



THE EUROPEAN UNION AND AFRICA:

Towards a partnership
"between equals"?

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Purpose of the study

The study presents the evolution, changes and perspectives of the frameworks concerning the relationship between the European Union and Africa, particularly related with the trends and challenges of development and cooperation, as well as some strategic dynamics on both sides. The analysis focuses on the need to change the relationship's paradigm and to transition from a more "aid-centric" approach to a "more geopolitical" one, highlighting the specific conditions for the implementation of a fairer and more balanced partnership.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
ADB	African Development Bank
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
CBSD	Capacity Building in Support of Security and Development
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy (European Union)
COAFR	Africa Working Party in the Council (European Union)
CPR	Permanent Representatives Committee (African Union)
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy (European Union)
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DG INTPA	Directorate General for International Partnerships (European Commission)
DG NEAR	Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement (European Commission)
EC	European Commission
ECOSOCC	Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFSD	European Fund for Sustainable Development
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIP	External Investment Plan
EP	European Parliament
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreements
EPF	European Peace Facility
GNI	Gross National Income
IFI	International Financial Institution
JAES	Joint Africa-EU Strategy
LDC	Least Developed Countries
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework (European Union)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGDO	Non-Governmental Development Organizations
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OACPS	Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PALOP	Portuguese-speaking African Countries
PPEU	Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union
PSC	Peace and Security Council (African Union)
REC	Regional Economic Communities
REPER	Permanent Representation of Portugal to the European Union
RIP	Regional Indicative Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The EU's ambition to assert itself as a real **geopolitical player** towards its development partners has led to **strategic** changes – namely in the efforts to achieve greater coordination between sectoral policies and instruments, such as security, trade or migration – (Chapter 1.1), **institutional** developments – shown by the transition from DG Development Cooperation to DG International Partnerships, or the Team Europe approach – (Chapter 1.2), and advances in **financial instruments** – including the merge of external action instruments into the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (Chapter 1.3).

Africa has always been a central focus for EU development policy. The relationship between these two blocks has evolved over decades through different formal partnerships, strategies, and instruments, sometimes with weak coordination between them and/or overlapping natures. The **need to change the paradigm of EU-Africa relations** seems to be a consensual aspiration, with both parties (re)affirming the intention to build a more effective, balanced and equitable partnership. Despite the recurrent (and currently reinforced) narrative on an “equal partnership”, EU-Africa relations have been sharply asymmetric due to disparities of development levels, and thus in parties' capacities and resources (human, technical, financial).

EU's evolving approach towards a partnership with Africa has increasingly emphasised its strategic relevance and **mutual benefits**. This becomes evident in the wording of both the EU strategy for Africa from March 2020 (Chapter 2.1) and the new agreement between the EU and the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States, replacing the Cotonou Agreement in 2021 (Chapter 2.2). The weight of the historical legacy, very present in past mutual perceptions, is becoming diluted within a more pragmatic approach, even though some sensitivities persist. While the narrative on mutual benefits is not new, the concrete focus on a more **comprehensive political dialogue** on a wide range of issues of interest to both parties – present both in the new ACP-EU agreement and in the current process towards a new Africa-EU strategy – now provides a more strategic and realistic view on what is feasible to achieve. **Civil society**, as a crucial development actor, has been formally included in the past partnership frameworks and is recognised within

this more strategic approach. But its meaningful engagement has been challenged over time and will also depend on the objective conditions for the future partnerships' implementation (Chapter 2.4). On the African side, the interest of various external partners and the reinforcement of the African Union capacities is contributing to diversifying opportunities, leading to **an increase of African bargaining space and to greater ambition of African positions** – and even though some internal positions still have to be clarified, such as the goals of these external partnerships, as with the EU (Chapter 2.3).

The EU's progress towards a more geopolitical approach entails several risks for its relationship with Africa. **Poverty eradication, as the central goal of development policy, may become diluted** by other EU interests, such as economic and security. This trend is observed in the externalisation of EU internal priorities and the mobilisation of all policies to pursue those interests, as it seems to be happening with EU development cooperation – and therefore further compromising policy coherence for development. The current reinforcement of EU's rhetoric on **promoting (or protecting) the “European way of life” and spreading “European values”** in its external action may also bring a new layer of complexity into the continent-to-continent relations. In addition, the **view of Africa as a battleground for EU-China rivalry**, a trend evidenced in recent years, does not seem to be the most effective way to build a “partnership of equals”, since focusing on the EU's added-value and comparative advantage would probably be more attractive to its development partners.

A more balanced and equitable partnership requires certain pre-conditions (analysed in Chapter 3) and **it would presuppose the creation and reinforcement of joint decision mechanisms, both at the governance and financial management levels**. However, changes observed in some policy instruments and underlying financial mechanisms do not seem to follow this trend. The negotiation process for the EU multiannual financial framework was, in fact, a missed opportunity to safeguard the development effectiveness principles, under which ownership and mutual responsibility are fundamental pillars. The possible dilution of these principles in the future phase of the partnership is mainly due to, among others, the EDF budgetisation, the growing

prominence of trust funds and investment instruments and the new European Peace Facility, none of which relies on joint governance - all these changes seem to imply less participation and greater distance of the partner countries/organisations from the decisions that will impact them. If the EU wants to go beyond the donor-recipient dynamics, it should start by recognising the existing imbalances and correct them, namely on the programming and implementation phases of those instruments.

Many EU initiatives targeting Africa are still defined in a unilateral approach, with little or no consultation with African partners. One would have expected a more detailed debate on what kind of governance and strategy should be defined for the intercontinental partnership; but the elaboration of the EU strategy for Africa, in 2020, was conditioned by bureaucratic deadlines and led to **poor participation at European level or no pre-discussion with African partners**. With the increased African capacities and assertiveness, on the one hand, and the claimed intention of a more equitable partnership, on the other one, the EU needs to advance its way of working and dialoguing with Africa. This should be reflected on a greater effort to search for joint analysis and solutions, respect for the processes/schedules of other part(ies) and more inclusive processes that integrate various perspectives.

The recent EU-Africa partnership frameworks highlight the need to **reinforce multilateralism and a rules-based international system**, which both parties recognise to be increasingly under threat. This objective would be translated into more concerted positions, which until now have been rare. There is room to invest on common understandings between the blocks on specific issues, on a case-by-case basis; but this should not just mean alignment of African positions with the EU's leadership, but also EU's support of more African positions in the UN and other multilateral fora (namely on crucial issues for development, such as illicit financial flows, external debt, responses to the pandemic, etc.). In this context, **international frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement could be reinforced as preferential and concrete guides** for the EU-Africa relations, which is not currently the case.

Finally, the partnerships between EU and Africa should evolve towards **decisions more focused on, or oriented towards, European and African citizens**. On the one hand, while the Planet, Prosperity and Peace dimensions of sustainable development are evident in the new partnership frameworks, the 'People' priority seems to be somehow dissolved in its premisses. The way human development is framed in the proposed instruments of the partnership reflects

an instrumentalisation of basic social sectors, such as education and health, as mere channels for economic growth - a view that has been jeopardised by the pandemic. On the other hand, the devoted space for dialogue with citizens and civil society from both continents has been scarce and inadequate, hampering the possibility of safeguarding a participative and inclusive discussion about the real needs and possible solutions to development challenges. The role of civil society in the partnership is still marked by some lack of trust, but the renewed alliances between the EU and Africa bring **key opportunities for creating more effective consultation and dialogue mechanisms with civil society**.

Portugal has been playing a meaningful and constructive role in EU-Africa relations, with several milestones carried out under (or driven by) Portuguese Presidencies of the EU Council. Portugal has also acted as an honest broker on several occasions in support of interests and needs of less developed and vulnerable countries on multilateral fora. However, maintaining and capitalising on this perspective requires, *inter alia*, a strong, more effective and coherent development policy. Portugal can seize the opportunity to promote a paradigm shift towards a more inclusive, fair, equitable and sustainable relationship with Africa, by using the possible means and EU decision-making arenas (as further detailed in the Recommendations), to advocate (i) that EU-Africa relations evolves towards reinforced mutual cooperation, common benefits, mutual responsibility, less asymmetry and greater inclusiveness, and (ii) that development policies preserve their integrity, space of action and main goals.



INTRODUCTION

In the European Union (EU), the term "partnership" has been used in reference to EU Africa relations since the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Nevertheless, it was necessary to wait until 2000 for the first summit between the two parties and for the creation of a new cooperation agreement with the ACP States (African, Caribbean and Pacific) to usher in a new phase of strengthening a more strategic, political and comprehensive dialogue. Over the past twenty years, worldwide geopolitical developments and shifts in balances of power, the globalisation of development challenges and the evolution of political, economic and social dynamics on both continents have influenced the relationship, priorities, interests and perceptions of the two parties in multiple ways.

The European Commission has declared **2020 as the year of EU-Africa relations**, presented as a key period for restoring the partnership, specifically with the negotiation of a new EU ACP agreement, the anticipated 6th intercontinental summit and the goal of a new joint strategy.

The **COVID-19 pandemic** has not only delayed some ongoing processes, but also recalled the aspects to be improved and brought new challenges to the relationship. The need for economic recovery, the EU's leadership difficulties within the European context in the face of enormous internal challenges, and the renewed focus on other external relationships and priorities may result in Africa's lower preponderance in political agendas. On the African side, strengthening the vision for the continent's development and increasing the importance of other external partners coexist with the fact that Europe is still the main partner in most aspects, such as foreign direct investment, trade, official development aid and, of course, being an essential partner in the face of

the multiple crises caused by the pandemic. All this in a general context where the pressure on development aid budgets and the (re)focusing of donors on their internal priorities coincides with an increase in humanitarian and development needs and the regression in many of the development gains achieved over the past few decades.

On the other hand, the pandemic has reinforced the fact that **the lack of access to public goods** – in particular health, but also sanitation and education, or the management of natural resources and the preservation of the environment – is not only an existential threat, but a shared global responsibility. The need to accelerate efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the interdependence of global challenges (for some of which the EU has expressed strong commitments and leadership intentions) also potentially act as drivers in EU-Africa relations.

Currently, there is a relative **consensus of the need to change the paradigm of the relationship**, with both parties (re)affirming their intention to implement a more effective, equitable, and strategic partnership that goes beyond a donor beneficiary logic to focus on common and shared interests. On the other hand, the deepening of the partnership requires going beyond governmental processes, advancing the **dialogue and involvement of multiple actors, particularly civil society**,¹ and making the partnership work for the people.

The Portuguese Presidency of the EU Council has included the relationship with the African continent as one of the main priorities, this dimension being often referred to as an added value of Portuguese foreign policy and development cooperation, notably in acting within the European and multilateral framework. The development

¹ This report uses the definition of civil society corresponding to the Third Sector. The concept of non state actors corresponds to a broader vision that includes other players such as the private sector.

of a study that **enables the understanding of the evolution, changes and perspectives of the relationship between the EU and the African continent, particularly in view of the trends and challenges of development and cooperation**, thus becomes particularly relevant in the current context. The study aims to be a contribution, both to decision makers in defining national and European policies, as well as to the information and reflection of the Portuguese Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs).

Based on the transition from a more "aid" centric approach to a "more geopolitical" approach, the study is structured in **three parts**. The first chapter addresses recent changes in the European Union's development policy, at the strategic and priority level, in terms of institutional dynamics and financial instruments. Developments in EU Africa relations are analysed in the second chapter, including the continental dialogue and new ACP EU agreement, as well as the involvement of civil society in the partnership. The third part focuses on the critical

analysis of the partnership, in particular the main factors that hinder it and the existing opportunities, including Portugal's role in that context. Recommendations are outlined to make the partnership more strategic, inclusive and effective in the future.

The preparation of the study resulted from an extensive analysis of relevant documentation and from interviews with key actors. This publication is prepared under the project: *Towards an Open, Fair and Sustainable Europe in the World*, for which the Portuguese NGDO Platform is responsible during the Portuguese Presidency of the EU Council (January to June 2021). The project is co-financed by the European Commission and the Camões Institute for Cooperation and Language.

There is a relative consensus of the need to change the paradigm of the relationship [EU-Africa]...

The European development cooperation policy has evolved over time, with changes resulting both from the mutable nature of the EU, as well as from the vicissitudes and challenges characteristic of the sector itself. This chapter frames the general evolution of this European policy, describing for this purpose the changes observed in terms of strategy, institutional architecture and financial instruments, with particular emphasis on those that have an impact on the relationship with Africa.



1. A CHANGING EU DEVELOPMENT POLICY

from aid to geopolitics?



Press Conference of Commissioner for International Partnerships on the Strategy for Africa © European Commission, March 2020.

1.1. Strategy and priorities

The evolution of European development cooperation policy has been influenced both by major changes in the geopolitical and global development landscape and by internal changes in the EU that have contributed to the reflection on its role as a global actor and its aspirations for external action². Globally, the impact and complexification of challenges – from climate change to inequalities, from health to food security, from peace and security to human rights – have led to a new understanding of the various dimensions of development (economic, social, environmental, human, cultural, etc.), of what are global common goods and of the need for more concerted and larger scale responses.

The adoption of the Paris Agreement (on climate change) and the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, both in 2015, is an expression of this globalisation of development challenges and represents an **important paradigm shift**, in which development is expressed as a universal responsibility, shared by everyone, everywhere, surpassing the traditional blanket North South and donor beneficiary relationship. The central issue is no longer only poverty reduction, or that developing countries reach the levels of progress of developed countries but it

² The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was established in 1993 as one of the EU's institutional pillars, with the aim of preserving peace, strengthening international security, promoting international cooperation, developing and consolidating democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The CFSP and its decision-making processes were developed with the subsequent EU Treaties, eventually being abolished by the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, together with the pillar system.

is also to find ways for both groups to define appropriate paths adapted to the reality of each one ("common but differentiated responsibilities"³), for a development that is more inclusive and compatible with the limits of the planet (Ferreira, Faria and Cardoso, 2015). Neither the Paris Agreement nor the 2030 Agenda, however, omit highlighting the need for more developed countries to play a major role in supporting the poorest and most vulnerable countries, to which particular attention should be given in the policies pursued.

In the 2030 Agenda, the agendas regarding environmental policy (Rio Summit in 1992 and Rio+20 in 2012) and global development (Millennium Agenda in 2000) are brought together in a vision that reflects the multifaceted challenges facing societies and which aims to be as comprehensive and integrated as possible between the various dimensions of development, in a constant and complex interrelationship between internal and external policy dimensions. This means that each actor – an entity such as the European Union, European countries or other regions, or local actors – implements the 2030 Agenda at three levels: the level of their national or internal policies (in the various sectors), the level of external impacts of their internal policies (impacts on other countries and globally) and the level of their external policies (including, e.g. development cooperation). The principle of "leaving no one behind" expresses a focus on the poorest and most vulnerable groups, which manifests itself, specifically, in "zero objectives" (eradication of poverty and hunger, for example) and which has implications for how public policies should be defined and implemented.

In this context, the diversification of challenges, agendas and their scope also carries the **risk of dilution of responsibilities**, since a 2030 Agenda that is applied universally, in all countries and places, can, in practice, contribute to a greater focus of the most developed countries and regions (notably in Europe) on their own development challenges and on national or European policies at home, "leaving behind" many of the sectors of the world's poorest and most vulnerable and further neglecting the essential role of development cooperation in

the overall formulation of public policies. This is enhanced, in Europe and in the world, by trends such as the degradation of liberal democracies, the growth of nationalist and protectionist positions and policies, the restriction of the space of action of civil society and others, in contradiction and coexistence with the increased need for international solidarity and common accountability – as, in fact, the responses to the pandemic have shown.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated some of these trends and revealed the size of others. With the United Nations Security Council stalled, a reform of the United Nations that has dragged on for decades and many of the sectoral structures – such as the World Trade Organization and the World Health Organization – becoming arenas for the power struggle between countries, multilateralism has proved to be in crisis and global governance is unsuited, in many ways, to current challenges. On the other hand, the strengthening of this multilateralism and the reform of global governance have been assumed as the only way to respond to global challenges, in the context of a pandemic, with the EU playing an essential role. The "Borrell doctrine", as it is known, has defined a vision for EU foreign policy, including revitalising multilateralism and the EU taking responsibility (and interest) in mobilising the richest countries to support the poorest and most vulnerable in response to the current crisis (Borrell, 2020). This focus on the EU's more assertive contribution to strengthening multilateralism is becoming increasingly mainstream in strategic instruments at an external level, both with the formulation of a European strategy for "inclusive and rules based multilateralism" (proposed in February 2021)⁴, which recognises the need for a **new generation of partnerships, both in instruments of relationship with partner regions and countries**, including with Africa (being very present both in the EC/EEAS Strategy for Africa and in the new ACP-EU cooperation policy agreement) (see chapter 2.1 and 2.2).

³ The principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" had already been established in the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, at the Earth Summit (1992 in Rio de Janeiro), according to which cooperation and participation of countries must be carried out according to their respective capacities and socio-economic conditions.

⁴ Also mentioned is the search for closer cooperation with regional groups such as the African Union and the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States to respond to common challenges and work together at an international level. More information at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_622

The change of powers in the international system and the ongoing geostrategic and geoeconomic transformation – with the trend of transition from the G7's central axis of power to the G20 and, in general, from the West to the East – is closely tied to the blurring of the North-South dichotomy, the change in the geography of poverty in the world⁵ and the wide diversity of levels, processes and development hubs⁶. In this context, it is natural for the EU to be confronted with the need to change the way it responds to these challenges, in particular in order to **try to match, at the level of power and influence at the political level, its projection as a humanitarian actor and its development⁷, trade and investment⁸ at the global level.** On the other hand, internally, the succession of financial, economic and political crises in the EU has revealed deep divisions between European countries, which are also expressed in the management of external or international issues, including development cooperation policy.⁹

Thus, there is an attempt on the one hand to **make external action politically more relevant and strategic** (Borrell, 2020) and, on the other, to **assume the projection of "European values"** – to the extent that they are seen as a distinctive factor vis-à-vis other actors and models of development at the international level – as the central axis of this action. On the EU's 2019-2024 strategic agenda, one of the five objectives is precisely to "promote Europe's interests and values in the world",

giving a clearer priority to European economic, political and security interests and mobilising all policies to this end (EU, 2019). It also states that the EU will promote "its own unique model of cooperation, serving as inspiration to others" and that it is a "driving force of multilateralism and a rules-based world international order, ensuring openness, fairness and necessary reforms"¹⁰. In this sense, it is recognised that the EU needs to be more assertive and effective, including in its external relations and partnerships.

The current European Commission, led by Ursula von der Leyen, has repeatedly taken the position since September 2019 that it is intended to be a "**Geopolitical Commission**", i.e. more focused on the intersection of geographical factors and power relations at the international level – this being one of the top three internal priorities listed by the President of the Commission. The other two priorities are Europe's adaptation to the digital age and the fight against climate change, through the European Green Deal, adopted in 2019 and currently being used across a broad set of policies.¹¹ These are, of course, **European priorities that are projected in international partnerships**, including with Africa.¹²

The appointment of Jutta Urpilainen as Commissioner for International Partnerships (a portfolio formerly known as "Development and International Cooperation") also reveals a more political and strategic perspective of

⁵ Pockets of poverty and very relevant inequalities persist in all countries and latitudes, which have been increasing both within and between countries and have been further exacerbated by the pandemic. The reduction of extreme poverty in the world between 1990 and 2015 was due, in particular, to developments in middle income countries in Asia, while a significant number of countries (particularly low income African countries) continue to have high poverty rates. In addition, poverty is also increasingly concentrated in countries in a state of conflict and/or fragility (according to the OECD, more than 76% of people in extreme poverty – earning less than USD 1.90/day, according to the internationally used classification – live in fragile countries).

⁶ The group of "developing countries" is increasingly heterogeneous and differentiated, with the poorest and most vulnerable countries increasingly struggling to make themselves heard within this group, compared to other developing countries with ambitions for regional and even global projection. The main forum for the articulation of this vast group is the G77, a group at the United Nations that currently brings together 134 developing countries to promote negotiating capabilities and common interests.

⁷ The EU, as a whole, i.e. the European institutions and its member states, account for around 36% of humanitarian aid in the world and more than 50% of all Official Development Assistance (ODA) – 2019 data. For more information on classification criteria and ODA data, see <https://oe.cd/official-development-assistance>.

⁸ The EU, as a whole, is still the main global trading bloc (in goods and services) and the main trading partner of approximately eighty countries in the world; it is also the world's first actor in international investment flows (outflow and inflow).

⁹ Development cooperation is a *shared competence*, i.e. both the EU and Member States can legislate on these matters, with the EU taking precedence: States can only adopt acts when the EU has not yet done so or has deliberately decided not to. The shared jurisdictions contrast with exclusive jurisdictions, which give the EU the right to be the only one to be able to legislate – examples being the common trade policy or customs union – and support jurisdiction, whereby the EU can only intervene to advise or supplement Member States on issues such as health and education.

¹⁰ The successful integration of the European model is referred to as inspiration for other integration efforts in different regions of the world, such as Mercosur, ASEAN or even the African Union.

¹¹ More information at https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

¹² See, for example, the President of the European Commission's speech at the joint press conference with the President of the African Union Commission on 7 December 2019, available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_19_6697

international cooperation (Teevan and Sherriff, 2019). This Commissioner's¹³ mission letter stresses that, by 2024, the priority is to ensure that the European development model is strategic and effective and contributes to the EU's broader political priorities (EC, 2019).

The purpose of EU development policy is established under the Treaties: Article 208 of the Treaty of Lisbon, which remains unchanged, states that its **central objective is the reduction and, in the long term, the eradication of poverty**, being conducted in accordance with the principles and objectives of the Union's external action (EU, 2009). Also in Article 21, regarding EU's external action, it states that one of the objectives of this external action is "to support sustainable development in the economic, social and environmental plans of developing countries, with the main objective of eradicating poverty" (EU, 2009). However, neither poverty nor related issues, such as inequalities, are mentioned in the Commissioner's mission letter. The focus is on **building "sustainable partnerships"**, referring, in particular, to the goal of taking advantage of the political, economic and investment opportunities that Africa provides. A clear guideline is also given to support comprehensive partnerships with countries of origin and transit of migration flows, bringing together all EU instruments and influence and explaining that it should "be ready to adapt bilateral funding to achieve our migration management objectives" (EC, 2019).¹⁴ Strangely, human rights – an area where EU leadership is traditionally valued – are not mentioned in any of the mission letters of Commissioners who have greater responsibility for external action.

The need for **greater interconnection and coordination between the various areas of EU external action** has been an increasingly present factor in objectives and policies, including in development cooperation itself. In 2016, the **Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy** set out the vision and priorities for all areas of the Union's external action in an increasingly variable context of global challenges and risks (EU,

2016). Strongly marked by a perception of enormous threats to Europe – particularly terrorism, energy security and migration – and by claiming that the European project is being called into question, the strategy was to contribute to a stronger, more credible and cohesive Union, "willing and able to make a difference, in a positive way, in the world", either by projecting European values and interests (which are presented as inseparable from each other), or by promoting a world order based on multilateralism and defined by rules. In this context, it is clearly stated that **development cooperation policy should become more flexible and aligned with the EU's strategic priorities** and its security and foreign policy interests (EU, 2016). The principle of **co-responsibility in external partnerships** is also highlighted.¹⁵

The **European Consensus on Development**, which is the framework document for European development policy aligned with the 2030 Agenda, established, in 2017, that development cooperation should be used as part of a whole range of policies and instruments to prevent, manage and help resolve conflicts and crises, meet humanitarian needs and build lasting peace and good governance" and that, to this end, the EU and the Member States will promote an integrated approach. It is safeguarded, however, that "the first priority of development cooperation remains the eradication of poverty and efforts will not be diverted from this objective" (EU, 2017). Indeed, the European Parliament itself has, in recent years, repeatedly and increasingly warned of the danger of subordination and instrumentalization of development aid for other purposes, in particular to ensure European security or to manage migration.

The need for more integrated and coordinated responses has led the EU to look for new ways to maximise the effectiveness of its external action. In strategic terms, this has contributed to the adoption of more comprehensive approaches, bringing together various instruments and actors, from the military and security areas to humanitarian aid and development, in order to better respond

¹³ The "mission letter" is a document which the President of the EC sends to the new Commissioners specifying what is expected of their work as members of the Commission and the specific objectives they are to be held accountable for during their term of office.

¹⁴ Migration issues are managed by the Commissioner for the "Promotion of Our European Way of Life" (the name being changed from "Protection" to "Promotion" after several actors, including the European Parliament, expressed concern and disagreement).

¹⁵ "The EU will be a responsible global player – but responsibility must be shared. Responsibility is inseparable from the revitalisation of our external partnerships. In pursuit of our objectives, we will keep in touch with states, regional bodies and international organisations. We will work with key partners and regional countries and groupings that share the same convictions. We will deepen our partnerships with civil society and the private sector as key actors in a networked world" (EU, 2016).

to the complex and multidimensional challenges of these contexts¹⁶. These are mainly focused on neighbourhood policy and in sub-Saharan African regions with particular relevance to security: **the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Guinea**.¹⁷ It should be noted, however, that the European project has a low level of regional integration in terms of foreign policy (unlike economic and monetary integration), and that the difficulty of linking the community institutions and 27 Member States in this area should always be taken into account, where differences in action are frequent and the ability to speak with one voice or act in a more unified manner is quite difficult to achieve, despite having improved with institutional and political developments (such as the creation of the European External Action Service or the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, also Vice-President of the EC).

With increasing globalisation and interdependence, **the distinction between the internal and external dimensions has eased**, with global challenges having a decisive role in the definition of national and European policies, and these having increasing impacts and external repercussions (spillover effects), in a direct and indirect way.

This means that the most diverse sectoral policies – whether on trade, security and defence, agriculture and fisheries, migration or the fight against climate change – have crucial impacts, positive or negative, on global development and the development prospects of low income, weaker and more vulnerable countries, which are just as important or more so than development cooperation. In fact, there will be little value in development aid (in quantity and quality) if there is not a greater reconciliation of

interests from other areas and sectoral policies (sometimes divergent) and if imbalances of power, governance systems and operating rules on such fundamental issues as trade arrangements, the global agri-food system or others are not properly addressed. This is, in fact, recognised in the principles of **Policy Coherence for Development (PCD)**, according to which the policies defined should not undermine development efforts and poverty reduction objectives, but rather (ideally) contribute to strengthening them. PCD is considered an essential condition for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹⁸ and has constituted a political commitment and legal obligation in the European Union and its Member States since 1992, strengthened in the Treaty of Lisbon (Article 208)¹⁹ and reiterated in strategic documents such as the European Consensus for Development (2017)²⁰. However, despite this formal recognition, little has evolved in effective monitoring of this coherence, and the harmful effects of some European policies in developing countries continue to be ignored, given the prioritisation of other interests and policies – considered more urgent or relevant to the EU – to the detriment of development policies (see chapter 3).²¹

In fact, it seems clear [there is] a movement in the opposite direction of the PCD, that is, it is the development cooperation policy that must contribute to the pursuit of the EU's other interests. In other words, **priorities and policies considered strategic for the EU progressively encroach on the development policy area** – where **migration is the most visible example**, as it is present in all strategy papers and cooperation agreements with Africa at a national, regional and continental level²². The rhetoric of addressing the root causes of conflicts

¹⁶ At the political and strategic level, the "EU's comprehensive approach to crises and external conflicts", adopted in 2014, is a milestone in the process of interconnection between various approaches and instruments. The vision is to promote a more holistic, "Europeanised", joint and comprehensive approach in responding to crises external to European territory, "to help countries get back on track for long-term sustainable development". In 2016, the European Union's comprehensive strategy for foreign and security policy established vision and priorities for all areas of the Union's external action in an increasingly variable context of global challenges and risks.

¹⁷ Regional Action Plan for the Sahel 2015-2020, Regional Action Plan for the Horn of Africa 2015-2020, and EU Action Plan for the Gulf of Guinea 2015-2020, all arising from previously approved Strategies. It should also be noted that most of the missions/operations of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy are located on the African continent (notably in Mali, Niger, Central African Republic, Somalia).

¹⁸ It is integrated as a key systemic issue to revitalise the global partnership for development (in SDG 17), including a specific target on its increase (target 17.14).

¹⁹ Maastricht Treaty, 1992, Article 130u; Treaty of Lisbon, 2009, Article 208 (on Development Cooperation), paragraph 2: "The main objective of the Union's policy in this area is to reduce and, in the long term, eradicate poverty. In implementing policies that may affect developing countries, the Union takes into account the objectives of development cooperation".

²⁰ Chapter 1.2, paragraphs 10 to 12, and Chapter 4.2, paragraphs 108 to 112. Available at <https://bit.ly/328k7Tz>

²¹ Several analyses of European policy inconsistencies in sectors key to global development – security, climate change, food security, migration, trade and finance – may be found at www.fecongnd.org/coerencia/estudos/

²² In 2015, the increase in the number of migrants and refugees arriving at the EU's external borders, particularly due to violent conflicts (such as those in Syria), but also fleeing hunger and precarious economic conditions (especially from African countries) led to major changes in the EU's external action at various levels and also revealed deep divisions between Member States.

and migration through development cooperation is also increasingly present in EU strategies (such as the 2015 European Agenda on Migration), as well as in signed agreements, in instruments and programmes with partner countries and regions, particularly in Africa. Peace/security and migration become the main lenses through which Europe looks to the south and, in this context, the preservation of the space and objectives of development aid becomes more difficult (even if necessary).

In this context, the visions of designing a more geopolitical EU have translated into an **increased political dialogue with the regions and partner countries in development cooperation**. This is particularly evident in the case of Africa, where only since 2000 has there been a relatively regular and comprehensive political dialogue at the highest level. The signing of a Joint Africa-EU Strategy in 2007, the formulation of the EU Strategy for Africa (in March 2020) and the political agreement for a new EU-ACP relationship framework (in December 2020) are evidence of this path to strengthening the more strategic character of partnerships **and emphasising "mutual benefits"** far beyond development aid (see chapters 2.1. and 2.2).

Development cooperation policy is also changing to **match the diversification of development financing sources** in order to be able to respond to the huge needs and gaps in this area, which are predictably accentuated by the pandemic²³. This trend, already initiated in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011), has been consolidated since the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015), globally defining a diversified framework – of flows, instruments, actors – for aligning financial policies and resources with economic, social and environmental priorities that lead to more inclusive and sustainable development, thereby supporting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015a).

In this sense, on the one hand, emphasis is on the need to increase the **mobilisation of internal resources** for the development of countries, with development cooperation playing an important role in supporting this goal

(particularly at a technical level). On the other hand, the **diversification of the actors** involved is highlighted in the framework of an approach that attaches increasing importance to the role of the private sector in development (notably through the creation of wealth, employment and investment), including the goal of development cooperation. This has inevitably been reflected in European policies and instruments.

Regarding Official Development Assistance (ODA), this means that, whilst not losing its enormous relevance to a number of countries and their development processes, it is also increasingly used as leverage for other development financing funds. The contribution of each actor to global development far exceeds ODA and, to that extent, should be better accounted for and assessed (as is being discussed within the Framework of the OECD and the United Nations). However, this complexification of resources and actors also raises new questions about **compliance with the principles of development effectiveness** (see chapters 1.3 and 3). These principles have been developed in international frameworks and implemented in European cooperation policies, considered essential to ensure a positive impact on development processes and which should be the basis for action of all actors in this area.²⁴

Developments in EU policies coincide with the above-mentioned trends. Thus, since the 2011 "Agenda for Change" (EC, 2011), there has been a goal of **increased differentiation** among countries receiving aid, trying to increase the **concentration** of aid in countries with higher needs, the poorer and more vulnerable (at least formally and rhetorically). This is while, at the same time, strategies and instruments for promoting development in partner countries and regions are being expanded, with the perspective of combining various actors and sources of funding (public and private). The EU External Investment Plan (EIP), in effect since 2017, is an example of this trend, with the aim of attracting and encouraging private investors to contribute towards the sustainable development of EU partner countries, by promoting the

²³ The pandemic has increased the risk of collapse of the development financing system of the poorest countries, as the expected external/international financing (with the decrease in FDI and remittances of emigrants) will further undermine the prospects for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and make it difficult to fill funding gaps (Ferreira, 2021). According to the [OECD](#), the annual funding gap for the achievement of the SDGs in developing countries may have increased from USD 2.5 trillion to about USD 4.2 trillion due to the pandemic.

²⁴ Enshrined in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011), the principles are based on ownership (developing countries lead and define their priorities and development models under which development partners should align), a focus on results (development policy investments and efforts should focus on positive and sustainable impact), inclusive partnerships (development depends on the participation of all actors, with a different and complementary role), and on transparency and mutual responsibility (countries and development partners are jointly responsible for ensuring such accountability). Learn more about the global partnership at <https://www.effectivecooperation.org/>.

improvement of the business environment and removing barriers to investment, in particular in terms of risk (see instruments in Chapter 1.3). In the specific case of Africa, the proclamation of the Africa–Europe Alliance for sustainable investment and employment in 2018 (EC, 2018a)²⁵ and the fact that the new European Commissioners for International Partnerships and Trade have highlighted the importance of strengthening trade and investment in Africa shows **how the issue of leveraging public resources to attract private investment has become central** to the EC's thinking on the African continent. This is also combined with a more general issue, that is, the growing intention to mainstream the **European Green Deal** in all internal and external policies, naturally reflecting the relationship with Africa.

In summary, all this points to a greater perception, on the European side, of the **value of a more strategic relationship with Africa**, whether as a partner in multilateralism, as a growing market for European trade and investment, or, in general, as a way to fulfil the announced purpose of solidifying the EU as a geopolitical actor with real strategic influence. This is the case in a context where the EU sees its political and economic importance on the African continent diminishing, both in real terms, with the increasing importance of other actors, and in terms of perceptions, particularly on the African side (see Chapter 2.3).

This **renewed interest in Africa is also common to several European countries**. Although the majority of EU Member States are far from Africa in their main foreign policy priorities (especially after the enlargement of the EU), several countries have demonstrated, in recent years, a greater focus on this relationship, including the Marshall Plan of Germany with Africa (2017), Global Ireland: Ireland's Strategy for Africa to 2025, the strategies of Finland and Italy for Africa (in preparation), the Spanish Foreign Policy III for Africa, Malta's first strategy for growth and partnership with Africa (2019), Hungary's first strategy for Africa (2019) and Estonia's first strategy for Africa. These strategic frameworks aim to build partnerships based on the combination of a range of policies, approaches and instruments, at the level of political dialogue, trade, investment and development cooperation.

The distinction between the internal and external dimensions has eased and EU's strategic priorities progressively occupy the space of development policy

²⁵ Launched by the then President of the EC, Jean-Claude Juncker, in his State of the Union address in 2018.

1.2. Institutional level

The evolution of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), in general, and of its development cooperation, in particular, have also resulted in multiple institutional reforms. With the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007 and its entry into effect in 2009, the EU External Action Service now has an institutional structure within the scope of shared jurisdiction. By eliminating the old European organisation of pillars, the main innovations for **European foreign policy introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon** thus include:

- The position of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who also assumes the duties of President of the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), a development also created by the Treaty of Lisbon, and Vice-President of the European Commission, having the current title of VP/HR;
- The permanent position of President of the European Council;²⁶
- The European External Action Service (EEAS).

Motivated by a bit of competitive spirit or simply by the need for further institutional coordination, these new configurations resulted from a compromise between the different positions of the European Commission (EC) and the Council of the EU on foreign policy. The institutional complementarity created by this reform has also resulted in the day-to-day coordination carried out within the Framework of the EEAS, which represents the EU diplomatic service. As a 'functionally autonomous Union body'²⁷, its establishment is the result of the merger of departments of the Council and the Directorate-General of the EC dedicated to External Relations, the so-called DG RELEX. From early on there was some concern that this new service would result in a possible duplication of

efforts with the European Commission, a concern that has been mitigated by the various coordination efforts.

Based in Brussels and divided between thematic and geographical units, the EEAS is represented in practically the entire world in a network of around 140 EU delegations²⁸, which can be equated with Embassies. EU delegations are responsible for European programming in partner countries, as well as for political dialogue and sectoral policies with their national and local authorities. In addition to greater political power, given the possibility of representing the entire EU²⁹, delegations have also had increased responsibilities in allocating and managing European development funds. The structure of these entities thus tends to be broken down between political sections and for development cooperation.

The changes brought about by the Treaty of Lisbon inevitably had an impact on the very **structure of the European Commission**, which remains a key funder, in addition to being responsible for coordination, mediation and policy making. The way this institution is organised for development cooperation has evolved over time, and it is interesting to map these developments so as to categorise the trends of European policy.

At the beginning of the millennium, in 2001, the EC divided its powers between the EuropeAid Cooperation Service, responsible for implementing development cooperation policies, and the Directorate General for Development and Relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries³⁰ (DG DEV), units that were merged into one in 2011, EuropeAid. In this way, both the relationship with all EC partner countries and the formulation and implementation of this policy have come under the aegis of a single section of the EC.

After changing its name again in 2015, becoming DG DEVCO, the composition of this Directorate-General itself increasingly reflected the political priorities in its structure. Always consisting of geographical and thematic units, the latter have incorporated under their

²⁶ Not to be confused with the Council of the EU, the former is composed of Heads of State, while the second represents the Member States and has legislative and budgetary powers.

²⁷ Official Journal of the European Union, 2010, Article 1. "[Council Decision of 26 July 2010 establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service](#)".

²⁸ Like Embassies, EU delegations are present not only in partner countries, but also in international regions and organisations with which the EU has structured relations. The EU delegation to the African Union was established in 2008.

²⁹ Prior to the Lisbon Treaty, this role was the responsibility of the Embassy of the Member State holding the Presidency of the EU Council.

³⁰ More information about this relationship in chapter 2.2.

jurisdiction new themes such as the private sector and foundations, or innovative financial instruments, which have been gaining increasing prevalence within the scope of this policy (see chapter 1.3).

At the beginning of 2021, this Directorate-General again changed its designation to **International Partnerships (DG INTPA)**, a change symptomatic of the EU's ambition to abandon the donor-beneficiary dichotomy in favour of a "partnership between equals" with partner countries, or even a possible dilution of development cooperation in the context of foreign policy.³¹ In addition to the change in terminology, the structure of this Directorate for cooperation has undergone changes (Table 1): on the one hand, the

geographical sections become the first represented in the organisation chart, which demonstrates the EC's interest in creating a greater focus on its localised relations to the detriment of sectoral cooperation (more details in Chapter 1.3); on the other hand, the different thematic sections are now organised **around the major European priorities** announced by the new executive body (including, specifically, the green deal or the digital agenda) while previously they reflected the dimensions of the 2030 Agenda: People, Planet, Prosperity and Peace.

TABLE 1
Evolution of the organisation of DG DEVCO to DG INTPA

	DG DEVCO (2015 – 2020)	DG INTPA (2021 -)
DIRECTORATE A	Policy for International Cooperation and Development	Africa
DIRECTORATE B	People and Peace	Middle East, Asia and Pacific
DIRECTORATE C	Planet and Prosperity	Latin America and the Caribbean; Relations with Overseas Countries and Territories
DIRECTORATE D	EU-Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa relations	Policy and Coordination for Sustainable Development
DIRECTORATE E	West and Central Africa	Sustainable Finance, Investment and Jobs: an Economy that works for the People
DIRECTORATE F	Asia, Central Asia, Middle East/Gulf and Pacific	Green Deal, Digital Agenda
DIRECTORATE G	Latin America and the Caribbean	Human Development, Migration, Governance and Peace

Source: Drawn up by the authors, based on the EC website.

³¹ According to some interviews, as well as the opinion article "[Brexit and development cooperation: A major connection problem](#)", Andrew Sherriff, ECDPM, 11.01.2021.

It should be noted that the DG INTPA, or the former DG DEVCO, is not the only Directorate dedicated to external relations. The relationship with partner countries located in the so-called 'EU Neighbourhood', including for example North Africa, has always been managed by another Directorate-General, the European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). The Middle East, however, is an area that is simultaneously under the aegis of both DG INTPA and DG NEAR, while on the other hand, the African continent is actually divided between DG INTPA (Sub-Saharan Africa) and DG NEAR (North Africa)³². Also relevant to development cooperation are the Directorate-General for Trade and the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, formerly known as DG for Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO).³³

The EEAS and the EC have a complementary role in the strategic and programmatic decisions of European cooperation, where the organisation of work is based on a legal decision dating to 2012³⁴. The translation of political priorities into programmatic decisions is thus the responsibility of these two institutions, upon approval of the Member States. EU delegations are then responsible for designing the concrete action, which is still subject to quality control by the EC and its approval. Opening the tender process, contractualisation, monitoring and evaluation is then left to the EU delegations or the EC, depending on the nature of the decision.

Through a set of procedures called "comitology", EU Member States have the right to react to financing decisions for cooperation³⁵. In addition to their committees structured specifically around European Development Instruments, countries are also organised into specialised working parties, known as "preparatory bodies", with various groups linked to the theme of cooperation, whether directly or indirectly (groups to note in **Figure 1**). In addition, the Council may set up ad hoc committees with a specific objective and limited duration – as is the case, for example, of the Ad Hoc Group for the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), the new instrument for European cooperation (see chapter 1.3).

³² DG INTPA's division addressing Africa (Sub-Saharan) also encompasses strategic partnerships with Africa and the ACP.

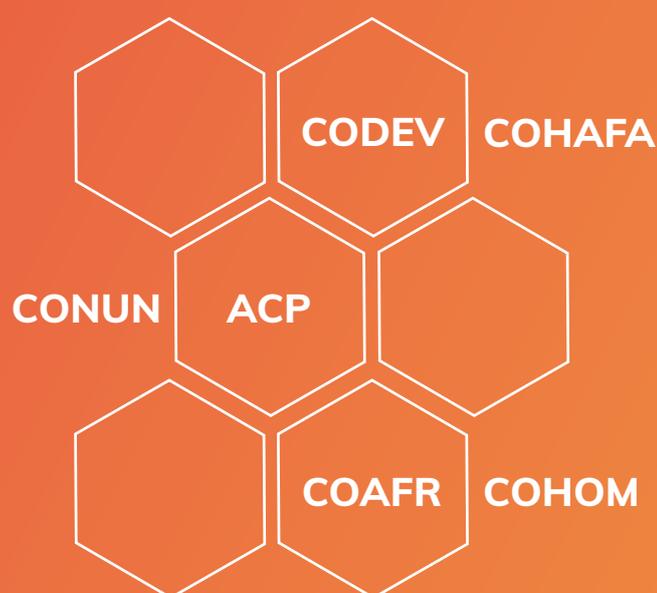
³³ In addition to humanitarian aid, this DG now also includes civil protection, formerly under the aegis of DG Environment, and with a vision for greater coordination and a capacity for faster response when it comes to the need to save lives.

³⁴ "Working Arrangements between the Commission Services and the European External Action Service in relation to External Relations Issues", CE, 13.01.2012.

³⁵ Learn more at <https://bit.ly/3mqqEC3>.

FIGURE 1

Specialised working parties related to development cooperation, including with Africa (Council of the EU)



- The Working Party on Development Cooperation (CODEV) discusses issues related to poverty eradication, such as gender equality, food and nutrition security, migration and development, trade and environment;
- Africa Working Party (COAFR): dedicated to Sub-Saharan Africa and relations with the African Union Commission
- Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group (ACP) Working Party: follows the Cotonou Agreement
- Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA)
- Working Party on Preparation for International Development Conferences United Nations Working Party (CONUN)
- Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM)
- Working Party on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Mashreq/Maghreb Working Party (MAMA): includes EU cooperation with North Africa and the Middle East in the so-called Union for the Mediterranean.

Source: Drawn up by the authors, based on the Council of the EU website.

Note: Working parties directly linked to cooperation with Africa are represented within the hexagons.

The powers of the **European Parliament (EP)** have been somewhat more limited than that of the institutions described above, although with powers increased by the Treaty of Lisbon, which has given this representative institution the powers of co-legislation. Parliament has, therefore, the right to propose legislative amendments and approve the instruments for cooperation.

As for specific financing decisions for cooperation, it has the right to information and scrutiny. It may raise objections to be reviewed but not amended by the EC, and this process has proved meagre in terms of interinstitutional

influence. This is even more the case with the European Development Fund (EDF), an instrument that has so far remained outside the EU budget. As it is an intergovernmental instrument, the EP had no decisive powers over its budget or monitoring³⁶. Development cooperation is specifically addressed by the Committee on Development (DEVE), but there are others of importance, such as the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET), which includes the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI), or International Trade (INTA), among others.

³⁶ The EP could, however, draw up a position on the implementation of the EDF budget in the context of a discharge procedure from the EC.

In addition to the formal strengthening of cooperation between European institutions and EU Member States formulated by the Treaty of Lisbon, increased efforts have been made, in fact, to strengthen this coordination, through various mechanisms and instruments. As recognised in the 2017 European Consensus for Development, the EU and its Member States have been increasing their commitment to **joint programming** in order to optimise their collective impact and comply with the principles of the effectiveness of development cooperation (EU, 2017). Introduced in 2011 by the "Agenda for Change" document (EC, 2011), the joint programming aims to align all bilateral cooperation by European actors with the national development plans of partner countries. Some of the benefits identified include sharing best practices between the EU and its Member States, as well as optimising their comparative advantages and the effectiveness of existing resources, thereby avoiding fragmentation of development aid. Thus this approach has been primed for the new phase of European financial instruments (see chapter 1.3.).

Although this harmonisation of efforts is generally welcomed, this process has not always led to best practices. According to the most recent assessment, joint programming had not yet effectively synchronised programming with national cycles and, in most countries, had not yet led to ownership of the process and results by partner countries (EC, 2017a)³⁷. Although this is an increasingly privileged option for programming with partner countries, this is not always seen favourably by some Member States, as several do not want to lose the visibility of their bilateral policies and/or want to lead the planning of their cooperation independently, without subsequent alignment with the cycles and plans of partner countries and other European actors. In several cases, partner countries themselves see this process with some reticence fearing that joint programming could result in less flexibility in allocating resources to the country.

This **principle of "Working better together"** (i.e. improving the way we work through coordination and joint action), endorsed by the 2017 European Consensus, has become more important in light of pressures from

national development aid budgets as well as of the need to meet the development cooperation effectiveness agenda, and it has been reinforced in the European response to the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In April 2020, the "Team Europe" concept was created, which aims to be an inclusive process between the EU and the European Investment Bank, open to all Member States, as well as their implementation agencies and financial institutions, with three priorities identified: (i) emergency response to humanitarian needs; (ii) strengthening health, water and sanitation, and (iii) responding to the social and economic consequences of the crisis. The objectives of this approach are related to strengthening European unity on the global stage and, in particular, improving recovery and reconstruction in the pandemic and post-pandemic contexts, while promoting European interests and values and projecting the EU as a global actor of solidarity.

On the one hand, this expresses a more strategic approach to international partnerships and development cooperation, trying to focus more on areas where the EU has added value, which also allows us to present a more unified model of development and action in this area (thereby increasing visibility and strengthening the "Europe brand") (Jones and Teevan, 2021). Furthermore, in practice, this can increase coordination and coherence by maximising resources in collective responses with greater sustainable impact. Indeed, although rooted in the response to the current pandemic, this joint intervention will have long-term implications for cooperation with partner countries, as so-called "Team Europe Initiatives" have been progressively relevant in the process of programming cooperation in partner countries since 2020, under the scope of the new European budgetary instrument for external action. For the time being, and while its recent nature does not yet allow for a concrete analysis of results, this approach seems to allow for more immediate, flexible and adapted responses, but, on the other hand, it remains a non-joint approach with partner countries (seeing it has been defined and managed by the EU in a one-sided manner, calling into question one of the basic principles of development effectiveness) and

³⁷ This evaluation covered the period up to 2015 and considered the process in 26 countries, out of 55 that had already begun the joint programming process by the end of 2015. This number can currently be considered much higher.

which may not necessarily express the allocation of additional financial resources for development.³⁸

1.3. Evolution of financial instruments

Developments in EU development policy have been reflected not only at an institutional level, but also in the mechanisms and instruments for its implementation, which have progressed over the different European budget cycles, traditionally seven years, the so-called Multiannual Financial Frameworks (MFF).

As a key player in international development cooperation, the EU has played a relevant regulatory role and, in financial terms, it is one of the world's leading Official Development Assistance (ODA) donors. Through its institutions, it has been the third³⁹ or fourth largest global donor in absolute values in recent years, while the combined EU and its Member States are the largest donor at the global level. Despite this positive rating, collective EU funding is still a far cry from the international commitment to allocate 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) to ODA.⁴⁰

During the last Multiannual Financial Framework, from 2014 to 2020, Sub-Saharan Africa was the region that benefited the most from ODA by European institutions (Figure 2) and about a quarter of the total funds (24%) disbursed to Least Developed Countries (LDCs). However, the

rhetoric of paying greater attention to the most vulnerable and lower-income countries is still far from being realised: in 2020, like previous years, according to EU data, only two of the top ten EU aid recipients belong to LDCs, with the largest recipients being neighbourhood countries (east or south and/or countries considered strategic in the global geopolitical landscape)⁴¹.

In terms of sectoral areas, making the thematic link with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), this aid, between 2014 and 2020, was mostly devoted to SDG 1 (Eradication of Poverty), SDG 5, (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 (Peace and Justice), while the overall objectives that received the least attention were, in increasing order, SDG 14 (Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources); SDG 12 (Sustainable Production and Consumption) and SDG 15 (Land Ecosystems and Biodiversity). The SDGs are increasingly used as reference indicators in the allocation and evaluation of European funding in the context of development aid and other funds. In this sense, the OECD has introduced a new field of association to the SDGs for all projects reported by funders, but, seeing as it is a voluntary classification, in 2020 only a few donors did so, and the EC was not one of them. On the other hand, the SDGs are mainly integrated into development cooperation instruments, but they are still virtually absent in other sectoral policy instruments that can express the EU's contribution to sustainable global development (e.g. trade policy, climate action, etc.), and are also poorly represented both in impact assessments and in economic management instruments across the Union.⁴²

³⁸ For example, there are concerns that some of the resources allocated by the Member States and by the EC in these more urgent initiatives correspond to the reallocation or reorganisation of previously existing development funds and should therefore not be presented as new resources.

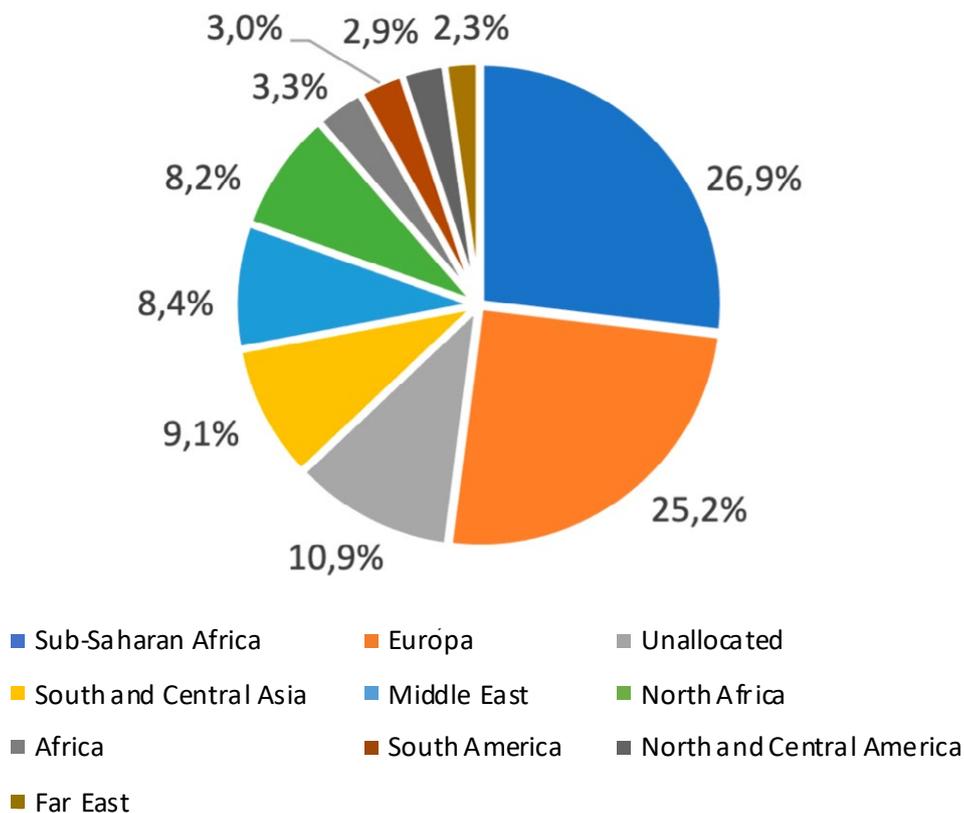
³⁹ According to preliminary OECD data, European institutions were the third largest donor in 2020, increasing their ODA by about 25% for activities mostly targeted at pandemic response.

⁴⁰ European collective ODA (institutions in the EU + Member States) accounted for only 0.46% of GNI in 2019. Preliminary data from 2020, on the other hand, point to 0.50% ODA/GNI from EU Member States. That are part of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), i.e. the ODA/GNI ratio of eight Member States – Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and Romania – are not yet included in the count. According to this introductory data, Portugal was the EU-15 Member State with the second least contribution in terms of ODA/GNI, at 0.17%, just ahead of Greece (0.13%). Data at <https://oe.cd/official-development-assistance>.

⁴¹ In recent years, only two LDCs have been included in the EU's top ten ODA recipients: Afghanistan and Ethiopia (this one only in 2019). The main destinations of development aid have been countries such as Turkey (occupying the top spot in recent years), Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Pakistan, India and Nigeria. More information on the EU profile as a donor at: <https://oe.cd/ll/dev-coop-eu>

⁴² In the so-called European Semester – the cycle of economic and budgetary policy coordination in the EU – since 2020, a summary and an annex have been included in each country report on the individual performance of each State Member State regarding its SDGs, but this falls short of the recommendations of the European Parliament, which proposes the transformation of the Annual Growth Survey of the European semester into an Annual Sustainability Survey, where there is a more substantial analysis of each Member State. The SDGs were also not fully incorporated as a comprehensive framework in the review of the "Better Regulation Guidelines" published in 2017, which could improve impact assessments and integrate the principle of sustainability more effectively. In 2019, the European Court of Auditors concluded that the EC does not report the contribution of the EU budget or policies to the fulfilment of the SDGs. For an analysis of these and other instruments for implementing the 2030 Agenda in the EU, see the Portuguese NGDO Platform/Ferreira, P.M. (2020). *Portugal and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Lisbon, August 2020.

FIGURE 2
EU ODA by regions, for the 2014-2020 period



Source: Drawn up by the authors, based on the EU Aid Explorer website, and according to the categorisation used by the EC.

Note: The Africa category refers to amounts allocated to African structures at a continental level. The "unallocated" category represents flows that cannot be assigned to a specific geographical area (country or region), including, for example, financing to multilateral organisations or administrative expenditures.

European aid managed by the EC is programmed under various financing instruments.⁴³ The way in which different instruments have been programmed in recent years has followed policy guidelines, particularly using the European "Agenda for Change" (EC, 2011), which stated the need to allocate more resources to fragile states and LDCs, given the great needs and special vulnerabilities of these countries in their development processes, as well as their difficulties in mobilising other types of resources

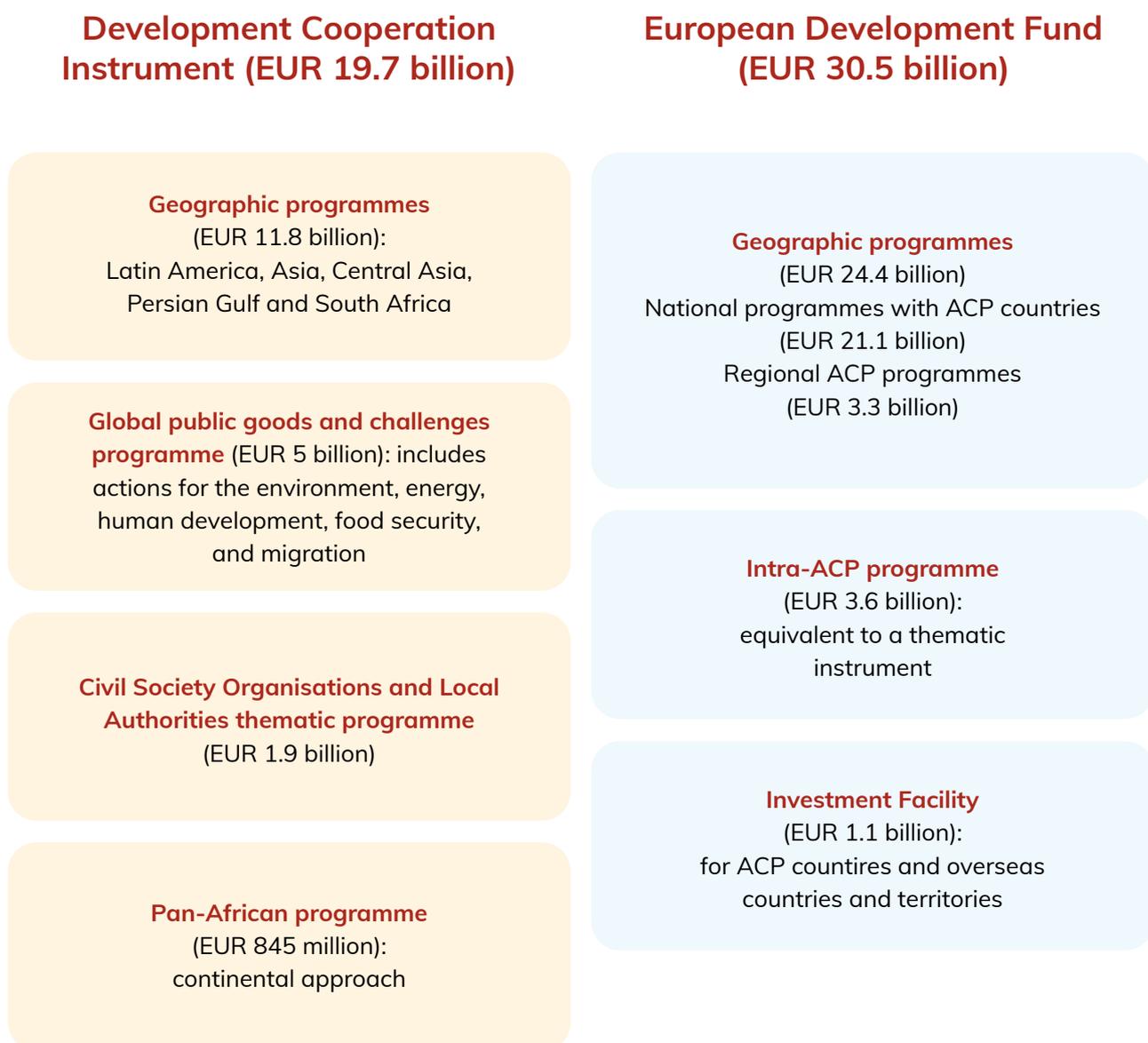
– which, in the case of LDCs, has not yet translated into the amounts allocated, as mentioned above. The EU has included the principle of the '**differentiated approach**' in order to select the amounts appropriate to the capacities of partner countries in carrying out their effective reforms. These guidelines have also introduced the principle of **concentrating European aid on a limited number of policy priorities**, with partner countries and regions selecting three to four priority sectors for cooperation with the EU.

⁴³ Funding instruments provide the legal basis for the implementation of the various European programmes, establishing the conditions under which the EU will administer and disburse its funds. The instruments themselves require institutional agreement on how they are operationalised.

The architecture of instruments for European external action has been marked by its complexity, reflecting the EU's vast interests and a process of bureaucratic administrative multiplication that is common to other sectors. While most instruments under the MFF 2014-2020 were considered appropriate for this purpose (EC, 2017c), the multiplicity of programmes, mechanisms and instruments has sometimes led to **overlaps and challenges to complementarity**, notably in relation to **synergies between geographical and thematic approaches**. Thus, some of the European instruments with larger financial envelopes in the past have also included a mixture between or overlap of geographical and thematic programmes (Figure 3).



FIGURE 3
DCI and EDF programmes, 2014-2020



Source: Drawn up by the authors, based on official EC documents

Note: The amounts reflected here refer to commitments made when defining the instrument and may have been changed in terms of disbursements. These are amounts at 2018 prices for comparability purposes.

There was also a key difference between the main European instruments for development cooperation. Established in 1958, the European Development Fund (EDF) is the EU's largest and oldest development instrument and follows the principles established in the Cotonou Agreement between the EU and the ACP countries and is not part of the EU's general budget, unlike other European funding instruments. Subject to an intergovernmental process, this instrument has been financed by direct contributions from Member States, disbursed in accordance with multi annual cost sharing protocols, the so called distribution keys. Despite this configuration, most of the resources are still managed by the EC – with the exception of the EDF Investment Facility dedicated to ACP countries and managed by the European Investment Bank (EIB).

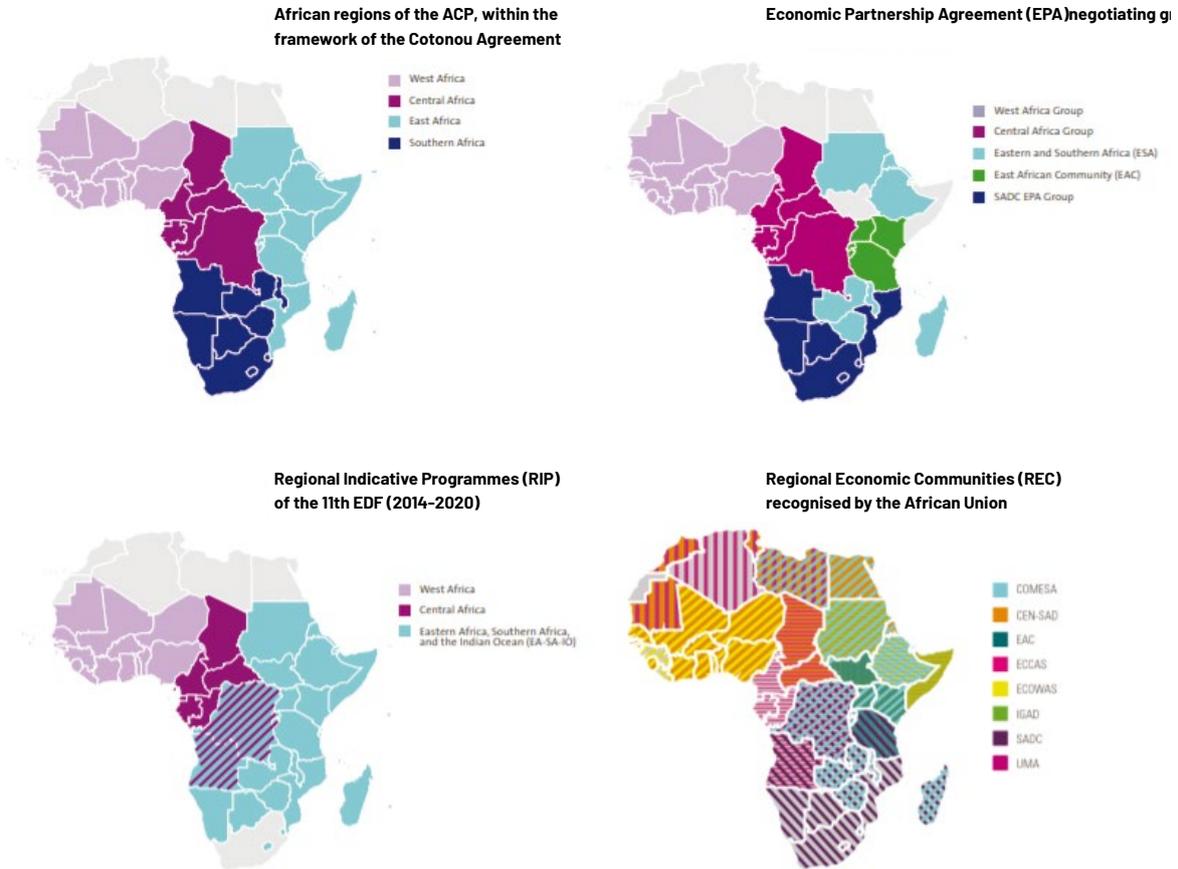
The African continent has traditionally been the scene of greater **overlaps and divisions between European programmes and instruments, reflecting the way in which the EU approaches Africa in terms of policies**, i.e. not from a unified perspective in continental terms, but in a differentiation between North Africa (neighbourhood policy instruments), sub-Saharan Africa (Cotonou Agreement) and South Africa (through the EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership, which focuses on trade, development and cooperation, as well as having its own process of political dialogue). Between 2014-2020, national programmes in African countries derived from three European financing instruments: the aforementioned European Development Fund (EDF), the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). To complete this picture,

African countries were also able to benefit from all thematic programmes and instruments, in addition to continental cooperation, under the Pan-African programme⁴⁴. Moreover, Africa has also been the focus of more significant regional European cooperation, with four regions in Africa selected in the period 2014-2020 for this type of cooperation, amounting to almost EUR 2.8 billion. **Figure 4** illustrates various approaches to African regions, according to different instruments of cooperation and partnership.

⁴⁴ The creation of a pan-African envelope was seen as a step towards "treating Africa as a whole", reinforcing the much-needed continental approach.

FIGURE 4

Comparison of EU-Africa frameworks and instruments in terms of regions



Source: Medinilla and Bossuyt, 2018.

Notes: The two maps on the left represent the ACP regional division that underlies the EDF regional programmes, and it is not the same basis for trade relations between the blocs (image on the right, above). Regional economic communities, on the other hand, are under the aegis of the African Union, functioning as their cornerstones for regional and ultimately continental integration.

The strengthening of economic integration has been referred to as the main justification for increasing these financial envelopes over the different MFFs and, in the case of ACP countries, this support has been used, specifically, in the implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreements (see chapter 2.2). Under the EDF, in addition to the three regional programmes in Africa – the Regional Indicative Programmes (RIP), which tend to establish economic integration as the

main purpose, there is also a RIP for a "special region" with geographical discontinuity, encompassing the group of Portuguese-speaking African Countries (PALOP) and Timor-Leste.⁴⁵

In addition to this mosaic, the 2014-2020 MFF brought other innovative elements, notably **trust funds**, formulated with the aim of making the EU's response to crisis situations

⁴⁵ This EU-PALOP collaboration has been active since 1992 and was extended to Timor-Leste in 2007. An evaluation conducted in 2019 concluded that the actions of this programme have been aligned with the national priorities of the countries concerned, but that there are shortcomings in terms of ownership (poor coordination between ministries and local authorities, in addition to representatives of PALOP-TL and EU delegations not always being involved in the various phases of projects) and sustainability (non-continuity of structuring projects, non-involvement or lack of interest of the private sector, etc.).

timelier and more flexible⁴⁶. These funds could be created under any instrument, mainly coming from the EDF and DCL by diverting some of their funds. Funds established in this way include the Bêkou Trust Fund for the Central African Republic (in 2014), the Regional Syrian Crisis Response Fund – Madad (2015), the Trust Fund for peace in Colombia (2015) and the African Emergency Trust Fund (2015), focused on development projects addressing the causes of instability and migration, this last fund being the most significant in terms of financial resources.⁴⁷

Moreover, like other instruments developed to support internal policies at the European level, the Commission chaired by Jean-Claude Juncker established the European External Investment Plan (EIP) in 2017. It is based on three pillars, the first of which is the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD), which acts as a financial investment mechanism, combining mixed EU funding with the EFSD guarantee to reduce investment risks and which has to this point been aimed at neighbourhood countries and Africa.⁴⁸

The importance of this type of operation is not new and has been growing in the last decade within the EU context. Indeed, in order to address market imperfections raised and exacerbated by the 2008-9 financial crisis, the EU has begun to significantly adopt the so-called innovative financial instruments (IFIs) from 2012. Building on the disbursement of the Community budget, **the aim would be to leverage diversified sources of funding, specifically from private investment**, with a reduction in the cost of the risks involved. Although not common in European external action, these mixed financing mechanisms were also not new in 2017 when the EIP was introduced. In 2007, the EC had established the EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund, the first mixed funding instrument to support bilateral cooperation, managed by the EIB. Since then, the investment facilities managed by this Bank have continued to multiply and grow to seven distinct regions with which the EU cooperates, with the ACP Investment Facility

under the EDF referred to above as one of the cases. The importance given to this type of operations also follows the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which proposed a new financing model for sustainable development that could mobilise more resources and diversified sources in order to implement the SDGs (see chapter 1.1.).

Furthermore, humanitarian aid has had an increasing weight in the overall calculation of development aid, reflecting the proliferation and persistence of humanitarian crises exacerbated by conflict situations and environmental/climatic factors. While humanitarian aid, which is implemented in parallel with development aid, tends to be programmed on an annual basis, the EC has also resorted to programmatic partnerships, which are multi-year and multi-country-focused, in order to address emerging complex challenges in a more integrated and flexible manner. With the COVID-19 pandemic, much of European aid has been channelled through emergency aid mechanisms, also using new coordination approaches with Member States, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

Given this complex architecture of European instruments and programmes, **the new Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027** revolutionises the resources used by the EU so far in terms of configuration and applicability. The new MFF includes seven headings, instead of the previous six, the new area being dedicated to migration and border management, reflecting the evolution of EU political priorities (Table 2). With a budget originally estimated at almost EUR 1.1 billion, the new MFF is reinforced by Next Generation EU, a package designed to boost post-pandemic European recovery, to be implemented between 2021 and 2023⁴⁹. The aggregation of these two financial envelopes resulted in the largest multiannual EU budget ever, totalling EUR 1.8 billion (2018 prices)⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ The new EU Financial Regulation confirmed the possibility of the EC receiving contributions from other donors in the form of these funds and to manage them based on rules and procedures agreed upon between both parties (Art. 169 of the [REGULATION \(EU, Euratom\) 2018/1046 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL](#) 18 July 2018, regarding the financial provisions applicable to the general budget of the Union).

⁴⁷ This trust fund, set up at the La Valletta Summit (EU-Africa) in November 2015 and scheduled to end in 2021, comprises EUR 5 billion, 88% from EU institutions and 12% from Member States. The regions covered are North Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel/Lake Chad, and the projects are implemented by EU Member State cooperation agencies, international and local NGOs, and international organisations (including UN agencies).

⁴⁸ Since its inception, the EFSD has received EUR 5.1 billion with the goal of mobilising EUR 50 billion. The other two pillars of the EIP are technical assistance and dialogue for the investment climate. More information [here](#).

⁴⁹ Due to its nature, the Next Generation EU is mostly allocated to the area dedicated to 'Cohesion, Resilience and Values', in addition to some contributions in the areas of the single market and natural resources. On the other hand, this new stimulus package had no involvement under the heading 'Neighbourhood and The World', which covers development policy. Initially, this exceptional instrument included funds for humanitarian aid, but then, in light of the rules of the Lisbon Treaty, it was concluded that this type of special funds can only be used within the EU.

⁵⁰ It should be noted that the 2014-2020 MFF was negotiated in the context of an economic crisis, and its financial envelope was lower than its predecessor (MFF 2007-2013). Overall, the EU's annual budget tends to account for around 1-1.1% of the gross national income for EU27.

TABLE 2

Distribution of MFFs 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 by thematic priorities

MFF 2014-2020: EUR 1 138 trillion*		MFF 2021-2027: EUR 1 824 trillion*	
1a. Smart and inclusive growth	13%	1. Single Market, Innovation and Digital	7.9%
1b. Economic, social and territorial cohesion	34%	2. Cohesion, Resilience and Values	60.3%
2. Sustainable growth/natural resources	39%	3. Natural resources and environment	20.5%
		4. Migration and border management	1.2%
3. Security and citizenship	2%	5. Security and Defence	0.7%
4. Global Europe	6%	6. Neighbourhood and World	5.4%
5. Administration	9%	7. Administration	4%

Source: Drawn up by the authors, based on official EU documents.

Note: * In 2018 prices.

Regarding EU external action, following the 'Better Legislation'⁵¹ programme launched in 2015 by the EC to speed up and ensure the quality of European legislation, a proposal was made for the simplification of development cooperation instruments, spread across various envelopes and mechanisms. The New MFF 2021-2027 was thus created, the **Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe**, which aims to "maintain and promote the Union's values and interests worldwide, by pursuing the objectives and principles of its external action" (EC, 2018b) (Table 3). According to recent EC assessments

(EC, 2018b), the restructuring of development cooperation into a single instrument will seek to avoid complex overlaps and complementarities while reducing administrative burdens. This simplification will also seek to increase the transparency of European cooperation because, by including other external financing – such as trust funds and investment facilities – in a single instrument of the European budget, it is expected to strengthen democratic scrutiny of these funds.

⁵¹ [Approved in 2015](#) (following efforts made since 2002).

TABLE 3
External action instruments, MFF 2014-2020 and MFF 2021-2027

Instruments 2014-2020	Instruments 2021-2027
Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI)	<p style="text-align: center;">Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)</p>
European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)	
Partnership Instrument (PI)	
Instrument for the Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)	
Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)	
European Development Fund (EDF)	
Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation (INSC) - only in part*	
European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD)	
External Lending Mandate	
Guarantee Fund for External Actions	
Macro-Financial Assistance **	

* As a nuclear instrument, it requires a specific legal basis under the Euratom Treaty.

** Macro-financial assistance is a financial instrument that aims to support countries geographically close to the EU in their difficulties of payments owed.

Note: In addition to the NDICI, European External Action will be served by an envelope for humanitarian aid, the Overseas Association Decision, including Greenland, and the Common Foreign and Security Policy. The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) will also remain separate from the NDICI, thus entering its third generation.

Formal negotiations for the approval of the NDICI and its financial envelope began in 2018, with the EC proposal worth EUR 78.9 billion and the interinstitutional agreement reached in March 2021 followed the position put forward by the Council of the EU, equivalent to EUR 70.8 billion⁵². The final decision ended up following the lower position, despite the increased needs of partner countries, due to socio-economic and climate crises and

major development impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, this conclusion did not accept the position of the European Parliament, which had advocated for the need to increase the NDICI budget by 4.4% compared to the EC's initial proposal.

Regarding financial resources, the total amount of instruments of the previous MFF linked to external action

⁵² This study uses 2018 prices for comparability with the previous MFF.

TABLE 4

Organisation and amounts of the NDICI for the period 2021-2027

Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)	EUR 70 800 Million*
Geographic Programming	EUR 53 805 Million
Neighbourhood	EUR 17 217 Million
Sub-Saharan Africa	EUR 26,000 Million
Asia and Pacific	EUR 7 564 Million
Americas and The Caribbean	EUR 3 025 Million
Thematic Programmes	EUR 2 835 Million
Human Rights and Democracy	EUR 1 214 Million
Civil Society	EUR 1 214 Million
Peace and Stability	EUR 809 Million
Global Challenges	EUR 2 429 Million
Quick response	EUR 2 835 Million
Reserve for new challenges and priorities	EUR 8 495 Million

Notes: * in 2018 prices.

Source: Drawn up by the authors, based on the intergovernmental interim agreement (data available at current prices).

appears to be slightly higher than the value approved for the NDICI⁵³. Although the new MFF no longer relies on UK contributions, this equivalent level of funding among financial packages has drawn criticism (CONCORD, 2020b), given the growing challenges in international cooperation, such as the social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the more aggravated efforts than ever to combat climate change. On the other hand, the initial proposal to allocate part of the funds from Next Generation EU in external action could not be implemented due to the rules of the Treaty of Lisbon, which means that the level of European aid for the long-term recovery of partner countries and international solidarity has remained modest at this critical stage⁵⁴.

The distribution of the financial envelope among the different priorities of the NDICI shows that this new instrument places a greater focus on geographic programmes (Table 4) and that thematic programmes, representing only 8% of the total value of the instrument, are seen in a complementary perspective. This trend is justified, in the interinstitutional agreement, with the aim of "maximising the impact of Union assistance and bringing Union action closer to partner countries and populations" (paragraph 34, EP, 2021b), i.e. principles of greater alignment in European cooperation with the ownership by partner countries and the principles of effectiveness in development cooperation. In addition to strengthening the differentiated approach, in line with the 2017 European Consensus on Development, the NDICI will seek to ensure flexibility, and this new architecture is expected to allow the transfer of funds between regions and aid channels, although it should be noted that it will not be done to the detriment of the

predictability or ownership by the partner country and its long-term development objectives.

Flexibility is the justification for strengthening lines for rapid response, intended to respond to crisis situations, and provide resilience and connection between humanitarian and development aid and foreign policy needs and priorities.⁵⁵ The European Union also seems to recognise the inevitability of the persistence of humanitarian crises in the coming years by strengthening the humanitarian aid budget (with €9.76 billion planned and maintaining an independent financial envelope for humanitarian aid). In this context, the EU intends to launch a reform process that allows for more effective responses and the mobilisation of additional resources to address global crises of an increasingly complex nature. At least 93% of NDICI fund allocation must meet the eligibility criteria of Official Development Assistance⁵⁶ and the European institutions have also agreed to the minimum threshold of 30% for climate action, 20% for social inclusion and human development and 10% for migration⁵⁷. In addition, issues such as climate change, the environment and gender equality must be integrated across all programmes and actions, in addition to democracy, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Finally, the interinstitutional agreement reiterates the commitments of the EU's new Action Plan on Gender Equality (GAP III) 2021-2025⁵⁸: 85% of NDICI's new actions should contribute to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment by 2025, and at least 5% should have this concern as the main objective.⁵⁹

In addition to the budgetary commitments, the final agreement brought some news in terms of governance. The European Parliament will have an enhanced role in

⁵³ Calculations by authors in 2018 prices. Based on original budgets of the instruments of the 2014-2020 MFFs, in particular EDF, DCI, ENI, IP, EIDHR and EPO, the amount of these instruments in 2018 would be EUR 71.35 billion.

⁵⁴ For an analysis of the funds for the next 2021-2027 MFFs and implications for EU external action, see Kapelli and Gavás, 2020. Several European civil society organisations and networks signed a manifesto in October 2020 against the reduction of European funds to support the most vulnerable countries, available at: <https://hrdn.eu/global-crises-demand-strengthened-cooperation-and-solidarity/>.

⁵⁵ It should be noted that the EDF already had such lines for greater flexibility, albeit not so well defined.

⁵⁶ In accordance with the criteria set out in the framework of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Previously, this amount was set at 90%.

⁵⁷ The European Parliament's proposal was that 45% of the NDICI allocation should be assigned to climate objectives, while civil society recommended 50% (CONCORD, 2020a).

⁵⁸ Learn more at https://ec.europa.eu/portugal/news/new-action-plan-gender-equality_pt

⁵⁹ According to the OECD 'gender marker', in terms of reporting on development aid. This marker classifies projects as G1 if gender is an important objective and G2 if it is the main objective.

defining the main strategic options compared to previous financial frameworks⁶⁰: for example, in addition to the regular exchange of information and opinions, a six-monthly geopolitical dialogue will be organised between the EEAS, the EC and the EP on the NDICI's strategic guidelines, including regarding the financial allocation of amounts. The compromise also mitigates the political conditionality associated with migration – which was originally an element of enhanced importance proposed by the Council of the EU – as well as amounts reserved for the empowerment of military actors and capabilities to promote security and development.⁶¹

The planning and implementation of the NDICI will follow a set of **principles** of various natures. On the one hand, it is formally established that it will follow the fundamental principles guiding all EU external action⁶², as well as those of development effectiveness. On the other hand, according to the assessment of EU funding instruments for 2014-2020 (EC, 2018c), the NDICI should also prioritise the universality of the 2030 Agenda and the need for integrated approaches to achieve the SDGs. It is intended that the SDGs serve as an entry point for a shared agenda for political dialogue and coordination between different development partners, since this principle supports the objective of using joint European programming, where feasible, as a pre-defined approach, as mentioned above. On the other hand, the implementation of the NDICI will also no longer be based on the principle of concentrating ODA in only a few sectors, but rather on integrated approaches around European priorities (in which context the above-mentioned Team Europe Initiatives fall into place). This integrated approach to planned programming has generally been welcome, to the detriment of the traditional sectoral approach, but it is not clear whether the EU institutions are prepared to do so, since EU delegations and policy dialogues in partner countries are both still structured mainly around sectoral areas.

One of the biggest novelties of the NDICI, which will have implications for principles and the implementation of cooperation with Africa, is the **integration of the EDF into the European budget**. This possibility has been discussed for decades, as certain European developments would no longer justify this differentiated approach between instruments: such as the consolidation of the own resources system⁶³ and the successive enlargements of the Union, among others, where it is also intended to increase the transparency and effectiveness of the funds managed by the EC. The target for this reform had already been set for 2021, as it coincided with the revision of the EU-ACP partnership (see chapter 2.2).

The EDF has traditionally followed the principles set out in the Cotonou Agreement (2000), such as the focus on equality, partnership, participation and ownership, especially as its programming and implementation were defined as joint responsibilities based on co-management. To this end, offices of the National Authorising Officer (NAO-EDF) have been set up in ACP countries to support this joint management of EDF-funded operations, although some assessments indicate that sometimes the NAO-EDFs have not strengthened appropriation but have had a blocking effect (EC, 2017b). In addition, some analyses consider that the implementation of the EDF has been carried out by top-down approaches, with agendas imposed by Brussels that have diluted the principles of development effectiveness – even though being done in parallel with extensive consultation processes (EC, 2017b). Despite the failures in operationalisation, the premise of mutual responsibility of the EDF has been a distinctive factor continuously recognised by the different institutions and decisive in the EU-ACP partnership, to the point that its integration into the Community budget, which may make sense from the point of view of transparency and efficiency for the EU, could call these principles into question by creating more room for unilaterally imposed agendas (see chapter 3).

⁶⁰ The integration of the EDF into the European budget already included an extension of the EP's powers in policymaking and allocation of European funds, but the specificities of this new role had not yet been determined.

⁶¹ The Council of the EU originally proposed more references to migration, including at the level of objectives. The political conditionality associated with this theme is set out in Article 8.10 of the intergovernmental interim agreement for the Global Europe instrument. The concern regarding the role of military actors arises from following reforms in the rules of development aid accounting for peace and security actions under the OECD-DAC in 2016.

⁶² According to the Treaty of Lisbon, these include democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity and respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

⁶³ For more information on own resources: www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/pt/FTU_1.4.1.pdf.

Regarding **financing modalities**, the NDICI will use the same type of approaches observed in recent years. These include grants, public service contracts, budget support, contributions to trust funds, financial instruments and debt relief, among others. Although none of these modalities are new, the **weight attributed to financial instruments** is a clear example of the new European financing architecture, since the new European Fund for Sustainable Development plus (EFSD+), now with global coverage, becomes an integral part of the NDICI and will therefore be guided by its overall priorities and programming.

In this context, a "**High Level Wisdom Group**" was set up in 2019 to propose recommendations to maximise the capacity of the financing architecture of the European development policy. To this end, the group suggested reforming the existing structure by establishing a European Bank for Climate and Sustainable Development, based on the existing EIB and/or the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)⁶⁴. This recommendation, which reiterates the importance of NDICI as an incentive tool, once again illustrates the relevance of these new operations, as well as linking development funding and the fight against climate change better. It is, therefore, foreseeable that international financial institutions (IFIs), such as the EIB⁶⁵, will continue to gain weight in European cooperation and gradually replace subsidies from more advanced countries, which is in line with the principle of differentiated approaches expressed in the European Consensus on Development and the NDICI. However, it is still unclear how the priority given to these IFIs will serve the objective of concentrating aid in the poorest and most vulnerable countries, LDCs, since **only about 4% of European ODA allocated to these countries between 2014 and 2020 was disbursed by the EIB**, compared to 96% by the EC⁶⁶. This data may be indicative

of the lack of attractiveness of these countries to investors, when compared to others, as well as the existence of capacity problems – the fact that LDCs are not yet prepared to undertake blending operations and budgetary guarantees, making these operations possibly unsuitable for support to those countries.

Within the scope of **peace and security**, a novelty that stems from the 2021-2027 MFF is the creation of a **European Peace Facility (EPF)** with an initial allocation of EUR 5 billion. This mechanism replaces the African Peace Facility and the Athena Mechanism, but it also extends the scope of action by financing the costs of CSDP missions, support for peacekeeping operations in partner countries and regions, and training activities for military actors, thus enabling, for the first time, a complement to activities of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations with assistance activities under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).⁶⁷ If, on the one hand, one of the objectives of this instrument is to increase flexibility and speed of implementation, on the other, by being outside the European budget, it raises concerns of liability, control and accountability⁶⁸, as the mechanism will be **extra budgetary** and managed by the EEAS.

In general, and with regard to prospects for the future, the merger of the various instruments into a single EU cooperation base can **entail opportunities and challenges**, especially since the financial envelope foreseen for European ODA over the next seven years is not as substantive as expected. On the one hand, the NDICI will avoid complex overlaps and complementarities by reducing administrative burdens, as well as seeking to enhance the transparency of European cooperation, given the extension of the EP's powers, a customary ally in poverty eradication, and potentially ensuring the concentration of aid in achieving the overall development objectives.

⁶⁴ The different proposals for this consolidation are now undergoing feasibility studies. The independent report by the Wisdom Group, "Europe in the World: The future of the European financial architecture for development", from October 2019, can be found at https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/40967/efad-report_final.pdf.

⁶⁵ Through its different operations, the EIB financed projects worth EUR 3 billion in Africa in 2019, which were expected to catalyse EUR 10.7 billion in investment and predicted financing of EUR 4 billion in 2020 (data not published at the time of writing). In addition to this amount, EUR 5.2 billion that the EIB mobilised as part of *Team Europe*. It should be noted, however, that the EIB had invested EUR 2.3 billion in Africa in 2018, a record figure, but less than half of this amount (EUR 1.155 billion) was allocated to Sub-Saharan Africa, where many of the LDCs are concentrated.

⁶⁶ Calculation made by authors, based on the [EU Aid Explorer](#).

⁶⁷ This novelty aims to meet the new OECD rules on CBSD, see footnote 60.

⁶⁸ These concerns have been raised by the European Parliament, notably in its recommendation on this Mechanism of 28.03.2019 (EP, 2019).

On the other hand, there is also concern that, despite attempts to ensure greater coherence and consistency with the adoption of the NDICI as a single instrument, the development effectiveness principles will depend mainly on the implementation and management structures chosen by the institutions. The specific integration of the EDF into the European budget could lead to the dilution of the priorities of partner countries, particularly in the case of ACP countries, which in recent decades have co-managed these funds, and it has yet to be confirmed what kind of role they will play in the new framework. Related to this, there is an issue of understanding the extent to which the EU's interests and partner countries' priorities can be balanced in this new context. While the focus on NDICI's geographical programmes seeks to bring European action closer to its partners, the EU's growing preference to advance its own priorities is evident in the interinstitutional agreement of this instrument, which includes as a parameter for geographical programming – the largest financial share – “The partners' capacity and commitment to promote common values, principles and interests, including human rights, fundamental freedoms [...] as well as efforts for Union priorities” (Art.13.2 (b), EP, 2021b). In the competition for the allocation of funding, this can mean, in practice, a dilution of the core objectives of EU development policy – the eradication of poverty – in favour of interests considered more strategic or urgent (such as security and migration), as is already happening in the development cooperation programmes themselves (see chapter 3).

In addition, the new financial framework reaffirms the trend, already seen during the 2014-2020 MFF, to create new programmes and operations which, rather than strengthening, can dilute all the principles of the effectiveness of development cooperation⁶⁹. For example, the creation of trust funds and their funding decisions do not require approval by the European Parliament and are a challenge in terms of budgetary supervision, as they are less subject to scrutiny (Hauck, 2020, EP, 2016a), nor do partner countries have a formal seat in the governance bodies of these funds, acting merely as observers. While partner countries can be formally consulted through programmatic EFSD deliberations, all decisions are based only on the European institutions,

as partner countries are also not present on the Strategic Council of this Fund⁷⁰ – but may become observers in the EFSD+. Finally, the trend of strengthening instruments for the private sector, being very relevant given the essential role of this actor in development, still lack so called concrete rules to assess a real compliance with social and human rights standards (since there has been greater evolution in the assessment of impacts and environmental standards). This means that the proliferation of such initiatives in the new MFF leads to further distancing of partner countries from the decisions that will impact them (see chapter 3). All this comes at a time when the next phase of EU-Africa relations is based on a logic of “between equals” partnership, as discussed in the following chapter.

⁶⁹ For more information, see “EU Aid: A Broken Ladder?”, CONCORD Aidwatch Report 2018.

⁷⁰ The EFSD evaluation shows that there have been tensions in the level of expected coordination and coherence, and that much of the agenda for the implementation of guarantees is ultimately set at the central level (EC, 2020).

Africa has been, from an early age, a focus of European development cooperation policy, and the relationship with the continent has evolved over time, which is reflected in different formal partnerships, strategies and instruments. Following the analysis of recent trends in EU development policy, this chapter describes the EU-Africa relationship in its different configurations (particularly the continental partnership and the ACP-states relationship), as well as the participation of civil society in these frameworks. It also looks at some recent developments on the African part with implications for the relationship with the EU.



2. EUROPEAN UNION - AFRICA RELATIONS



The presidents of the European Commission and the African Union Commission meet in Addis Ababa. © European Commission, February 2020.

2.1. Continental partnership and dialogue

Political dialogue at the highest level between the European Union and the African continent has been underway for about two decades, although it could be said that only from 2007, at the second joint summit, has the basis for a more regular and structured dialogue been established. Table 5 presents an evolution of the formal "continent-to-continent" relationship, with a selection of some important policy milestones for each of the parties with implications for relations.

The formal partnership between the two continents was established in 2000, at what was the first summit between Africa and the EU, which took place in Cairo, and it is currently guided by a concerted strategy between the parties. The Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) was a key milestone in this relationship⁷¹, emphasizing the language of a fairer and longer-term partnership, including explicit references to a strengthened political partnership, joint responsibility and a common commitment to multilateralism and the response to global challenges (EU/AU, 2007).

JAES was already inspired by a new vision of the relationship that it intended to take to a new strategic level and to move the partnership: *beyond development* (through a political partnership that would establish a deep and regular dialogue on issues of interest to both parties, the search for mutual benefits regarding political issues and a change of attitudes towards building a partnership between equals, which went beyond traditional development aid and the donor-recipient relationship); *beyond Africa* (through more concerted responses to global challenges, promoting common agendas in international forums, defining common positions on global conflicts and pushing for stronger African representation in international institutions); *beyond institutions* (developing a people-centred partnership including consultations expanded to civil society, the creation of a platform for dialogue and implementation of the Joint Strategy and the intensification of relations between the European and Pan-African Parliaments); and *beyond the fragmentation of relationship frameworks* within the EU (the partnership

⁷¹ Following the formulation of a European Strategy for Africa in 2005, the natural way forward would be to negotiate a Strategy jointly agreed between Africa and the EU, which was established by the Heads of State and Government of the two continents at the Second EU-Africa Summit in 2007. It should be noted that JAES is a policy document that, unlike the ACP-EU partnership agreement, is not a legally binding instrument.

with the Mediterranean/North Africa region, the previous Cotonou Agreement in the case of Sub-Saharan Africa and the EU-South African partnership), through a comprehensive strategy that would address the problems and challenges of the African continent as a whole and complement other relationship frameworks. In this sense, **JAES has established what continues to be a large part of the objectives of relations between the two continents today**, reaffirmed since then whenever the need to re-launch the partnership or to reformulate the relationship paradigm is emphasised.

By establishing an innovative and ambitious vision, the Joint Strategy has undeniably been a test of the political will, capacities and common interests of the European and African institutions and their Member States. However, the implementation of the structure of dialogue and joint cooperation that was being built at the institutional level ended up not effectively accomplishing this vision, due to the lack of political traction of the JAES, as well as a **lack of realistic conditions for implementing the structure – in terms of means, instruments and financing**. Added to this is the parallel cooperation of the EU and its Member States with African States, under the Cotonou Agreement.

This is particularly evident in the strategic dialogue around the themes of priority areas of action established by the Joint Strategy, which was organised into eight partnerships co-chaired by actors (Member States and institutions) from each party, serving as the foundation of the Strategy⁷². First, the content of the partnerships was based on the idea of "how Europe can help Africa", following the more one-sided logic of the MDGs (see chapter 1.1), and not on an open and strategic discussion about common and/or reciprocal problems. Secondly, its operation, in some cases, was limited to supporting development projects in Africa and/or carrying out activities and events, decided in a relatively ad-hoc manner and focusing on technical bureaucratic discussions that added little to the donor-recipient logic. Not helping this was the lack of clarity on how to operationalise some thematic partnerships, specifically due to the lack of definition of the concrete objectives and results intended to be achieved (e.g.

a partnership was established on the then Millennium Development Goals, which was extended by dialogues as diverse as gender equality, human and social development, environmental sustainability, agriculture and food security, water and basic sanitation, or cultural cooperation, without identifying concrete ways on how to advance them). Thirdly, the relationship was then still heavily marked by delicate issues of political friction – such as international justice and the role of the International Criminal Court, or the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), to give two examples – which have hampered the progress of dialogue, in general and in some thematic partnerships (see chapter 3).

Fourthly, JAES ended up functioning as another framework of the relationship, to be added to all the others, and not as an **umbrella of coordination and grouping of existing instruments and processes**, as was proposed in its original vision. One of the objectives was to increase coordination and synergies between different cooperation agreements, policies, instruments and programmes that exist at the EU and Member State level, where the parties would commit to work together to adapt their policies and legal and financial frameworks to the needs and objectives of the partnership, as well as to systematically include the joint strategy (and their action plans) in the agenda of political dialogue meetings between African regions and countries and the EU. However, many of the issues most relevant to the partnership continued to be defined and negotiated outside the JAES framework – such as trade agreements between the EU and African regions (the EPAs), or later, migration issues⁷³.

Lastly, the fact that until 2014 there was no financial envelope that could support the implementation of the joint strategy also did not help to boost the implementation of the partnership; only in that year, at the IV Summit in Brussels, was the **Pan-African Programme** created for this purpose, being the EU's first financial instrument in the area of development and cooperation encompassing the entire African continent⁷⁴. There were, however, themes with targeted funding. The thematic partnership on Peace and Security has had a specific funding instrument

⁷² Until 2014: Peace and Security (Secretariat of the Council of the EU/Algeria); Democratic Governance and Human Rights (Germany, Portugal, European Commission/Egypt); Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure (European Commission/South Africa); MDGs (United Kingdom/Tunisia); Energy (Austria, Germany/African Union Commission, Mauritius); Climate Change (France/Morocco); Migration, Mobility and Employment (Spain/Libya); Science, Information Society and Space (France/Tunisia).

⁷³ In this context, the most strategic issues have been defined in the Rabat process (countries along the western migratory route), the Khartoum process (eastern migratory route) and in initiatives such as the EU Africa Summit in La Valetta in 2015, which established an action plan as well as the EU Emergency Trust Fund. At the beginning of 2020, at the meeting between the EC and the AUC, the parties committed to developing, in the future, the joint framework for a continent-to-continent dialogue on migration and mobility (EC/AUC, 2020).

⁷⁴ More information at <https://africa-eu-partnership.org/en/financial-support-partnership-programme/pan-african-programme>.

– the **African Peace Facility**, established in 2004 and in effect until 2020⁷⁵ – which has contributed to developing enhanced cooperation and jointly establishing a framework for action consistent with what has been the African Union's aspirations in this area, especially in the operationalisation of an African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)⁷⁶. The **EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund**, established in 2007 and terminated in 2019⁷⁷, was the first blended funding instrument that helped finance several projects. Financial instruments are undergoing major changes under the EU MFF 2021-2027, as described in chapter 1.3.

All these factors have also contributed to the functioning of thematic partnerships becoming very diverse among themselves, which naturally depended on the relevance of each theme to the parties and the specific conditions for implementation, but also, subsequently, on the interest of the Member States in boosting dialogue or not. Thus, JAES was implemented through **action plans/roadmaps (2008 2010, 2011 2013 and 2014 2017)**⁷⁸, and the strategic priorities in thematic terms were successively reformulated: the eight thematic partnerships of 2008 became five in 2014 (still with points of contact with the thematic structure of JAES and following a rationalisation and simplification logic), which were then reformulated in 2017, when the governance and thematic functioning structure of JAES had already undergone a process of degradation⁷⁹.

In **institutional terms**, this means that some structures, such as the Joint Africa EU Task Force⁸⁰ and the Joint Expert Groups, established since 2008 and linked to the implementation of JAES action plans, were no longer functioning because the structure was considered too heavy and unfeasible. The dialogue process driven by JAES has, however, resulted in an institutional dynamic that has been strengthened at other levels, particularly in

formal political dialogue. The joint summits have become more regular (held almost every 3 years); joint ministerial meetings have continued to take place (although lately not on an annual basis, as planned, as the last one took place in 2018); and the two Commissions (EC and AUC) initiated a more regular **Commission to Commission dialogue**, which has become one of the main mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the EU Africa partnership, priorities and policy guidelines set out in the summits. Interparliamentary meetings between the European Parliament and the Pan-African Parliament also take place on a regular basis, often in parallel with intergovernmental summits.

In sectoral terms, the **partnership for peace and security** is a particular case where cooperation is more structured and systematic. In addition to the joint consultation meetings between the AU Peace and Security Council and the EU Political and Security Committee, where issues of common interest related to crisis and conflict situations are regularly discussed and more shared analyses are being reached⁸¹, a **Memorandum of Understanding between the African Union and the European Union on Peace, Security and Governance** was signed in May 2018. This memorandum is part of the priorities defined in Abidjan at the 2017 Summit and seeks to establish a stronger and more structured basis for the evolution of this partnership in light of new and complex threats, notably in the areas of terrorism, trafficking and transnational organised crime. The goal is to move towards more integrated and coordinated approaches to responding to conflicts and crises, focusing on issues of fragility, human security and human rights and recognising the need to increase coherence and synergies between development, humanitarian, governance and peace-building activities. Strengthening **trilateral cooperation between the AU, the EU and the United Nations** is also

⁷⁵ Within the framework of the new MFF 2021-2027, this mechanism and the Athena mechanism are integrated into a European Peace Facility, not specifically focused on Africa, as mentioned in chapter 1.3. Between 2014 and 2019, the EU channelled €2.4 billion through the African Peace Facility.

⁷⁶ The EU supports African institutions (AU and regional communities) in peace support operations, development of capacities (e.g. early warning) and conflict prevention. An assessment conducted in 2018 by the European Court of Auditors concluded, however, that EU support remains very focused on the payment of operating costs and that its implementation is hampered by delays and inconsistent use of financial instruments (see "The African Peace and Security Architecture: need to refocus EU support", Special Report no. 20 of the Court of Auditors, 2018)

⁷⁷ The fund was led by a Steering Committee composed of members of EU and African countries (chaired by the EC and the AUC) and managed by the European Investment Bank, combining grants from the European Development Fund and EU Member States with loans granted by eligible financial institutions.

⁷⁸ The Declaration of the V Summit, held in Abidjan in 2017, called on the two Committees to draw up an Action Plan, which did not come to fruition.

⁷⁹ Several thematic dialogues stopped being held regularly; for example, the last meeting of the EU AU human rights dialogue (established in 2006) took place in 2017.

⁸⁰ This Task Force consisted of members of the Commission for the AU, the EC and the Council, and the European representation changed after the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon and the creation of the EEAS (more in chapter 1.2).

⁸¹ The 12th annual meeting took place in October 2020, with the communiqué available at <https://bit.ly/3tku8si>.

one of the main objectives in the field of peace and security, which has also begun to bear fruit on other specific issues⁸².

Overall, the most notorious element of recent years is **the greater fragmentation of dialogue and cooperation mechanisms by various themes, sectors and stakeholders**. High level dialogues, in particular, have been taking place in specific sectors of common interest, such as the AU-EU Platform on Science, Technology and Innovation (launched in response to the Tripoli Summit in 2010), in which information exchange and cooperation in research and innovation programmes are to be strengthened. Another example of thematic expertise is regular ministerial meetings in specific sectors such as agriculture (since 2016), with an agreed agenda of action. In the field of maritime security, efforts are also being made to develop a coordinated approach between the EU, the AU and its Member States, including issues of combating piracy and illegal, unregulated and unregistered fishing. One factor driving this type of sectoral cooperation is the existence of African strategic frameworks, defined and operationalised at AU and/or regions level, enabling greater clarity and direction from joint cooperation (see chapter 2.3.)⁸³.

Furthermore, the parties having agreed at the 2017 summit in Abidjan that economic investment, job creation and trade are common priorities requiring a joint commitment, a number of sectoral task forces were established **within the framework of the Africa Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs**: the Task Force Rural Africa, the EU Africa High Level Platform on Sustainable Energy Investments, the Digital Economy Task Force, and the Transportation Task Force. These task forces, promoted primarily by the EU, held expert meetings and high level sectoral meetings, with the purpose of making recommendations to boost investment and mobilise the private sector in these areas⁸⁴.

At the end of 2020, in place of these task forces, the **Africa-Europe Foundation** was launched, through which the EC funds a consortium with Friends of Europe and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation⁸⁵ to establish five "strategic groups" for dialogue and cooperation: Health, Digital, Agriculture and Sustainable Food Systems, Energy and Ecological Transformation⁸⁶, and Transport and Connectivity. The foundation was presented as an expression of the European political desire to strengthen the partnership and as an independent forum that opens strategic dialogue to a diversity of actors (see chapter 2.4).

The current focus on the **need to revitalise the partnership**, while not new, has become more evident among the parties in anticipation of 2020, resulting from the confluence of a multiplicity of global geopolitical and geoeconomic factors, as well as the internal evolution of integration and political priorities in Africa and the EU (points covered in chapter 2.3. and 1.1, respectively). 2020 was fruitful on the European side, both at a political level and when reflecting on what should be the basis of this new joint strategy. After the symbolic choice of the African Union as the EC President's first overseas trip (in December 2019), the meeting of the two EC/AUC Commissions⁸⁷ sought to assess progress on the commitments made at the Abidjan Summit and discuss the prospects for the future – although the AUC wanted a greater focus on the first issue and the EC the latter.

The EC and the European External Action Service (EEAS) issued a joint communication in March 2020, outlining their proposal for a **new strategy with Africa**. It proposes to work in five areas, mostly aligned with the joint work under the task forces mentioned above: a partnership for ecological transition and access to energy; a partnership for digital transformation; a partnership for sustainable growth and jobs; a partnership for peace, security and governance; and a partnership for migration and mobility (EC and EEAS, 2020)⁸⁸. The **Council Conclusion of the EU regarding Africa** in June 2020, recognising the EC/

⁸² In 2017, a joint EU AU-United Nations task force was created for the situation of migrants in Libya.

⁸³ For example, in the sectors mentioned above, the *Integrated Programme for the Development of Agriculture in Africa (CAADP)* and the *Integrated Maritime Strategy for Africa 2050*.

⁸⁴ More information at <https://africa-eu-partnership.org/en/africa-europe-alliance-0>.

⁸⁵ In partnership with the African Climate Foundation and the ONE Campaign, and the association of organisations such as Ipemed (a Euro-Mediterranean think tank).

⁸⁶ The transition to clean energy was the theme of the EU-Africa Business Forum in April 2021 (<https://www.euafrica-businessforum.com/>).

⁸⁷ In February 2020, the 10th EC EC Joint Meeting had 22 EC Commissioners, the largest delegation ever. The President of the European Council, Charles Michel, attended the annual Summit of the African Union in early 2020.

⁸⁸ The Communication lists the programmes and policies that should serve as the basis for a new strategy in the proposed actions. A summary table with these programmes and contribution to the SDGs is available in EP, 2020a.

EEAS proposal as the basis for negotiations in an effort to define a joint partnership agenda at the next EU-AU Summit⁸⁹, add the dimension of the COVID-19 pandemic response as an essential factor for closer rapprochement between the EU and Africa and define that the establishment of a strengthened partnership should focus on: multilateralism, peace, security and stability, sustainable and inclusive development and sustainable economic growth. Indeed, one of the issues that seems to be consensual on the European and African sides is the need to support multilateralism in responding to global challenges and, within this context, to move forward with greater cooperation and collaboration at a multilateral level.

In March 2021, the **European Parliament** expressed its position on a renewed strategy with Africa, which should be "mutually beneficial and results oriented that reflects the interests of both parties" and clearly defines "the roadmap for partnership and the responsibilities of each party on the basis of a clear assessment of the implementation of previous joint agreements", i.e. drawing lessons from the previous joint strategy (EP, 2021a). In terms of priorities, human development, achieving SDGs, and eradicating poverty are considered to remain at the heart of EU Africa relations and that, regardless of whether other priorities are valid, human development must be at the centre of the joint strategy. This seems to contrast with the Joint EC/EEAS vision, which in its proposed strategy essentially integrates human development into the issues of sustainable growth and employment and peace and governance (highlighting the idea of the EP as an ally in poverty eradication, as described in chapter 1.3).

The EU seems to want its proposal to be the basis for joint negotiation of a new Africa EU strategy, as has been done in the past, even though this proposal has not been preceded by specific discussions between the parties. On the African side, however, there is a growing desire and awareness of the need for the African Union to develop a more ambitious and coordinated negotiating position, so that the exercise of defining the joint strategy is not limited to an update by the JAES or the validation of proposals unilaterally defined by the EU - which has also been possible due to the vacuum made by the lack of a coordinated African position (see chapter 2.3). The new joint strategy, expected to be adopted at the VI EU-AU Summit, should not only result from an alignment of positions for an

ambitious political declaration aligned with the aspiration of a more balanced partnership, but also to define a realistic and joint governance structure. To this end, it should not only include the usual list of priorities for cooperation, but also define concrete targets and effective conditions for implementation (at the level of participation, financing, etc.). (Lopes, 2020a). Furthermore, to be added to this complex mosaic, the new strategy will need to ensure coherence and complementarity with the "African pillar" of the new EU-ACP agreement and with other policies underway in the EU and the AU.

⁸⁹ The VI Africa-EU Summit, initially planned for 2020, has been postponed, notably due to the pandemic. The joint ministerial meeting, which was to be held in 2019 or 2020, also did not take place (the last meeting was in 2018).

TABLE 5
EU-Africa summits and relevant policy milestones

Date/Location	Key decisions and documents		
I Summit April 2000 Cairo	<u>Cairo Declaration</u> Commitment to give a new strategic dimension to the partnership between Europe and Africa through a formal and regular political dialogue.		
Relationship-relevant policy evolution and milestones			
European Union	Africa	Joint milestones	International landmarks
2000: <u>Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union</u> 2003: European Security Strategy 2004 and 2007: EU expansion 2004: Development of the European Neighbourhood Policy 2005: European Consensus for Development 2005: European Strategy for Africa	2001: New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) 2002: <u>African Union</u> 2003/2004: Beginning of the creation of the <u>African Peace and Security Architecture</u> 2004: Ouagadougou Declaration on Employment and Poverty Eradication in Africa 2006: Tripoli Declaration on Migration and Development	2000: <u>Cotonou Agreement</u> 2002: start of negotiations on economic partnership agreements (EPAs) 2005: Start of regular formal dialogue between the two Commissions (European Commission - EC and African Union Commission - AUC) 2006: <u>Joint Declaration on Migration and Development</u> (Tripoli) 2006: Launch of the Europe-Africa Dialogue on Migration and Development (<u>Rabat Process</u>) 2007: Launch of the EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership 2007: Africa-EU Infrastructure Partnership	1999: Creation of the G20 2000: Millennium Agenda / 8 Millennium Development Goals 2001: 9/11 terrorist attacks 2002: Monterrey Conference (development financing) 2002: <u>International Criminal Court</u> 2005: Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness

Date/Location	Key decisions and documents
II Summit December 2007 Lisbon	<u>Lisbon Declaration</u> Joint Africa-EU Strategy <u>I Action Plan 2008-2010</u> : 8 thematic partnerships: (I) Peace and Security; (II) Democratic Governance and Human Rights; (III) Trade, Regional Integration, and Infrastructure; (IV) Millennium Development Goals; (V) Energy; (VI) Climate Change; (VI) Migration, Mobility, and Employment; (VIII) Science, Information Society, and Space

Relationship-relevant policy evolution and milestones

European Union	Africa	Joint milestones	International landmarks
Establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) 2009: entry into force of the <u>Treaty of Lisbon</u> EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2007-2013 2010: Europe 2020 strategy 2010: EC Communication on the JOINT EU-Africa Strategy 2010: <u>EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development (2010-2015)</u>	Development of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) 2007: <u>African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance</u> (entered into force in 2012) 2009: AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (<u>Kampala Convention</u>)	Structuring and development of the institutional architecture of the Strategy: the EU-Africa Ministerial Troika and Joint Task Force, creation of Joint Expert Groups and formulation of participation schemes for representatives of African and European civil societies: formation of the EU CSO Steering Group (in 2008) and the AU CSO Steering Committee (revitalised in 2009) 2008: <u>Joint declaration on climate change</u>	2008: <u>Accra Agenda for Action</u>

Date/Location	Key decisions and documents
III Summit November 2010 Tripoli	Theme: Investment, Economic Growth and Job Creation - <u>Tripoli Declaration II Joint Strategy implementation action plan (2011-2013)</u> Other actors: Declaration of <u>the 1st EU-Africa Intercontinental Civil Society Forum</u> Declaration of <u>the Youth Forum</u> Declaration of <u>the 2nd Trade Union Forum</u>

Relationship-relevant policy evolution and milestones

European Union	Africa	Joint milestones	International landmarks
2011: <u>European Union Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel region</u> 2011: <u>EU Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa</u> 2011: Agenda for Change (development policy) 2012: <u>EU Strategic Framework for Human Rights and Democracy</u> 2012: <u>The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's commitment to civil society in the field of external relations</u> 2013: <u>Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy for the period 2014-2020 and reform of the Common Fisheries Policy</u>	2010: Launch of the Infrastructure Development Programme in Africa (PIDA) 2014: Creation of the G5 Sahel	2011: EU-Africa Action Plan on Human Trafficking	Effects of the global economic crisis 2008-9 2011: <u>United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights</u> 2011: <u>Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation</u>

Date/Location	Key decisions and documents
IV Summit April 2014 Brussels	Theme: Investing in people, prosperity, and peace - Joint Declaration Roadmap 2014-2017 , with 5 priorities: (I) Peace and Security; (II) Democracy, Good Governance and Human Rights; (III) Human Development; (IV) Sustainable and Inclusive Development and Growth, and Continental Integration; (V) Global and Emerging Issues EU-Africa Declaration on Migration and Mobility Other actors: Declaration of the summit between the Pan-African Parliament and the European Parliament Declaration of the 2nd Civil Society Forum (2013) Declaration of the 5th EU-Africa Business Forum 3rd Youth Forum

Relationship-relevant policy evolution and milestones

European Union	Africa	Joint milestones	International landmarks
<p>EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020</p> <p>2014: EU Climate and Energy Action Framework 2030</p> <p>2015: European Agenda on Migration and EU Action Plan Against Migrant Trafficking 2015-2020</p> <p>2015: EU Action Plan for the Gulf of Guinea 2015-2020; Regional Action Plan for the Sahel 2015-2020; Regional Action Plan for the Horn of Africa 2015-2020</p> <p>2016: EU Global Strategy</p> <p>2016: EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020</p> <p>2017: European Consensus for Development (development policy)</p> <p>2017: EU External Investment Plan</p>	<p>2015: Agenda 2063: "The Africa We Want" (common strategic framework for inclusive growth and long-term sustainable development)</p> <p>Action plan for the first decade of implementation of the 2063 Agenda (2014-2023)</p> <p>2014: Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation</p> <p>2016: Continental Strategy for Education in Africa (2016-20215)</p> <p>2016: AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2018-2028)</p>	<p>Creation of the Pan-African Programme (financing the implementation of the Joint Strategy)</p> <p>2014: Khartoum Process (EU-Horn Migration Route Initiative)</p> <p>2015: De la Valetta Summit on migration</p>	<p>2015: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development / 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</p> <p>2015: Paris Agreement on Climate Change</p> <p>2015: Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development</p>

Date/Location	Key decisions and documents
V Summit November 2017 Abidjan	<p>Theme: Investing in young people for accelerated inclusive growth and sustainable development - Final Declaration</p> <p>Common priorities for the future: (I) investment in people (education, science, technology and skills development); (II) strengthen resilience, peace, security and governance; (iii) migration and mobility; (iv) mobilising investments for Africa's structural and sustainable transformation</p> <p>Joint declaration on the situation of migrants in Libya</p> <p>Other actors: Appeal of Abidjan - Meeting of the Pan-African Parliament and the European Parliament Declaration of the EU-Africa Civil Society Forum Declaration of the 4th EU-Africa Youth Forum Declaration of the 6th EU-Africa Business Forum Declaration of the 1st Forum of local and regional governments</p>

Relationship-relevant policy evolution and milestones

European Union	Africa	Joint milestones	International landmarks
<p>2019: European Green Deal</p> <p>EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027</p> <p>EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024</p> <p>2019: For a Sustainable Europe by 2030 (reflection paper)</p> <p>2020: UK exit from the EU</p> <p>2020: EU Proposal (EC+ EEAS) for a new strategy with Africa</p> <p>2020: Proposal for a European Pact on Migration and Asylum</p> <p>Agreement on the Common Agricultural Policy 2021-2027</p> <p>2021: EU Gender Action Plan 2021-2025</p>	<p>As of 2017: AU reform</p> <p>2018: Signing of the Treaty for the creation of an African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)</p> <p>2020: Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa 2020-2030</p>	<p>2017: Joint AU-EU-UN task force on migrants in Libya</p> <p>2018: EU-Africa Alliance (on investment, employment, economic integration and trade), with 4 sectoral task forces: digital, transportation, rural, energy.</p> <p>2018: Memorandum of Understanding between the African Union and the European Union on Peace, Security and Governance</p> <p>2020: Creation of the Africa-Europe Foundation</p> <p>2021: New ACP-EU agreement</p>	<p>2018: United Nations Global Compact on Refugees and Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration</p> <p>2019: Global Action Programme for Least Developed Countries 2021-2030</p>

2.2. The new ACP-EU agreement

About 20 years ago, the Cotonou agreement between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states established a partnership that was intended to be more political and strategic than the previous Lomé agreements and was considered innovative in many respects. However, over the past two decades, there were many provisions that ended up not being used, and changes in the challenges and context of the various parties – particularly in the EU and Africa – have determined the need to lay new foundations for the relationship.

Negotiations for a new agreement to follow the Cotonou Agreement began in 2018, and the general political agreement was established at the end of 2020, with the negotiations being formally concluded by the parties in April 2021⁹⁰. The new agreement, which will define EU's oldest and most comprehensive partnership and is expected to be in place for 20 years⁹¹, includes two components – **a common basic protocol**, with the values, principles and objectives that guide the partnership, the provisions that apply to all regions, and the cross-cutting priorities, **and three regional protocols**: EU Africa, EU Caribbean and EU Pacific (OACPS/EU, 2021).

The existential debate on **whether or not it makes sense to maintain such an agreement** precedes the start of negotiations, taking place particularly over the last decade, due to the rapid evolution of the international context and European and African priorities. From one point of view, the Cotonou agreement corresponds to the largest, most advanced and comprehensive North-South partnership⁹², being legally binding and should be maintained as a sign of a strong commitment to the development of the

poorest and most vulnerable countries. An opposing view challenges an agreement that emerged from the colonial legacy⁹³, with three regions with few affinities between them and which have practically no role in the implementation of the agreement, their union being artificially maintained by the relationship with the EU (without which the ACP Group would not exist)⁹⁴. Moreover, the existence of a global agenda of universal development that influences a shift in the international thinking on sustainable development and questions the traditional North South relationship, which has been at the heart of the EU ACP relationship, has raised questions about its preservation (Medinilla and Bossuyt, 2019). The new logic of European external action, the fact that the EU aspires to address Africa as a whole (while the Cotonou agreement is intended only for sub-Saharan Africa), and the deepening of EU Africa dialogue at a continental level in recent decades are contributing factors to this duplication of relationship frameworks. Added to this is the debate on the relevance of the partnership to the African continent, since, while not questioning the essential importance of development cooperation through concrete programmes and projects at the national, regional and intra-regional level, most of the key issues for Africa's future in other components of the Cotonou Agreement – joint dialogue on policy and trade – have been defined or agreed upon beyond the EU-ACP framework⁹⁵.

On the European side, member states initially split on this issue, as some countries see the agreement almost as a "historical relic" that makes little sense to them in external action (particularly eastern European countries), other countries (such as Germany and the Scandinavian countries) support the commitment to a joint and comprehensive approach to Africa as the best way to approach development cooperation, and still

⁹⁰ The agreement was due to expire in February 2020, but the delay in negotiations led to the postponement of this deadline and the foreseeable adoption of transitional measures after the formal signing of the political agreement, given the various issues still open regarding implementation.

⁹¹ A mid-term review is planned in 2030, the year of completion of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

⁹² 28 European countries (27 as of 2020, with the departure of the United Kingdom) and 79 ACP countries, 48 of them from Africa (sub-Saharan).

⁹³ The EU ACP agreements originate from the "special relations" provided for in the Treaty of Rome between European countries and their colonies, as well as on the subsequent need to maintain this relationship after independence, which materialised in the two Yaoundé Conventions (1965-1975) and the four Lomé conventions that followed them (1975-2000).

⁹⁴ With the revision of the Georgetown Agreement (signed in 1975), which created the so called ACP Group, in April 2020, it became an intergovernmental organisation, the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OEACP), headquartered in Brussels.

⁹⁵ On the trade front, for example, the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) process and other European market access issues have taken place outside the EU ACP framework. For a long time, and since 1975, the trade component was central to the EU ACP agreement (Lomé), notably through the granting of non reciprocal trade preferences to the ACP and compensation mechanisms for export losses due to price fluctuations. This was overridden by the need to align trade regimes with WTO rules and the proliferation of regional trade agreements in European trade policy, in this case through EPAs. The main objective of EU ACP trade cooperation is currently the implementation of EPAs.

others advocate maintaining the partnership in the existing ways (especially France and Portugal).

The ACP group and the African Union initially expressed different positions on the agreement with the EU: the common African (AU's) position wanted to move towards a split from the ACP group, entering into an EU Africa regional agreement, while the ACP group wanted to maintain the status quo — particularly to maintain the various ACP EU joint institutions and financial cooperation.

The decision agreed upon by the Executive Council of the African Union in March 2018 in Kigali on the post Cotonou stipulated that Africa's relations with the EU should be governed by "a single framework of Union to Union, continent to continent cooperation, regardless of the ACP EU framework" (AU, 2018). The Kigali decision, being consistent with the process of strengthening the path to "an interdependent and united Africa that speaks with one voice", was based on an interpretation that (i) the existence of an ACP group has done little to boost Africa's human, social and economic development, (ii) the EU, by separating North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, has contributed to slowing the African integration process, and (iii) the AU is the only framework with legitimacy and capacity to promote Africa's interests vis-à-vis the EU and other international actors (Carbone, M. 2020). This position was driven by the African Union Commission, the President of the African Union and a small number of states (Rwanda, South Africa, Zimbabwe), and challenged by most West African states and some in East and Central Africa, but not by north African countries (as it did not question the preservation of their cooperation agreements with the EU, specific to the region). More generally, this also reveals the different perspectives that exist among African countries about the power and role of the AU Commission in these contexts.

Thus, in practice, ministers representing these same countries have reached different decisions on the same issue. Indeed, given the coordination failures in the foreign policy architecture of African countries and/or the lack of prior consensus in African capitals, it is not uncommon to have different positions and lines of action between those dealing with European ODA (the African ambassadors

in Brussels covering the ACP agreement, for example) and those participating in continental processes in Africa (African representatives in the AU, for example) (Medinilla and Bossuyt, 2019). The fact that the ACP mandate for negotiating the new agreement and the African common position are essentially complementary or similar in terms of thematic priorities ultimately contributed to a compromise solution (in December 2018), in which a **"two-track process"** was decided upon in Africa's relations with the EU: one through the AU, centred on continental issues, and the other through the ACP, directed at the national level (Carbone, M, 2020).

Hence, the final option chosen, of a hybrid nature – the maintaining of ACP integrity with a general protocol and the coexistence with three protocols to better respond to the needs, priorities and specificities of each region – **represents a compromise solution in each of the parties**. The ACP group accepted the logic of having strong protocols for each of the three regions, to the detriment of strengthening unity and solidarity among its 79 members; Africa accepted the EU ACP framework and the role of the ACP group as negotiator on behalf of African countries; and the EU moved further away from its stated goal of reaching a unified policy for Africa as a whole (Carbone, M., 2020)

In the case of the general part of the new ACP EU agreement, the parties easily agreed on most formal and substantive issues, with some important exceptions: the meaning and implications of "external interference", issues relating to the gender dimension, the role of the International Criminal Court in the most serious international crimes, the commitments on the death penalty, the emphasis on obstacles to economic growth being on the supply side or on the demand side, and finally, the balance between legal and irregular migration. The two **issues that contributed to prolonging the negotiations**, due to divergent positions, were references to sexual rights – in the context of the wider debate on sexual and reproductive health rights and sexual orientation and gender identity – and the section on migration, as the EU wanted to introduce detailed procedures on the return and readmission of irregular migrants, while the ACP (particularly

African countries) advocated voluntary return and a greater focus on legal migration pathways⁹⁶. With regard to regional protocols, the basis for the negotiation of the Africa Protocol, albeit substantially expanded, was the 2017 Abidjan Declaration and other initiatives between the EU and the AU, which are in line with the continent's vision of development and which have greatly facilitated the process.

The new agreement is presented as a renewed partnership that focuses on **common interests and goes beyond development aid** – these also having been in some way the basic premises of Cotonou. It focuses on six major thematic areas: (i) human rights, democracy and governance, (ii) peace and security, (iii) human and social development, (iv) environmental sustainability and climate change, (v) sustainable growth and (vi) migration and mobility. **Cotonou's central objective, the eradication of poverty, is thus diluted in the other priorities**, which are quite broad, being especially present in the field of human and social development (**Box 1**). Cotonou's division into three fundamental pillars – political dialogue, economic and trade cooperation, and development cooperation⁹⁷ – is also further diluted in the provisions on greater diversification of instruments and means of cooperation within the framework of the various thematic priorities. Overall, the approach is more geopolitical, but the broad scope of the partnership translates into a long list of themes, from which it is difficult to extract the highest priorities.

The **partnership dimension** is strengthened throughout the agreement by the emphasis on shared responsibility, reciprocity, mutual respect and accountability, as well as a chapter dedicated to multilateral and international cooperation on issues of common interest. In this sense, there is an evolution of Cotonou, which envisaged a political dialogue based on these principles and encompassing national, regional and global issues for more specific provisions on the need to move forward with a more concrete coordination of positions at the multilateral level, so that the parties would work together to advocate for multilateralism and a rules-based trading regime.

The **partnership elements considered "essential"** remain: respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law, as well as the "fundamental" element – good governance, including the fight against corruption – which may lead to consultations and other appropriate measures in the event of infringement, including the suspension of the agreement (former Articles 96 and 97 of Cotonou, Article 101 of the new agreement). These elements highlight **the EU's regulatory nature within the partnership, in the context of a formal approach to "values" and conditionalities** in development cooperation, which tacitly distinguishes the EU from other international partners. Whilst Article 96 of Cotonou (on the essential elements) has been invoked several times by the EU, the consultation process and the adoption of the necessary measures in serious cases of corruption (Article 97) have been invoked only once during the 20 years of the agreement. The fact it was little used and ineffective warned of the need for better monitoring of the situation in relation to the fundamental elements of the agreement (EP, 2016b). It should be noted that, in this context, reciprocity is formally ensured by establishing that either party can trigger the consultation mechanisms in the face of a dispute or non-compliance, although in practice it does not seem likely that ACP countries will do so in relation to the EU.

One of the more detailed parts of the agreement concerns **migration**, where it goes beyond what might be foreseeable, given the divergence of positions that have marked the relationship, particularly between the EU and Africa. In Cotonou, only one article (Article 13) addressed migration, establishing that all countries must accept, without further formalities, the return and readmission of their illegally emigrated nationals, and including a provision noting that, if requested by one of the parties, negotiations were to be initiated with ACP states with a view to finalising bilateral agreements governing specific obligations on the readmission and repatriation of their nationals. Thus, the issue of readmission did not become binding, immediate and effective in the Cotonou framework. The new agreement contains a thematic chapter on this issue, which addresses issues as diverse as legal migration, migration and development, irregular migration and protection and

⁹⁶ These two issues continued to be the subject of disagreements within the EU, with two member countries trying to reopen negotiations even after the political agreement between the two parties on the text in December 2020, on the grounds that the text deviated substantially from the initial negotiating mandate that the member countries conferred upon the EC. See, for example, "[Exclusive: European Commission battles to sell post-Cotonou deal at home](#)", DEVEX, 14.01.2021

⁹⁷ The transition from the Lomé Agreements to the Cotonou Agreement in 2000 incorporated political dialogue and trade as two components of the agreement (together with the development cooperation component).

asylum, including clear provisions on return and readmission processes⁹⁸. Again, the reciprocity of the provisions is ensured in formal terms, but this is an issue which, in practice, has only had one meaning – flows to Europe, not the other way around – so that in practice it will be aimed at the ACP parties (and particularly Africa).

Finally, with regard to the provisions of the agreement, **Policy Coherence for Development** (PCD) also appears reciprocally, as a general and mutual commitment (i.e. each party must take into account the impact of its sectoral policies on the other side), but the consultation mechanism that existed in the previous conventions disappears in the new agreement. The Article 12 Lomé/Cotonou mechanism, which was used several times in the 1980s and 1990s to protect the interests of ACP countries, had ceased to be used in the last two decades and was not activated by the ACP on important occasions such as the preparation of the EU's multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027. This contradicts various calls from European civil society, which advocated strengthening PCD through concrete specifications on implementation and monitoring frameworks, to ensure that European policies in areas crucial to EU-ACP cooperation (such as trade, energy, agriculture and fisheries, security and migration) contribute to global development (CONCORD, 2017). Similarly, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development serves as a global framework for guiding the partnership, but joint monitoring and monitoring mechanisms of the agreement are not envisaged that concretely incorporate the assessment of how it contributes to the SDGs, as had been recommended by the European Parliament (EP, 2019b).⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Initially, the EC proposed that more detailed questions on return and readmission should be included in an annex to the agreement.

⁹⁹ Since 2016, the European Parliament has recommended "a mechanism for monitoring, accountability and peer review of the ACP EU for the regular monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs in the Member States, with representatives of ACP countries and EU Member States, not only of the central government institutions, but also of parliaments, regional and local authorities, civil society and scientific communities, which annually draw conclusions and recommendations for national, regional and global level review procedures, and for monitoring" (EP, 2016b). It should be noted, however, that geographical cooperation at the national level within the EU ACP framework tends to be based on the national development plans of partner countries, which are aligned with the SDGs.

BOX 1

Objectives and Priorities of the ACP-EU Partnership



Cotonou Agreement (2000-2020) - Article 1

The Community and its Member States, on the one side, and the ACP States, on the other, hereinafter referred to as the "Parties", conclude this Agreement to **promote and accelerate the economic, cultural and social development of the ACP States** in order to contribute to

peace and security and promote a stable and democratic political context.

The partnership **focuses on the objective of reducing poverty, and in the long term, its eradication, in line with the objectives of sustainable development** and progressive integration of ACP countries into the world economy.



New ACP-EU Agreement (2021-2040)

1. This agreement **establishes a strengthened political partnership between the Parties to generate mutually beneficial results on common and interconnected interests** and in line with shared values.
2. This Agreement shall contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement being the comprehensive frameworks guiding the partnership.
3. The objectives of this Agreement are:
 - a. Promote, protect and fulfil **human rights, democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance**, with particular attention to gender equality;
 - b. Build **peaceful and resilient states and societies**, addressing current and emerging threats to peace and security;
 - c. Promote **human and social development, in particular the eradication of poverty, and address inequalities**, by ensuring that everyone lives a dignified life and no one is left behind, with special attention to women and girls;
 - d. **Mobilise investment, support trade and promote private sector development** with a view to achieving sustainable and inclusive growth and creating decent jobs for all;

e. **Combat climate change, protect the environment and ensure sustainable management of natural resources;**

f. Implement a **comprehensive and balanced approach to migration** in order to take advantage of the benefits of safe, orderly and regular migration and mobility and prevent irregular migration by addressing its root causes in full respect of international law and in accordance with the powers of the parties.

(...)

4. This Agreement **shall facilitate the adoption of common positions by the Parties at the international level** by strengthening partnerships to promote multilateralism and a rules-based international order with a view to boosting global action.

Africa Regional Protocol - Article 2: Strategic Priorities

The parties agree to be involved in the following key areas:

- a. Economic growth and inclusive and sustainable development
- b. Social and human development
- c. Environment, natural resource management and climate change
- d. Peace and security
- e. Human rights, democracy and governance
- f. Migration and mobility



The **implementation of the new agreement encompasses a strong component of uncertainty** due to several factors. One of these elements has to do with **the agreement's legal nature in the EU**, which, being an internal issue of one of the parties, is not a minor issue, as it largely determines how it will be implemented and its importance to the Member States. Indeed, it remains to be decided whether this is an agreement whose implementation is the exclusive competence of the European Commission (in which Member States waive their prerogative of implementation in favour of the Commission), or whether the mixed nature of Cotonou (in which both the EC and the Member States have responsibility and intervention in the practical implementation of the partnership) is maintained. In the first scenario, the political signal given by the European side on the importance of the partnership will certainly be weaker, in addition to contradicting the ongoing efforts in the EU to implement "Team Europe" approaches that express the focus on the Member States and Community institutions assuming a greater share in the management of efforts for international development. Moreover, if on the one hand, the exclusive legal competence of the EC could favour a faster and simpler concrete implementation of the agreement (given the internal divisions between EU Member States), on the other hand, for ACP countries, the presence of European countries with which they have bilateral relations seems very relevant, particularly in the framework of the joint implementing bodies. Thus, a lengthy internal process at the EU level is to be expected, the result of which is difficult to predict.

A very relevant aspect is **the disappearance of the specific financial instrument** on development cooperation, which has been the main source of funding for this partnership for more than 60 years and considered one of its main distinctive elements (Boidin, 2020). As already mentioned, the European Development Fund (EDF) was added to the EU budget¹⁰⁰, with the funds being decided by the European side in the framework of the new

external action instrument and in accordance with the internal European management mechanisms, now corresponding to the process which is also followed by EU development policy for non-ACP regions (see Chapter 1.3). In the new agreement, it is only mentioned that the EU will communicate, where possible, the indicative allocation for each ACP region¹⁰¹. Thus it remains unclear what the role of ACP countries will be in negotiating, defining and evaluating the amounts and instruments for implementing this cooperation in the financial sphere. The ACP will seek to maintain, as far as possible, the principles of joint management, but it is unclear how this will be feasible in the programming, allocation and operationalisation of the new EU external action instrument (the NDICI). As this was previously an element of shared programming and management between the EC and partner countries, questions arise as to whether this development is not at odds with the objective of strengthening shared and common responsibilities in the implementation of the partnership, as well as with the principles of development effectiveness, where predictability, ownership and leadership of partner countries are fundamental pillars.

Another element concerns the predictable difficulty of rapid, effective and fluid implementation of the **defined institutional architecture**. The "regionalisation" of the new Agreement reflects the shift of the centre of gravity from the partnership to the three regional components, which have their own governance regimes, duplicating most institutions at common and regional level. Thus, the ACP-EU Council of Ministers, the Joint Committee of Ambassadors and the Joint Assembly (parliamentary dimension)¹⁰² will have counterparts for each of the three regions, which, reflecting a structure that is much more complex and cumbersome than the previous one, also raises questions of composition/representation in these implementing bodies, as well as of articulation and effectiveness.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ The financial instrument becomes the NDICI, as described in chapter 1.3. Thus, financial envelopes previously existing in the EDF disappear: the intra-ACP envelope and the envelope for regional cooperation and integration (Caribbean, Pacific and 4 African regions).

¹⁰¹ During the negotiations, delays in negotiating the 2021-2027 MFF justified further vagueness in this area, and only after the political agreement was signed in January 2021 did the EC formally inform the ACP party that the EDF would cease to exist.

¹⁰² Initially, the ACP-EU Joint Assembly was expected to be extinguished, but the European Parliament threatened to veto the Agreement if there were no guarantees of a parliamentary dimension to ensure effective supervision.

¹⁰³ This issue occurs mainly in the case of Africa, where there is greater uncertainty about the interlocutors and organisation of the African representation in the various implementing bodies of the Africa Protocol. The role of the new OACPS, now an intergovernmental organisation with legal existence and therefore an interlocutor with valid legal representation (unlike the ACP Group, which was only a consultative body), will also have to be defined.

Finally, the **practical link between the EU-Africa and EU-ACP relationship frameworks** incorporates various uncertainties and "grey areas", taking into account the institutional dynamics of the parties, and in the context of thematic enlargement, renewal and the intended strengthening of these two partnerships (see chapter 3). The Africa Regional Protocol, within the new ACP-EU Agreement, recognises the political guiding role of EU-AU summits. On the other hand, the Agreement only binds the African members of the ACP (sub-Saharan Africa) and does not apply to continental institutions, so there may be no consistency between the provisions of the agreement (e.g. on migration) and then what is collectively agreed upon in the continental dialogue. This "two-way" approach will therefore require an enhanced coordination of actors and structures, on both the European and the African sides, and in the common structures of dialogue and cooperation.



Conclusion of OACPS-EU Agreement Negotiations by chief negotiators. © Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), April, 2021.

2.3. Strategic and institutional dynamics in Africa

Despite the obvious asymmetry of capacities and mandates between the European and African parties in the various partnerships and strands of the relationship, it is clear that African continental capacities are strengthened in responding to the multiple development challenges, especially over the last decade. The creation of the African Union (AU) in 2002¹⁰⁴ was decisive for the existence of a **valid and recognised interlocutor for the main development partners**, but also, and primarily, for the **definition of its own vision for development** (expressed in the Agenda 2063), for the **attempt at coordination between countries, the various African regions** and for the **advancement in structuring areas of continental cooperation**, increasingly becoming the pan-African institution defending Africa's interests. In this context, the area of peace and security has been the most immediate example since its inception, with the progress in the creation and strengthening of an African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), direct collaboration with the United Nations and EU support in various strands.

However, since the creation of the AU, **the context of the continent has changed significantly**. Internally, adding to the persistence of structural problems that have led to some discouraging development outcomes (such as conflicts, poverty and inequality, to which is added the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁰⁵) there have been new or intensified challenges, resulting from large population growth (notably in education, skills and employment) and accelerated urbanisation, as well as the impact of unavoidable global challenges such as climate change¹⁰⁶. This means that development needs remain enormous, very broad and diverse, and there is a difficulty in defining a narrower agenda of limited and concrete priorities. Externally, the increase in the continent's importance in

¹⁰⁴ The previous Organization of African Unity (OAU), which has existed since 1963 and was founded following several historical currents and political trends that focused on supporting African liberation movements and independence, has never had a truly continental scope, political traction, or capacity to pool efforts. The African Union seeks, according to its Constitutive Act, "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena".

¹⁰⁵ Africa is the region with the lowest rates of human, social and economic development, and it is the one that is furthest away from achieving the SDGs. Of the 39 countries considered to be in conflict and that demonstrate institutional and social fragility in 2021 according to the [World Bank Group](#), 21 are located in Africa. In December 2020, of the 46 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) according to the [United Nations classification](#), 33 are African countries, and about 9 in every 10 people in extreme poverty in the world live in Africa. At the same time, however, six of the ten fastest growing economies in the world are African, and it is the continent with one of the largest youth populations in the world. The social and economic impact of the pandemic has been particularly severe, worsening poverty in its multiple dimensions, while the response to the pandemic has contributed to worsening the indebtedness of African countries (OECD and UNCTAD data).

¹⁰⁶ In this respect, Africa is both the continent that has contributed the least to climate change and the one most affected by climate change, with multiple environmental, economic and social impacts (ranging from conflicts to migration).

geopolitical and geoeconomic terms has enabled greater diversification of partnerships and an increase in the negotiating power of African actors. The increased Chinese presence, in particular, in addition to its great internal impact – mainly in the growth of funding for infrastructure projects in various areas (energy, natural resources, transportation, highway/railway, bridges, ports, buildings) and also in the growth of indebtedness of African countries, resulting from the types of financing favoured and the returns demanded – also had a huge effect on Africa's relationship with the rest of the world, including with the European Union. At the global level, the position and vote of African countries in various structures is particularly relevant due to their number, but African countries still have **little presence and influence in multilateral governance structures**, particularly in financial institutions and structures such as the G20¹⁰⁷, which means they are less able to influence policies and decisions with impacts on their development.

The Agenda 2063, adopted in January 2015, structured the long-term vision for Africa's development and defined seven aspirations for the next 50 years, divided into 39 priority areas and 20 objectives to be achieved (AU, 2015) (Box 2). In this context, the last aspiration for Africa's future, out of a total of seven, is related to the international aspect, with two main objectives: **to improve the continent's participation in the global governance system** (UN Security Council, financial institutions, global common goods) **and to strengthen development financing**, either by improving external partnerships, so that they are more strategic and meet African transformation priorities, or through strategies to finance their own development and reduce dependence on external aid.

In 2015, the definition of an action plan to implement the Agenda for the first decade (2014-2023) added greater detail to the priorities, strategies and programmes involved, including the so-called **flagship or structuring projects** for development at a continental level¹⁰⁸. The external financing and partnerships for these projects are quite diverse, ranging from development banks

(African Development Bank, World Bank, European Investment Bank), and multilateral and regional organisations (particularly the EU and UN agencies such as UNECA, UNCTAD and UNHCR, all of which are more focused on technical assistance and capacity building), to countries at the bilateral level, such as China (particularly in the African High-Speed Rail Network project), India (in the Pan-African Electronic Network – e-Network) and European donor agencies (French Development Agency – AFD and GIZ, from Germany).

In addition, the 2063 Agenda also unfolds specific plans to address the aspiration of an "Africa with a people-oriented development", particularly in supporting the empowerment of women and youth, through the Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2018-2018 and The Action Plan for Youth Empowerment 2019-2023. These plans correspond not only to the practical implementation of Agenda 2063 but also to the concrete translation of the AU treaties – the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on Women's Rights in Africa (in force since 2005), and the African Youth Charter (in force since 2009).

The definition and implementation of **continental policies** has increased in recent years. Among the continental frameworks for action in areas considered as structuring for Africa's development are the African Infrastructure Development Programme (PIDA), the Comprehensive Programme for Agricultural Development of Africa (CAADP), the Africa Mining Vision and the Africa Accelerated Industrial Development Programme, the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy and also a strategy to promote intra-African trade¹⁰⁹. We see then that African continental priorities at a practical level are largely focused on economic transformation in terms of infrastructure, industrialisation, and strategic sectors such as agriculture and minerals, bearing in mind, as cross-cutting issues, the issue of human resource capacity building, job creation and increased trade. In terms of infrastructure alone, the African Development Bank (ADB) estimates that needs are between USD 130 billion

¹⁰⁷ Only one African country (South Africa) is part of the group of the world's largest economies, which accounts for 80% of global GDP and 60% of the world's population. For Europe, four European countries and the European Union are an integral part of it, as well as Spain as a permanent guest. See www.g20.org

¹⁰⁸ These include the Great Inga Dam, the African High-Speed Rail Network, the African Single Air Transport Market, the Pan-African Electronic Network, continental monetary and financial institutions, the Continental Free Trade Area, the Initiative for the Silencing of the Guns until 2030, and the Free Movement of all Persons and African Passport. Source: <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/flagship-projects>

¹⁰⁹ Learn more at <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/continental-frameworks>

and 170 million per year, and despite investment growth, the current funding gap is around USD 70 billion to 108 billion. This warns not only of the need to **diversify partnerships**, but also of the importance of considering **various funding models**, including public-private partnerships, aid and other development financing instruments, sovereign bonds, and loans, among others.

As part of continental policies, the recent creation of an **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**¹¹⁰ represents the culmination of a long process of negotiations and the articulation of countries and Regional Economic Communities (RECs)¹¹¹ with a view to facilitating trade and promoting economic integration through a vast market that provides an opportunity for countries to diversify their exports, attract more Foreign Direct Investment and create jobs. This is a very relevant issue for development, as Africa is both the continent with the lowest participation in world trade (representing about 3%) and the continent with the least trade between countries (intra-African trade constitutes between 16% and 18% of total trade). In order to take advantage of these opportunities, there not only needs to be the planned removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers between countries, simplification and harmonisation of procedures, but also an additional effort to create the necessary infrastructures at various levels and increase the capacity of production, processing and transformation of products, as well as training in relevant technical areas. In any case, the creation of AfCFTA, a long-standing aspiration of Africa, sends an important economic and political signal and has increased the leverage of the AU in its political relationship with international partners (Amare, 2020), in addition to its implementation necessarily prompting a rethinking of external relations, including with the EU (Lopes, 2018).

These and other priorities for African development underscore the growing importance of knowledge, technical skills and innovation. Especially in sectors such as trade or digitalisation, the complexification of global governance frameworks, rules and procedures at the

global level requires enhanced human and institutional capabilities in legal, financial, digital and other terms. This is relevant to the negotiation of mutually beneficial trade and investment agreements, to the creation of quality jobs (with a focus on education and training for appropriate technical skills), or to the definition of robust legal frameworks that enable risk reduction and boost investment, among other aspects. Thus, Africa's continental perspective on partnerships increasingly places the focus not only on financial resources and financing, but also on the **effective transfer of skills, knowledge and technology**. In this context, however, an area rarely found in African priorities for relationships with external partners is **institutional and state capacity building**, a basic condition for effective conditions for policy implementation – the importance of which has been further evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹¹⁰ The agreement was signed in March 2018, and the AfCFTA has been operational since January 2021, with a new phase of negotiations on intellectual property issues, rules of origin, etc. The AfCFTA provides for the gradual elimination of 90% of tariffs within 10 years for LDCs and 5 years for the rest.

¹¹¹ There are eight regional economic communities recognised by the African Union, namely: the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Community of the Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Community of Southern African States (SADC) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU).

BOX 2

The Agenda 2063 Vision

- 1st **Aspiration:** A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.
- 2nd **Aspiration:** An integrated continent; politically united on the basis of the ideals of pan-Africanism and the vision of the African Renaissance.
- 3rd **Aspiration:** An Africa of good governance, democracy, respecting human rights, justice and the rule of law.
- 4th **Aspiration:** A peaceful and safe Africa.
- 5th **Aspiration:** An Africa with a strong cultural identity, heritage, value and common ethics.
- 6th **Aspiration:** An Africa where development is people and childcare-oriented, relying on the potential of the African people, especially women and youth.
- 7th **Aspiration:** Africa as an actor, united, resilient, strong and influential, and a worldwide partner.

Source: AU, 2015.

The AU's ability to adopt an increasing number of policies has not, however, been reflected in a corresponding increase in the capacity of its institutions in terms of coordination, implementation and monitoring. Thus, **in institutional terms, the need to restructure the African Union** to better respond to the implementation of the 2063 Agenda and development challenges and opportunities was recognised in 2016, with the launch of a process of reflection, consultations and evaluation that resulted in the Me'kelle Report (2016), focusing on the institutional structure and effectiveness of the secretariat, and the Kagamé Report (2017), which proposed and propelled a broader reform process, which is still ongoing. These studies concluded that the African Union was highly fragmented, with too many priority areas; that its complicated structure and poor management capacity had led to inefficient working methods, weak decision-making and a lack of responsibility and accountability; that the institution is not financially

independent or sustained, relying on partner financing for the majority of its funding; and that coordination between the Union and the Regional Economic Communities is limited (AU, 2017).

In addition to restructuring procedures and working methods, the adaptation of mandates and institutional composition¹¹², the reforms target areas that are highly relevant politically to improve the African Union's domestic and international performance and development impact, such as the need to focus on a smaller number of priority areas where the continental approach can make a difference, clarifying the division of labour between the African Union, RECs and Member States (in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity, complementarity and comparative advantage)¹¹³, and improving the connection with African citizens (AU, 2017). The lack of institutional financial self-sufficiency and of support for various projects at

¹¹² In particular, the selection and election processes of the AU Commission, to ensure greater transparency and regional representation and gender parity. The AU Commission that took office in 2021 has six Commissioners (instead of the previous eight), which corresponds more to a reorganisation of portfolios than to a rationalisation of priorities. The presidency of the AU moved from South Africa to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

¹¹³ In July 2019, the AU approved a document on the division of labor between the AU, the RECs and the member states, available at <https://bit.ly/3e9mo6f>.

the continental level continues and will foreseeably remain one of the main concerns¹¹⁴. On the other hand, there will only be a real impact on people's lives if the decisions, standards, values and policies defined at the continental level are effectively translated and implemented by the

member countries. However, the level of implementation of AU decisions at the national level is generally low, and the possibility of some form of accountability or liability mechanism for non-compliance in this implementation is not on the reform agenda.¹¹⁵

BOX 3

African Union priorities (Presidency and Commission) for 2021-2024

Priorities set forth by the President of the African Union Commission - Moussa Faki Mahamat (2nd term)

1. Finalising institutional reform and strengthening the Commission's leadership
2. Improve administrative and financial accountability
3. "Silence the arms" at the continental level
4. Successfully implement key integration projects
5. Promote food self-sufficiency, reduce poverty by building resilience through agriculture and the blue economy; protect the environment
6. Operationalise policies for Youth and Women
7. Stimulate African thinking on the determinants of crises
8. Renew strategic partnerships

Priorities set forth by the Presidency of the African Union – Felix Tshisekedi, Democratic Republic of Congo

1. "Silence the arms" in Africa
2. Implement the AfCFTA and the Africa Strategy on Raw Materials
3. Construction of the Grande Inga hydroelectric project (in the DRC)
4. Fight against COVID-19 (including access to vaccines)
5. Development of Africa's human capital
6. Promotion of Africa's cultural heritage
7. Promotion of zero tolerance for gender-based violence, and of gender parity in the AU and the Member States
8. Lay the groundwork for the African Humanitarian Agency, advocate for migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons
9. Combating climate change

Source: Drawn up by the authors, based on the [vision of the Chairperson of the AUC](#) and the inauguration speech of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, February 2021.

¹¹⁴ More than 40% of member states did not regularly pay their annual contributions, countries have little involvement in the AU budget, and there are no strong supervisory and accountability mechanisms. The AU decided in 2016 to introduce a tax on eligible imports from outside the continent to finance its budget and programmes, and specifically, peace and security operations. Learn more at <https://au.int/AUReforms/financing>

¹¹⁵ See for example, "African Union Reform Decisions: How will change happen?" Include Platform, 28.11.2018.

The finding of overlapping implementation functions and powers between the African Union and NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development, established in 2001), although it was integrated into the AU as a technical implementation body, has also led to an attempt at further clarification, which has resulted in the creation of the first continental development agency – the **African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)**.¹¹⁶ The mission is to establish itself as a platform to promote the development of the continent through the effective implementation of the 2063 Agenda and as a technical interface with development partners.

Despite the existence of a division of functions/powers between the African Union Commission, AUDA-NEPAD and regional economic units, problems of articulation and duplication persist since they conduct their own processes of planning and mobilisation of resources, often without mutual consultations, and in some cases, competing for the same financial resources, in particular at external/international levels. The coherence of implementation of projects and partnerships can also be influenced by the fact that both the African Union Commission (AUC) and the AUDA-NEPAD work with regional organisations and African countries on a bilateral basis. On the other hand, AUDA-NEPAD also works virtually independently with external partners on a project basis, being mainly financed by multilateral agencies (United Nations and World Bank) and bilateral cooperation agencies, which in addition to Japan (JICA) and the United States (USAID) are from European countries: Germany (GIZ), Spain (AECID), Norway (NORAD), Sweden (SIDA) and France (AFD).

The external interest in Africa has led to an expansion of "**strategic partnerships**", including in this case countries

not traditionally involved, which have deepened their external action both in the field of development cooperation in general (e.g. with the creation of agencies and cooperation policies) and in the relationship with African governance structures (acquiring observer status in the AU, signing partnership agreements, implementing joint action plans and holding regular summits and joint discussion forums). In addition to the specific case of China¹¹⁷, which by the size and depth of its presence in African countries is quite a different case, several so called emerging donors, such as South Korea, India or Turkey¹¹⁸, are highlighted, which have in common the emphasis on African leadership in development processes – "African solutions to African problems" – a model of cooperation that is said to be free of conditionalities, and the focus on economic cooperation and trade and investment opportunities, as well as, in some cases, a vocalisation of the opposition to the hegemony of Western and more "traditional" models of cooperation. Russia is a different case, more focused on security and defence issues, its partnership being the last one signed by the AU at the first joint summit in 2019¹¹⁹. Although there is a rule of participation of African countries in these types of summits and joint meetings at the highest level, the AU does not have the power to impose these provisions on African countries in meetings not organised by the AU, and this is also ignored by external partners¹²⁰.

The ever-widening framework of partnerships – sometimes considered to be low in substance, redundant or formatted to match the geostrategic interests of partners and not necessarily Africa (ISS, 2019) – has made their management and coordination increasingly challenging and complicated. Thus, the AU decided to initiate a process of **evaluating international partnerships**, not only for their rationalisation with a view to deriving

¹¹⁶ Decision taken by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in July 2018.

¹¹⁷ The China-Africa Cooperation Forum (FOCAC) has been in place since 2000 (the last [action plan covers the period 2019-2021](#) and an [extraordinary joint response summit](#) to COVID-19 was held in June 2020), China published its policy for Africa in 2006 and [2015](#) and its [new white paper on cooperation policy](#) in January 2021 (where it states that 45% of Chinese financing for development went to the African continent between 2013 and 2018). The Afrobarometer 2019/2020 assessed the perception of African citizens in 18 countries about the Chinese presence, development models and development funds, and can be viewed at https://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/africa-china_relations-3sept20.pdf.

¹¹⁸ The India-Africa Forum Summit has been in place since 2008. The "Korea Initiative for African Development" was launched in 2006, the joint cooperation forums have been held since the same year (2006, 2009, 2012, 2016, 2021). Turkey has been an observer member of the AU since 2005, being considered a strategic partner in 2008, and several summits were held with joint ministerial conferences (the first in 2008), signings of multiannual implementation plans and meetings of the [Turkey-Africa Economic and Business Forum](#); Turkish partnership policy with Africa was reformulated in 2013, and the number of Turkish embassies in Africa increased from 12 in 2003 to 41 in 2020.

¹¹⁹ The next summit will be held in 2022: <https://summitafrica.ru/en/>.

¹²⁰ The so-called "Banjul formula" was approved in 2006. The AUC recently proposed that Africa be represented at partnership meetings not by the leaders of the African countries, but by the AU troika (former, present and future leaders taking over the presidency of the AU), the presidents of the RECs and the president of the NEPAD agency.

greater benefits, but also on what is needed to improve the articulation between African parties in that context, and to reflect on what Africa wants from these partnerships – particularly with the European Union, China and the United States (since the African Growth and Opportunity Act – AGOA ends in 2025). In this sense, in addition to the ongoing process in the internal structure of the AU, the Interactive Platform for the Coordination of AU Partnerships was also created (in December 2017). Institutionally, the continental partnership with the European Union is considered the most substantial, structured and advanced of the African partnerships, and it has been seen as a case study that can serve as the basis for action in other partnerships. The process of **building a joint Africa negotiating document with the EU** (which can serve as the basis for the negotiations on a possible joint strategy), which is underway, is the first attempt to jointly articulate the African position vis-à-vis a partner, which has also resulted in a discussion on the process itself and guidelines. The Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC), i.e. member states, play the main role in this process.

The negotiation and relationship capabilities of the African Union with external partners, namely the European Union, is hampered by **various internal, political and institutional factors**. From the outset, the lack of a strong mandate derived from the treaties (such as that in the European Commission and EEAS) and exclusive own responsibilities in the implementation of common policies requires the AU Commission to negotiate and attempt to coordinate and constantly balance the sensitivities of Member States and regional economic communities on a case-by-case basis. This sometimes leads to issues of legitimacy and ownership, but also confusion and duplication in Africa's multilateral positions, as was the case in the negotiation of the new ACP-EU Agreement (see chapter 2.2.). On the other hand, an AUC with scarce human and financial resources can have difficulty in managing a number of sectors, themes, files

and partnerships, both internally and externally – a fact that the process of structural strengthening of the AUC and the support of technical assistance and training, provided mainly by the European Union, have been able to improve but not fully minimise. Moreover, despite the growing articulation of continental, regional and national frameworks and strategies, at the practical level, the interests of African countries, not necessarily convergent, have great preponderance in the relationship with external partners at a bilateral level, which is reflected in the continuation, in parallel, of various divergent policies and competing positions, compromising the aspiration to more coherent and common African positions in dealing with these partners (see chapter 3).

In the **multilateral framework, and particularly at the United Nations**, there is a noticeable greater effort to coordinate African positions, namely on issues of peace and security. On the one hand, coordination between the AU and the United Nations in this area has been strengthened in recent years, and there is also a trilateral coordination process AU-EU-United Nations, focusing on peacekeeping missions. The marginalisation of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) at the United Nations Security Council (UNC) has not contributed to strengthening the aforementioned aspiration of African solutions to the continent's challenges, but there has been an effort to coordinate the positions of African members in the UNPSC (the so-called "A3") and to align the decisions of the AU PSC with those of the UNPSC¹²¹.

With the strengthening of the AU's presence on the global stage, African countries are also increasingly interested in supporting **Africa's coordinated positions in the face of international issues relevant to the continent**. Traditionally and for the most part, this demand for articulation has been seen as a need for a common response to specific negotiation processes or mechanisms existing at international level¹²². However, concerted effort has also increased in relation to problems affecting

¹²¹ Africa's representativeness in the UNPSC and the guarantee of UN contributions to AU-managed peace support operations are two issues to be improved in the UA-UN partnership. Not being the subject of the present study, the dynamics between the two PSCs can be understood through the ICG (2019), *The Tale of Two Councils: Strengthening AU-UN Cooperation*, International Crisis Group, June 2019; and for an analysis of this partnership, see Forti and Singh (2019), "Toward a More Effective UN-AU Partnership on Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management", ISS-IPI, October 2019.

¹²² These are the cases, in particular, of the Common Position on the Post-2015 Development Goals (2014) for the negotiation of a new global development framework, which has become the 2030 Agenda; of the *Common Position on the Effectiveness of Humanitarian Action* for the World Humanitarian Summit (2016); of the *Common Position on a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* (2017); of the *Common Position on the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction* (2019); or the *Common Position on the Revision of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture* (2020).

African countries and in which there is clear added value in having a more unified voice vis-à-vis external partners. A recent example is the African common position on asset recovery (2020), proposed by Nigeria, which is the legal instrument for negotiating the return of assets that have been stolen or left the continent in illicit financial flows and which are in foreign jurisdictions (notably in tax havens). Another example is the attempt to conciliate positions and the AU's leadership in responding to the pandemic, notably through a common narrative on global health governance, a coordinated appeal to the international community on the need for external support and debt relief, and more coordinated action on access to vaccines. The harmonisation of African positions on these and other issues naturally reflects on the relationship with the European Union, in particular on the prospects of taking, or not taking, joint positions in multilateral forums (chapter 3).

2.4. The involvement and role of civil society

The recognition of civil society as a **key development actor** and the commitment of EU development policy in this framework, as seen in the 2017 Consensus (paragraphs 17 and 62, among others, EU, 2017) and in the mission letter of the Commissioner for International Partnerships (EC, 2019), contributes to this being a recognised, integral player in both the continental cooperation process with Africa and in the framework of EU-ACP cooperation, albeit in different ways.

The **Cotonou Partnership Agreement** is innovative in this regard. On the one hand, in formal terms, its provisions recognise the fundamental role of civil society as a full-fledged actor, including its organisations (CSOs), and its expressed objectives are to strengthen its role in development cooperation. In addition, the Agreement also states that civil society must be fully involved, as an

actor in its own right, in political processes and in the implementation and monitoring of the European ODA. On the other hand, with Cotonou having established that CSOs should be "involved in the consultation of cooperation strategies", consultations on European aid programming in partner countries tended to be more frequent in ACP countries than in countries outside this partnership. However, these consultations tend to suffer from the shortcomings generally pointed out in the participation and structured involvement of civil society in political decision-making processes and their implementation, in other words, it is the fact that these are validation exercises rather than discussion exercises, with little or no influence on final decisions¹²³. Although EU delegations have been making efforts to improve these processes in recent years, problems such as representativeness and lack of communication have also been pointed out on a number of occasions. In addition, the participation of CSOs has been threatened by the growing number of countries adopting legal structures or restrictive measures, both at ACP and EU levels, further limiting the scope of their action and restricting essential freedoms. It should also be noted that the involvement of CSOs at the level of consultation for programming was mainly focused on national programmes and was not a common practice for regional or even intra-ACP envelopes.¹²⁴

In the context of the EU-ACP partnership, CSOs can access European funds through a variety of ways: "support for civil society and local authorities" could be chosen as one of the priority sectors of a partner country for European cooperation under the EDF, and where this was not the case, CSOs could be eligible as implementers of funds allocated to priority sectors through other channels, or even beneficiaries of specific support. The Cotonou Agreement was also explicit about the possibility for CSOs to benefit from support for the development of their capacities and financial resources to support the implementation of national cooperation strategies – so bilateral cooperation within the EDF could include a specific envelope for civil society, separate from the three or four priority sectors. In the case of the 11th EDF, around 60% of ACP countries opted for this envelope¹²⁵, which

¹²³ In this regard, see for example "Towards a more effective partnership with civil society", CONCORD EU Delegations Report 2017.

¹²⁴ The EC organised only one consultation with civil society organisations based in Brussels for this envelope in the context of the 11th EDF programming.

¹²⁵ The number of ACP countries that opted for this specific envelope increased from 21 in the 9th EDF to 35 in the 10th EDF and 43 countries in the 11th EDF.

corresponds to a growth trend over time; but there were also 30 ACP countries that preferred not to have resources of this nature, claiming "failed previous experiences" and "unavailability of appropriate non-state actors", which conflicts with the spirit of the Agreement and its focus on partnership and capacity building for CSOs. The financial support that CSOs had received in the context of the 11th EDF was aimed at strengthening accountability, supporting the focal sectors of the agreed programmes, or even to strengthen an environment favourable to CSOs' action in those countries. It should be noted in this context that the European institutions tend to channel significant financial resources into CSOs, particularly when compared to those of other donors.

Civil society participation has also been carried out within the ACP-EU Joint Assembly, which ought to bring together parliamentarians from both parties twice a year to discuss and adopt resolutions of relevance to the partnership, including political, economic, financial and environmental¹²⁶. CSOs could be present and possibly participate in parliamentary debates by invitation, as well as have independent initiatives that inform them, thus contributing to the discussion between the parties directly or indirectly.

Whereas both the EU and the ACP countries have mentioned the need for the inclusion of civil society – or non-state actors – in their negotiating mandates (EU Council, 2018 and ACP Group, 2017)¹²⁷, the **new ACP-EU agreement** follows in the footsteps of its predecessor and specifically recognises the important role that civil society can play in advancing the partnership, alongside other actors such as the private sector and economic and social partners. In accordance with the general protocol of the agreement, these actors should be informed, consulted and take an active part in the dialogue processes, support the implementation of cooperation programmes and receive support at the level of training in critical areas (Art. 5.3). However, according to that text, these provisions are only applicable 'where appropriate', leaving room for the exercise of discretionary power by the participating states, including those that have been reducing the space for civil society. The specific text of the African protocol includes several references to the role

of this actor, in line with the preamble, highlighting the need for its consultation (Art. 5), the conservation of its space of action, with the need to remove restrictions on freedom of association, expression and peaceful meetings (Art. 67) – another innovative element compared to Cotonou – and its participation in the defence and promotion of human rights (Art. 65), among others. While this inclusion of civil society throughout the various provisions is considered positive, the next phase will involve identifying how to operationalise this commitment and ensure that this participation is significantly effective, contrary to the practice found in many contexts. For example, during the negotiations for the new agreement there was a more intensive consultation process for civil society in the Caribbean and Pacific compared to Africa, which may be symptomatic of the incipient level of structured dialogue in those countries.

The inclusion of civil society in the context of the **EU-Africa strategic partnership** is more recent, as is the partnership itself. Being rooted in various political statements and/or roadmaps and not in a single and binding agreement, such as Cotonou, the first references made to civil society date back to the declaration resulting from the first summit of 2000, and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy 2007 again refers to the importance of its involvement.

The 2007 Summit did not include any kind of formal participation by CSOs, but various organisations and networks, notably European, mobilised to influence the outcome of the negotiations at the political level. Consequently, CSOs from both continents were invited to participate in the implementation of the two joint strategy action plans between 2007 and 2013, integrating **joint expert groups for each thematic partnership**, and which were in a position to advise heads of state. In 2010, a CSO management committee was set up to promote the coordination and formalisation of the contributions and work of civil society with regard to the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, consisting of a group of European CSOs and managed by the African Union's Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC). Supporting and promoting the role of civil society was intended to make the partnership more people-centred, but the results did not always translate into the political declarations at the

¹²⁶ For more information, see: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/acp/10_01/default_en.htm

¹²⁷ It should be noted that the European Parliament was an advocate of the role of civil society and the need to retain this actor within the ACP-EU partnership (EP, 2019b). This position has also been retained in the context of the new partnership with Africa (EP, 2021a).

summits. In 2014, the IV EU-Africa Summit established the Joint Annual Forum for Civil Society and other actors, which was aimed to implement the partnership roadmaps, but this mechanism, which was intended to be the only inclusive and structured forum to promote people-centred aspirations, never came to fruition.

On the other hand, civil society has organised three meetings under this partnership since 2010, the so-called **Africa-EU Civil Society Forum**, with the support of the European Commission. The positions resulting from these forums should have informed high-level summits as an attempt to ensure some level of structured dialogue with civil society. However, the formal presentation of the last declaration in 2017 (Africa-EU Civil Society Forum, 2017) was rejected in Abidjan at the 5th EU-Africa Summit. Among other points, this declaration recognised the fact that several key points of action for civil society participation have never been triggered in the context of the partnership, including for the effective participation of this actor in the different thematic groups, the creation of an intercontinental forum for women or as a monitoring mechanism in the areas of trade and finance in which they could participate¹²⁸. The impossibility of civil society participation has created uncertainty about its concrete role in the partnership and lead to negative reactions by organisations and networks on both continents, including a formal reaction by the management committee of the EU and AU CSOs, where it regrets the silencing of their voices and contributions¹²⁹.

With the **revision of the EU-Africa** partnership, civil society has been organising itself so that it can participate in discussions in a more structured way, which translates into something more compact in the continuity of what has been done in the forums, preceding the high-level summits. There is a commitment on the part of the EC to organise more structured consultations with civil society in this context, in the possible form of an intercontinental 'Africa Week', which brings together actors of various kinds, including economic and social partners and academia. As in previous experiences, this initiative would culminate in a joint declaration to be submitted to the different

institutions and their Member States. This consultation process, which is expected to take place before the next EU-Africa summit, should not therefore be replaced by the new EU-Africa Foundation (see chapter 2.1), but may suffer from some competition or at least lack of complementarity between the different spaces for dialogue established in the context of this strategic partnership.

Several other groups of non-state actors have participated in the Africa-EU Summit process, including in dialogues and parallel events and/or making contributions to political decision-making, such as **youth, the private sector and economic and social partners**. The first **Africa-EU Youth Summit** was held in 2007, preceding the second High Level Summit, and taking place in connection with the following summits. With hundreds of representatives from European and African youth organisations, the first summit led to the creation of cooperation activities, including the sharing of experience and courses within the Council of Europe. The role of youth was also strengthened in 2017, this being the thematic focus of the Africa-EU Summit, and in order to prepare the main recommendations, the EU and AU created the 'Plug-in' initiative for youth in order to consolidate the participation of these actors and formulate concrete proposals for a 'Youth Agenda'¹³⁰. The first **EU-Africa Business Forum** also preceded the joint strategy and was held in 2006, and it usually takes place on the occasion of High Level Summits, both to contribute to their results or to strengthen cooperation between these actors, for example with meetings between young entrepreneurs from both continents, or meetings with a greater sectoral focus such as agriculture and innovation.

Here, in addition to recognising the role of civil society in the various provisions of each partnership with Africa, the EU has recently put in place several **mechanisms for participation at the local level** that aim to strengthen structured dialogue with this actor, as well as support for CSOs in various areas, therefore being provisions that end up complementing and/or strengthening the role of civil society in these partnerships. All these instruments derive, in the first place, from the policy guidelines established

¹²⁸ "CSO Brussels Declaration on the JAES", Brussels, 2013.

¹²⁹ The letter addressed to the highest representatives of the EU and the AU of 30 November 2017 can be found at <https://bit.ly/3rZTU3H>.

¹³⁰ For more information, see: www.aueuyouthhub.org/.

TABLE 6

Civil society in the ACP-EU partnership agreement and the Africa-EU partnership

ACP-EU Partnership			
Cotonou Agreement (2000)		New Agreement (2021)	
<p>Civil society is recognised as an official actor of the partnership. Several provisions support the participation and empowerment of civil society organisations. Examples include consultations on strategies for cooperation and association in political dialogue. The Cotonou Agreement also includes consultations before the programming of the national indicative programme for financial cooperation.</p>	<p>Articles 4, 7, 10; 'Programming' Annex; several Joint Declarations</p>	<p>General protocol: Idem. Participation should, however, take place 'where appropriate'. Civil society is also included in several thematic provisions.</p>	<p>Articles 5, 11 and 95. Inclusion also in several thematic provisions.</p>
		<p>General protocol: Idem. Participation should, however, take place 'where appropriate'. Civil society is also included in several thematic provisions.</p>	<p>Articles 5, 65 and 67. Inclusion also in several thematic provisions.</p>
Africa-EU strategic partnership *			
<p>Recognised as an actor in all areas of intervention, but without identification of implementation mechanisms.</p>		<p>Roadmap 2011-2013</p>	
<p>Recognised as an actor for the partnership whose contributions will be 'supported and promoted' and as part of cooperation in international forums.</p>		<p>Roadmap 2014-2017</p>	
<p>Recognised as having an important role to play in the context of governance.</p>		<p>2017 Declaration</p>	

Source: Drawn up by the authors.

Note: * The Declaration resulting from the 2000 Africa-EU High Level Summit already recognised the need for greater inclusion of civil society. But as this precedes the creation of the strategic partnership (2007), it is not reflected here.

by the European Commission in 2012¹³¹, which then triggered structured dialogue mechanisms so that this actor became more central in the definition of government democratic policies and processes, with the EU delegations being the main mediators of this participation and capacity building. This commitment was also recently reaffirmed in the context of the new guidelines for "Team Europe", according to which civil society should be more involved in local joint programming processes¹³².

In addition to these coordination mechanisms with civil society in partner countries, the EU has also promoted other forms of more centralised structured dialogue, notably through the *Policy Forum on Development*, which brings together a small number of representatives of civil

society and local authorities, both from the EU and partner countries, to discuss this policy each year in Brussels. This Forum has thus served as a consultation space, as was the case, for example, with the adoption of the Pan-African programme in 2014 and will probably also be the stage for discussion on how to operationalise the new ACP-EU agreement. In parallel with this Forum, which is of a broader nature, the EU has also been promoting more targeted discussion spaces, such as the Southern Neighbourhood Civil Society Forum, which, as the name implies, also focuses on countries in North Africa. The distinction and complementarity between this space and the Africa-EU Civil Society Forum once again illustrates a fragmented approach between both continents.

TABLE 7

European mechanisms complementing the role of civil society in European partnerships with Africa

EU country roadmap for engagement with civil society	EU Gender Action Plan	National Human Rights Strategies
Created in 2014, these roadmaps intend to improve the involvement of each EU delegation and countries with civil society. The roadmaps provide for the creation of a civil society-friendly environment, support for their participation in a structured and meaningful way and the development of their capacities.	It provides for dialogue with civil society to improve European action on gender equality. CSOs can also receive financial support to create a gender-friendly environment.	Civil society participates in the human rights dialogue and in identifying priorities for EU financial assistance. CSOs can also benefit from this support to create a human rights-friendly environment.

Source: Drawn up by the authors.

¹³¹ "The roots of Democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations", Communication from the European Commission, 2012.

¹³² See European Commission *Tools and Methods series, Guidelines No. 10, Working Better Together as Team Europe Through Joint Programming and Joint Implementation*, 2021. This specification is distinct from the previous guidelines for joint programming, which dated back to 2018, and which listed civil society as only one actor among many others.

Notwithstanding the tacit recognition of the role of civil society, and in this context of CSOs as a development actor, there have been various challenges to participation and dialogue in these frameworks, and the confirmation of considerable room for deepening the kind of dynamics that would allow not only for broadening the dialogue with civil society, but also for improving its quality. Added to the difficult operationalisation of effective mechanisms for participation that is meaningful and inclusive, either by a weakened political will or by the lack of vision on how to make this participatory process relevant, there is a growing tendency to extend the concept of civil society to a non-state nature, thereby incorporating actors that go beyond the third sector, such as the private sector, which may weaken the intended representativeness of citizens. Added to this complexity of challenges is the lack of trust that is still seen on both sides with regard to the role of this actor, whether as a partner in political dialogue or as an implementer of cooperation programmes, particularly where African CSOs are concerned.

How these mechanisms for civil society participation will evolve in the near future could be crucial to the equitable and inclusive nature of the Africa-EU partnership (CONCORD, 2018). For this new alliance, translated into the ACP-EU or intercontinental partnership, to "leave no one behind", in line with universal commitments in the context of the 2030 Agenda, and to focus on people, as stated several times by the Parties, it will be essential to ensure a comprehensive participation of European and African citizens. African and European civil society has been able to amplify and unify its voice, which could represent an opportunity to strengthen ties between the continents, and for which the relevant involvement of civil society should be protected and encouraged in all instances so as to build bridges between both continents and their citizens (VENRO, 2020).

While, on the one hand, the European Union has successively stressed the need to raise the bar for EU-Africa relations and change the paradigm of this relationship to an "equal" partnership, on the African side, the African countries and the African Union have been increasingly vocal about the objective of giving greater substance to the partnership, which is reinforced by the need to respond to the short- and medium-term impacts of COVID-19. This chapter critically analyses some of the features and changes in the relations between these two parties, which were described in the previous chapters, from the perspective of the existence (or not) of objective conditions to change the paradigm and implement a more equitable and balanced partnership.



3. TOWARDS A MORE EQUITABLE AND BALANCED PARTNERSHIP?

A. The asymmetry of the relationship and the weight of perceptions

Despite the narrative of a "partnership between equals", **EU-Africa relations have been markedly asymmetric**, due to differences in levels of development, and consequently, of capacities and resources (human, technical and financial). Linked to this is the fact that the degree of regional integration of the European project is substantially more advanced than African integration and the capacity of the related institutions, resulting in relevant structural differences in mandate, status, autonomy, etc.

In terms of financial and partnership management, the fact that one party owns the resources favours the one-way direction of development aid and the donor-recipient dynamic, despite the universal commitment to share responsibilities in common goods: one party gives and the other receives – it is one of the parties that defines amounts and in many cases the instruments for channelling resources.

In the EU-Africa case, this was compounded by the **weight of the historical legacy**, particularly of colonisation, with the perceptions and emotion associated with it (ICG, 2017). This factor contributed to a climate of tension and mutual accusations that, until recently, was quite evident in the continent to continent dialogue,

favouring postures and/or perceptions of condescension, paternalism, moral superiority or the manifestation of guilt complexes by the European side, and an accusatory posture of mistrust and moral judgment, based on the historical past, on the African side¹³³. Controversial issues such as the return of cultural goods, or the well-known differences in the interpretation of human rights – with the African party emphasising economic and social rights, and the European party more focused on civil and political rights – have helped exacerbate this dynamic, preventing a more open and objective discussion of the interests of each party. In this field of perceptions, the evolution has been notorious, with the parties developing, in recent years, a clearly more pragmatic approach, more detached from past complexes and allowing the development of a more forward-looking relationship. However, the current strengthening of the **EU's rhetoric on the projection of the "European way of life"** and the promotion of "European values", i.e., Europe as a guardian of norms and values that it exports in its external action, may add a new layer of complexity and difficulty in the relationship with the African continent, giving rise to perceptions of paternalism.

For quite some time, the narrative of mutual interests and common benefits – which is not recent – has not resulted in concrete policies and instruments. In effect, although the 2007 Africa-EU joint Strategy was, in formal and strategic terms, very advanced for its time, this vision did

¹³³ This issue was particularly visible in the African Union during Jacob Zuma's presidency between 2012 and 2017, where engagement with the EU was visibly marked by anticolonial rhetoric, resentment and mistrust resulting from perceptions and historical legacy. The imposition of political conditionalities on development aid has also been the basis for accusations of external interference in the internal affairs of African states.

not materialise into forms of cooperation beyond “business as usual”, since the action plans continued to be based on a list of areas and projects financed by the EU and implemented in Africa, in the various thematic areas (Cardoso, 2020). Although increasingly less common, it can generally be seen that **assistance and client based visions still find a welcome place in some sectors in Europe and in Africa**. Currently, and despite an evolution in language (which was already seen in some way as progressive in the sense of balanced partnership), the new ACP-EU agreement does not advocate a real change in power relations or a break with old paradigms, given the imbalances that are expressed in the very text of the agreement¹³⁴. In this context, **some issues are presented as reciprocal**, that is, those which both parties can appeal (such as the violation of the essential elements of the partnership – human rights, democracy, the rule of law – or in serious cases of corruption), but this is a formal development, because there are no practical conditions for ACP countries to be able to trigger these mechanisms vis-à-vis the EU. At a continental level, the fact that the African Union is heavily dependent on EU funding also contributes to the perpetuation of the donor-recipient dynamics (Amare, 2020).

Thus, if the EU really wants to move away from a donor-recipient dynamic, it must first acknowledge existing imbalances and correct them.

Thus, if the EU really wants to move away from a donor-recipient dynamic, it must first acknowledge existing imbalances and correct them, particularly in the programming and implementation phase of the instruments of cooperation between the parties, which should become more equitable (see paragraph C). **The greater focus on a comprehensive political dialogue on a broad set of issues** of interest to both sides – present both in the new ACP-EU agreement and in the current process towards a new Africa-EU strategy – also offers a more strategic perspective on the relationship and a more realistic vision of what is achievable, taking into account “common but differentiated responsibilities”, but everything will depend on the conditions for implementation. Clearly recognising the strategic interests of each party and the shared responsibilities in implementing their agendas for change is the first step towards overcoming assistance based visions and avoiding the instrumentalisation and short-term vision of this policy. This precondition, however, will be unlikely to materialise in sub-Saharan Africa, given the removal of the principles of co-management brought about by the integration of the EDF into the European budget.

On the other hand, one of the most important developments is that, given the global context and the two continents, **both sides now need each other more interdependently than ever before**. Considering the major gaps in global development funding, Africa needs the EU to finance its major needs (regardless of the increased presence of other external partners) on issues such as debt relief, and to support the priorities set out in the framework of its structuring programmes - for example, African peace and security efforts, the multisectoral development underpinning the African Continental Free Trade Area, technology transfer in the area of industrialisation, innovation and green growth, or other key priorities such as human development, skills improvement and job creation. This is, of course, reinforced by the overwhelming socio-economic impact of the pandemic. The EU has said it needs Africa to respond to threats to European security, for more integrated migration management and to expand trade and investment opportunities, taking a more interest-based discourse than solidarity issues. In addition, with Africa being the only

¹³⁴ According to some perspectives, the very maintenance of this agreement, along the old lines, is a sign of the extension of North-South logics based on the viewpoint of aid. See, for example, “Does new EU-ACP deal really ‘decolonise’ aid?” EU Observer, 08.04.2021.

continent with significant population growth, the opportunities brought by the demographic dividend are seen as a possible contribution to greater and fairer economic growth with mutual benefits for both continents (EC and EEAS, 2020).

However, the way the EU looks at Africa goes beyond these concrete interests, penetrating internal areas of the **EU's perception of itself and the projection of "European values"** in the face of the threat posed by other actors¹³⁵. In this case, it is evident how the "Chinese threat" currently permeates and drives the relationship with Africa, and this is not only verbalised at the highest level in meetings or negotiations with the African partner, but also expressed in the strategic documentation that supports it. For example, the European Parliament resolution on the new EU-Africa Strategy of March 2021 considers that "some third countries, such as China, pursue other objectives, which are sometimes a cause for concern for us", lamenting "the questionable exploitation of Africa by China and Russia" and the "destructive policies used by other actors that result in damage to African nations, which also have negative impacts on the EU". In this regard, it expresses "regret that the actions of other actors, in particular China and Russia, promote their geopolitical interests and focus on growing unilateralism and stresses that their own benefits are obtained to the detriment of the sovereignty of African countries and European security", and therefore calls on the EU "to develop a strategic and long-term response to the Chinese initiative 'One Belt, One Route', which should be guided by our common values (...)" (EP, 2021). In any case, **presenting Africa primarily as a battleground for the EU and China rivalry** does not seem to be the most effective framework for achieving the goal of a partnership between equals. The **focus on the EU's capital gains and what it has to offer that is different in its model of development and cooperation** could potentially be more appealing to partners.

On the African side, regardless of whether these perceptions are shared or not, and despite the various risks of Chinese action (in terms of indebtedness, squandering of resources without real effects on development, etc.), there is no doubt that the strengthening of this relationship

and the interest of other external partners has contributed to a diversification of opportunities, and consequently, to a greater ambition of African positions and their negotiating space. These factors, together with the strengthening of the African Union's capacities, are contributing to an attempt to rethink external partnerships, reflect on what is being asked of Europe and improve the difficult articulation of positions at home by strengthening positioning vis-à-vis external actors. The EU is therefore **faced with increased African self-confidence and assertiveness, to which it is not accustomed and with which it has difficulty coping**. Although the EU continues to rely on the idea of being "Africa's preferred partner", it will increasingly have to get used to being that partner for some issues and not necessarily for others, so it will have to invest in building alliances for each specific topic, resolving differences in positions and interests.

B. Unilateralism versus joint decision-making and management mechanisms

A more equitable and balanced partnership is related to the conditions for the concrete exercise of this partnership, and would therefore presage the creation and deepening of joint decision-making mechanisms, both in governance and financial management. However, developments in the underlying financial policy instruments and mechanisms do not seem to follow this trend.

In the case of the **continental strategy**, after the joint governance structure of JAES has been progressively dismantled, a more thorough debate should be expected on what type of governance and strategy ought to be pursued, allowing for extensive involvement and consultation with a wide range of actors (European and African). The process of formulating an EU strategy for Africa in 2020 was conditioned by the need to meet established technical bureaucratic deadlines, which ensured speed in development but little participation at a European level or even

¹³⁵ In the EC President's mission letter to the Commissioner for International Partnerships, development is also presented as a competition, in which the European development model disputes space with others (EC, 2019).

any pre discussion with African partners¹³⁶. In the process leading to a new joint strategy, the EU assumed that, as in previous cases¹³⁷, its proposal would be the basis for the negotiation, and being accustomed to setting the agenda, it could move forward in validating the priorities it set¹³⁸.

It should be noted that the EU's stance has been rooted in part in a need to advance proceedings in the face of the other party's lack of reaction, due to the inability to reach common positions on the African side. The AU and its member states have tacitly accepted European leadership of these processes and have only recently started reflecting on the definition of a strategy for their relationship with the EU (Amare, 2020). However, it is mainly the presentation of European positions as being "joint" agendas, strategies or action plans, summit after summit, that generates frustration on the African side (Medinilla and Teevan, 2020). With the strengthening of African capacity and assertiveness on the one hand, and with the expressed objective of a more equitable partnership on the other, the EU needs to evolve in the way it works and dialogues with Africa, making a greater effort in the search for reflection and shared solutions, respecting the processes and timetables of the other party(ies) and pursuing the shared and inclusive processes of the different perspectives (of both parties). This should also result in a joint strategic framework of the continental partnership, with joint governance and jointly defined objectives/targets (Lopes, 2020), focused on achieving concrete and tangible results for people (Madueke, 2020).

Many of the EU's initiatives targeting the African continent continue to be defined in a one-sided approach.

Many of the **EU's initiatives targeting the African continent continue to be defined in a one-size-fits-all approach**, with little or no consultation with African partners. The Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs, announced in 2018 by the EC, for example, focuses on European investment in Africa, but very few African actors or even EU Member States were consulted in advance, largely missing the "partnership" or "alliance" element that is in its name (Teevan and Sherriff, 2019). The securitisation of migration and the systematic inclusion of this perspective in the political dialogue with Africa and in several European programmes, including development aid, is another aspect that has reinforced the African perception of a "one-way dialogue" (EP, 2017a).

In regard to governance and management mechanisms, in the case of the ACP-EU partnership, **the integration of the EDF into the EU budget** is a key point, the future implications of which are not yet clear. If the ACP countries wish to maintain as much as possible the principles of joint management that governed the implementation of this instrument, this does not seem possible in the framework of the governance, allocation and operationalisation of the NDICI, which aggregates the resources for the EU's external action, as the funds will now be fully decided in accordance with the EU's programming and financial management procedures. The disappearance of the offices of the so-called National and Regional Authorising Officers, which were the links (at the local level) in the implementation of EDF funds, may make some sense in

¹³⁶ The new EC took office in November 2019 and the strategy was published in March 2020.

¹³⁷ Over time, the EU has carried out its internal processes of reflection and assessment on partnership and related instruments, usually before summits, resulting in a defined European position "for Africa" (in the form of an EC and EEAS communication, followed by Council conclusions).

¹³⁸ In this regard, at the February 2020 Meeting between the AUC and the EC, the Chairperson of the AUC stated that the AU is in the process of formulating its own strategy, which will express African interests and should be the basis for negotiations. See "African Union to EU: We've got our own strategy, thanks", Politico, 27.02.2020.

seeking simplification and speeding up processes by the EC, but it seems to be a step backwards in the trend of strengthening the ownership and leadership of partner countries in the management and coordination of development aid. Indeed, these developments may contradict some principles of development effectiveness, where predictability, ownership and joint accountability are fundamental pillars.

In EU development financing instruments, there is now a **widening of geographical scope**, as several mechanisms targeted at Africa now focus on wider regions. This is the case for the European Sustainable Development Fund Plus (EFSD+) investment mechanism, previously divided between the EU's neighbourhood countries and Africa, which now becomes an integral part of the NDICI and now has global coverage, being guided by the priorities and overall programming of the external action instrument. Furthermore, the proliferation of instruments such as **trust funds** in the new MFF 2021-2027, which are defined in a more flexible and unscheduled manner, also affect the predictability of development aid for partner countries, in addition to not being subject to such close control or supervision (as they do not go through the scrutiny of the European Parliament or involve an extended consultation process with partner countries). This potentially means further distancing of partner countries from the decisions that will impact them.

Also, within the framework of the External Action Instrument, the "Team Europe Initiatives", increasingly relevant in the process of programming cooperation in partner countries, have important purposes in terms of flexibility, speed, coordination, and aggregation of resources, but they still represent a non-joint approach with partner countries.

It should be noted that the blending instruments managed by the EIB in the framework of partnerships with Africa – such as the Investment Platform in Africa, which replaced the EU Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund in 2019, or the ACP Investment Facility under the Cotonou Agreement – have a governance and management in which only EU representatives participate (EC and Member States)¹³⁹.

Moreover, as previously pointed out, although formally partner countries can be consulted through programmatic EFSD deliberations, all decisions come from European institutions only, as partner countries are also not present at the Strategic Council of this Fund (they may become mere observers in the EFSD+). In addition, there is a lack of evidence on the potential for inclusive and sustainable economic and social development and country ownership of blending mechanisms, which the EU is increasingly using, as concluded in a recent evaluation report on the EFSD (EC, 2020; EP, 2021a).

In the sphere of **peace and security**, the European Peace Facility (EPF) replaces the African Peace Facility (which has existed since 2004) and the Athena Mechanism, thereby extending geographical coverage within the framework of the common foreign and security policy and aims to increase flexibility in terms of the type of funding and beneficiaries. In fact, the content of the African Peace Facility will be integrated into two global funds – the larger peace support operations component becomes part of the EPF and support for institutional capacity building and the rapid response mechanism is integrated into the NDICI instrument, through which the EU channels development support globally. In other words, the EU abandons the previously followed rule of channelling most of Africa's funding into peace and security through the AU.

On the one hand, this means that assistance in this area will not be limited to Africa but will be directed to partners from all regions that EU Member States decide to support, increasing decision discretion and competition between geographical priorities, particularly within the framework of the EPF – Africa could lose funds and interest in Africa could be diluted. On the other hand, the new EPF will allow military cooperation and direct funding to governments, regional organisations and ad hoc coalitions that do not require the approval or involvement of the AU (e.g. in the fight against terrorism, or in specific regions such as the Sahel), which may make financing of the AU's peace and security priorities more unpredictable in the long term (ICG, 2021). In addition, the mechanism is extra-budgetary (managed by the EEAS), which also raises concerns in terms of responsibility, control and accountability,

¹³⁹ In the previous framework, which resulted from the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, the so-called EU-Africa Infrastructure Reference Group provided the strategic guidelines for the Trust Fund and consisted of representatives in equal numbers from the AU and the EU.

namely by limiting the supervisory role of the European Parliament¹⁴⁰.

The definition of this mechanism could have been an opportunity to implement greater reciprocity in decision-making, but the **AU's involvement in decision-making, oversight and management will now be more limited**. Although the decisions under the EPF are fundamental to supporting peacekeeping missions in Africa (notably those managed and implemented by the African Union), the approach defined by the European Union does not give the African Union any formal role in the supervision or decisions on the funds of this new mechanism¹⁴¹. By comparison, the EU and the United Nations sit on the board of directors of the African Union-run Peace Fund¹⁴². The AU would like the EU to channel EPF contributions to Africa through its Peace Fund in order to strengthen ownership of peacebuilding operations on the continent, but this is not foreseen as it runs exactly counter to the EPF's objective, namely that the EU should gain more control in this area (ICG, 2021). What does not change is the fact that the African Union remains highly dependent on European funding in this area, which is an extra factor of unpredictability of support and dependence on European priorities (Hauck and Tadesse, 2020)¹⁴³.

C. (Lack of) internal cohesion and coordination (EU and AU)

The analysis concludes that the EU has not taken advantage of various reform opportunities in recent years to deal with the African continent in a more integrated and coherent way. As mentioned, there is still no unified continental perspective, as North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa are the subject of different **policies, agreements and instruments** (neighbourhood policy in the first case, the new EU-ACP agreement in the second and the EU-South Africa strategic partnership in the last)¹⁴⁴. This fragmented approach was one of the factors detrimental to the effectiveness and political pull of the Joint Africa-EU strategy (Kouassi, 2017; Bossuyt, 2017; Medinilla and Teevan, 2020), and it seems unlikely to contribute to Africa's strategic priorities, such as the Continental Free Trade Area (Faleg, 2020). At the institutional level, there is a clear division of jurisdictions, which, being useful from a practical implementation point of view, promotes a silo approach that does not favour the search for synergies (e.g., Africa Working Party - COAFR and ACP Working Party in the Council). Within the EC, a division of DG INTPA addresses Africa and the ACP together, but the dichotomy between sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa remains, which continues to be addressed by DG NEAR. Furthermore, as EU-Africa policy dialogue on several strategic areas expands, global challenges are addressed, and the EU is moving towards a more geopolitical approach, there is an increasing **need for coordination between the EU institutions**, notably between the various EC Directorates - with DG Trade or DG Climate often having different perspectives from DG International Partnerships (INTPA), which is more linked to development cooperation - and also between the EC and the EEAS.

¹⁴⁰ There are also growing concerns that greater flexibility (e.g. in the financing of African coalitions and ad-hoc missions, or African armies) will have to be accompanied by more effective risk mitigation procedures in terms of human rights abuses and misuse of military equipment (risk of falling into the "wrong hands" or being misused by the military and security forces receiving it).

¹⁴¹ In the previous African Peace Facility, there was a Joint Coordination Committee, and the AU had an important role in guiding funds and in the decision-making process – which also helped consolidate the AU's primacy in peace and security at the continental level (ICG, 2017).

¹⁴² Fund revitalised in 2018. More information at <https://au.int/aureforms/peacefund>

¹⁴³ Between 2004 and 2019, the EU provided €2.9 billion in financial support to peace and security efforts in Africa through the African Peace Facility, of which 93% went to peace operations (and of these, the majority for AMISOM, the mission in Somalia). For example, in 2017, the EU set a 20% cut in AMISOM's remuneration.

¹⁴⁴ This includes EU policies for specific African regions (Sahel, Horn of Africa, Gulf of Guinea) and multiple other instruments, such as economic partnership agreements (at a regional level) for trade, or, in this new EC, "comprehensive agreements with countries of origin and transit" in related to migration (at a national level).

Added to this are **the bilateral external and cooperation policies of EU's member states**, which span numerous sectors and programmes, and which continue independently of the EU's common positions on Africa. In addition to the increased relevance of the relationship with Africa in their own bilateral strategies referred to in Chapter 1.1, several European countries continue, or have also initiated, institutional dialogue processes at regular summits or other conciliation forums¹⁴⁵.

The EU Strategy for Africa of March 2020 goes well beyond EU-AU cooperation as it sets the goal of creating a political alliance between European and African countries, involving greater coordination and joint mobilisation of resources by member states towards a more common and coherent policy. There are, in fact, many points of convergence and common ground for joint work by member states and the EU with African partners, sharing many of the priorities and themes, although the great diversity and scope of priorities also increases coordination challenges, as is already seen in joint programming.

There are, however, substantial differences in the way they deal with some key issues, notably **the way they view Africa within the framework of their interests**, which translates into differentiated and sometimes tense actions within the Council of the EU (Faleg and Palleschi, 2020). There is, therefore, a group of countries with little relationship with, knowledge of, and interest in Africa, which participate in discussions with more informative objectives; another set of countries, particularly the Nordics, which take a progressive view, wanting the EU's regulatory agenda to be prominent in the relationship (advancing gender and human rights issues); and a set of countries that attach importance to the relationship but have a more conservative/realistic agenda, less normative in their positions (like Portugal, Spain, Italy, Belgium, France and Germany)¹⁴⁶. Furthermore, at one extreme there are Poland and Hungary, which have tried

to block various policy instruments in the framework of development cooperation, albeit with different nuances: Poland is more focused on gender identity issues and Hungary on the issue of migration – issues that have recently been the subject of disagreement between members in the negotiation of the new ACP EU Agreement¹⁴⁷. On the other hand, the way European countries view Africa intersects with the **way they see EU's role** in its relationship with the African continent. There is a relatively general consensus that the EU must be more present (whether because of major global challenges, whether in competition with other powers or due to economic interests, among other factors), but small states tend to advocate for a greater role for coordination within the EU because it increases their influence despite meagre resources, while countries such as France see the EU as an additional component of pursuing French interests in Africa, and still other countries – notably the Nordic states – take the EU to be one of the main avenues through which their national interests can be channelled. Added to this ambiguity is the instrumental role of development cooperation in the context of European foreign policy, which seems to be gradually dissolved by other political priorities, including those of the member states themselves.

Recent developments in European policies with Africa, with greater preponderance of the institutions (EC/EEAS), can be seen by Member States as part of a broader trend to remove foreign policy space from them, which may generate additional tensions. One example is **the uncertainty about the legal nature of the new ACP-EU agreement** (at the European level), as the EC wants to ensure greater control, with the exclusive competence of its implementation, while member states tend to advocate a mixed agreement, i.e., with shared powers (as in the Cotonou agreement). Whilst the EC's position may be justified on the grounds of flexibility and speed – making it possible to overcome the difficulties repeatedly raised by a small group of Member States – the position of most

¹⁴⁵ In addition to the usual France-Africa summits (since 1973), Germany established the Pact with Africa (under the G20 Presidency), Hungary established the Budapest Africa Forum (2013, 2015, 2018), Ireland the Africa-Ireland Economic Forum (since 2010), Italy the Joint Ministerial Conference Italy-Africa (2016, 2018). For a comprehensive and comparative analysis of the policies of European countries with Africa, see Faleg, and Palleschi, 2020. The impact of the UK's departure on EU development policy and the relationship with Africa has yet to be assessed.

¹⁴⁶ Of course, France's and Germany's affirmation is very present in the Council working parties. The impact of Brexit is still to be assessed, as the UK was one of the countries with the strongest positions in Africa. However, the United Kingdom has considerably changed its policy of cooperation in 2020-2021 and, in this context, its position vis-à-vis the African continent.

¹⁴⁷ The issue of migration, being the subject of very differentiated positions on the part of European countries (some with more progressive approaches that highlight the positive impact of these on development and others with essentially restrictive positions), is also reflected in the EU's relationship with Africa.

European countries is linked to their desire to preserve control over the partnership and also to maintain greater political importance of the agreement in their foreign policies. For the African side, the latter seems to be the preferred option, as ACP countries can meet and negotiate with European countries (instead of having only the EC as interlocutor).

The issue of the role of Member States and their relationship with the interlocutory institutions at regional and continental levels is even more relevant on the African side. Without the AU having exclusive powers in the implementation of common policies and the model of integration being markedly intergovernmental, there is a need for constant negotiation and a systematic search for the concerted involvement of Member States in all dossiers and implementation stages of existing agreements.

African countries have **very different positions on what the role of the AU should be** and on the level of power they are willing to transfer to the regional/continental level¹⁴⁸. In addition, the interests of African countries are greatly **preponderant in the relationship with external partners at a bilateral level**, which is reflected in the frameworks at the regional and continental level. This is evident, for example, in the difficulty of reaching more common or concerted African positions vis-à-vis the EU (within the AU), but also in the difficulty of coordinating the various relationship frameworks with the EU, which are quite diverse.

The difference in regional integration processes between the EU and the AU also explains why joint political declarations or strategies between Europe and Africa have also failed to follow-up and produce concrete results, because while, on the European side, the institutions are in charge of following up on the processes autonomously, on the African side there needs to be an interest, involvement and commitment on the part of the countries in moving forward and putting these declarations into

practice. This does not mean that there are no difficulties on both sides, as the Joint Africa-EU strategy has always been very limited to the Brussels-Addis Ababa axis, which raises questions of ownership and participation of the various actors on both continents.

All this was reflected in the differences over the negotiations on the new ACP-EU agreement, as described in Chapter 2.2. The ACP-EU agreement has always given greater preponderance to the national level (programming and implementation of cooperation in countries), while in the broader EU-Africa dialogue, the AU has played a central role, with the AUC taking the lead. The maintenance of an ACP-EU cooperation agreement – contradicting the AU's initial position – shows a greater prioritisation of development cooperation in the relationship with the EU, compared to continental integration, which entails investment in a stronger collective position through the AU (Medinilla and Bossuyt, 2019).

On the African side, the institutional architecture also does not favour a coherent and unified approach of the two partnerships. The Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) is one of the constituent bodies of the AU, with nominated diplomats accredited with the AU Commission, UNECA and the Republic of Ethiopia, while African ambassadors to Brussels are accredited with the OACPS, the European Commission and Belgium. The mandates and functions of the AU PRC and the ACP Committee of Ambassadors are very different, which is important in understanding their role in the governance of the AU-EU relations¹⁴⁹. This is exacerbated by the fact that the European institutions (in Brussels) often contact the ACP Committee of Ambassadors in Brussels on issues relating to the relationship between the two continents. These contradictions created some confusion in the negotiations for the new EU-ACP agreement and will predictably also influence the prospects for practical coordination between the EU-Africa and EU-ACP relationship frameworks. The "two-way" approach to the relationship with the EU will therefore have to involve

¹⁴⁸ The importance of Member States in the progression and capacity to implement policies at the continental level is well illustrated by Paul Kagame's mandate as President of the African Union (Jan. 2018 to Feb. 2019), which among other points, focused institutional reform with a view to the greater effectiveness of the AU.

¹⁴⁹ The first reports to the Executive Council of the AU, which in turn answers to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, i.e., in the implementation of its mandate, it coordinates and supervises, on behalf of the Executive Council of the AU, the management of all external partnerships in Africa, including with the EU. For its part, the ACP group of ambassadors in Brussels, due to its geographical location, tends to act as if it had a mandate to supervise, participate in or scrutinise AU-EU relations, even though its mandate is only for ACP-EU cooperation, and it does not report to any political authority in Africa (Kouassi, 2017). Since all African countries are participating in the ACP-EU Agreement, they should, in the opinion of some, receive the mandate of the AU bodies and respect these guidelines.

strengthening the coordination of actors and structures, both on the European side and on the African side, as well as common structures of dialogue and cooperation.



Summit on Financing African Economies, Paris. © Twitter of the Presidency of Rwanda.

D. Common interests at a multilateral level?

One of the points most greatly reinforced in the most recent frameworks for the EU-Africa partnership is the need to strengthen **multilateralism and a rules-based international system**¹⁵⁰, which both sides recognise as **increasingly threatened**. This is intended to be reflected in the pursuit of more concerted positions between the two parties, in practice, both in common responses to the growing and complex global challenges – which are concerns shared by the parties (and which also require global responses) – and in more coordinated action in multilateral forums (where each party can support the aspirations of the other party in various ways).

Whilst this concern has already been defined since the 2007 Africa-EU Joint Strategy, so far, the search for common positions has resulted in just a few common statements that have not required major negotiations or trade-offs of divergent interests, insofar as they do not address more sensitive or neglected areas of political cooperation. In particular, the Joint Africa-EU Declaration on Climate Change (2008) and the Joint EU-AU Communiqué on the implementation of the Paris Agreement (2017), driven by the announcement of the withdrawal of the United States from the agreement; and, in the ACP-EU framework, the joint declaration on a post-2015 development agenda (2014), on climate change (2018) and on the 2030 Agenda (2019). The concerted positions on climate change and global development played an important role in the processes that led to the Paris Agreement (signed at COP21) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, both in 2015. In addition, both blocs have an interest in seeking convergence in the United Nations, where they have often acted together on issues related to climate change and international security (see the AU-EU-United Nations task force on Libya) and where there is a trilateral dialogue (EC-AU-UN). With the intended transformation towards a more strategic and political dialogue and the evolution towards a new level of relationship, it is to be expected that the EU and Africa (whether through the AU, the ACP, or in consultation with the member states of both parties) will increasingly invest in concerted positions

¹⁵⁰ The principle of multilateralism is contained in the Treaty on European Union (Art. 21) and the Constitutive Act of the African Union (Art. 3).

and mutual support at a multilateral level, even in areas that require greater effort¹⁵¹.

However, **the positions of African and European countries/institutions have been markedly different** on a number of issues, which is manifested in the negotiations between them and also at the international level – issues such as those relating to sexual orientation and gender identity, some issues relating to human rights and international law (e.g., in relation to the International Criminal Court)¹⁵² – and more recently, on trade and migration issues. In relation to **the international governance system** – notably the United Nations, international financial institutions (such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) and the World Trade Organization – both blocs recognise the needs for reform, but divergences between European and African countries have not allowed the implementation of joint political initiatives.

In the United Nations General Assembly, the division between the two blocs is closely linked to the fact that they belong to **different development/income groups**, with the African countries' votes being more often aligned with the G77+China than with the EU. This is also evident in support for candidates for international office, where Africa tends to align, with some exceptions, with candidates supported by the Global South. Africa is increasingly seen as an important partner in forging geopolitical alliances globally and multilaterally, and in this sense, the competition for its support tends to increase. In this context, in many cases where the EU seeks a shared understanding with African countries, the prospect is that they will simply follow the European lead; but the EU will only be able to strengthen their partnership with Africa if they are prepared to support more African positions in the UN and other multilateral forums – particularly on key issues for African development, such as illicit financial flows and external debt, among others (Teevan et al, 2020).

To strengthen joint action at the multilateral level, political dialogue between the EU and Africa on common interests and global issues must be **integrated more**

systematically into the political agendas of the partnership and its instruments and mechanisms. The new ACP-EU Agreement greatly reinforces this dimension, and the EU strategy for Africa also prominently refers to it, but the dominant perspective is still focused on "how Europe can help Africa" and not on how both sides can dialogue and support each other (e.g., security in Africa is discussed, but security in Europe is never discussed with Africa). In other words, greater openness is needed to integrate into the political interaction, particularly at the ministerial level, not only foreign policy issues and issues that only concern Africa, but also sectoral policies and issues that correspond to a mutual interest. Strengthening the quality of political dialogue, based on mutual trust and guiding principles of a fair partnership based on meaningful consultation processes, thus becomes a precondition for ensuring the identification of common positions between both parties that can be defended in global forums.

While at the Joint EC-AUC meeting of February 2020 both committees reiterated their support for multilateralism as an effective way to respond to common challenges, the reality is that these international frameworks still do not guide decision-making between the parties in a preponderant and concrete manner. The EU Strategy for Africa is an illustrative example of this statement. The proposed thematic priorities – in particular the two that can be considered more innovative compared to previous frameworks, i.e., green transition and digitisation – correspond to internal EU priorities, which are transversal to the external action plan. While these are priorities shared by Africa, as they correspond to undeniable development challenges for the continent, **African actors would be more inclined to addressing these issues within the framework of multilateralism** and international law, as they believe that these frameworks better serve the interests and rights of the poorest and most vulnerable countries. Thus, in the context of the green transition, the Paris Agreement should be the framework for the partnership, with all that "common and differentiated responsibilities" entail, rather than the EU seeking to transpose its priorities under the framework of the

¹⁵¹ Under the new ACP-EU agreement, ways of implementing greater multilateral cooperation are being considered, going beyond mere joint declarations.

¹⁵² For example, the AU's support for the withdrawal of some African states challenged the ICC's role, then seen as a Western tool for conditioning and subjugating African leaders. There are several occasions (notably at the UN Council on Human Rights) when African UN members voted against resolutions aimed at protecting against violence and/or discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity (EP, 2020a).

European Green Deal in the relationship with Africa¹⁵³. Similarly, in the context of digitisation, there is a fear that European cooperation on technical standards and frameworks will render obsolete several technologies that are being implemented in Africa (in various countries, based on Huawei's technology), and that African countries will be a tool in a trade battle between the EU and China on this issue.

The priorities and **policies considered strategic for the EU are gradually encroaching on the area of development policy, which is evident when one considers the issue of migration.** This has been particularly controversial in the relationship, and it dominates many aspects of the dialogue between the parties and is currently widely integrated by the EU into the priorities, programmes and instruments of the relationship with Africa. In 2015, the EU-convened La Valetta Summit was clearly dominated by a European agenda focusing on security, return and readmission, while African partners tried to focus on developing and improving governance on migration and mobility (EP, 2017a). Integrated and sustained migration management is, of course, in the interests of both parties, but there is some unease about the imposition of a markedly security-oriented perspective in relations with African countries and regions – namely by supporting the implementation of restrictive policies through aid programmes with partner countries (border management control, training in this area, etc.)¹⁵⁴, conditioning development aid to the signing of readmission/return agreements for migrants and the implementation of security policies aimed at preventing migrants from reaching Europe, and suggesting the creation of "landing platforms" on African soil (something that has been rejected by African countries). African priorities for facilitating legal

migration and harnessing migration to improve economic growth and job creation have been largely ignored. Thus, while the EU aims to "establish a joint framework for dialogue on intercontinental migration and mobility and to continue to strengthen trilateral AU-EU-UN cooperation" (EC and EEAS, 2020), cooperation between the two sides on this issue is inevitably marked by what has been the controversial history on this issue. In December 2018, African countries overwhelmingly voted in favour of the United Nations Global Compact on Migration, while several European countries abstained or voted against¹⁵⁵.

The **response to the pandemic** also exposed the fragility of governance systems of some multilateral organisations and the divergences between the blocs of so-called developed countries and developing countries, illustrating how the multilateral framework tends to be favoured more in situations where it does not imply a real concession of power. The EU has become one of the largest contributors to the COVAX initiative¹⁵⁶, which aims to improve access to COVID-19 vaccination for low and middle income countries, but on the other hand, it has been part of the opposition to an initiative of more than 80 developing countries (driven by India and South Africa and supported by hundreds of civil society organisations) at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to suspend patent rights on technologies related to combating COVID-19, namely vaccines. The demand was for a temporary waiver of rules under the WTO's Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) agreement, a move that would allow generic or other manufacturers

¹⁵³ For example, some initiatives considered under the Green Deal, such as the definition of a Carbon Border Tax, may be potentially harmful to African interests, becoming almost a "climate sanctions regime" that does not respect the multilateral principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities", as these countries do not have the capacity to comply with many of these rules.

¹⁵⁴ Since 2016, the European Parliament has condemned the use of the EDF and other development aid budgetary instruments for migration control without clear development objectives, stating the need to ensure that financial instruments in the context of migration – such as the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa – meet the criteria of public development assistance. In its Resolution of November 2019 on the new ACP-EU Agreement reaffirms that "a conditioning of the granting of aid for cooperation with the Union on migration issues is not compatible with the accepted principles on development effectiveness" (EP, 2019b). On the future prospects of migration in EU-Africa relations, see "The EU Migration Pact: Building a True Partnership with Africa", Center for Global Development, 21.12.2020.

¹⁵⁵ Globally, 5 countries voted against (3 of which from the EU: Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic) and 12 abstained (5 of which were from the EU: Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Latvia and Romania).

¹⁵⁶ In February 2021, the European Commission [announced that it would double its financial contribution](#) to COVAX. The EU (EC+ Member States), grouped together in the "Team Europe" approach, contributes to this mechanism with around EUR 2.2 billion.

to produce vaccines on a large scale, thereby increasing distribution to poorer countries¹⁵⁷.

Thus, the pursuit of joint positions and mutual support at the multilateral level depends on greater **Policy Coherence for Development**, among other factors, so that the various policies implemented at the sectoral level – agricultural, fishery, trade, security, climate change policies, etc. – do not hurt the development policies of the poorest and most vulnerable countries, but rather establish synergies and contribute effectively to global development. In the current context, there is a potential for the EU and Africa to move forward in greater cooperation and consultation on various issues, but this will inevitably have to be **decided and negotiated on a case-by-case basis, depending on the will and leadership of both parties**.

One area yet to be optimised, which could be effective in terms of pooling resources and generating important synergies and complementarities, is the pursuit of **more cooperative approaches with other regional and global actors**. For example, the development of tripartite EU-China-Africa cooperation around infrastructure, based on complementarity of technical skills and resources, may be unlikely due to current geopolitical conditions, but it could have significant impacts on Africa's development. There are certainly areas where European priorities intersect with the interests of countries like India or Japan (at the level of trade or digitalisation, for example). This search for a more strategic and broader multi-stakeholder cooperation, in some cases already seen in joint programming processes at the partner country level, will be key to meeting the major needs and challenges of post-pandemic recovery and resilience.

E. A people-centred partnership?

While the five key dimensions of the 2030 Agenda – People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships – have been identified as priorities in the various Africa-EU strategic documents, **the specific focus on "People" has not always translated** into decisions focused on European and African citizens, or even oriented towards them. A part of these challenges rests in both the concept of what a people centred partnership is and how to operationalise this vision in concrete and relevant initiatives.

The concept of human development has been one of the most pressing measures used by the United Nations to identify the level of progress and well-being in all countries of the world: this concept refers to the richness of human life, while income growth is a means and not an end in itself¹⁵⁸. However, this has not been the most important vision in the Africa-EU partnership, particularly in terms of intercontinental cooperation, which has been integrating human development mainly in the areas of growth and peace. This **instrumental view of the role of sectors such as education and/or health as vehicles for economic growth** has been shared both by the EU, as seen in its proposal for the Joint Strategy (EC and EEAS, 2020), and in African countries themselves, as evidenced in the ACP Working Party's mandate for the post-2020 negotiations (CONCORD, 2019a) and in the context of JAES, according to which investment in people translates into employment education (in the framework of the priority 'Investing in people – education, science, technology and skills development', arising from Abidjan in 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the correlation between human, economic and environmental development and its aspects of governance, placing front and centre the need for integrated approaches that do not view the first dimension merely as an instrument for the second. While the dimensions related to the Planet, Prosperity and Peace remain evident in the new partnerships, in one way or another, the realisation of the "People" priority may be somewhat dissolved in the premises for the new partnership.

¹⁵⁷ This WTO debate has been going on since October 2020 and the proposal was blocked again in March 2021. Developed countries claim that the existing intellectual property system is the only one that provides the necessary incentives for pharmaceutical companies to develop and produce vaccines. It is estimated that low-income countries will have to wait until 2024 to achieve herd immunity. On this subject, see for example, "Patently unfair: Can waivers help solve COVID vaccine inequality?", Aljazeera, 01.03.2021.

¹⁵⁸ For more information, see the human development index: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/>

Added to this gap in what should be a people-centred partnership is the **lack of space devoted to dialogue with citizens** on both continents that could allow for the identification of the real needs and possible solutions to development challenges. As mentioned above (chapter 2.4), Africa-EU partnerships have contemplated dialogue mechanisms for consultation, namely with civil society organisations as a full-fledged actor, but these, whilst operationalised, have served more as a validation process than a debate process, and they are not always structured or timely, suffer from top-down approaches and are deficient due to the small representation allowed in some of the spaces created for this purpose. Despite the various statements that partnerships should be focused on (and targeted towards) people, there is still a relationship with civil society that is lacking in confidence, particularly in the role it may play, both in conveying the voice of citizens as well as in implementing cooperation programmes. On the other hand, it is evident that the growing focus on the contribution of the private sector to development, being undoubtedly important, has generated a trend towards the creation of multi-actor spaces which can be welcomed if the representation of all stakeholders can be ensured, but that risks contributing to the possible dilution of the Third Sector. The revitalisation of the EU-Africa relationship through partnership with ACP countries and the AU offers relevant opportunities **for the creation of more effective consultation and dialogue mechanisms.**

Given their nature, CSOs are well-positioned to develop more democratic and representative forms of work in the search for relevant and effective solutions that can lead to sustainable development and reduction of inequalities. By creating **structured, regular and trust-based dialogue mechanisms** (CONCORD, 2018), CSOs can lead more comprehensive consultation processes with their communities in order to develop a joint agenda and inform policies in a timely manner, since the pressure of deadlines in European bureaucratic processes tends to take precedence over other objectives, such as identifying a joint vision. On the other hand, while the NDICI might not include a financial envelope specifically dedicated to

civil society in African countries, distinct from the thematic programme for CSOs, the new European instrument could provide effective ways to enable and empower CSOs in African countries, specifically through trust-based financing – that is, those that can be managed with some freedom, similarly to what the EU does with partner countries through budget support or sectoral budget support – and other funding modalities that enable space for civil society. Meeting these key conditions will already make it possible to talk about a people-centred partnership that "leaves no one behind."

F. Portugal's role

In general, Portugal's role in EU-Africa relations has been significant, especially considering the growing challenges that come from being a small Member State within the Community. Several of the milestones of this relationship were accomplished under (and driven by) Portuguese presidencies of the Council of the EU: **in the 2000 presidency**, the Cotonou Agreement (EU-ACP) was concluded, and the first EU-Africa high-level summit took place in Cairo; in the **2007** presidency, the second summit (after difficult negotiations) was held, where the Joint Strategy and its action plan were adopted. At that time, Portugal contributed to a strengthening of the EU's response in fragile states, which was one of the Portuguese priorities (with the Council Conclusions on security and development and the conclusions on fragile situations) and to the adoption of the EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (which remains the main policy guiding document in this area), issues of great relevance to Africa. In the same presidency, it was possible to adopt Council Conclusions on policy coherence for development and specific conclusions on the coherence of EU migration and development policies, still focused at that time on maximising the benefits of migration for development.

This corresponds, in general, to the important role that Africa has in Portuguese foreign policy, and which also translates into the prioritisation of this geographical area in Portuguese initiatives at the level of the EU's external relations¹⁵⁹. Portugal has shown particular interest in the EU's external action (which distinguishes it from other Member States with a similar dimension) and in an action that allows it to leave a specific mark and strengthen its European/international credibility (compared to other matters where the country's influence is more constrained by its structural limitations) (Raimundo, 2020; Seixas da Costa e Ferreira, 2020). In this context, it has sought to highlight "special" ties with various parts of the globe, arising from its historical experience, and as can be seen by its efforts as a promoter of the international debate

on triangular cooperation, as well as the **comparative advantages compared to other European countries in the relationship with Africa** where it hopes to serve as a vehicle of some African aspirations towards the EU. The signing of the EU-Cape Verde Special Partnership (the first established by the Union with an ACP country in 2007) and the adoption of the mission of the then EU European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) to support the reform of the security sector in Guinea-Bissau (in 2008) are among the examples that best illustrate this claim.

On the other hand, Portuguese political-diplomatic initiatives at European and international levels, within the framework of foreign policy and development cooperation, have emphasised the country's role as an "honest broker" and a useful partner to support the interests and needs of the poorest and most vulnerable countries (Ferreira, Faria and Cardoso, 2015). This is the case in the calls for **special attention** to least developed countries, fragile countries, developing small island states and Lusophone countries within various multilateral frameworks, such as the 2030 Agenda and the aid effectiveness and development financing agendas¹⁶⁰. However, with developments towards strengthening the EU's common external voice and coordination commitments at a European level, Portugal is **increasingly encouraged to pursue an alignment with EU's positions in the various multilateral forums and frameworks**.

As a small EU Member State, Portugal has benefited from an image of greater neutrality as well as a promoter of bridges and consensus throughout EU Council presidencies (Raimundo, 2020). However, the enlargement of the EU, which have made it unsustainable to hold annual rotating presidencies, and the Treaty of Lisbon, which had significant institutional implications in the context of the Union's external action, **have greatly diminished the presidencies' role, scope and capacity for influence**. In this sense, much of the Portuguese presidency in the first half of 2021 can only aspire to advance the files it inherited from

¹⁵⁹ According to a study conducted through interviews with 800 actors in the 27 Member States, Portugal is the only EU country to include Africa's policy among the EU's top five priorities for the next five years (while all European countries ranked Africa 17th out of 20 potentially priority areas) (Dennison e Franco, 2020).

¹⁶⁰ Portugal has also advocated special attention to countries undergoing the UN undergraduate process (i.e. moving from LDC status) as they should not be penalised (in terms of access to funds, for example) for their development progress. This can be related to the fact that, in recent years, four out of ten of the countries traditionally beneficiaries of Portuguese ODA are not LDCs.

previous presidencies and try to leave a benchmark of competence and ambition on some issues that correspond to its main priorities, which is further complicated in the context of a pandemic.

The **strengthening of multilateralism and the relationship with Africa** were highlighted as priorities of the Portuguese presidency in 2021¹⁶¹. The pursuit of a more balanced and equitable EU-Africa partnership is not a new concern, as mentioned in the Strategic Concept for Portuguese Development Cooperation 2014-2020, arguing that co-responsibility, respect and mutual dialogue, as well as the joint definition and management are essential in this context, contrary to what has been the EU's often unambiguous stance in the past (MNE, 2019). The Portuguese position has **some nuances in relation to what has been the EC/EEAS' stance** towards Africa in recent years: on the one hand, Portugal has maintained that the EU should not focus its African policy on countries considered more strategic and/or creating greater challenges for Europe, in terms of security in particular (such as North Africa and the Sahel), and it should treat the entire continent as important from a comprehensive perspective; on the other hand, Portugal argues that any European strategy with Africa should take into account the approaches and interests of individual Member States, which is linked to the bilateral interests of policies for Africa (Dennison and Franco, 2020). It is, therefore, not surprising that Portugal is advocating for a mixed ACP-EU agreement, i.e. in which Member States continue to share the governance and implementation of the agreement with the European institutions.

Although the 6th EU-AU Summit could not be held during the Portuguese Presidency as envisioned, some **relevant milestones for Africa** are highlighted: the conclusion of negotiations for the new ACP-EU agreement, the political agreement for the new external action budgetary instrument (the NDICI), the removal

of some difficulties posed by other Member States in relevant sectors of development policy (such as gender and migration issues), the proposal and approval of the permanent coordinated presence of European forces supporting countries in the region of the Gulf of Guinea, or the particular focus on human development issues¹⁶². Specifically with Africa, the Presidency promoted, in partnership with the EIB, a set of discussions culminating in the High-Level EU-Africa Green Investment Forum, connecting economic growth to the green transition. Portugal incorporated some joint European efforts (notably at a humanitarian level) and also pushed to preserve international solidarity and include African concerns in European and international responses to COVID-19. The presidency, however, has been heavily marked by internal EU issues, particularly on economic recovery in the context of a pandemic.

Portugal's contribution to a more inclusive, fair, equitable and sustainable relationship with Africa goes far beyond its Council presidency and depends largely **on the conditions for implementing strong, coherent and effective foreign and development cooperation policies**. Over the past few years, in a combination of the effects of the economic and financial crisis and strategic/policy options, Portuguese cooperation has been weakened in human and financial terms, which limits its ability to respond to current challenges and to take full advantage of its comparative advantages in the relationship with Africa¹⁶³. Furthermore, the political relevance of development cooperation within public policies is low, even when compared to other European countries with similar sizes, which means that little attention is paid to these matters and that it becomes more difficult to pursue greater coherence in development policies. Only by maintaining strong cooperation, particularly at a bilateral level, can Portugal continue to be recognised by its peers and capitalise on the profile of having comparative advantages in Europe in terms of its relationship with Africa. The development and implementation of a new strategy

¹⁶¹ In the Presidency programme, Africa is mentioned not only in the context of promoting the EU's role as a global actor and EU-Africa relations in general (focusing on the continental partnership), but also on the economic recovery of low-income countries, energy policy and green investment, trade, security and defence, digitalisation and connectivity, job creation, research and innovation, space cooperation, and global health diplomacy (Government of Portugal, 2020). There is no focus on "critical issues such as health, education, human rights and the strengthening of the rule of law", as proposed in the priorities of civil society for the presidency (Portuguese NGDO Platform, 2021).

¹⁶² The paper prepared under the presidency, "Reinvigorating human development in EU external action" (ECDPM, April 2021) is available at <https://bit.ly/3ns3HPP>.

¹⁶³ For example, according to the 2020 introductory data published by the OECD, Portugal was the EU-15 Member State that contributed the second least in terms of ODA/GNI.

for Portuguese cooperation, for the period up to 2030, offers an opportunity to establish clear guidelines on how to strengthen this position, also aligning cooperation with good international practices, including through the effective integration of elements that contribute to the principle of leaving no one behind. Finally, EU-Africa partnerships and related mechanisms and instruments encompass new opportunities, which need to be considered, discussed together and reflected upon in coherent strategic and guiding approaches.



Portugal's contribution to a more inclusive, fair, equitable and sustainable relationship with Africa depends largely on the conditions for implementing strong, coherent and effective foreign and development cooperation policies.

Summary: SWOT analysis on the future of the partnership

STRENGTHS

- Greater reach of the African and European voice, through efforts of 'working better together'
- Mutual political will to revitalise and strengthen the relationship between the parties
- Joint vision and ambition to alleviate the 'donor-recipient' dichotomy; emphasizing mutual benefits and co-responsibility
- Greater focus on political and strategic dialogue encompassing a broad set of issues; common interests beyond development aid
- Both parties are critical to the partnership, which can lead to the incorporation of lessons learned

WEAKNESSES

- Asymmetries of various types (resources, capacities) remain between the parties
- Difficulty in ensuring internal cohesion (institutions and Member States) within both parties, despite renewed European and African coordination
- Consultation mechanisms, governance and meaningful and relevant dialogue between the parties have not yet been established in order to listen, discuss and build joint views in a timely and inclusive manner
- Lack of effective reciprocity in partnership mechanisms
- Mechanisms at the European level do not favour a unified continental approach to Africa
- Weak mechanisms of involvement and structured, regular participation of CSOs
- A specific focus on "People" has not always translated into decisions focused on (or targeted towards) European and African citizens

OPPORTUNITIES

- The partnership follows a universal logic of values and agendas supposedly shared between the parties
- Commitment to multilateralism; potential for negotiating more joint positions at a multilateral level, on a case-by-case basis
- Renewal of new partnerships (Africa-EU, ACP-EU) coincides with defining and programming a new European financial package
- New external action financial instrument implies greater (European) transparency and scrutiny
- EU assets in what it has to offer through its model of development and cooperation (compared to other donors)
- Strengthening African continental policies (e.g. AfCFTA); Reform of the AU and the approach to external partnerships
- Growing interest from a wide range of actors
- COVID-19 pandemic reinforces the need for integrated and shared approaches

THREATS

- Uncertainty in the coordination of two different ways to operationalise the partnership
- New financial instruments distance partner countries from decision-making that affects them, diluting principles of developmental effectiveness
- Negative impacts of sectoral policies (e.g. migration management) in development and cooperation (policy coherence)
- Africa's manipulation as a battleground for EU-China rivalry
- Merely instrumental vision of human development (vehicle for economic growth)
- COVID-19 pandemic may lead to dilution of some key priorities and less interest in the partnership
- Significant impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on development prospects in Africa and development financing



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

In sum, in order to change the paradigm and improve EU-Africa relations towards a meaningful partnership that meets the aspirations, interests and needs of both parties, especially in the pursuit of fairer, more sustainable and equitable development, and bearing in mind the above analysis, the recommendations are:

1. That the EU-Africa relationship evolves towards greater joint cooperation, mutual benefits and responsibility, less asymmetry and greater inclusiveness, specifically:

1.1. That the opportunity presented by the renewal of the Africa-EU partnerships allows for the establishment of **a relevant and meaningful dialogue and of a consultation process between the parties** intended at building a **joint and shared vision**, before setting up the instruments to implement it.

1.2. That a **governance structure** for the Africa-EU partnership is defined based on joint mechanisms and in lessons learnt from the JAES experience.

1.3. That the implementation of the jointly agreed partnership's priorities is based on **principles, commitments and provisions of multilateral/global frameworks**, namely the principle of 'joint but differentiated responsibilities', the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the promotion of all the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development dimensions.

1.4. That concrete mechanisms are established for **the consultation and engagement of European and African civil society** in EU-Africa partnerships. This implies identifying and putting into practice structured dialogue and participation mechanisms that provide civil society with the agency that it can and should have in promoting sustainable development, investing in its role as a partner for political dialogue and for programme implementation and monitoring.

1.5. That all efforts are made to create greater complementarity, coordination and coherence between the various instruments and partnerships with Africa, particularly between the AU-EU and ACP-EU frameworks, and between the various bodies, policies and instruments that deal with Africa at European level.

1.6. That the rhetoric on a more equitable partnership is translated into **greater reciprocity** in governance/management of the existing instruments (the AU should have a seat on the European Peace Facility just as the EU has on the AU's Peace Fund;

joint governance should be sought for blended-finance instruments and other investments managed by the EIB, amongst other examples).

1.7. That opportunities are seized for increased joint action at multilateral level, which implies not only a systematic search for agreed positions on a case-by-case basis, but also that the EU is ready to support more African positions at the UN and other multilateral fora (especially on crucial issues for African development such as, *inter alia*, illicit financial flows, external debt or taxation), and to bolster African participation in global governance mechanisms (the UN Security Council, financial institutions, global public goods).

2. That the integrity, operating space and overarching goals of European development policy are preserved, namely:

2.1. That the EU preserves the core goals of its development policy, aiming for the global eradication of poverty in all its dimensions. This aim should not be lost within a redefined and wider vision of cooperation, as it may risk hampering progress towards the SDGs or even altering perceptions of the EU added value as a development partner. This includes safeguarding the central focus of poverty eradication also within the new external action instrument, the NDICI-Global Europe.

2.2. That the EU establishes concrete mechanisms to ensure greater Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development, particularly ensuring that other policies (on migration, security, trade, etc.) do no harm for African countries' development, by paying real attention to the priorities of partner countries and avoiding conditionality of development assistance.

2.3. That the EU does not jeopardise the development effectiveness principles in its relations with partner countries. This means ensuring, amongst

other things, some of the joint management principles previously included in the EDF, notwithstanding its budgetisation, to ensure that partner countries have a word in the financing options that will impact them. This participation and ownership premise – which should not call into question the increased transparency intended with this budgetisation process – should be extended to national programmes and to the new financial instruments and trust funds, which tend to distance partner countries from decision-making even further.

2.4. That the necessary diversification of development financing sources and support to different actors does not lead to a diversion or decrease of EU development aid funds, effectively concentrating these flows in African countries with the greatest needs, fragilities, and vulnerabilities (which is not currently the case).

2.5. That human development is given greater centrality in development policies, regardless of other strategic considerations or sectoral priorities, thus matching Africa's needs (on health, education, suitable skills, employment, institutional capacities, etc.), capitalising on EU's added value as a normative power, and simultaneously contributing to the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda.

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Useful Links:

Africa-EU Partnership | <https://africa-eu-partnership.org/>

African Union | www.au.int

AUDA-NEPAD | www.nepad.org/

OEACP | <http://www.acpsec.org/>

EC – International Partnerships | <https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/>

EU Delegation to the AU | https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/african-union-au_en

EU Africa Business Forum | <http://eu-africasummit.eu/>

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Because we defend gender equality as an intrinsic value to human rights, any grammatical terms in the text referring to gender should be read and understood as equally applicable to either gender.

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