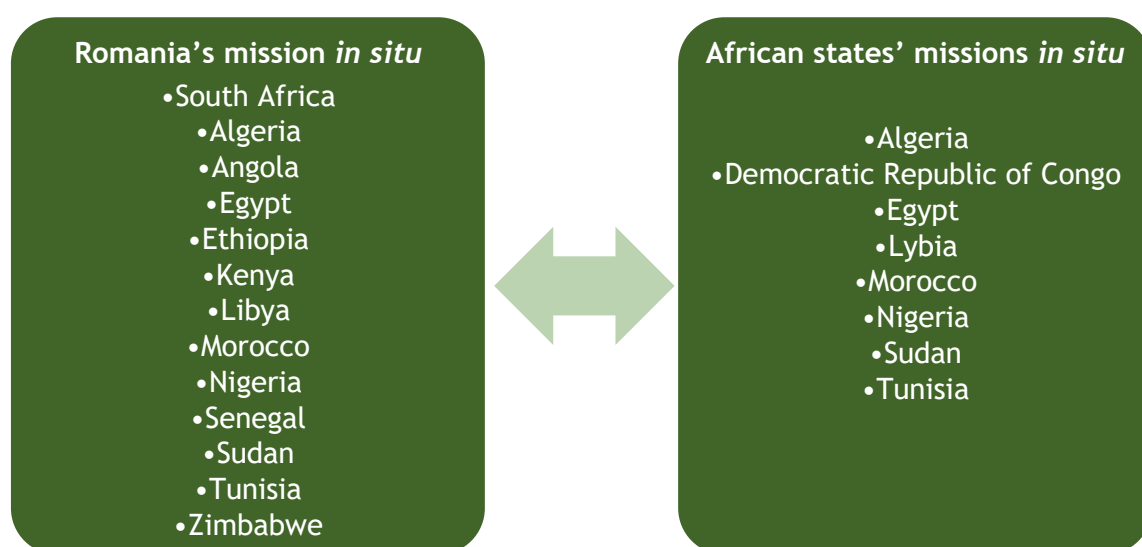
² For further details on Africa-EU Partnership, see: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/africa-eu-partnership_en

African states”, proposing to convert the historical debts owed by the African states into development assistance, while emphasising “*the sympathy capital enjoyed by Romania in the countries on the continent*” and its contribution to “*the Union’s efforts to ensure sustainable growth in Africa*”.³

The relations with Africa have also been on the agenda of Romania’s Presidential Administration. [President Klaus Iohannis participated at the 6th European Union - African Union summit in Brussels on 17 - 18 February 2022](#), where he underlined **Romania’s support for maintaining peace and security on the African continent and continuing the fight against terrorism**. Taking this opportunity, the Romanian president reminded us that education is a bridge between our country and the African states, and many former African students use the skills acquired in Romania for the betterment of their countries. Over 17 500 young Africans have studied in Romanian universities during the past five years alone, and around 3 500 students, from at least 40 African countries, are enrolled in universities annually.

The [current governing programme](#) also refers to the need for consolidating the cooperation with Africa with “*a more important role given to the political and economic dialogue, including the capitalisation of the new African free trade area, and a sectoral approach, with an emphasis on the educational component. Also, Romania will ensure a high-level presence at the EU-African Union meetings.*”

This political direction was maintained throughout all the high-level meetings with African leaders, as the [Romanian MFA expressed Romania’s support for the development of the EU-Africa partnership in a strategic manner](#), with an emphasis on concrete initiatives and substantial results, for the benefit of both continents. Romania’s priorities on the African continent are **focused on education and training, sustainable agriculture and food security, peace and security, countering disinformation, health, and disaster management**. Education is seen



³ The full version of the Opinion in Romanian language and all related documents are available here: http://www.cdep.ro/eu/examinare_pck2015.fisa_examinare?eid=621 The Opinion was published in the Official Gazette no. 971 from 21 October 2020.

as one of the most effective tools for sustainable socio-economic recovery, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as for building societal resilience and countering the challenges facing Africa.

An important line of the bilateral relationship with the African states is that of assistance for development. Romania's actions aim at promoting peace and security, mitigating the effects of climate change, ensure food security, as well as consolidating the public health systems. The states of sub-Saharan Africa are geographical priorities of the national policy of international cooperation for development and humanitarian assistance, following the Multi-annual strategic cooperation program for development and humanitarian assistance 2020-2023, adopted by the Government of Romania in 2020. [The official development assistance granted by Romania to countries in Sub-Saharan Africa increased in 2020 by 30% compared to 2019, with the focus being on education](#). Moreover, Romania increased the amount allocated to initiatives in Africa for 2022 - 2025 and provided also a [voluntary contribution of EUR 150 000 to the UNICEF call for supporting children and teenagers in Mauritania and Niger](#).


Since an important element of bilateral relations refers to education, [Romania's MFA offers several scholarships for all the cycles of higher education](#) that garner a growing interest. According to the official data for the 2021-2022 application round, several African countries were among the top 10 countries of origin of the candidates: 2. Nigeria, 7. Congo, 9. Ethiopia and 10. Guinea.

[Romania is also taking a keen interest in the security and the stability of the African continent](#), in line with President Iohannis's political statements from the 6th EU - AU Summit. Romania is committed to supporting partners from African states in terms of military training or through projects aimed at post-conflict stabilisation and reconstruction.

In the context of the Russian illegal war of aggression against Ukraine launched on 24 February 2022, [Romania had an active role](#) in assisting **African citizens evacuated from Ukraine**, a role acknowledged by many of the countries in question. Moreover, in terms of **food security**, Africa has been affected by the disruptions in production processes, supply chains and trade in agricultural products, fertilisers and raw materials, as a result of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine.

Despite constant politico-diplomatic efforts, there is still a significant discrepancy between the bilateral relations with the North-African states and the ones with the Sub-Saharan states. Due to cultural, economic and educational factors, economic and human flows with North Africa are stronger and better represented. Another aspect which can potentially contribute to improving Romania's presence in Africa is the further development of the [foreign trade network representation](#) of the Ministry of Economy, currently limited only to Egypt, Morocco and South Africa.

However, during the past months, we are witnessing a revitalisation of Romania's diplomatic network in Africa, as it was announced that the embassies'



mission would also be in charge of implementing projects of interest for the host countries. [In the margins of the high-level segment of the 77th UN General Assembly, Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bogdan Aurescu, had meetings with five counterparts from African states](#), where he “*highlighted the added value that Romania can bring in areas such as education, climate change, agriculture, cyber security and IT&C and expressed the openness of our country to continue at a more sustained pace interpersonal and expertise exchanges, the granting of university scholarships, as well as the specific training programs organised by Romania.*”

Considering the legacy of Romania’s foreign policy in the region, as well as its own experience within the European Union, the Africa chapter is a diplomatic story waiting to be written within the EU-AU partnership. Romania has both the will and the capacity to restart and augment an already flourishing friendship with its African counterparts.

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