

**February 2022**

In February 2022, a summit between EU and African Heads of State and governments – delayed by the pandemic – will discuss ways to build a new and comprehensive partnership, based on five pillars put forward by the EU, namely: green transition and energy access; digital transformation; sustainable growth and jobs, in particular for young people and women; peace and governance; and migration and mobility. It will also highlight the need to strengthen the links between the two continents in order to tackle the most urgent global issues. The European Parliament champions this partnership and would like more ambitious goals to be adopted – but not at the cost of the fight for democratic values. This digest features the most recent EPRS publications relevant to this subject; other publications are available on the European Parliament's [Think Tank](#) pages.

Background notes

[Understanding the EU's approach to a new partnership with Africa](#)

Briefing by Eric Pichon, EPRS, February 2022

In February 2022, a summit between EU and African Heads of State and government will discuss ways to build a new and comprehensive partnership based on a proposal put forward by the EU. 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 efforts begun several years ago to forge a deeper relationship and strengthen partnership in multilateral forums. 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. The pandemic has reframed priorities and delayed the adoption of a common strategy. Measures to combat the current public health crisis and prevent future ones will give new impetus to partnerships in areas such as health, the fight against climate change and the promotion of digital transformation.

[Financing for Africa – The EU budget and beyond](#)

Briefing by Velina Lilyanova, graphics by Samy Chahri, EPRS, June 2021

The entry into force in January 2021 of the EU's new, restructured long-term budget – the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for the 2021-2027 period – coincided with efforts to reinvigorate and relaunch relations with Africa. Financial support is one of the key tools in the EU's external action, and, as before, it will also underpin future relations with Africa. Mapping the main EU financing instruments of relevance to Africa, including the funds that are outside the EU budget, this briefing also points out the main novelties in the new MFF that have an impact on financing for Africa, such as the incorporation of the European Development Fund within the EU budget and the merging of most previous instruments into a single one, the Global Europe Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – NDICI.

[New EU scheme of generalised preferences](#)

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, January 2022

On 21 September 2021, the Commission published its proposal for a new EU scheme of generalised preferences. The Commission considers that the current scheme has delivered on its objectives, and proposes some 'fine-

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tuning'. Taking on board proposals from civil society, but also from Parliament, the Commission proposes to extend negative conditionality to environmental and good governance conventions and, overall, to improve monitoring and stakeholder involvement. Civil society organisations and other stakeholders put forward more ambitious proposals, such as making the monitoring fully transparent and rewarding countries that fulfil jointly agreed benchmarks relating to GSP conventions with additional preferences.

[The European Peace Facility: A new tool in action](#)

'At a glance' paper by Bruno Bilquin, EPRS, February 2022

The European Peace Facility (EPF), an off-EU budget instrument, has been operational since 1 July 2021. Intended to replace two instruments previously used to finance operations with military implications, the Athena mechanism and the African Peace Facility, and to support the armies of its partner countries with infrastructure, training and equipment, including lethal weapons, the EPF has so far been used to fund operations in places as diverse as the western Balkans, the eastern neighbourhood, in particular Ukraine, and sub-Saharan Africa. As stated in the Strategic Compass process, the EU aims to strengthen its crisis management role, with the EPF supporting this process.

[Charting a course through stormy waters: The EU as a maritime security actor](#)

Briefing by Tania Lađici with Branislav Stanicek and Eric Pichon, EPRS, February 2021

The EU is a one-of-a-kind maritime actor, which brings both opportunities and responsibilities. Two of the EU's 17 missions and operations are naval military operations: EUNAVFOR Somalia and EUNAVFOR MED. EU Member States also participate in multinational maritime coalitions and in NATO's own maritime operation, Sea Guardian, patrolling the entire Mediterranean Sea. Following the guidelines provided by its maritime and global strategies, the EU is aiming to increase its capacity and reliability as a maritime security actor. One example is its coordinated maritime presences, launched in January 2021. Another is the EU's action to boost its maritime defence capabilities through various post-2016 initiatives that aim to incentivise collaborative projects. Finally, the EU has also enhanced its cooperation with NATO in ensuring maritime security in the transatlantic space, although political obstacles remain.

[The external dimension of the new pact on migration and asylum: A focus on prevention and readmission](#)

Briefing by Eric Pichon, graphics by Eulalia Claros, EPRS, April 2021

In September 2020 the European Commission proposed a new pact on migration and asylum. The proposed pact has an external aspect: it aims to reinforce international partnerships with a view to ensuring effective returns, combating migrant smuggling more effectively, and developing legal migration channels. In the context of migration, the objectives of the EU's external policy include helping third countries tackle the root causes of irregular migration or quests for asylum. The European Parliament often emphasises this point, while warning at the same time that security and migration management concerns should not result in funds being diverted from core EU development cooperation objectives. This is also a concern among academics and non-governmental organisations dealing with migration issues: several have pointed out that the Commission's proposals for the pact put a lesser emphasis on pathways to legal migration than on measures aimed at incentivising third countries to retain possible irregular migrants or to accept returns.

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

Briefing by Eric Pichon, EPRS, September 2021

After two years of negotiations, the text of a renewed partnership agreement between the EU and the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) states was initialled in April 2021 after a set of multi-level negotiations, slowed down by the pandemic, and difficulties in reaching agreement on sensitive issues, such as migration

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management and sexual and reproductive health and rights. The European Parliament insisted on maintaining the ACP-EU joint parliamentary assembly and was successful in this endeavour; in addition, three regional parliamentary assemblies will be created in the future institutional set-up of the partnership. The new agreement still needs to be signed by the parties, and further legal procedures must be completed before it can be provisionally applied or enter fully into force.

[New EU strategic priorities for the Sahel: Addressing regional challenges through better governance](#)

Briefing by Eric Pichon with Mathilde Betant-Rasmussen, map by Samy Chahri, EPRS, July 2021

Recent events have shown that the Sahel region remains highly politically unstable. This political fragility and the lack of government legitimacy have made responding to the Sahel's security and humanitarian issues all the more challenging. The continued threat posed by terrorist armed groups and rising intercommunal violence over land and resources have led to both internal and cross-border displacements in Sahel countries. Meanwhile, the inadequacy of governance mechanisms for managing this displacement, compounded by environmental degradation, resource scarcity and population growth, has created a severe humanitarian crisis. The new EU integrated strategy in the Sahel aims to strengthen action at the political level, focusing on governance mechanisms, human rights, and collaboration with civil society and local authorities, while maintaining security cooperation with states in the region.

[State of democracy in sub-Saharan Africa: Democratic progress at risk](#)

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, June 2021

The recent trends of democratic recession have not left sub-Saharan Africa untouched, but have affected individual countries differently. Some unexpected democratic transitions have taken place at the same time as overall democratic decline has set in. Two sets of reasons account for the fragility of democracies in sub-Saharan Africa. The first relates to low socio-economic development, conflict and insecurity; the second includes weak institutions, lack of judicial independence, manipulation of electoral laws and constitutional norms, and serious limitations of civil and political rights. In practice, authoritarian regimes have become skilled at using a façade of legality to legitimise their grip on power. The pandemic's impact on democratic and human rights norms has been significant. For the EU, issues of concern include the shrinking space for civil society, the need to broaden political participation for various groups, such as women and young people, and the impact of digital developments on democracy and human rights in societies that are still suffering from limited internet access and insufficient digital literacy.

[Jihadist networks in sub-Saharan Africa: Origins, patterns and responses](#)

Briefing by Branislav Stanicek with Mathilde Betant-Rasmussen, map by Samy Chahri, EPRS, September 2021

The rise of jihadist activity in sub-Saharan Africa cannot be attributed solely to the influence of jihadist ideology from the Middle East. A number of factors have contributed to the deterioration of security, among them poverty, corruption, local grievances, separatist movements, pre-existing intercommunal violence between herders and farmers over land rights (exacerbated by the consequences of climate change), weak state presence, and a lack of prospects for young people. The spike in violence attributed to jihadist groups and their ties to foreign movements has prompted international stakeholders, including the EU, to launch counterterrorism operations, also involving local actors. The European Parliament has condemned these terrorist groups on several occasions and supported EU military and civilian missions in the region. Nevertheless, the military approach that the international community has preferred up to now has not succeeded in addressing deeper community grievances and strengthening state presence.

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[Colonial-era cultural heritage in European museums](#)

'At a glance' paper by Magdalena Pasikowska-Schnass, September 2021

While Europeans access and enjoy their rich cultural heritage, making the most of the European Heritage Days every September, it is worth reflecting on what access people living in territories once dominated by Europe's colonial powers have to their cultural heritage. Colonial times saw the destruction of cultural property and removal of precious and symbolic items. Countries now going through the long decolonisation process have reached a point where they are exploring ways to recover their cultural property and heritage.

Country cases

[Egypt's foreign policy within a challenging regional context](#), briefing by B. Stanicek, EPRS, October 2021

[Political crisis in Guinea](#), 'at a glance' paper by I. Zamfir, EPRS, September 2021

[Security situation in Mozambique](#), 'at a glance' paper by I. Zamfir, EPRS, July 2021

[Mali: Yet another coup](#), 'at a glance' paper by E. Pichon, EPRS, June 2021

[New Ethiopian dam sparks controversy among Nile states](#), briefing by E. Pichon, EPRS, April 2021

[Sudan: A transition under pressure](#), briefing by E. Pichon with J. Karhilo, EPRS, December 2020

[The EU and multilateral conflict management: The case of the Central African Republic](#), briefing by E. Pichon with J. Karhilo, EPRS, June 2020

African Union countries compared with EU27 Member States in terms of risk

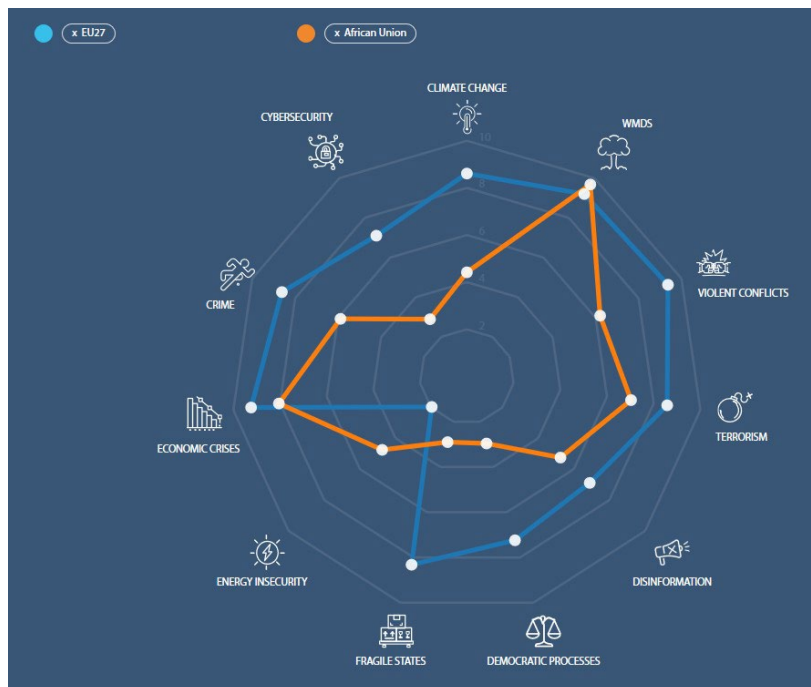


Image generated using the [EPRS Normandy peace index](#). The higher the score, the lower the risk.

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