



October 2020

The EU is keen to build a modern, equal and ambitious partnership with Africa – but not at the cost of forgetting the fight for democratic values. A broad investment plan proposed in March 2020 aims at developing closer cooperation between the EU and Africa on infrastructure, technology, resources and others. The European Parliament champions this partnership and would like more ambitious goals to be adopted.

Background notes

[After Cotonou: Towards a new agreement with the African, Caribbean and Pacific states: International Agreements in Progress](#)

Briefing by Eric Pichon, EPRS, October 2020

The Cotonou partnership agreement between the EU and ACP states is due to expire at the end of 2020. The ACP states and the EU adopted their negotiating mandates in May and June 2018 respectively, thus starting negotiations for a 'post-Cotonou' agreement in September 2018. The main challenge for the EU is to maintain its cooperation with the three ACP sub-regions and to continue to promote the values enshrined in the EU Treaties. At the same time, the new partnership should take into account the United Nations' sustainable development goals, the redefinition of European strategies in the concerned regions, the new ambitions of the ACP states and the changing balance of power at the global level.

[Towards a new EU strategy with Africa: A renewed focus on outreach](#)

Briefing by Eric Pichon, EPRS, June 2020

Africa has been put at the core of the Commission's geopolitical work programme. In March 2020, the European Commission and the High Representative of the EU for Foreign and Security Policy proposed to build a new and comprehensive partnership with Africa. Although the proposal mainly builds on existing frameworks, its high profile and clear commitment to the African Union (AU) make it an important milestone in a partnership effort initiated several years ago. In order to preserve its own economic and security interests in the face of increased geopolitical competition, the EU intends to continue to be an important player on the African continent. The EU and the AU have converging interests in a number of areas, such as the fight against climate change and the promotion of a sustainable, job-creating African economy. However, they still have to find common ground on migration, security management, and fundamental values.

[An overview of the EU-ACP countries' economic partnership agreements: Building a new trade relationship](#)

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, July 2018

In line with the objective enshrined in the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (signed in 2000), the EU has sought to update its preferential trade relationship with the ACP countries by establishing free-trade areas with regional groupings. As well as allowing ACP countries to continue exporting their products to the EU without any restriction, this would also ensure compliance with WTO rules. They are the first attempt to liberalise trade between economies with such a disparate level of development, which also possibly explains the difficulties encountered during the negotiations.

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Coronavirus in Africa: A crisis with multiple impacts

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir and Eric Pichon, EPRS, May 2020

At the beginning of May, the number of Covid-19 cases in Africa was lower than in other regions of the world. Limited testing capacity and Africa's young population are often mentioned as possible explanations for this overall low rate. The very early preventive measures adopted by most governments are also credited for slowing down the spread of the disease. On the other hand, African economies have been severely hit by the pandemic. The pandemic has also affected the fragile democratic institutions of some African countries. Restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly, as well as the postponement of elections can undermine recent democratic progress. Africa needs massive help to overcome these challenges. The European Union is refocusing the funds earmarked for Africa to fighting the pandemic. The consequences of the outbreak will profoundly reshape the discussions on a renewed Africa-EU partnership, and if correctly seized, might be the opportunity to strengthen this partnership.

EU-Africa academic cooperation

Briefing by Anna Zygierewicz, EPRS, December 2019

EU-Africa academic cooperation is one of the priority of the strategic partnership between both regions. It allows the mobility of students, researchers and academic staff as well as the cooperation between academic institutions from both regions. The cooperation is supported, not least with the EU funds, through the Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 programmes as well as through the Inter-Africa Mobility Scheme. With the new financial perspective and the new 'post-Cotonou' agreement, still in negotiations, it is important to ensure the future of the EU-Africa academic cooperation is relevant in scale to the needs and expectations and is focusing on topics important for both regions.

Russia in Africa : A new arena for geopolitical competition

Briefing by Eric Pichon and Martin Russell, EPRS, November 2019

Recent years have seen a renewed Russian interest in the continent, as part of President Vladimir Putin's drive to reassert his country as a major global player. Moscow has long been the continent's leading supplier of weapons, and it has military cooperation deals with nearly two dozen African countries. Among other things, these provide for the presence of military trainers and advisors, and a small but growing number of Russian 'boots on the ground', many of them coming from shadowy private military companies closely linked to Putin's entourage. Russia's military presence in countries such as the Central African Republic often goes hand-in-hand with commercial interests. Russia's African toolkit also includes covert political influence operations – again, involving shady Kremlin-linked organisations, soft power (building on Soviet-era links and a growing media presence), and increasingly close diplomatic ties. On the other hand, Russian development and humanitarian aid to the continent is minimal. Its role is therefore viewed with concern by the EU institutions and Member States.

China's growing role as a security actor in Africa

Briefing by Gisela Grieger, EPRS, October 2019

China has emerged as an important economic, political but also security actor in Africa as a result of its 'Going out' policy officially launched in 2001, and the massive roll-out of its signature connectivity strategy, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), since 2013. China has shifted from uncompromising non-involvement to selective and incremental engagement in bilateral, regional and international cooperation on peace and security. As in other fields, China has pursued a two-pronged approach to African security issues, to defend its economic and security interests and to expand its influence in Africa. On the one hand, it has contributed to existing multilateral structures and instruments to foster peace and security. It has participated in UN-led peacekeeping

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missions to Africa and in the UN-mandated counter-piracy action off the Horn of Africa. Both have provided the pretext for China to accelerate its massive blue-water navy build up, to be present in the Indian Ocean and beyond and to set up its first overseas military base, in Djibouti. On the other hand, it has expanded its military presence by engaging African countries bilaterally through joint drills, military training, and military infrastructure-building and multilaterally through the newly created China-Africa fora on security issues. Against this backdrop it remains to be seen how complementary or competitive the future EU-China security cooperation, which so far has remained in its infancy, will be in seeking 'African solutions to African problems'.

Peace and Security

[Understanding the EU Strategy for the Sahel](#)

Briefing by Eric Pichon, EPRS, September 2020

The August 2020 coup in Mali has once again demonstrated the instability of the Sahel. The instability in this region has direct consequences for the security of the European Union's neighbours and for the EU itself. In 2011, to respond to the multiple factors of this instability, the EU adopted the Sahel security and development strategy. Despite the revamping of the strategy in 2015 based on the lessons learnt, its implementation, which involves the coordination of multiple stakeholders, has been difficult. While it has contributed to notable progress towards integration and regionalisation, security challenges have impeded tangible achievements in preventing radicalisation and fostering inclusive development. The Sahel action plan comes to an end in 2020; its revision (or replacement) will need to take the EU's and Africa's new geopolitical interests on board. As the EU endeavours to reconnect with Africa in a regional and full-fledged partnership, the successes and failures of the EU Strategy for the Sahel could inspire the whole EU development and security policy on the continent.

[Peace and security in 2020: Evaluating the EU approach to tackling the Sahel conflicts](#)

Study by Isabelle Ioannides, EPRS, September 2020 (also in [French](#))

The Peace and Security series evaluates European Union (EU) performance in the field of peace and security in a specific geographical region each year. This, the third thematic study in the series, focuses on the EU's contribution to resolving the conflicts in the Sahel, restoring stability and building peace in the region. The EU has adopted a comprehensive and integrated approach to tackling the numerous political, security and defence, humanitarian, development, and environmental challenges facing the five countries in the Sahel: Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, issuing a strategy specifically for the region in 2011. This evaluation first outlines the complex local and geopolitical dynamics framing the conflicts in the Sahel. It then assesses the various aspects of the EU's approach to supporting peace efforts in the region in an already crowded international landscape. The study also analyses the European Parliament's engagement with the Sahel region, considers the challenges that the EU (and other international actors) have faced in the Sahel, and presents options for improving the effectiveness of EU action. A parallel study, published separately, provides an overview of current EU action on peace and security, while a third presents the 2020 Normandy Index. The studies have been drafted as a contribution to the Normandy World Peace Forum in October 2020.

[The EU and multilateral conflict management: The case of the Central African Republic](#)

Briefing by Eric Pichon with Jaana Karhilo, EPRS, June 2020

The EU supports multilateralism in the furtherance of peace and security, acting as a partner to both the United Nations and regional organisations in the effort to prevent violent conflicts, mitigate their consequences and aid long-term recovery. A significant share of EU development cooperation is dedicated to fragile and conflict-afflicted countries or areas whose populations suffer prolonged humanitarian crises. One such country, the Central African Republic (CAR), ranks second last in the Human Development Index and has been confronted with a complex emergency requiring a multi-faceted response. Multiple armed groups control or contest about

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80 % of the national territory, benefiting from illicit activities and the lucrative circulation of arms, fighters and natural resources across porous borders, as the state builds up institutions that have traditionally held little sway outside the capital Bangui. The EU – the country's biggest donor – is part of a dense UN-led network of external actors committed to supporting the government and the national partners in the pursuit of peace among the parties to the conflict. No previous peace accord has been the object of so much effort from the international community as the political agreement brokered in February 2019 in Khartoum. Its tenuous implementation has reduced overall levels of insecurity without winning all hearts and minds. As the CAR prepares for political wrangling at the ballot box in 2020, the launch a new civilian Advisory Mission (EUAM RCA) alongside the existing military Training Mission (EUTM RCA) comes at a pivotal moment.

[Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea: EU and international action](#)

Briefing by Eric Pichon, EPRS, March 2020

The Gulf of Guinea is framed by 6 000 km of west African coastline, from Senegal to Angola. Its sea basin is an important resource for fisheries and is part of a key sea route for the transport of goods between central and southern Africa and the rest of the world. Its geo-political and geo-economic importance has grown since it has become a strategic hub in global and regional energy trade. Every day, nearly 1 500 fishing vessels, cargo ships and tankers navigate its waters. The security of this maritime area is threatened by the rise of piracy, illegal fishing, and other maritime crimes. Regional actors have committed to cooperate on tackling the issue through the 'Yaoundé Code of Conduct' and the related cooperation mechanism and bodies. The international community has also pledged to track and condemn acts of piracy at sea. The European Union (EU), which has a strong interest in safeguarding its maritime trade and in addressing piracy's root causes, supports regional and international initiatives. The EU is also implementing its own maritime security strategy, which includes, among other features, a regional component for the Gulf of Guinea; this entails EU bodies' and Member States' cooperation in countering acts of piracy, as well as capacity-building projects.

[How the EU budget is spent: Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace](#)

Briefing by Alina Dobрева with Philipp Wegner, EPRS, March 2017

The Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace was established in 2014 to support the European Union's external policies. It contributes funding for crisis response, conflict prevention, peace-building and crisis preparedness, and to address global and trans regional threats. The instrument thus plays a role in both EU foreign and development policy.

Further reading

[The G5 Sahel and the European Union: The challenges of security cooperation with a regional grouping](#)

Briefing by Eric Pichon with Tessa Fardel, EPRS, September 2020

[The African Union: Defending peace, democracy and human rights](#)

'At a glance' note by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS November 2017

[EU strategy in the Horn of Africa](#)

'At a glance' note by Eric Pichon, EPRS, December 2016

Democracy, good governance and human rights

[LGBTI in Africa: Widespread discrimination against people with non-conforming sexual orientations and gender identities](#)

Briefing by Eric Pichon with Gevorg Kourchoudian, EPRS, May 2019

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Three out of five African countries have laws criminalising homosexuality and the public expression of sexual or gender behaviour that does not conform with heterosexual norms. These same laws even sometimes punish LGBTI (lesbian, gay, trans, intersex) rights advocacy. Some African countries have partly decriminalised LGBTI persons or given them better protection. However, across the continent – with the notable exception of South Africa – such persons are still far from fully enjoying the same rights as other citizens. Tolerance for LGBTI is still very low in most African countries, and LGBTI people are all too often exposed to discrimination and violence. Against this backdrop, the EU institutions and Member States have a difficult task: on the one hand, they are committed under the Treaties to promote the EU core values in their external relations, and to monitor and tackle abuses in their partner countries. On the other hand, their actions and declarations in this area risk reinforcing the perception that the EU is trying to impose non-African values on Africa, all the more so since the notion of sexual orientation and gender identity as grounds for discrimination is contested by African countries in the multilateral arena.

[Child labour: A priority for EU human rights action](#)

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, January 2019

Despite a comprehensive normative international framework that prohibits child labour, it persists in many areas of the world, particularly in developing countries. In sub-Saharan-Africa, it has even increased in recent years. More efforts are therefore needed to combat child labour. While international conventions provide a broad definition of child labour, they leave the task of defining more precise criteria, such as the acceptable number of working hours per week or what constitutes hazardous work, to national legislation. Child labour is a complex phenomenon that has a multiplicity of causes, among which poverty usually features first. It requires a comprehensive approach to fight it, including awareness-raising among families and local communities, due diligence by companies involved in global supply chains, and action by governments, international organisations and civil society. The European Union has deployed measures to fight child labour through cooperation with international organisations and has funded development projects whose aim is to counter it. The human rights conditionality enshrined in the EU's trade arrangements provides another path for tackling child labour. Nevertheless, there are numerous calls from civil society and the European Parliament to impose binding legal obligations on EU-based companies, to make sure their imports of goods from developing countries are free of child labour.

[EU support to democracy and good governance in Africa](#)

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, November 2017, EPRS

Support to democracy and good governance is a central component of EU cooperation with and development aid to the African continent. Against the background of democratisation processes that are still fragile, but also of continuous popular support for democratic systems in Africa, EU support remains vital. Various mechanisms are at the EU's disposal, although questions of their effectiveness remain as complicated as ever.

Further reading

[Mali: The coup and its consequences](#), 'At a glance' note by Eric Pichon, EPRS, September 2020.

[Actions of the African Union against coups d'état](#), 'At a glance' note by Ionel Zamfir, November 2017.

[Democracy in Africa: Power alternation and presidential term limits](#), Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, April 2016.

Attracting investments for sustainable and inclusive development and growth

[La mise en œuvre du nouveau cadre de partenariat avec les pays tiers Le cas du Niger](#)

Briefing by Marta Latek, EPRS, September 2019

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Le Niger, pays de croisement de nombreuses routes migratoires au Sahel, s'est montré le plus réactif, parmi ceux de l'Afrique subsaharienne, aux sollicitations européennes pour renforcer la lutte contre la migration irrégulière – un des objectifs clefs du nouveau cadre de partenariat de l'Union européenne (UE) avec les pays tiers. Ce cadre offre de nouvelles opportunités de coopération en contrepartie du durcissement de la politique migratoire. Le gouvernement nigérien a donc mis en œuvre une réglementation stricte criminalisant toute assistance aux étrangers en transit. En matière de sécurité, le gouvernement de Niamey, qui doit faire face à l'instabilité régionale et la criminalité transfrontalière, et l'UE, qui gère une pression migratoire importante, ont des intérêts convergents, ce qui explique l'intensification de la coopération depuis 2015-2016. La diminution des flux migratoires qui en résulte, applaudie par les partenaires européens, a cependant des conséquences néfastes sur l'économie locale centrée sur le fait migratoire. Le Parlement européen a mis en garde dès 2017 contre une vision trop étroite et à court terme de la politique externe de l'UE et contre le risque de détourner les fonds de la politique du développement vers les objectifs purement sécuritaires, en plaidant pour une approche de la migration centrée sur les droits de l'homme. Il soutient également le plan d'investissement extérieur, un de bras financier du nouveau cadre de partenariat, qui doit encourager des investissements privés en faveur du développement.

[The African Union's blue strategy](#)

'At a glance' note by Eric Pichon, EPRS, March 2019

Harnessing ocean resources in a sustainable manner is the 'new frontier of the African renaissance', according to the African Union. To this end, the African Union has designed an ambitious maritime strategy aimed at restoring ocean health, reinstating security at sea, and strengthening strategic 'blue growth' sectors. The EU is supporting this strategy, which is in line with the main aspects of its own approach to the Africa-EU partnership.

[European Fund for Sustainable Development \(EFSD\)](#)

'EU Legislation in progress' Briefing by Marta Latek, EPRS, November 2017

The EFSD is part of the partnership framework for cooperation with countries with high irregular emigration, and is one of the pillars of the new external investment plan, inspired by the success of the investment plan for Europe. The new fund aims to mobilise EU grants to catalyse investment from public and private sources, to tackle the root causes of migration in the European neighbourhood and Africa, while helping to achieve the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals.

Further reading

[Understanding the Sustainable Development Goals](#), Briefing by Marta Latek and Eric Pichon, December 2019.

[New European consensus on development: Will it be fit for purpose?](#), Briefing by Marta Latek, EPRS, April 2017.

[Economic integration under the African Union](#), 'At a glance' note by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, November 2017.

[Africa's economic growth: Taking off or slowing down?](#), In-depth analysis by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, January 2016 [On the necessity of investments in Africa] (also in [French](#) and [German](#)).

Migration, Youth, and human development

[EU support for fighting global poverty: Implementing UN SDG 1 – 'Ending poverty'](#)

Briefing by Marta Latek, EPRS, November 2019

Poverty affects more than a quarter of the world's population, and that is why erasing it is a principal objective for humanity, enshrined as the first of a number of goals (SDGs) in the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Poverty is more than just having insufficient income – it is a multidimensional phenomenon closely

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related to unequal access to education, health and other basic services. Increasingly concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa, extreme poverty destroys the lives of millions through malnutrition, high infant mortality rates and the violence and insecurity it fuels. Poverty eradication is an ongoing objective of EU development policy. It has recently gained new momentum with the incorporation of the SDGs into the 2017 European consensus on development – the framework for EU action in the area of development cooperation. The EU supports, through its different instruments and programmes, key areas, such as education, healthcare, social security and good governance, relevant to poverty eradication in developing countries. Some doubt that using aid to subsidise private investment is the optimal way to tackle poverty, and insist on strict implementation of development objectives, environmental and social standards, and on highlighting human rights in all projects.

Refugee policies in Africa: Open borders but limited integration

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, September 2017

As Europe struggles with the migration crisis, the EU is trying to develop a new relationship with African countries, in order to try to curb the influx of people fleeing war, poverty or persecution, as well as to address the situation of refugees in Africa. Indeed, while some African countries are transit countries, Africa also hosts significant numbers of displaced people.

Reintegration of returning migrants

Briefing by Marta Latek, EPRS, October 2017

Returning more and more migrants with irregular status to their countries of origin has become a key European Union aim in efforts to reduce chaotic and dangerous migration flows. To make the return option more attractive for migrants with irregular status, the EU's return policy promotes voluntary returns through reintegration assistance packages. Close cooperation with local partners is necessary to include reintegration assistance within existing development initiatives.

Empowering Africa's youth: The new focus of EU-Africa cooperation

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, November 2017

Today, over 60 % of Africans are under the age of 25. One in four working age persons in the world by 2050 could be African. As the EU prepares to redefine its cooperation with Africa, the issue of youth is thus inescapable. The most urgent challenge for the EU is to channel foreign investment and development efforts towards Africa's youngest populations, which most often are located in its most fragile states.

Growing impact of EU migration policy on development cooperation, *Briefing by Marta Latek, EPRS, November 2017*

Further reading:

How the EU budget is spent: EU Aid Volunteers initiative, *Briefing by Alina Dobрева, EPRS, December 2016.*

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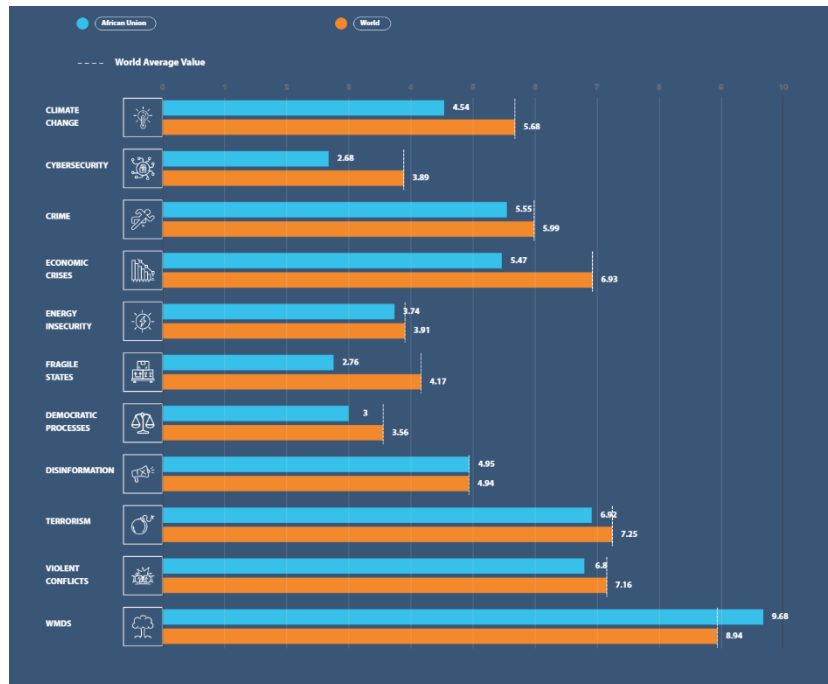
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African Union countries compared to world average in terms of risks Image generated with the [EPRS Normandy peace index](#)



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