The inclusion of civil society in the Africa-EU Partnership is of utmost importance.

In preparation of the African Union (AU)-EU Summit, and per the Communication ‘Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa’\(^1\), the Commission launched several initiatives to this end\(^2\).

The Commissioner for International Partnerships held a consultation within the Policy Forum on Development ahead of the Ministerial meeting in Kigali in October 2021. The fully stakeholder-led Africa-Europe Week\(^3\) produced joint recommendations which were discussed with African and European representatives on 17 February 2022. The final declaration of the Summit acknowledged these contributions and encouraged the relevant stakeholders to further engage in the Partnership.

The Commission will further strengthen the inclusion of civil society through a dialogue platform with civil society. The Commission will encourage EU and AU partners to better include civil society in the Partnership.

The post-Cotonou Agreement\(^4\) provides for a formal engagement mechanism with civil society in the new Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS)-EU Partnership. The Commission has initiated work to make this operational.

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\(^1\) JOIN(2020)4.
\(^2\) Examples: appointment of a Special Advisor on Youth; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) research project including surveys, interviews and desk reviews to establish best practises for a more permanent stakeholder engagement mechanism in the Africa-EU and EU-OACPS Partnerships; new phase of the AU-EU youth lab project; outreach events via the Africa Europe Foundation.
\(^3\) The Commissioner met with the civil society and local authorities steering groups to prepare this event on 1 February 2022 and again on 15 February 2022.
\(^4\) Article 95.