



* TOGETHER TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY *

EUROPE: TEAM PLAY IN AFRICA?

The Africa Policies of EU Member States

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In March 2020, the European Commission issued a draft proposal for a »New comprehensive strategy with Africa« that aims at building a »political alliance« for tackling common challenges.



The goal of a reinvigorated role for the EU in Africa raises the question of the new plan's consistency with the Africa policies of the different EU Member States.



Despite sharing significant common ground, there are differences in how individual EU countries relate to Africa – and between their approaches and the EU's – in terms of priorities, narratives and tools. The paper recommends a number of ways to improve the alignment.

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1

WHY AFRICA

Since the turn of the millennium, sub-Saharan Africa has gained unexpected prominence on the international scene. The region appeared to leave behind a period of disappointing development outcomes and a deeply pessimistic outlook, and began to exhibit a new dynamism, including sustained economic expansion, socio-economic improvement, democratic progress and advancements in regional integration processes. At the same time, global and emerging powers have increasingly engaged with sub-Saharan countries through competitive initiatives to expand their links, presence and influence, thus acknowledging as well as fostering the area's growing relevance and potential.

Europe inevitably affects and is affected by current and future developments in Africa. Historical ties and geographical proximity serve to bind the two continents together. Besides economic opportunities and development prospects, key issues on the international community's agenda – most notably migration, climate change and the fight against violent extremism – also invite Euro-African cooperation. In line with her pledge to lead a »geopolitical Commission«, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stressed the growing centrality of the external action of the European Union (EU) and called for a »New comprehensive strategy with Africa«.

Historically, EU relations with Africa date back to the very beginning of the European integration project. Despite the development of these relations – which we will examine in more detail below – they have remained fragmented, based on relatively short-term arrangements, and with a weak capacity to attract interest and political support. In an effort to overhaul and inject new vigour into EU-Africa relations, President von der Leyen's New Strategy aims at embracing and developing comprehensive relations between the two sides. The draft strategy¹, issued in early March 2020, proposes a »political alliance« that would strengthen Afro-European cooperation in tackling common challenges, with a focus on five major areas. The identification of key priorities and the emphasis on a reinvigorated role for the EU in Africa beg the question of the consistency of the new plan with the foreign and development policies of EU Member States.

Individual European countries have traditionally pursued national approaches to Africa, alongside formally acknowledging and contributing to the broader EU frameworks for the region. Over the last decade, in particular, many of these countries have shown growing interest in and have been paying increasing attention to Africa. While there is much common ground between the member states' approaches to Africa, there are evidently also variations in the form as well as in the substance of their strategies, including their stated priorities, channels and adopted narratives. Some have a long-established presence and influence south of the Sahara (particularly France), while others rediscovered, expanded or accelerated their initiatives targeting the area (e.g. Germany, Italy and Hungary). A number of smaller European countries, on the other hand, essentially lack an identifiable or active policy towards the region (as, for example, Croatia, Greece and Romania). The content of EU Member States' Africa policies thus range from substantially increased activity and well-articulated ambitions to much less proactive, under-articulated approaches, or even a complete lack thereof.

The EU Commission's decision to embark on a process of revising, streamlining and strengthening its external action regarding Africa comes at a critical time for Euro-African relations. The Cotonou Agreement between the EU and a large group of primarily African countries expired at the beginning of 2020, when negotiations for replacing it with a new deal were supposed to be completed. The 6th European Union–African Union Summit, at which the EU Commission had wanted its proposed New Strategy to be agreed upon and adopted, was originally scheduled to take place in October 2020. Ultimately, however, it proved impossible for any of these processes to proceed smoothly or as scheduled. The Covid-19 emergency inevitably adds to the complexity of re-negotiating relationships between the two sides. At such a decisive time, the aim of this paper is:

- to frame the EU's draft »New comprehensive strategy with Africa« in the context of evolving EU-Africa relations
- to examine the Africa policies and initiatives of key EU countries and country clusters in order to identify the common ground as well as the differences between them in terms of interests and priorities, tools, values and visions
- to analyse the EU Member States' Africa policies in light of the EU's own draft New Strategy and to make recommendations on how to make them more consistent

¹ In this paper, the term »New Strategy« is used to refer to the Communication »Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa«, released by the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in March 2020.

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THE EU AND AFRICA

The commitment of the EU's top leadership to establish a new partnership with Africa in 2020 reflects the combination of a long and unfinished search for the right approach to EU relations with Africa and the continent's growing geopolitical and economic relevance.

When the European integration process originally commenced in the 1950s, it was primarily France, backed by Belgium, that insisted on establishing privileged relations between the new Community and the colonies. The latter were thus included in the customs union created by the Treaty of Rome, which also set up the European Development Fund, which ultimately became the key instrument for EU development aid.

Europe's development policy regarding the newly independent African states – grouped with a smaller set of Caribbean and Pacific countries to make the ACP – was subsequently shaped by the Yaoundé Conventions (1963–1975) and the Lomé Conventions (1975–2000). The pacts formally resulted from 'negotiating' processes and, in the case of Lomé, rested on the idea of a 'partnership' between equals. Yet, relationships inevitably retained structural asymmetries, notably in the two key components of politically neutral development aid and trade preferences. The foundations of both were gradually undermined by global trade liberalisation and the post-1989 democracy and good governance agenda. Meanwhile, Africa appeared increasingly characterised by development failures and growing marginalisation. The 1990s called for change.

The year 2000 was a defining moment with major innovations being introduced in EU-Africa relations, though the fruits of these changes would ultimately prove more modest than originally expected. The need for adaptation and new perspectives was first embodied in the Cotonou Agreement which replaced the Lomé Convention. In terms of development strategy, the key focus was now on economic integration, which called for a reciprocal opening of markets. The Cotonou plan, in particular, envisaged Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) being negotiated with subgroups of the ACP countries as WTO-compatible trade liberalisation schemes.

Development policy, however, was increasingly part of the EU's broader foreign policy and the Cotonou Agreement thus incorporated other important political issues. In line with

the 1995 amendments to Lomé, development aid was formally made conditional on a positive assessment of democracy, rule of law and human rights in the beneficiary country, though this rarely led to the envisaged suspension of aid in the case of serious breaches. Migration also became an increasingly contentious political issue for the EU, particularly as a result of the so-called European migrant crisis. Several initiatives were conducted and significant resources deployed, from the Rabat Process (2006) and the Khartoum Process (2014) to the European Agenda on Migration and the related EU Trust Fund for Africa (2015), to the Partnership Framework on Migration (also known as the Migration Compact), the External Investment Plan (2016) and, ultimately, the Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs (2018). The issue of repatriation was one major obstacle in the negotiations on the renewal of the Cotonou Agreement, which expired in February 2020. But it was not the only one. Questions were raised about the insistence that African countries – themselves a heterogeneous collection – be grouped with countries from other world regions, which would also undermine the African Union's legitimacy as the EU's counterpart. Moreover, in the meantime, another EU-Africa platform had been taking shape which raised doubts about the usefulness of a new Cotonou-like deal.

Back in 2000, the first Africa-EU Summit of Heads of States and Governments had taken place with the aim of »giving a new strategic dimension to the global partnership between Africa and Europe« (Cairo Declaration, 2000: 1). The process fed into the launch of the landmark Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) at the Lisbon summit in 2007. The strategy was explicitly meant to move beyond the logic of a development policy, expanding existing links through a new EU-Africa Partnership, a »political partnership to address (...) common challenges, in particular peace and security, migration and development, and a clean environment (...) a strong and sustainable continent-to-continent partnership, with the AU and the EU at the centre« (JAES 2007: 2). Formally, the alliance was periodically renewed through regular summits – five took place between 2000 and 2017, with the 6th originally scheduled for October 2020 – and three-yearly action plans for the implementation of the agreed measures. Moreover, the JAES identified specific areas for enhanced cooperation through the African Peace Facility, set up in 2004 to support the African Union's peace and security efforts (alongside the EU's own security missions on the continent), and the Pan-African

Programme, established in 2014 to support transregional or continental projects (e.g. the infrastructure for the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area). Yet, the JAES also came under criticism for aspects such as the inefficiency of its institutional setup, its limited financial resources and the lack of African ownership of the entire project. Gradually, political dialogue meetings have become a rarer occurrence and political support has declined. Ultimately, the JAES and the related Africa-EU Partnership seemed to achieve little progress in terms of substantial change to Euro-African relations.

The recently proposed New Strategy with Africa – *de facto* an overhaul and relaunch of the existing JAES – comes after years of external actors dramatically increasing the attention paid to and their presence in Africa and aims at developing comprehensive relations between the two sides. The EU Commission proposes a »political alliance« between European and African countries to jointly address global challenges, with joint initiatives and greater political weight in international forums, where, together, the two sides would comprise a majority.

The proposed focus for the New Strategy is five partnerships in the areas of green transition and access to energy, digital transformation, sustainable growth and jobs, peace and governance, and migration and mobility. The centrality of issues such as counter-terrorism and stability in the Sahel and the management of migration once again bring the EU's own legitimate interests and concerns to the fore. The aim is for progress to be made in all these areas by acting together on three distinct levels. At the global level, by using the majority bloc that Europe and Africa represent within the UN and UN agencies to strengthen rules-based multilateralism. On the bilateral level, by increasing African Union–European Union political cooperation. And within the European Union, by increasing coordination with EU Member States and effectively mobilising resources.

Published in early 2020 in a world about to be engulfed by the Covid-19 crisis, the EU's proposal has so far failed to create momentum on either side of the Mediterranean. This lack of impetus was also a result of the African Union's significantly increased assertiveness and decreased readiness to accept EU plans that were not aligned with the AU's own interests and agenda (cf. Medinilla and Teevan 2020). Europeans will have to adapt to processes and outcomes that will inevitably be increasingly based on bilateral negotiations.

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EU MEMBER STATES AND THEIR AFRICA POLICIES

Colonial past and geographic location, level of wealth and economic interests, political culture and government orientation are some of the key variables that can affect the perspective and positions of an individual EU Member State with regard to Africa. In this section, the Africa policies of ten EU Member States are examined. In selecting the countries, we attempt to achieve a balance between two simple criteria, namely the need to include the larger and more influential actors as well as to account for the positioning of countries in different geographical regions of the EU².

FRANCE

The role, scale and type of France's involvement in post-colonial Africa can hardly be compared to those of any other nation, European or otherwise. From the outset, the privileged political and economic links that Paris retained with its former colonies were culturally built on the notion of a distinctive and intimate relationship – »Africa is carved into France's identity«³ is how President Emmanuel Macron put it – and in practice, this relationship was supported by a direct military presence accompanied by significant development aid as well as an original monetary arrangement. The term *Françafrique* has been widely used to account for these unique connections – which a succession of French presidents pledged to put an end to and replace with »normalised« relations – and has been at the centre of a debate on the extent to which its essential elements still persist today.

The drivers of France's strong presence and influence in Africa have been a mixture of geopolitical and economic interests. On the one hand, a post-imperial determination to maintain their role on the international stage, and enjoy the related prestige by focusing on an arena where this would still be accessible to Paris, namely, sub-Saharan Africa. On the other hand, the defence and promotion of French businesses, trade and investments in markets where they have an established presence.

Informal networks and personal relationships – as well as financial and military commitments – were nurtured for many years and have been exploited to keep the leadership and capital cities of African countries as close to Paris as possible. But substantial institutional channels have also been regularly employed, including what is currently the largest number of embassies in the region after China (42 embassies for 49 sub-Saharan states), accompanied by the work of the French Development Agency (AFD) and an expansive network of cultural and educational institutions. There have also been two multilateral platforms at play since the early 1970s: the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF), a testimony to the notion that »the dissemination and promotion of the French language are a priority for French diplomacy«⁴, and the Africa-France Summits of Heads of States and Governments, including some key non-French-speaking economies with which France maintains important relations, notably Angola, South Africa and Nigeria. While not as significant as it used to be, French aid also remains substantial (around 0.43–0.44 per cent of GNI in 2017–2019).⁵

The most relevant formal arrangement linking 14 West and Central African countries to Paris, however, is the CFA franc, a currency pegged to the euro and guaranteed by the French treasury. The CFA franc has been repeatedly criticised as a »neo-colonial« tool allowing Paris undue interference in the monetary policies and thus the economies of African member countries.

Although France has been an interventionist power in Africa for the better part of the last five decades, its current exposure in western Sahel is entirely unprecedented (the costly Operation Barkhane deploys over 5,000 French troops). Paris remains primarily motivated by a desire to retain political and economic influence in this part of its traditional *pré carré*, where it now has to respond not only to the jihadist insurgents but also to the rising influence of external competitors such as China, the US and Russia. Yet France devoted increasing attention to the coordinated involvement of other international actors and the adoption of an integrated

2 For a comprehensive comparison of individual EU countries, primarily using quantitative measures of different dimensions of their relations with Africa, see also Faleg and Palleschi (2020).

3 *Discours de Emmanuel Macron à l'Université de Ouagadougou*, Ouagadougou, 28 November 2017.

4 Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères (www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/dossiers-pays/afrique/).

5 OECD, ODA Official development assistance: disbursements (<https://stats.oecd.org/>).

approach – what is being referred to as »3D« (diplomacy, defence, development) – including through the Sahel Alliance, launched with Germany and the EU to promote development schemes; the Partnership for Stability and Security in the Sahel (P3S), also supported by Germany, for re-establishing basic state services; and the EU-sponsored Coalition for the Sahel to better coordinate international initiatives.

Besides its direct actions, France has traditionally played an influential role in the EU's policy towards Africa, for example by having a French as EU Commissioner in charge of development from 1958 to 1985 and through strong influence over the European Development Fund, reinforced by a voting mechanism that gives more weight to the EDF's largest contributors (Claeys 2010). Paris has increasingly been calling for EU involvement in Africa, something observers have at times referred to as *Eurafrique*. In Macron's words, »a new relationship, rethought on the right scale, where the European Union will be able to speak and build with the African Union and with Africa as a whole«⁶ France, however, will *de facto* retain its substantial parallel and autonomous policy towards the region for the foreseeable future (cf. Medina and Teevan 2020: 3).

GERMANY

Germany's presence and role in Africa recently evolved from that of a long-term relevant but relatively self-restrained player to a significantly more active economic and political partner. For sub-Saharan countries, Berlin currently represents both the EU's largest donor as well as the EU's main exporter to the area.

Having already lost its colonies during the First World War, the country adopted an essentially low-key posture in its relations with post-independence Africa, with little appetite for political influence or direct involvement in security issues. This approach is reinforced by an interest in not to tangle with French – but also US and British – policy in the region. With limited strategic interests in the area (cf. Engel 2012: 473), much of Germany's activities were driven by development objectives, with Ethiopia and Tanzania among the main beneficiaries of official aid, and many took place within EU initiatives. A range of non-state actors have also contributed to establishing ties between Germany and Africa, including anti-apartheid movements, political foundations and churches.

Since the early 2000s, Germany's approach to Africa has had a significant rethink, leading both to a new emphasis on the region's economic and geopolitical relevance as well as an expansion of Germany's actual stakes in the area, notably through direct involvement in recent international stabilisation efforts in the Sahel. Berlin's expanded role within Europe, particularly after the financial crisis, further contributed to growing awareness and expectations with

regard to its role towards the sub-Saharan region, although the German government remained firmly committed to the EU's own frameworks on Africa⁷ and somewhat wary of the geostrategic priorities pursued by the likes of the US, China or France in the region (Kappel 2017: 7). A proliferation of initiatives and debates were testimony to the renewed interest in the region, with the influential political foundations and the two major parties advancing their own proposals to complement official initiatives.

The federal government presented its first comprehensive New Strategy in 2011. This was followed, in 2014, by the *Policy Guidelines for Africa*, which in turn were expanded in *An Enhanced Partnership with Africa* (2019). The latter spelled out five major goals: peace, security and stability – a central component of Germany's policy towards Africa since the 1990s – to be promoted through democratic rights and regional approaches; sustainable and inclusive economic development, with a crucial role for trade and private sector investment as well as for the new Africa Continental Free Trade Area; the management of migration; a rules-based international order to jointly address global challenges; and the deepening of German-African civil society partnerships. Migration was clearly framed as a key aspect of relations with Africa: »Germany and Europe are (...) facing enormous challenges. As a result, significant action is needed in Africa and in Europe. Migration policy is an integral part of our Africa policy. Helping to tackle the causes of displacement and irregular migration and to stop human smuggling (...) and ensuring the readmission of nationals« (An enhanced partnership with Africa 2019). This same approach prompted a series of specific programmes launched in 2017, notably a Compact with Africa initiated during Germany's G20 Presidency and offering guarantees to businesses willing to operate in African countries prepared to commit to reform; a Marshall Plan with Africa outlined by the Ministry for Cooperation and Development; and the *Pro!Afrika Initiative* established by the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy and comprising specific measures to boost German trade and investment in support of Africa's development. The extent to which such initiatives actually managed to mobilise German companies, however, has been questioned (Pelz 2019).

At the same time, however, there was visible evidence of Germany's focus on Africa in the form of Chancellor Angela Merkel's increasingly frequent official visits to sub-Saharan Africa, which went from just three over ten years (2005-2015) to one a year during the subsequent period (2016-2020). Security deployments were also increased. As of mid-2020, Germany was the EU's largest contributor to a UN peacekeeping mission in Africa, with 372 personnel engaged as part of MINUSMA (Mali and Niger).⁸ In addition, just short of 200 people were deployed in the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) and some 80 troops were

⁶ *Discours de Emmanuel Macron à l'Université de Ouagadougou*, Ouagadougou, 28 November 2017.

⁷ *Speech by Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle on presenting the Federal Government's Strategy for Africa*, Berlin, 15 June 2011.

⁸ UN, *Summary of Contribution to UN Peacekeeping by Country, Mission and Post: Police, UN Military Experts on Mission, Staff Officers and Troops*, 30 June 2020.

hosted at the French base in Djibouti as part of the EU's anti-piracy Operation EU NAVFOR Atalanta. Ursula von der Leyen presided over most of these developments as German Minister of Defence (2013-2019). During the time she served as defence minister, von der Leyen publicly expressed the need for closer EU involvement in and cooperation with Africa, a stance that she continued to promote as president of the European Commission.⁹

ITALY

Compared to other international actors, Italy was slow to change its position on Africa. Rome had not effectively nurtured post-colonial ties. While Italian aid reached remarkable levels in the mid-1980s, it subsequently plummeted, reflecting a broader loss of interest in a continent largely seen as better left to Italy's numerous Catholic missions and NGOs. For 30 years, no serving Italian prime minister travelled south of the Sahara, and the diplomatic network relied on 19 embassies for some 49 countries in the region (no more than four for the whole of West Africa). Cultural centres were only set up in Ethiopia, South Africa and Kenya. Italy proudly supported the mediation effort that led to Mozambique's peace deal being signed in Rome but this was an exceptional occurrence, as was the large deployment of troops for the unsuccessful UN operation in Somalia, also in the early 1990s.

While some new initiatives had already emerged between 2007 and 2009 (notably, an Italian African Peace Facility as a financial instrument to support security and a draft Africa Plan to promote economic links), Italy's more recent rediscovery of Africa was reactive rather than proactive. Over the past decade, two key drivers led to a substantial change of approach and pace when it came to Africa policy: the global financial crisis of 2008–2009 and what has been referred to as the »migrant crisis« of 2014–2016.

The economic slowdown induced by the global crisis led to the notion that, in the context of dwindling resources and extensive public spending cuts, the legitimacy of the country's diplomacy hinged on its capacity to serve Italy's economic recovery by supporting exports and investment abroad. In 2013, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched an Italy-Africa Initiative aimed at attracting new interest in the continent, while commissioning a comprehensive review of Italy's policy towards Africa (Carbone et al. 2013). The country began to conduct high-level missions to foster closer bilateral relations – three different prime ministers visited a total of 13 African countries in 2014–2019 – while the diplomatic presence on the ground was expanded through the opening of four new embassies. This new proactive approach included increased attention from the media and from business circles, and culminated in the two Italy–Africa Ministerial Conferences held in Rome in 2016 and 2018.

The long-awaited reform of development cooperation established an autonomous Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), which became operational in 2016. This all occurred against the backdrop of an upward trend in the country's, admittedly limited Official Development Assistance (ODA) between 2012 and 2017, when it reached 0.29 per cent of GNI.

The 2013–2019 flurry of initiatives showed a gradual shift in focus from the diplomacy of growth and an emphasis on business opportunities in Africa, under the Renzi government, to more clearly prioritising migration control – an issue that was already high on the agenda – particularly with the increased dominance of the populist right in government. Migration had already become central for Italy with a 2016 proposal to European partners that the EU establish a »migration compact« targeting origin and transit countries in Africa. The idea was to invest in development so as to reduce the pressure on people living in poor African countries to migrate, a suggestion that fed into what became the 2016 EU Migration Partnership Framework. Unsurprisingly, the two most recent prime minister's visits to the continent led Giuseppe Conte to the Horn of Africa and the Sahel – both of which are key migration origin and transit areas – while a military training mission in Niger (MISIN) was launched in 2018 with around 290 Italian troops for the training of security forces and personnel working on anti-trafficking operations. Italy also gives substantial support to the EU NAVFOR Atalanta anti-piracy operation in Somalia with the provision of some 400 personnel. Its participation in EU training and capacity-building missions in the Sahel is much more limited, as is its contribution to UN missions in Africa with only four deployed under MINUSMA and two under MINURSO (United Nations 2020).

In the meantime, Italy created a Fund for Africa, which was essentially devoted to strengthening border controls, and the abovementioned expansion of Italian aid partly resulted from increased expenditure for refugees and asylum seekers, the subsequent reduction of which, in 2018 and 2019, led to a decline in ODA as a share of GNI to 0.24 per cent. The country's latest development cooperation programme also clearly states that »the migration issue remains at the centre of actions in the field of foreign policy and development cooperation« (Government of Italy 2020). The main goal is to address the »structural causes« of »forced migration« in order to stem them. Agriculture, food security and nutrition – issues that have traditionally been high on the agenda for cooperation in Rome, which is home to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) – were now also framed as ways of helping stem migration from famine-stricken areas.

On the whole, geopolitical and economic factors, partly linked to its southern geographical location recently pushed Italy from a relatively inactive approach towards sub-Saharan Africa to one that comprises a combination of autonomous initiatives with more active involvement in EU policy-making.

⁹ »Germany sees bigger military role in Africa«, in: *Al Jazeera* (26.1.2014); »France, Germany tighten defence cooperation in Africa's Sahel«, in: *Reuters* (27.7.2017); »German defense Minister wants EU military to match NATO«, in: *Atlantic Council* (7.11.2016).

NETHERLANDS, SWEDEN AND DENMARK

The Netherlands' links to Africa date back to pre-colonial coastal settlements, primarily in South Africa, where such presence was at origins of today's privileged relationship between the two countries.

The Dutch have long been a well-respected operator and often a leading innovator in development (Spitz et al. 2013: 16). In terms of aid levels, too, the Netherlands has traditionally ranked high, with ODA as a share of GNI at above the 0.7 per cent threshold for the entire 1975–2012 period. Since 2013, however, this number declined, reaching its lowest point at 0.59 per cent in 2019¹⁰.

Building on changes that began in the 1990s, the Dutch Africa policy of the new millennium was shaped by clearer thematic issues, and good governance itself became a goal of development cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands 2008: 29).

The current approach to Africa was outlined in 2018 and contains goals such as the prevention of conflicts and the reduction of poverty and inequality, SDGs and digitalisation for sustainable growth, but also enhancing »the Netherlands' international earning capacity« (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands 2018: 22). Dutch development policy will concentrate on four unstable regions near Europe – including the Sahel and the Horn of Africa – and »target the root causes of poverty, migration, terrorism and climate change« (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands 2018: 8). Across the focus regions, Amsterdam has established three forms of working relations with 16 sub-Saharan countries, including a development relationship as part of a broader foreign policy targeting insecurity and instability and preventing irregular migration (with Chad, Mauritania, Senegal, Nigeria and Sudan).¹¹ Aid used for the latter purposes comprises funding programmes for education, youth and women's employment and »the reception of refugees in their own regions«.¹²

Also high on the agenda is the promotion of Dutch businesses and the defence of the Netherlands' highly internationalised economy, achieved through initiatives such as Orange Corners (2015), which matches African start-ups led by young people with Dutch businesses already operating in Africa.

Sweden and Denmark are, respectively, a medium-sized and a relatively small state, both of which place strong emphasis on multilateralism and international cooperation, as well as on the role of the EU, in pursuing foreign relations aimed at consolidating a rules-based international order.

Sweden does not currently treat Africa as an official foreign policy priority (Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden 2020). However, the continent has traditionally been an important area of interest, with Swedish development aid consistently among the highest in OECD countries.

In the mid-1990s, a debate stimulated by the Nordic Africa Institute led to Sweden's first official Africa Policy (Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden 1997). Entitled Africa on the move, it comprised early recognition of the promising transformations underway in the continent. The policy was subsequently updated, making Africa's development »one of the Swedish Government's foremost foreign policy priorities«. The country placed an especially strong focus on trade as a »a central pillar of Sweden's new Africa policy« (Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden 2007: 24), calling for the removal of trade barriers – particularly the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU – for the benefit of Africa's poor.

Development cooperation is currently framed through »a regional approach« aimed at contributing to Africa's regional integration by having the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) work with the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities and the African Development Bank. The strategy also explicitly underlines the need to »embrace the positive effects of migration« (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden 2016).

Cutting across all the above is Sweden's long-established emphasis on »a rights perspective«, implying that »human rights and democracy are regarded as fundamental to development« (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden 2016), and on multilateralism, including through the Africa-Nordic Dialogue the creation of which it sponsored in 2000. Since Sweden became a Member State in 1995, the EU itself has been recognised as a crucial platform, with Stockholm aware that »influencing ... and strengthening EU actions in Africa gives priceless added value to Swedish bilateral policies. The Joint EU-Africa Strategy and the 2007 Joint Action Plan will accordingly guide Sweden's policy for Africa« (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden 2007), and that »no other actor is a greater guarantor of Sweden's economy, security and peace« (Statement of Foreign Policy 2020). Sweden is also currently part of the UN's MINUSMA mission with a substantial commitment of 100 personnel.

Similar to Sweden, Denmark also stresses the need for rules-based multilateral cooperation and order. Besides the Africa-Nordic Dialogue, together with its regional neighbours Copenhagen is also involved in defence capacity-building through the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF), with a focus on the Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF) as part of the African Peace and Security Architecture.¹³ Eastern Africa is also the region where five of Copenhagen's eight priority countries are located. The remaining

¹⁰ OECD, *ODA Official development assistance: disbursements* (<https://stats.oecd.org/>).

¹¹ <https://www.government.nl/topics/development-cooperation/partners-in-development>

¹² Government of the Netherlands, *Development cooperation. Dutch Policy* (<https://www.government.nl/topics/development-cooperation/the-development-policy-of-the-netherlands>).

¹³ »The Danish engagement in Africa« (<https://fmn.dk/eng/allabout/Pages/the-danish-effort-in-africa.aspx>).

three are states of the Sahel, where Denmark supplies some 70 troops to MINUSMA and a similar number to Operation Barkhane.

Alongside security concerns, there is also an economic rationale behind recent initiatives, as illustrated by an Africa Commission chaired in 2008 by the country's then Prime Minister, the Opportunity Africa initiative launched in 2013 to boost Denmark's presence in the continent, and, since 2018, the global forum Partnership for Green Growth and the Global Goals (P4G).

Danish aid has traditionally been high, comprising 0.7 per cent or more of national income since 1978. The new development strategy passed in 2017 by a centre-right government, however, placed explicit emphasis on Danish interests and influence abroad. It wanted »to put migration high on the development agenda«, primarily by investing in security and development as a way of »countering refugee pressures on Europe's borders ... countering irregular economic migration and ... addressing the root causes of migration« (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and Danida 2017: 2,5). The social democrats which, in 2019, replaced the centre-right government assumed a similarly tough stance on immigration.

Also like Sweden, Copenhagen sees the EU's role and frameworks as »Denmark's best opportunity to influence the world ... for pursuing Danish interests in Europe and globally« (Government of Denmark 2019). Closer controls of EU external borders are called for, in line with the strict immigration policy adopted by the government (favouring the repatriation of failed asylum seekers and irregular migrants), as well as investment in addressing the causes of irregular migration, including new stabilisation initiatives in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Ending the existing opt-out for the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy has also been discussed.

PORTUGAL AND SPAIN

Portugal and Spain represent two very different trajectories in sub-Saharan Africa. The former is a small state that capitalised on long-term relations to carve out a mediation role for itself with regard to Portuguese-speaking countries in the region. The latter, now the EU's fourth largest state by population, went from an almost complete lack of historical connections with Africa – with the exception of Equatorial Guinea – to recently identifying the continent as a strategic priority.

Africa has long been an essential dimension of Portugal's foreign policy. Lisbon's direct presence in African territories, established as far back as the 15th century, had only been reluctantly relinquished. In the mid-1970s, democratic Portugal favoured a new »European vocation« (Cravo 2012: 234), with a focus on joining and integrating into the EU. Once the latter goal was completed, the Lusophone area gained ground as another strategic pillar of foreign policy.

The Portuguese language and its promotion provided a clear focus and served as a rare opportunity for a small country to have a global presence. Building on bilateral agreements with the Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa (PALOP) (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe and Equatorial Guinea¹⁴), during the 1980s, Portugal positioned itself as an intermediary between the West and these African states (Pavia 2019: 38). In 1996, Lusophone Africa took on an institutional form with the creation of Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP), promoted by Portugal and also involving Brazil and later East Timor. As a multilateral platform, the CPLP facilitated successful coordination in international fora, including the UN.

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to play a pivotal role in Portugal's foreign policy, despite the absence of a formal, dedicated policy. The country's development cooperation framework is also rather abstract and generic, with little reference to Africa other than to recognise Portuguese-speaking countries – and the promotion of the Portuguese language – as priorities (Government of Portugal 2014). Aid – limited, mostly bilateral, and concentrated in PALOP countries – has fluctuated over the years, but, since 2014, has declined dramatically.¹⁵

The EU and multilateralism have played an increasingly important role. Since accession, Portugal has advocated for the EU to play a strong external role and has successfully pushed for more systematic EU involvement in Lusophone Africa (Cravo 2012: 223, 336-337). Both the first EU–Africa summit, which took place in Cairo in 2000, and a second summit in Lisbon, in 2007, were held under two different Portuguese presidencies of the EU.

Africa became a more relevant component of Spain's foreign policy following José Luis Zapatero's arrival in government in 2004, that is, a few years before many other European countries »rediscovered« the continent. Spain's first Africa Plan was approved in 2006, followed by a second in 2009. Meanwhile, the country's development aid to the continent increased fourfold, peaking at 1.4 billion US dollars in 2009, although it was subsequently drastically cut due to the economic crisis.¹⁶ Notwithstanding the claimed centrality of human rights, Madrid's former colony Equatorial Guinea, currently a dictatorship, was the largest recipient of Spanish aid (per capita) in 2014–2018.

Contrary to the previous two plans, the 3rd Africa Plan, issued in 2019, is an original, incisive and yet inherently practical strategy. It essentially aimed at taking stock of Africa's

¹⁴ Equatorial Guinea was a Spanish colony (1778-1968) having earlier been under Portuguese rule. In 2011, it adopted Portuguese as its third official language, primarily to become part of Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) countries.

¹⁵ OECD, ODA *Official development assistance: disbursements* (<https://stats.oecd.org/>).

¹⁶ OECD, ODA *Official development assistance: disbursements* (<https://stats.oecd.org/>).

transformations and moving beyond migration to envision a broader and more productive relationship with the continent. A strong rhetoric emphasises that »Spain’s immediate national interests are in Africa, almost as much as they are in Europe« and that »Spain must spearhead the efforts to bring the EU closer to Africa ... at a historic moment in which identity issues and national concerns are causing nations to withdraw into themselves ... making Africa a foreign policy priority.«¹⁷ While the Africa Plan is generally supportive of working within a European framework, it is unusually critical of the EU’s excessive focus on controlling irregular migration and facilitating more efficient repatriation, and insists on »a migratory strategy *with* rather than *without* regard to Africa« (Government of Spain 2019: 10,18). This requires a primary focus on three large »anchor« countries (Nigeria, South Africa and Ethiopia) to be instrumentally supported – also via the promotion of Spanish businesses – for the potential they have to absorb intra-African migratory flows and export stability to the rest of the region. An additional seven »partnership countries« are identified as stable economies with significant growth potential.

In practice, despite the strong decline in development aid, Spain retains a substantial diplomatic presence (23 embassies) and is the top contributor, in terms of personnel deployed, to EU military operations and civilian missions in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly to EUTM Mali.

HUNGARY AND POLAND

The Africa policies of both Hungary and Poland unsurprisingly underwent a marked shift after 1989, when previous Soviet-oriented relations with sub-Saharan countries were essentially abandoned. While Budapest recently embarked on a new path to re-establish its links with the continent, Warsaw, however, has remained lukewarm on the issue.

Only once Hungary had accomplished the overarching goal of integrating into NATO (1999) and the EU (2004) did Budapest find new reasons to look to other regions again. A turning point was 2010, when the Fidesz–Hungarian Civic Union government came to office and proclaimed a Global Opening (2011) aimed at projecting the country beyond Europe. This included Africa, a region whose markets the government had set its sights on primarily to promote the diversification of export destinations. Hungary’s access to the European Development Fund, in 2010, allowed it further room for manoeuvre. But a number of new tools were employed, too. Most notably, the first Budapest Africa Forum was convened in 2013 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (further editions followed in 2015 and 2018), three new embassies were inaugurated and four Hungarian Trade and Cultural Centres (HTCC) were set up to support Hungarian businesses across the continent. Since 2012, development aid has also risen and become increasingly bilateral – total ODA grew

from 0.10 per cent of GNI in 2013 to 0.22 per cent in 2019¹⁸ – with an emphasis on Africa, although the volume of aid remains limited.

Hungary’s new commitment to Africa culminated in the official adoption of an Africa Strategy, in 2019, the opening sentence of which expressed the basic rationale: »the fundamental point of the foreign trade and external policy towards sub-Saharan Africa is that migration can be effectively managed by developing the economies of individual countries, creating jobs, making a living locally, therefore ... the need to put Hungary’s foreign policy and foreign economic presence on the African continent on a new footing, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa« (Government of Hungary 2019). The strategy consisted of a series of specific actions and tasks to be completed within short deadlines, such as forming a government body to deal with Hungary–sub-Saharan Africa relations, strengthening bilateral military cooperation (e.g. on border defence), devising a support programme for Hungarian businesses to export to or invest in Africa and developing a scholarship programme for African students. Similarly, alongside other national interests, such as national prestige and opening new markets to Hungarian businesses, the cooperation policies of 2014 and 2019 steered the use of aid towards tackling the fundamental causes of migration (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary 2014).

Unlike in Hungary, the post-1989 decline in Polish involvement and interest in Africa has been steadier: Poland still has no clear Africa policy or aims for its activities in the continent (Polus 2016: 99; Kugel 2012). The area is barely mentioned in the country’s foreign policy strategy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland 2017), except for a brief reference to a *Go Africa Initiative* and an equally cursory description of development and humanitarian assistance as responses to the so-called migration crisis. There is essentially no active promotion of diplomatic and economic links. As many as eight Polish embassies have been closed since 1989, half of them as late as 2008 – at a time when many countries were moving in the opposite direction – whereas diplomatic missions have remained very rare and rather inconclusive in terms of promoting economic links. While Warsaw claims it has left its relations with Africa to the EU, in fact it did not engage through EU channels either (Poland was not represented at the first three EU–Africa Summits).

In 2013–2014, however, Poland too seemed to step up its relations with Africa. This was manifest in a new and more positive narrative, a new programme (Go Africa) aimed at increasing exports to five sub-Saharan countries, the first prime ministerial visit by Donald Tusk, several economic missions and some trade increase. But these new steps remained largely *ad hoc* and unsystematic. The first Poland–Africa Congress was convened in 2013 to strengthen bilateral trade and economic ties, but was discontinued after a second edition in 2014. The country’s fundamental align-

¹⁷ Josep Borrell, Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs, »Preface« to the *3rd Africa Plan 2019*.

¹⁸ OECD, *Development Cooperation Profiles 2020*, www.oecd-ilibrary.org.

ment with Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia – i. e. the Visegrád Group – on the migration issue did not lead to more substantive initiatives either. Instead, it was Polish entrepreneurs and businesses that became convinced by the potential of Africa's markets, driven by a stagnant Europe and geopolitical tensions with Russia. As observers have pointed out, however, »Poland is still searching for its strategy for Africa (...) for the time being we are on a reconnaissance mission«.¹⁹

¹⁹ »Poland Starts to Conquer African Markets«, in: *Obserwator Finansowy* (30.4.2015).

4

AIMS, THEMES AND TOOLS

European states relate to Africa in markedly different ways. Several build on post-colonial ties that others never had. Some provide a considerable amount of development aid, others contribute directly to security operations. A number of countries have explicitly outlined fully fledged official Africa policies, but several remain more generic. Notwithstanding these and other differences, there is still a very clear overlap between the EU Member States' approaches to the continent as well as with the EU's own initiatives.

Examining the extent to which national strategies are in line with the EU's New Strategy requires looking beyond the headings of the five partnerships, since some of the proposed areas of cooperation actually cover an array of relatively heterogeneous issues. This is particularly the case for »green transition and energy access« (ranging from renewables and access to electricity to sustainable agriculture and protection of maritime ecosystems) and »sustainable growth and jobs« (stretching from foreign investments and trade to African regional integration – with support for the new African Continental Free Trade Area deemed »a top priority« – but also targeting education, health, and women's and youth empowerment). The two areas are both in line with Europe's new growth strategy – the European Green Deal – and there is also a degree of overlap between them, with regard to the notion of environmentally sustainable investments, for instance. Similarly, the third partnership – on »peace, security, governance and resilience« – also embraces a broad range of issues from conflict resolution and humanitarian interventions to good governance, democracy, human rights and gender equality. By comparison, the two remaining partnerships presented in the proposed New Strategy – i.e. »digital transformation« and »migration and mobility« – are far more focused and much less expansive.

A more fine-grained list of themes was thus used to investigate the differences and similarities between the national approaches of the Member States examined in the previous sections and the European Union's draft strategy. Besides the topics themselves, the African regions and countries that are the focus of individual European actors were also identified.

The resulting heat map and matrix charts (Tables 1, 2 and 3) display a comparative summary of the key information

concerning thematic, regional and country priorities.²⁰ *Priority themes* show the relevance of each of a number of selected subjects in three to five major policy documents on sub-Saharan Africa in each European country (the darker the colour, the higher the priority). *Priority regions* refer to the geographical areas that are either mentioned as priorities in a European country's selected policy documents or where that country has deployed security forces. *Prioritised countries* present the sub-Saharan states that host the embassy of a specific European country (diplomatic presence, top left quadrant), host its security forces (security presence, top right quadrant), are among its top ten aid recipients (ODA presence, bottom left quadrant), and are mentioned in the selection of policy documents of the specific European country (textual reference, bottom right quadrant).

THEMATIC PRIORITIES

As the heat map in Table 1 shows, the priority topics in the EU's proposed New Strategy are generally also well covered by national agendas. Across EU Member States, the top five priorities for Africa are peace and security, migration, inclusive growth, women and youth, democracy and good governance, and environment and climate change. The two subjects covered less well in terms of cross-country interest, on the other hand, are digital and culture (the latter is not a partnership area, although it is briefly touched on in the draft strategy). Germany emerges as the EU country with the most comprehensive coverage of the themes being examined, followed by Portugal, France and Italy. At the other end of the spectrum are Denmark, Hungary and Poland.

The promotion and protection of peace and security is the single most widely emphasised concern in national approaches to sub-Saharan Africa. It essentially appears in every single document, often with concrete implications, whether in the strong form of France's large deployment in the Sahel (where Germany, Italy, Denmark, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands and Portugal also have a presence) or the Nordics' cooperation with the Eastern Africa Standby Force. Hungary also prioritises security in the sub-Saharan region, but its operational presence remains very limited, as does

²⁰ See Annex for method and sources.

Table 1
Priority Themes in Africa Policies: The EU and EU Member States

Priority Themes	EU – New Strategy	EU	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Denmark	Sweden	Portugal	Spain	Hungary	Poland
	Agriculture	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	High
Aid/Poverty	Low	Low	High	High	High	High	Low	High	High	High	High	Low
Culture	Low	Low	High	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low
Democracy, Good Governance, Human Rights	High	High	High	High	High	Low	High	High	High	High	High	Low
Digital	High	High	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Education and Research	Medium	High	High	High	High	High	Low	High	High	Low	High	High
Energy (sustainability and/or access)	High	High	High	High	High	Low	Low	High	High	High	High	High
Environment and Climate Change	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Health	Low	High	High	High	High	Low	Low	Low	High	Low	High	High
Inclusive Growth	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Migration	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	Low	High	High	High
Peace and Security	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Regional Integration	High	High	Low	High	High	Low	Low	High	Low	High	Low	Low
Sustainable Development and Green Growth	High	High	High	Low	Low	High	High	High	High	Low	Low	Low
Trade and Investments	High	High	High	High	High	High	Low	High	High	Low	High	High
Women and Youth	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High

Sources: see Annex.

Poland's. Similarly, the related issue of governance is most commonly addressed by individual European states, if somewhat less systematically. The Nordic countries are among those placing particular emphasis on topics such as democracy and human rights, as well as women and youth.

Migration and mobility is another theme which is high on the agenda in EU countries. Yet, the approach of each Member State to this issue is different in two ways. Firstly, national positions on the issue are often put forward quite vigorously, more than is normally the case with other themes. Secondly, while there is certainly broad underlying consensus about the need, as the narrative goes, to «tackle the root/structural causes» of migration – i.e. socio-economic, security and environmental conditions in countries of origin –, to improve the channels for legal migration, to fight human smuggling and trafficking, and so on, there are differences when it comes to EU Member States' perspectives on the issue. Countries such as Hungary, the Netherlands and Denmark take more hard-line positions, while the likes of Spain, Portugal and Sweden are at the opposite extreme and officially adopt a softer stance. The remainder fall somewhere in between.

The greening of the economy and access to energy are the focus of another proposed partnership. Often framed through the climate change and sustainable development narratives, environmental concerns feature strongly in national strategies, albeit not as strongly as one might expect. Copenhagen leads the Nordics with the P4G initiative. The

focus on energy is not as pronounced, with either sustainability or access issues being largely absent from some programmes (e.g. Netherlands and Hungary).

The issue of sustainable investments and jobs also features prominently – notably through the widely used notion of inclusive growth – as well as, on the part of a growing number of EU states, with a focus on promoting national trade and investments south of the Sahara. Germany devoted significant attention to investing in Africa through a series of specific initiatives (Compact with Africa, the Marshall Plan, Pro! Africa). France concentrated on offering initiatives responses and job opportunities to Africa's youth, also as a tool for preventing radicalisation. Countries in Eastern Europe (Poland and Hungary) made education and research proposals based on opportunities for scholarships and exchanges. Africa's regional integration is also a topic that is increasingly being addressed by policy-makers in EU Member States.

Finally, digital transformation is by far the topic that features least frequently in national strategies, with only a minority of EU countries including it among their priorities for Africa, and many not mentioning it at all. Digitalisation does enjoy somewhat broader support among a «northwestern» cluster (Germany, the Netherlands, France), including Amsterdam's ambition to find innovative ways of promoting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Overall, however, digitalisation remains more absent from a number of national policies for Africa than any other major issue.

The above differences, while limited, partly echo the divisions emerging among European states during discussions on the new, post-Cotonou deal which was meant to be agreed on in early 2020. While negotiations with African countries proved harder than expected – the deal is still to be finalised – there were disagreements to resolve within the EU camp too (Carbone 2019, Schefer 2019, Tindemans and Brems 2016). With regard to the Commission’s initial proposal, one key area of contention saw Member States favourable to a renewed accord with the ACP group of countries – led by France, with backing from Spain and Portugal – on the one hand, and those who resisted this approach and suggested a specific SDG-oriented agreement with Africa alone would be more appropriate, on the other. The latter group was headed by Germany, with support from the Netherlands and the Nordics as well as from Eastern European countries, such as Hungary and Poland – that is, mostly Member States with no special interests or strong bilateral relations with Africa and those that had only joined the EU after the Cold War. Additional divisions, albeit not as deep or broad, also emerged on the issue of migration (Hungary was against a formal acknowledgement of the benefits of legal migration and called for a stronger focus on irregular migration as a security threat) as well as on sexual reproductive health and rights (the expansion of which, supported by the Nordics and Netherlands, was contested by Poland, Hungary and Malta).

Brexit will inevitably impact EU-Africa relations, mainly due to the United Kingdom’s history with the continent and its economic size. In terms of resources, the UK has been one of the largest contributors to the European Development

Fund (EDF) budget, with around 15 per cent. While London hinted that it would like to continue to cooperate with the EU on development aid, this may not necessarily be feasible, particularly with the EDF now integrated into the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), now the EU’s main instrument for development cooperation (Edwards 2018). In addition, Brexit also implies the loss not only of British diplomatic connections, but especially of development policy expertise and focus – UK development spending is significantly more poverty focused than that of France or Germany (Szynol 2020) – in a field in which the Department for International Development (DfID), just recently incorporated into the Foreign Office, has played a key role since it was set up in the late 1990s. Finally, London’s departure might reduce the attractiveness of the EU in Anglophone/Commonwealth Africa.

GEOGRAPHIC PRIORITIES

If we turn to the geographical focus of European interests and concerns in Africa (Table 2), the sub-regions that feature most prominently are – unsurprisingly – the Sahel and the Horn. This is mostly for security reasons and very much in line with the emphasis placed by the EU. Member States also cover other areas of collective European interest, such as East Africa (where the Nordics are engaged in security cooperation, for example), the Gulf of Guinea and Central Africa. Portugal (which also works with Lusophone countries as a group) and France (also with a focus on the western side of the Indo-Pacific region) have the most comprehensive approaches in regional terms.

Table 2
Priority Regions in Africa Policies: The EU and EU Member States

Priority Regions	EU – New Strategy											
	EU	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Denmark	Sweden	Portugal	Spain	Hungary	Poland	
East Africa												
Great Lakes and Central Africa												
Gulf of Guinea												
Horn												
Lake Chad												
Lusophones												
Sahel												
Southern Africa												
West Africa												

Sources: see Annex.

Table 3
Prioritised Countries in Africa Policies: The EU and EU Member States

Prioritised Countries	EU	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Denmark	Sweden	Portugal	Spain	Hungary	Poland
Angola	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■
Benin	■	■	■		■						■
Botswana	■	■	■								
Burkina Faso	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
Burundi	■	■	■		■						
Cabo Verde	■	■						■	■	■	
Cameroon	■	■	■	■				■	■		
Central African Republic	■	■	■	■			■	■	■		■
Chad	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
Comoros	■	■									
Congo-Brazzaville	■	■	■	■							
Côte d’Ivoire	■	■	■	■	■				■	■	
Djibouti	■	■	■	■							
Democratic Republic of Congo	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■
Equatorial Guinea	■	■	■					■	■		
Eritrea	■	■	■	■	■						
Eswatini	■	■	■					■			■
Ethiopia	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Gabon	■	■	■	■					■	■	■
Gambia	■	■	■								
Ghana	■	■	■	■	■	■			■	■	
Guinea	■	■	■	■					■		
Guinea-Bissau	■	■	■	■				■	■		
Kenya	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Lesotho	■	■									
Liberia	■	■	■				■				
Madagascar	■	■	■								
Malawi	■	■	■								
Mali	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Mauritania	■	■	■	■				■	■		
Mauritius	■	■	■								
Mozambique	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Namibia	■	■	■					■	■	■	
Niger	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Nigeria	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Rwanda	■	■	■		■		■				■
Sao Tomé and Príncipe	■	■	■					■	■		
Senegal	■	■	■	■	■			■	■	■	■
Seychelles	■	■	■								
Sierra Leone	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Somalia	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
South Africa	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
South Sudan	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Sudan	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Tanzania	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Togo	■	■	■	■	■	■	■				
Uganda	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			■	■
Zambia	■	■	■	■	■		■				■
Zimbabwe	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■		■

Diplomatic Presence – ■ – Security Presence
 Top 10 ODA Recipient – ■ – Textual Reference

Sources: see Annex.

The reason specific countries are prioritised (Table 3) is often due to their economic and demographic size: there is far less interest in and resources devoted to the various smaller countries (not only eSwatini, Gambia and all the African island states, but also Botswana, Malawi, Sierra Leone and Togo, for example). The largest economies, on the other hand, receive much more attention (e.g. Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia and South Africa), a partial exception being Angola. Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa also have the highest concentration of European diplomatic missions. But the dominant factor when it comes to explaining the focus of EU Member States is, once again, security concerns, with a focus on conflict-ridden countries such as Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso in the Sahel as well as the DRC, South Sudan and Somalia elsewhere in the region. In terms of development aid, Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal and Uganda occupy a privileged position. DRC and South Sudan, on the other hand, encompass both insecurity and low development as motives for attention and assistance. Finally, certain countries or sets of countries maintain close links with specific European actors, such as France and Portugal with their former colonies or the Nordic states with Tanzania and to an extent also Uganda.

On the whole, France, Germany and Italy appear to use a broader range of channels in developing relations with sub-Saharan Africa, which is certainly also a reflection of their relative size, economic structure and history. Based on the same indicators, Portugal (particularly for trade, aid and diasporas) and the Netherlands (trade and aid) are also comparatively active and connected. Denmark and Sweden – alongside Spain – take middle positions, whereas Hungary and Poland are laggards across most of the selected measures. With regard to trade, for example, for Portugal commerce with sub-Saharan Africa represents a relatively high share of external trade (3.9 per cent in 2019). Portugal is followed by Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Italy and Germany (the latter being the largest partner by absolute value, but with a corresponding share of a mere 1.2 per cent), whereas both the Nordics and Eastern European countries all have shares of below one per cent.

The narratives adopted by EU Member States in referring to Africa share most tropes of development discourse. In fact, many of the policy documents examined contain large tracts that are barely distinguishable from each other. Calls for such fundamental principles as multilateralism, security and human rights feature in official policies of virtually every European state, as do ideas and development jargon such as partnership, accountability, ownership, African opportunities, common challenges, and so on. This is in line with the EU’s traditional eagerness to draw a distinction between its approach to Africa and that of the world’s major powers – notably the US, China and Russia – with a narrative aimed at portraying itself as a »civilian power« and a »force for good« focused on promoting virtuous norms, whether in defence of human rights, the environment, world peace or some other universal value (cf. Scheipers and Sicurelli 2008). On the other hand, there is no policy

TOOLS AND NARRATIVES

Table 4 looks at some of the main tools EU countries rely upon in promoting their presence south of the Sahara. Aid and trade play a crucial role in shaping economic relations, but links also depend on the breadth of a European nation’s diplomatic network, the presence of cultural and educational institutions in Africa, and the size of the diasporas back home. Security mission deployments are also accounted for.

Table 4
Key Tools in Africa Policies: The EU and EU Member States

Key Tools	EU – New Strategy	EU	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Denmark	Sweden	Portugal	Spain	Hungary	Poland
	Aid Levels and Development Agency	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Maximum	Low	Low	Low	Maximum	Low	Low
Cultural Centres and Schools	Low	Maximum	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Diasporas	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Maximum	Low	Low	Low
Diplomatic Network	Maximum	Maximum	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Military and Peacekeeping Deployments	Maximum	Maximum	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Trade	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Maximum	Low	Low	Low

Legend: Minimum (lightest blue), Low (light blue), Medium (medium blue), Maximum (darkest blue)

Sources: see Annex.

document with anything close to the harsh anti-UN and anti-China rhetoric found in the US's New Africa Strategy²¹ – in referring to the fight against religious extremism, for example, French president Macron chose an inclusive rather than a conflictual tone («I also count on Qatar, Turkey and Iran to firmly take up this fight»²²) – or to Beijing's non-interference approach with regard to democracy issues.

There are however still differences between the EU Member States' narratives, however. Two examples are migration and the role of the EU in relations with Africa. With regard to migration, a shared European concern with reducing and controlling is quite evident across the policy documents. There is a systematic emphasis on the need to manage the entire process, with a particular focus on tackling its »root« or »structural causes« as well as more practical aspects of migration (visas and border controls, illegal movements, repatriations, etc.). But there is a rather clear distinction between the countries calling for somewhat more progressive approaches – in line with the EU's general acknowledgement that »well-managed migration and mobility can have a positive impact on countries of origin, transit and destination« (European Commission 2020: 13) – and those that take a tougher position. The distance between Spain and Hungary is probably the best illustration of this point.

A second example of common ground between European countries pertains to the role the EU should play in Euro-Africa relations according to the different EU Member States. Here, too, a widespread recognition that the EU »must be there« is a common theme. This is both because the challenges are massive (climate change, international security, etc.) and because the competitors include major global players (China, Russia). Yet, it is smaller countries that tend to rely more heavily on the EU playing a greater role, often openly recognising that this is the best or only way they can exert influence and make a difference in spite of their limited resources. For Paris, Europe is a but not *the* key component – albeit an increasingly relevant one – in the pursuit of French interests in Africa. For Copenhagen, Warsaw or Stockholm, the EU is the only way their national interests in Africa can be advanced. In this sense, it is the latter that count on a common and coherent EU Africa policy most.

21 John Bolton, *Remarks by National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton on the Trump Administration's New Africa Strategy*, whitehouse.gov, 13 December 2018.

22 *Discours de Emmanuel Macron à l'Université de Ouagadougou*, Ouagadougou, 28 November 2017.

5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The European Union's New Strategy with Africa is meant to revise and revive Euro-African relations by working through five partnerships to build a large political alliance aimed at addressing common challenges. This is in line with the notion of a more »geopolitical Commission«, or an EU more capable of behaving as a unitary player in pursuit and defence of defined interests, rather than a multi-level actor whose national and supranational institutions can have distinct concerns and push in different directions.

For the New Strategy to gain traction, there has to be a high degree of consistency in terms of how different EU Member States intend to operate in Africa. There has been a significant increase in European attention towards the continent in the new millennium – and particularly during the 2010s – driven initially by the attractiveness of Africa's growing economies and subsequently by the desire to control migration flows. Meanwhile, extremist threats on Europe's doorstep also created apprehension. An unprecedented number of EU Member States turned or returned to Africa, in the process adopting new policies and initiatives targeting the area.

With regard to sub-Saharan Africa, there is substantial common ground among EU Member States and between them and the EU. Most notably, migration control has increasingly come to accompany peace and security as core components of foreign and development policies. Despite the shared terrain, there are policy differences between the EU Member States, beginning with the fact that some have clear and official strategies for the continent, whereas others have not articulated a specific approach.

At a time when the coronavirus pandemic may foster more inward-looking attitudes – at the risk of eroding the development progress Africa has made over the past two decades and of damaging Euro-African relations – it is important that the EU and its Member States pull in the same direction as much as possible. The following can help improve such consistency and alignment:

1. REFOCUS (POST-COVID-19)

The EU should revise its strategy by finding a better balance between the search for a comprehensive approach and the need to select and prioritise the key

areas of the proposed Euro-African political alliance. This will be something that is all the more important in a post-Covid-19 scenario.

As they currently stand, at least three of the five proposed partnerships are all-encompassing lists of rather disparate issues, with insufficient effort made to rank and give preference to some topics over others. The resulting agenda is too broad and generic. The EU should narrow down its focus by selecting and prioritising, based on criteria such as relevance, support and/or feasibility. The impact of Covid-19 itself, both in Europe and in Africa, makes a revision of the draft New Strategy vital as it affects, among others, growth prospects, resource availability, health concerns and international mobility.

2. LEADERSHIP AND COMMONALITY

The EU should take a stronger lead in driving EU Member States towards more commonality of intent around the partnerships identified by the revised New Strategy, a necessary step to make the EU's overall proposal to the AU more resolute and credible. In particular, the EU should devise guidelines, parameters and assessments – alongside a dedicated forum for internal dialogue – for the progressive alignment of Member States' Africa policies.

Once the EU's priority areas for the Euro-African partnership have been identified, the EU should take the lead and work towards augmenting Member States' commonality of intent and the alignment of efforts around its core themes. Currently, for example, there is still some resistance or divergence within the EU – and particularly from within the Eastern European cluster – with regard to issues such as the green transition, migration management, democracy, and sexual and reproductive health rights. Such differences risk hampering the legitimacy and effectiveness of external initiatives towards Africa at both Community and Member State levels. Gradually reducing the disparities on the specific issues and policies that are on the table will help generate stronger support and more effective action. Closing ranks also requires devising tools that can help support the progressive alignment of Member States' Africa policies, such as a dedicated forum for internal dialogue as well as guidelines, parameters and assessments for bilateral initiatives.

3. SELECTIVITY AND COORDINATION

Individual Member States should focus on selected priority themes and regions/countries from among those identified by the EU, with responsibility for coordination assigned to a dedicated body within the EU to make sure that, combined, Member States' bilateral actions help all the proposed partnerships move forward.

Coherence means that the initiatives of an individual Member State must essentially be in line with the priorities identified in Brussels, not that each Member State commits to working on all priorities across the entire African region. In this regard, the »few-to-few« approach adopted by the Nordics in the security field with the East African Standby Force might be a good model to replicate in other fields, for example with climate initiatives in the Sahel. Selectivity on the part of Member States and coordination on the part of the EU – via a dedicated working group/body – should be applied as complementary elements. From the EU's perspective, this would have two beneficial effects. On the one hand, it would help concentrate the resources of a Member State's bilateral actions – both geographically and thematically – thus strengthening them. On the other hand, it would also be instrumental to overcoming existing differences between distinct Member States' African agendas. Only a limited number of the latter, for example, include digitalisation and could thus be supported in advancing this specific partnership.

4. DIVERSIFICATION

Sub-Saharan Africa is an increasingly diverse region, and the EU's and EU Member States' new policies must reflect this and build on it. In particular, key African countries should be singled out and prioritised based on their potential as sub-regional hubs for the promotion of political goals (e.g. stabilisation, respect for human rights) as well as economic (e.g. renewable energy, digitalisation, industrial development) and social ones (e.g. managing migration patterns).

Demographic and territorial size, level of development and economic dynamism, political regime, state consolidation and geopolitical location are just a few of the many macro specificities of each of sub-Saharan Africa's 49 countries. Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea have very different realities, as do, say, South Africa, Eritrea and South Sudan. Each of these countries has distinct interests and capabilities, each faces different challenges and offers particular opportunities. Recognition of this must be an integral part of European policies. Spain's Africa Strategy exemplifies the idea of more tailored relations when it identifies Nigeria, South Africa and Ethiopia as strategic »anchor countries« that can play a role in absorbing continental migration processes.

5. QUALITY

The EU's and EU Member States' support for new investments in Africa should not only aim at leveraging public funds to increase the total resources that are mobilised, but should also concentrate on the actual quality and impact of such investments, alongside their sustainability, in terms of job creation, economic transformation, value chain development and digitalisation.

Both the EU's and Member States' recent plans and efforts to boost investment in Africa (including the Africa-Europe Alliance on Sustainable Investment and Jobs, which the New Strategy proposes to turn into a central pillar of Euro-African economic relations) adopt strategies aimed at leveraging public funds to attract additional investors and thus scale up available resources. The projected volume of mobilised resources, however, does not always materialise. Even if and when it does, more attention should be paid to the kind of investments that are actually promoted and supported and to their potential impact on key variables such as job creation, economic transformation, value chain development and digitalisation.

6. INTEGRATION

Africa's ongoing regional integration process, and particularly the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), should be given more consistent support by the EU, with the abandonment of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) strategy, and should feature more systematically in EU Member States' policies.

In the EU's New Strategy, »the long-term prospect of creating a comprehensive continent-to-continent free-trade area« (European Commission 2020: 8) is the single element that comes closest to a clear vision of and project for the future. It also has potentially crucial positive implications for aspects of virtually all other partnerships (from energy access to environmental protection, from business environment to migration management, from political stability to democratic rights). The EU declared support for the new African Continental Free Trade Area »a top priority«. Member States are essentially supportive of African integration and, if this is not already the case, should follow suit in making it an integral and central component of their strategies. Both the EU and Member States should be consistent in their support for AfCFTA – as a prospective framework for the rationalisation of Euro-African trade – by abandoning the strategy of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) envisaged by Cotonou, since they represent a multiplicity of diverse and controversial arrangements that risk creating new regional fragmentation and only benefit EU trade access to African markets (cf. Lopes 2020).

7. RESPONSE

The African Union should devise ways for its member countries to prioritise the content of EU-AU joint strategies when dealing with individual EU Member States.

For a new EU-AU strategy to be successfully implemented, work will have to be done not only on the European side but also on the African one. The EU should support the African Union in devising ways for individual African states to privilege the agreed partnerships when dealing with EU Member States. This could be done by placing the proposed partnerships high on the AU's own agenda and by supporting African countries themselves with coordination or other services, or by setting out requirements, in order to encourage them all to focus on the specific themes addressed by the partnerships.

6

ANNEX

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES AND SOURCES

PRIORITY THEMES

The data show the relevance of a specific theme in each European country's three to five key policy documents on sub-Saharan Africa. The selected documents comprise the most recent highest-level public profile shared by each European country on its sub-Saharan Africa policy. The documents include national security strategy concepts, international development cooperation plans, investment frameworks and foreign policy notes or statements – sometimes sourced from governmental web pages – which, either specifically or partly, address the sub-Saharan region. The selected documents are not homogeneous across countries, as not all these types of document are available for all European countries. Each of the documents has been coded with the specific themes that could be identified as priorities in the text. Depending on the frequency at which the themes occurred across a given European country's selection of documents, and their prominence in each of the individual documents, each theme was then scored a total of between one and three priority points. The resulting heat map therefore represents the thematic priorities of each country's sub-Saharan Africa policy as they appear in the selected texts (the darker the colour the higher the priority).

PRIORITY REGIONS

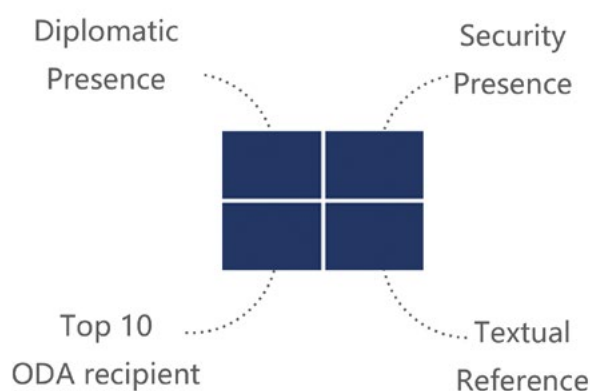
The data show the relevance of a specific sub-Saharan region for each European country. The heat map represents the regions that are either mentioned as priorities in a European country's selected policy documents or have been hosting that country's security forces.

PRIORITISED COUNTRIES

The data show the relevance of a specific sub-Saharan country for each European country, on the basis of four indicators: diplomatic presence, security presence, ODA presence and textual reference. The heat map therefore indicates which sub-Saharan countries host a specific European country's embassy (diplomatic presence, top-left quadrant); host its security forces (security presence, top-right quadrant); are among its top ten aid recipients (ODA presence, bottom-left quadrant); and are mentioned in the given European country's selection of policy documents (textual reference, bottom-right quadrant).

With regard to the security presence indicator, for each country in sub-Saharan Africa the heat map highlights the presence of a given European country's security forces (in-

Table 5



cluding advisors), either on military bases or deployed in missions. For Western Sahel countries only, the indicator also refers to the indirect security support received by all the G5 Sahel countries from cross-border security initiatives active in their region (such as the France-led Opération Barkhane and/or the Takuba Task Force integrated into its command), even when a European country's contribution to such operations is limited to providing logistical support to a restricted number of countries only.

TOP FIVE ODA RECIPIENTS

The data show the sub-Saharan countries that rank among each European country's top five ODA recipients, as reported by OECD Stats (cumulative net ODA 2014-2018).

KEY TOOLS

Aid levels and development agency refers to the net bilateral ODA each European country has allocated to sub-Saharan Africa as a share of the total allocated to the world's developing regions in the past five years. Source: OECD Stats, net ODA, cumulative sum 2014–2018 (excluding the category »unspecified developing countries«).

Cultural centres and schools refers to the number of cultural centres and schools each European country has in sub-Saharan Africa. Source: various. AEBE (Belgium), Institut Français, Alliance Française and SCAC (France), Goethe Institut (Germany), Instituto Cervantes (Spain), Instituto Camões (Portugal), DanKultur (Denmark), Balassi Institute (Hungary), Instytut Adama Mickiewicza (Poland), Swedish Institute (Sweden), Dutch Culture (the Netherlands), Finnish Cultural and Academic Institutes (Finland), and Istituti Italiani di Cultura and Società Dante Alighieri (Italy).

Diasporas refers to the estimated stock of migrants from sub-Saharan African countries living in a specific European country as a share of the total local population. Source: UN-DESA 2019, estimates for both men and women.

Diplomatic network refers to the number of major diplomatic missions each country has in sub-Saharan Africa. It includes embassies, consulates and consulates-general. In the case of the European Union, it refers to the number of EU Delegations in sub-Saharan countries. Source: Global Diplomacy Index, 2019 and European country's websites.

Military and peacekeeping deployments refers to the number of security forces on military bases or deployed in bilateral or multilateral (UN/EU) military, civilian, peacekeeping missions in sub-Saharan African countries in 2019–2020. Concerning the multilateral initiatives, the list includes UN peacekeeping operations MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO, UNAMID and UNMISS; EU civilian CSDP missions EUCAP Sahel Mali, EUCAP Sahel Niger, EUCAP Somalia and EUAM RCA; EU military CSDP operations EUTM Mali, EUTM RCA and EUTM Somalia; Opération Barkhane and the Taku-

ba Task Force. Source: UN, FOI - Swedish Defence Research Institute, SIPRI as reported by EUISS/Chaillot Paper 158 (only EUCAP and EUTM missions), the Italian Parliament, Danish Government and the French Ministry of Armed Forces.

Trade refers to each European country's trade with the sub-Saharan region as a share of that country's total external trade in 2019. Source: UNCTAD Stats, merchandise imports and exports by partner.

SELECTED DOCUMENTS

The sources of the selected documents are as follows: ad hoc plans regarding the country's Africa relations; foreign and security policy strategies, even when not specifically focused on Africa; governmental programmes; development strategies; governmental strategic notes; annual or multi-annual reports by national development cooperation agencies; concluding statements of summits focusing on Africa; official policy indications from presidents, prime ministers or ministers of foreign affairs; Africa pages of official governmental websites.

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- Denmark in Africa – The World 2030. Denmark's strategy for development cooperation and humanitarian action (MFA/Danida, 2017)

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FRANCE

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GERMANY

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- Netherlands in Africa – Working worldwide for the security of the Netherlands: an Integrated International Security Strategy 2018–2022 (Government of the Netherlands, 2018)

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- Netherlands in Africa – Statement by Prime Minister Mark Rutte at the High-Level Forum Africa-Europe (Government of the Netherlands, 2018)

POLAND

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- Poland in Africa – President Duda speech in Addis (2017)
- Poland in Africa – 2019 Development Cooperation Plan, 2016–2020 MDCP (MFA, December 2018)

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EUROPE: TEAM PLAY IN AFRICA?

The Africa Policies of EU Member States



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Further information on the topic can be found here:
<https://www.fes.de/en/together-towards-sustainability>