



EMEA WEBINARS

EU-AFRICA PARTNERSHIP: IS THE EU STILL A RELEVANT ACTOR FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN THE CONTINENT?

Thursday 15 July 2021, 15:00- 17:00 CET

Moderator:

Prof. Rym Ayadi, President, Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA), Professor at the Bayes Business School (Former CASS), City University of London

Speaker(s):

Andrea Renda, Senior Research Fellow and Head of Global Governance, Regulation, Innovation and the Digital Economy (GRID) at CEPS, Belgium

Sara Ronco, Researcher, Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA), Spain

Panellist(s):

Moubarack Lô, Director General of the Bureau of Economic Prospective, Senegal, Senior Fellow, Policy Centre for the New South, Member of the EMEA Advisory Board

H. E. Harriet Sena Siaw-Boateng, Ambassador of Ghana to the Kingdom of Belgium, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Head of Mission to the European Union

H.E. Fathallah Sijilmassi, Former Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean (Barcelona), Founder and CEO of Positive Agenda Advisory, member of the EMEA Advisory Board and member of the EMNES Advisory Committee

Domenico Rosa, Head of the Unit INTPA/A/1 on the Strategic partnerships with Africa and OACPS at the Directorate General for International Partnerships (INTPA) of the European Commission

Rapporteur: Sara Ronco, Researcher, EMEA

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Introduction

Africa and Europe have a long history of development and cooperation. Since decolonisation, the EU has strived to be a reference actor for Africa, launching several “partnership agreements” with the countries of the continent and its institutions. 2020 represented a crucial moment for EU-Africa relations and development aid. The year symbolised the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona process instituting the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Furthermore, in December, the political deal was reached on a new EU-Africa Caribbean and Pacific Post-Cotonou Partnership Agreement, leading to significant changes in the 20 years of cooperation between EU and Sub Sahara Africa. This demonstrates the need to reflect on the weaknesses and the strengths of more than 20 years of EU engagement in Africa. Despite the COVID-19 eruption, in March 2020, the EU issued a Joint Communication “Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa”. Meanwhile, in December 2020, the Thirteenth Extraordinary Session on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) took place, resulting in the decision to officially start trading under AfCFTA on the 1st January 2021. 2021 is a pivotal year for the future of EU-Africa relations, but it also comes with the continuing unmanaged global pandemic. The EU has been very active since the eruption, supporting the neighbourhood and African countries via the outstanding Team Europe Initiative and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) participating in the COVAX AMC (COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access – Advance Market Commitment) platform for medical equipment and vaccines distribution. Despite the EU’s engagement in Africa, countries like China, India and Turkey demonstrated their strong presence in the Continent and were often perceived to be quicker and more efficient than the EU. Against this backdrop, the webinar will discuss the following: what kind of Actor will the EU be in development and cooperation with Africa? Will it still be a relevant one? What differentiates it from other foreign players, such as US, China, Russia and others?

EMEA is a partner of the TRIGGER Project led by CEPS, which kicked off in 2019. The panel will discuss the concept of Actorness developed by the TRIGGER [project](#) (on Trends in Global Governance and Europe’s role) and will present the preliminary findings of the research performed by EMEA under this project.

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Panel

EMEA **CEPS** **trigger**

EU-Africa Partnership: Is the EU still a relevant actor for development policy in the continent?

PROF. RYM AYADI
President, Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA) and Professor at the Bayes Business School (Former CASS), City University of London

ANDREA RENDA
Senior Research Fellow and Head of Global Governance, Regulation, Innovation and the Digital Economy (GRID) at CEPS

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MOUBARACK LÔ
Director General of the Bureau of Economic Prospective, Senegal, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South, Member of the EMEA Advisory Board

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DOMENICO ROSA
Head of the Unit INTIPA/1 on the Strategic partnerships with Africa and DACPS at the Directorate General for International Partnerships (DITPA) of the European Commission

Prof. Rym Ayadi

She welcomed all the panellists and the participants and then introduced the topic. She started by recalling the long history of development and cooperation between the European Union and Africa. The European Union has tried to be the reference actor for Africa and the neighbourhood countries, spearheading several partnership agreements with the continent's countries and its institutions. She underlined that both 2020 and 2021 had been challenging years for both the continents and extremely decisive for EU-African relations and development aid. She recalled certain critical events from the last year - from the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona process to the new comprehensive strategy of Africa and the post-Cotonou partnership agreement.

Covid-19 complicated things and European Europe has been very active in helping African countries, with Team Europe and other initiatives. Amongst these is COVAX and she recalled the difficulties of African countries in reaching the needed doses of vaccines. She wished to see a true partnership amongst equals between the European Union and Africa, setting capacity and boosting priority. She said that the webinar would discuss the concept of actorness, developed by the TRIGGER project, led by CEPS, in which EMEA is a partner. The webinar will answer questions, such as what kind of actor is the European Union in development policy and Africa? Is it still a relevant one, if compared with other players? With this in mind, she welcomed the speakers to start the webinar.

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Andrea Renda

He started by explaining the TRIGGER project: trends in Global Governance and Europe's role. It was conceived and designed to help European Union institutions understand what kind of image they are projecting and what role they should play in global governance. The main objectives of the project are to provide institutions with knowledge and tools. The specific goals of this project are: trying to advance the state of the art in understanding the different players and their interactions in global governance; understanding and better defining a concept, such as governance and effectiveness rather than using a concept such as power with a rather normative connotation; understanding how global governance and emerging technologies interact and what role the EU plays in this respect, in particular as a "regulatory superpower"; identifying emerging trends that strengthen/loosen deeper global governance and cooperation; building capacity for strategic foresight and public engagement inside EU institutions.

He said that once it has been defined what an actor is and when an actor is effective, the project digs down into four different areas (after Andrea, Sara will focus on one of them, which is the EU as an actor for development aid and partnership with Africa). He then moved to the explanation of how actorness has been conceptualised. He said that internal and external dimensions influence the behaviour of an actor. Internal dimensions are the autonomy (the ability to act independently), the authority (the level of competencies to act), cohesion (concerning member states and internal institutions). Moving to the external dimensions, there are the external recognition of an actor; the ability of the EU to see opportunities when presenting itself; the attractiveness of the EU as a partner. The last dimension is credibility, which is considered as both internal and external. He said that, in the conceptual framework outlined in the project, there would be the intention to test whether the level of actorness triggers a certain level of effectiveness. He said that in studying the relationship between actorness and effectiveness, it seems that a lot could be explained by the actor's strategy and the external environment (i.e., the ability to forge a coalition, what the EU does to project its actorness in the global governance). Actorness and effectiveness dynamically shape global governance.

He then showed some preliminary results in scoring actorness from around 1990 to 2020, based on some critical episodes in global governance, in the different dimensions. Preliminary results show a high level of actorness in data protection policy, followed by climate policies, sustainable development, and the EU-Africa partnership. He anticipated the results of the analysis that will be better explained by the next speaker, saying that some of the elements possibly triggering the EU's actorness in development policy and relations with Africa could be: the level of cohesion and the

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alignment between the EU's principles and values and the way in which the EU acts in Africa. Obviously, the EU level on the ground was also another important factor. He underlined that it is not just what the EU does - it's also the environment in which it operates and the perception and actions taken from the other side that affects actorness and effectiveness. That's why he stressed the importance of hearing from the other webinar participants. He concluded by saying that it is important to understand how the EU is perceived and what could be done to strengthen its actorness and effectiveness and to strengthen the EU-Africa partnership's overall value-added, given its extremely strategic dimension.

Sara Ronco

She explained that the study on actorness started from pinning certain milestones moments in the EU-Africa partnership and development policy over recent decades. The first moments identified are the constitution of the three main frameworks for cooperation with Africa, which is different from the past. 2007 represents a significant turning point in actorness, for many reasons (i.e., the Lisbon Treaty, the adoption of the first Africa-EU Strategy and its relative Action Plan, and new instruments complementary to other aid modality) constituting the start of a "second partnership phase". The third one started around 2015/16, with the beginning of the post-Cotonou partnership coming into view, which was a new phase consolidated with the geopolitical commission, placing a strong focus on achieving an equal partnership between the continents. She then moved to the exposure of the main results of the analysis. She started from the internal dimensions. The authority's levels, assessed by looking at both primary and secondary law, show a decreasing trend during the three-periods observed, mainly due to the transfer of some legal competencies to the EU, even if the policy area remains under a shared competencies' umbrella. For the assessment of autonomy, both the institutions' personnel and agenda-setting and instruments for financing agenda-setting Africa has been considered. The study reveals an increasing autonomy through new specific policy instruments and an EU budget dedicated to development and Africa. As for cohesion, the EU has increased its efforts to coordinate actions with the Member States and European Institutions. Despite several initiatives to strengthen joint action and coordination on development programming, it remains a vital bargaining constellation, sending mixed signals (mixed MS interests and EU interests).

She then moved to the analysis of external dimensions. The assessment of attractiveness reveals the maintenance of a moderate to high level, looking at elements related to the EU as an actor for development policy in the international scene and cooperating with Africa. On the other hand, looking at the level of

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recognition, it seems to have worsened over the last period. The recognition assessment is considered as formal and informal recognition. The first refers to the institutional frameworks in which the EU operates, whilst the second tries to investigate the "perceived" recognition by the other actors involved. Opportunities and the necessity to act have been assessed looking at some key issues (i.e., human rights, EU enlargement, aid effectiveness, Brexit and Covid-19), noticing that, regarding recognition, after an increase between the first and second periods, it declines in the third period. The last and cross-cutting dimension of credibility shows a more significant decrease during the three periods analysed. It seems to be related to substantial criticism concerning the inconsistency between objective and practical action from one side and the nature of the purpose for the partnerships and development programme from the other. The preliminary analysis seems to reveal an inverse trend between autonomy and authority on one side and the other dimensions on the other side (except for attractiveness and cohesion). She underlined that it is worth noting that pre-2007 can be considered as a period of optimistic EU international and cooperation momentum. On the other hand, post-2007 has been characterised by significant challenges, particularly for development aid and EU-Africa relations (i.e., the Arab Spring, the refugees' crisis, the UK withdrawal), putting particularly under stress the EU's development and cooperation strategy.

Despite everything, the overall actorness can be considered as moderate across all dimensions. Despite the decreasing trends observed in some dimensions (mainly external), there has been increasing EU engagement in regaining visibility in development aid and African relations (i.e., Team Europe, the New comprehensive strategy with Africa, the New Agenda for the Mediterranean etc.). She concluded by saying that the 2020/2021 period also represents a crucial phase for EU-Africa regarding development aid in general. This could represent the next main turning point for EU actorness in this domain.

Moubarack Lo

He said he wanted to concentrate on its intervention, commenting on the framework for the analysis of actorness. He suggested considering what he called "the strategic triangle of actorness". This triangle has 3 points. The first one, the mission, is legitimacy which comes from the mandate given by the European treaties, by political support from the member state and democratic institutions, like the European Parliament and citizens, and agreement in the spirit of the Paris declaration. He said that anytime the European Union acts, it should follow the needs and requests from the partner state. The second point in the triangle is the capacity to act. In this respect, to have human and financial resources, good internal EU organisation and good

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relations with the member states (complementarity and subsidiarity). These capacities need to be developed, in order for the EU to be effective. The third point of the triangle he mentioned is value creation: the EU's programmes and activities should be aligned to the country's priorities. He thought that the value of EU intervention will be measured by effectiveness and efficiency, looking at the EU's impact and sustainability for assessing the quality of policies. He said that the triangle he proposed explains the credibility, recognition and attractiveness that can be considered a consequence of the value created. He then suggested comparing other actors, such as China or Turkey, or the USA, to test whether credibility, recognition, and attractiveness are correlated to the value created.

Sena Siaw-Boateng

She started by considering that it would be good to analyze actorship in other institutions, such as the OACPS. She underlined that, because of the historical and geographical ties between the EU and Africa and the level of interests and responsibilities that the two continents share, their relationship is unique. She said that the issues are there, on good governance, climate change, economic transformation and migration, and the new matter of the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the need for everyone in both the EU and Africa to enhance their cooperation for mutual benefit. Indeed, she stressed that the EU-Africa partnership and the role of the EU in African social-economic development remain vital. Over the years, it has become evident that Europeans and Africans need to better understand and appreciate each other, in order to improve their strategic partnership.

She wanted to stress that, today, there is heightened awareness of Africa's assets and capabilities in their partnership. The narrative of a donor-recipient relationship is no longer there; instead, it has become one of cooperation by alliances and the buzzword is a word she wanted to stress. The African continent will continue to be a centre of attraction for other major actors within the global geopolitical space, because Africa now is the centre of the world, where all the resources are and where human resource is now available for the development of new skills. The US, China, Russia, India, Turkey and even the Gulf States, despite Africa, are experiencing that they still find the continent very attractive. She raised the question of how does the EU keep holding onto its space and its values? The EU started with Africa as a colonial partner. Yet now, China, Russia and other countries, without past colonial ties, are coming. They have also brought something to the table that they feel the EU is not providing, or they have taken advantage of certain things that they realise the EU was not providing for the continent. She said that searching for dialogue will be key. The two continents need to talk and to try to be on the same level.

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She moved on to analyse how the EU is perceived now. Sometimes, the EU is perceived as not credible, because they say one thing, then turn around and deal on the ground in another way. She appreciated what Mubarak said about spending money without results. Sometimes, the implementation doesn't go well; whatever happens on the ground, the practice of what has to be done, doesn't work. She wanted to stress that, whilst most EU countries have had many years (decades) to establish themselves, it's unfair and not realistic to expect the same standards from the African perspective. She underlined that the way forward is to help assist in a very practical way. She said that, whilst the search for higher standards is required, it is important to also consider the costs. When the EU's regulatory system kicks in, it helps countries facilitate their activities and systems. Yet, it should be done humanely and not in a punitive way, because Africa the victim becomes Africa the cooperate. We have the continental free trade area, which the EU has supported along with the successful implementation of the measures that have been put in place to enhance trading on the continent. In this respect, of course, Africa will be very grateful to the EU and work alongside the EU going forward on this trading plan. However, she thought more dialogue is needed to put this partnership into a better perspective.

Fathallah Sijilmassi

He started by saying that the issue of the future of Europe and Africa relations in partnership is rather well designed in the spirit of the decision-makers, because it has been set as a priority. He recalled that the first visit outside of Europe of the President of the Commission was to the African Union. It was a clear signal about the strategic importance of the EU-Africa partnership. The EU-AU Summit that was supposed to occur last year did not come about, because of the sanitary crisis and the pandemic. He believed, referring to the study on actorness presented by the initial speakers, that the key issue to be analysed shouldn't be the "what" but the "how". In his opinion, the study should investigate the "how" and identify the different option initiatives, to provide policy recommendations towards the future of the EU-Africa partnership. He thought that there is a clear challenge to go in-depth on the road map towards implementation. He then shared some ideas on what this "how" includes in order to build the policy recommendation perspective. The first one is the importance of South-South cooperation. He thought the EU will only have a better relationship with Africa if South-South cooperation in Africa continues to be stronger. It should not be seen as a development aid; it's not a donor-recipient or just spending money with little impact. Europe has to be seen as being good for Europe, because if you want to do impactful and meaningful things, at the end of the day, the interest has to be mutual,

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in order to build win-win relations. He said that we can only achieve the ultimate strategic goals of a true lasting sustainable partnership through this new mindset.

He said that South-South cooperation is also fundamental when looking at the complementarity between the relationship with the continent and the relationship with the regional economic communities. Africa is a big continent, with many countries and with several differences and regional economic communities. The third point he made was about the cohesion between the European Member State's priorities. The fourth message he gave was the importance of reinforcing synergies between the different instruments, mechanisms and tools, emphasising the impact that sometimes seems fragmented, too small or difficult to catch. The fifth message was to create a more balanced agenda, since there were different topics on which the agenda from the EU and Africa sides do not seem to be aligned. He took the case of migration, which is very high on the European agenda. If one looked beyond the general global statement relating to migration, it is not migration in general, but specifically "irregular migration". From the perspective of the South, there is a clear understanding of the importance of regular migration. He also brought up the example of Morocco, which is strongly engaged in helping the EU secure the EU's management of the migration borders, with many investments that are sometimes under-assessed by the EU. Nevertheless, he said that the African partners have so many other elements to the migratory agenda, which are very high on the agenda of the African countries and that are not truly dealt with within the framework of the dialogue between the EU-African frameworks.

One simple example is the strength of the African economies in services. Trading in services is certainly an area where other countries of the South, along with the countries of Africa, can do more and are doing more. For example, if you take a country like Morocco, trade with the European Union has a deficit in goods, whilst there is a surplus in services, so there is competitiveness. According to the WTO definition, if you look at services, there are four modes: exports of services, import of services, investment in services and movement of people. He stressed this when negotiating on services with DG Trade. At the same time, although the first three modes are feasible, the last one, mobility, is not. And, he said taking away the mode of movement of people in services is annihilating the capacity to be market competitive and this is precisely related to the issues of mobility and migrations beyond the narrow concept of irregular migration.

He then moved on to talk about objectives and reality on the ground. He said that, too often, decisions taken on the ground go against the previously stated objectives. He gave an example. On the one hand, there is the encouragement and the call for

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reform in our African countries, to improve the business environment in order to attract more foreign direct investment. On the other hand, he said that you could easily receive a letter saying that your fiscal incentives for the investment are incompatible with investment. Therefore, if you do not remove these incentives, you will move from the white list to the grey list and then to the black list. That creates a lot of unforeseen obstacles to the sustainable visibility of what you can develop. Therefore, he stressed the importance of global coherence, which could occur only with clear dialogue and communication, particularly a clear understanding of both options. He concluded by saying that there are opportunities to build on positive agenda types of initiative. . He stressed that there are some things that can be worked on to build t a better partnership. Also, here he provided an example - the green deal. It is amongst the top priorities of the EU and could also be very important beyond European borders. He concluded by stressing the importance of working on green recovery schemes in Africa, that would also encompass the partnership with the European Union (he said last week Morocco and the European Union signed a "green partnership").

Domenico Rosa

He started by saying that he found that the concept of actorness in Africa very interesting. Though he said Africa is not an homogeneous entity, it comprises 55 countries with significant differentiation between the northern African and the Sub Saharan regions. Inside the latter, you also have considerable differentiation amongst the different countries. He said that this is something that is needed to be taken into account. Furthermore, he also stressed the importance of identifying specific sectors to which to apply the measurement of the EU's actorness and perceptions by African countries. He said that, sometimes, there is a tendency to extrapolate general ideas that are perceived differently if you move to a country level. The European Union is providing budget support in most African countries. He said that it was instrumental in the recent Covid-19 crisis and in the past when there was the food crisis or the global economic crisis. He said that, sometimes, the EU seems to be too much the guilty party when discussing impact and effectiveness. He said that it is difficult to evaluate the effect of budget support. He stressed that the EU had changed the narrative. Both the EU and Africa are engaged in going beyond donor-recipient relationships and developing a true partnership, placing the same balance between African and European partners and seeing the convergences – being partners on an equal footing and discussing common issues on the table and finding standard solutions.

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The EU is taking action to build a strategy with Africa from a long-term perspective, aiming to achieve African autonomy and agency. He said they need to move forward along the five lines of the new strategy adopted in March 2020. He said that COVID-19 had exacerbated some problems but wasn't undermining the fundamentals of the established partnership: in future, Africa remains the main partner of the EU to share. The future generation will be in the position to share the future in a better way.

He then moved on to the external dimension of the Green Deal and how it will have to be something different from the European one, based on decarbonisation. In Africa, with few exceptions, it is not about de-carbonising but providing access to energy and, therefore, promoting sustainable energy. He concluded by saying that the issues are very complex and, sometimes, there could be incoherence in how the implementation is taking place. The creation of the AfCFTA will be transformative, because it is aiming at creating an economic space inside Africa that doesn't currently exist and will be key considering the demographic evolution and growth of the middle class. He said that creating this Africa trade is even more important than creating a free trade area between Africa and Europe, which is a more long-term objective. He said that Europe should support an African capacity to produce vaccines inside the continent, instead of being dependent on other countries. He stressed that the development policy concept is moving in parallel with a societal change. He concluded by saying that, even if the EU did have some strategic priorities that could be construed as "negative" (i.e. irregular migration), in general, there are more positive than negative elements.