



The Africa-EU Partnership on Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure: Current state of affairs

**Background Note for the 18th Inter Regional Coordinating Committee meeting (IRCC),
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ECDPM, 20 May 2009²**

The Joint African and European Strategy (JAES)³ adopted in December 2007 in Lisbon is a continent-wide and comprehensive policy approach to Africa-EU relations. The main objectives of this new framework are to enhance political dialogue, strengthen institutional ties and to address common challenges through a partnership of equals. This is the first arena to treat Africa as a single entity, to emphasize joint ownership and responsibility (including in the implementation), and involve non-state actors in the institutional set up. Coherence with other policy frameworks is foreseen, as is securing appropriate funding⁴ for the strategy. 'Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure' (TRII) is one of eight thematic partnerships of the JAES.

This note gives an overview of the state of play on the implementation of this partnership. It considers some key challenges actors of the JAES are currently facing and presents opportunities for overcoming those challenges.

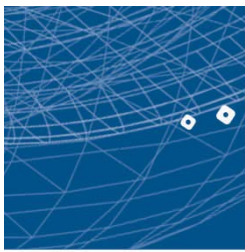
1 The institutional setting

The joint structures of the overall JAES are now in place and functioning. This institutional setting is mainly composed of two levels. The bodies with decision-making capacity include the ministerial troikas held twice a year, and the summits.

² We are grateful to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its financial support.

³ *The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, A Joint Africa-EU Strategy*.
http://www.eu2007.pt/NR/rdonlyres/D449546C-BF42-4CB3-B566-407591845C43/0/071206jsapenlogos_formatado.pdf

⁴ For a discussion on the overall, see V. Tywuschik, A. Sherriff, *Beyond structures? Reflections on the implementation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy*, ECDPM Discussion Paper, February 2009.



The implementation level corresponds to the Joint Expert Groups (JEGs) and European/African Implementation Teams (IT) for each of the partnerships.

In addition, in order to ensure the overall coordination of the partnership⁵, an enlarged Joint Africa-EU Task Force is composed of staff from the African Union Commission (AUC), the European Commission, the EU Council Secretariat departments, the lead countries of each partnership and the AU and EU presidencies. The enlarged joint task force format further allows participation of observers from the European and Pan-African Parliaments as well as civil society organisations. Meeting every six months, at a technical level, it is intended to complement the College-to-College meetings between the two Commissions, which are held every year and discuss issues at a political level.

At the level of the specific partnerships, the JEGs are intended to be a forum where experts and civil society organizations discuss the implementation and financing of the priority actions⁶. For each of the partnerships, one lead country or institution has been designated each on the African and European side.

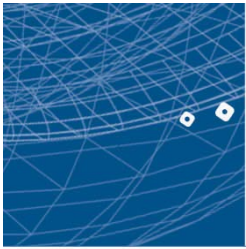
The TRII partnership is led jointly by the European Commission and South Africa, and involves the African Union Commission, African and European member states, civil society organizations and African Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Within the European Commission, the JAES goes beyond the previous approach to tackling African-EU relationships mainly through DG Development and DG Trade by involving other DGs (Environment, Health and Consumers, and Agriculture and Rural Development), whose coordination is ensured via an internal task force. In the African Union Commission, the Department of Economic Affairs coordinates the overall JAES as well as the TRII partnership together with two other departments (Department of Trade and Industry, and Department of Infrastructure and Energy). For EU and African member states, participation in the partnerships is a result of an expression of interest. *On the EU side*, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Italy and Sweden are working on the TRII partnership under the lead of the European Commission as most of the issues fall under the Commission competence. *On the African side*, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Gabon, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo, Uganda and Zimbabwe have shown interest and are working under the lead of South Africa. With regard to the RECs, as per the expression of interest list provided by the European Commission, the East African Community is the only REC having expressed formal interest in the trade partnership, and the overall JAES.

2 Overview of the state of play

The table in Annex 1 gives an overview of the meetings held so far, the participants and their outcomes. An Action Plan has been adopted by the Head of States in December 2007 that specifies three jointly agreed priority actions for the TRII partnership:

⁵ In addition, the last Joint Africa-EU task force meeting (March 2009) has agreed to broaden this objective by including the following: strengthening institutional cooperation and capacity building between the EC and the AUC; preparing the ministerial troika; accelerating the delivery of results.

⁶ V. Tywuschik, A. Sherriff, *Beyond structures? Reflections on the implementation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy*, p.9.



- (1) Support to African integration agenda;
- (2) Strengthen African capacities in the area of rules, standards and quality control;
- (3) Implement the EU-Africa infrastructure partnership.

The significance of progress and concrete deliverables for the implementation of the JAES has been acknowledged since the Lisbon Summit. While initial steps have been taken in the implementation of the TRII partnership, and are reflected in the draft joint roadmaps endorsed at the last Ministerial Troika meeting on 28 April 2009, actors are fully aware of the need to speed up the delivery of results. The partnership is likely to gain from **clarifying further the specific role and added value of the JAES in the areas covered**, as results so far have rested to a great extent on existing initiatives external to the JAES.

For instance, the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) regional indicative programmes and regional Aid for Trade packages⁷ are counted as progress towards the implementation of the regional integration (RI) priority action. The joint African-EU dimension of the Minimum Integration Programme (MIP) presented by the AUC in May 2009, which has been agreed to be a key activity for implementing the RI priority action, would also need to be made clearer.

Similarly, among the ongoing activities in the second priority action, Africa-wide trainings on sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) are provided through an existing EC initiative, 'Better training for Safer Food Initiative'.

The priority action infrastructure, which is currently the most advanced of the three in terms of implementation, is resting on a pre-existing mechanism (the Infrastructure Trust Fund). 147 million euros have been committed, eight major projects approved and 10 million euros from the 9th EDF dedicated to support the start-up phase.

3 Challenges and Opportunities

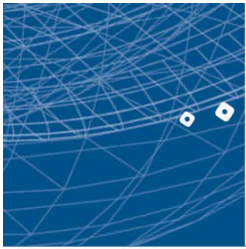
Key challenges the TRII partnership is facing in delivering the expected results and the corresponding opportunities to overcome them are outlined below.

3.1 Challenges

- **Participation is lower than expected**
Progress on implementation will greatly depend on progress in delivering results but also on the degree of involvement of the different actors⁸. The participation of a broad range of actors is also critical to the essence of the JAES ('beyond the two Commissions').

⁷ "The regional Aid for Trade packages will be the main tool for delivering EU support to regional integration, including accompanying measure for EPAs", [Joint progress Report on the implementation of the Africa-EU Joint Strategy and its first Action Plan](#), pp.8-9.

⁸ This has been reiterated at the last AU-EU Task force meeting, March 2009.



However, participation of the African and EU member states in the TRII partnership has remained low⁹. Member states seem to be in need of a **clearer idea of their roles** in the TRII partnership. For EU member states, this question is of particular relevance where the issues dealt with primarily fall under the competence of the European Commission¹⁰. With clearer contributions, the perception of an added value of the TRII partnership is also likely to increase further.

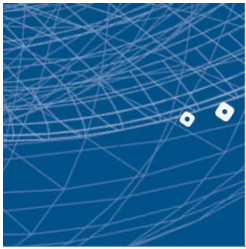
Similarly, the involvement of the African RECs is widely acknowledged to have been low, with the exception of the EAC which expressed formal interest in the TRII partnership. Despite the recognition of the importance of the participation of the RECs in the JEG meetings, given their essential role to play in the implementation of the TRII partnership¹¹, only one representative from a REC was present at the last JEG meeting which took place on 2 April 2009. The African Union and the EU Council and overseas Heads of Missions have undertaken efforts to inform and mobilize RECs in this respect; however, it remains to be seen to which extent RECs will be taking part in the JAES in the future. Given their limited capacities, focusing on the issues which are closest to their own priorities and processes, and identifying the corresponding potential areas of complementarity, is likely to encourage them to consider serious investment in the TRII partnership.

- **Qualitative participation for faster progress in implementation**
The implementation of the roadmaps is relying to a great extent both on a quantitative and qualitative increase in the participation of key stakeholders. A major challenge would be to reach a **higher number of experts** participating in the JEG meetings to enable the technical implementation set-up of the Action Plan to become fully functioning, as discussions would be focusing further on the substance of the partnership. In turn, the greater presence of experts is likely to significantly increase progress in implementing the TRII. It remains to be seen, however, to which extent the technical aspects of the Action Plan and the roadmap will be addressed in a more systematic manner in the near future as most activities fall technically outside the TRII partnership and stakeholders still remain to be convinced of the added value of their participation.
- **The current level of information** available to the stakeholders could be further increased to sustain their interest in this newly-born process. Despite several efforts to make information available, including through the launch of a website, an intranet as well as through direct outreach to RECs via regional consultations by the AU Commission and initiatives of the EU delegation to the AU, the **information has not fully reached** all the relevant actors, notably the

⁹ Moreover, on the JAES as a whole the African MS are all from North Africa with the exception of South Africa taking the lead of the trade, regional integration and infrastructure partnership. A broader geographical representation would contribute further to the objective of treating Africa as one (Lisbon Declaration).

¹⁰ In other partnerships moving faster, the level at which discussions are taking place seems to have been a determining factor. Actors at senior officials' level showing high commitment have been able to spur the involvement of other actors including the MS.

¹¹ Their role in this regard has been reiterated at the last Joint Africa-EU Task force meeting (March 2009), being firstly asserted during the First ministerial Troika.



member states and the RECs at the regional level¹², few being aware of its existence. The recent decision to establish a more systematic contact with the RECs through a reference person holds potential for improvement.

- **The added value of a new framework: different expectations**

The JAES is officially aimed at building ‘a new strategic political partnership’¹³. On the EU side, it is perceived as a potential tool for fostering a less fragmented political dialogue and giving new impetus to African-EU relations. Alongside this coordination function, there is also a strong interest in the substance of the partnerships on the African side. As such, **the issue of financing** to ensure the delivery of tangible results is of great importance to African stakeholders who lack the capacity to participate in and implement the JAES¹⁴. In that respect, a workshop will be held in September 2009 to address the financing aspects of the JAES¹⁵.

- **Coherence with existing initiatives**

In the area of trade and regional integration, several processes are already unfolding, among others Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and Euro-Mediterranean initiatives.

The first priority action of the Action Plan ‘Support to the African integration agenda’ is expected to bring increased synergies between African integration processes and EPAs, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and bilateral trade agreements. Support to RI through EPAs is further an objective of the EC as outlined in the EC Communication on regional integration adopted by the Council¹⁶. European actors consider that the JAES could play a significant role in coordinating existing initiatives at a pan African level. This greater potential for coordination is also seen as a positive objective from the African perspective, but it is felt that the EU should best take up this task.

Political and technical dialogue on EPAs and on its relation with regional integration, has been taking place at the subregional level of the RECs. EPA development support programmes are currently elaborated by the regions, with a view to foster regional economic integration. As Trade and RI are core elements of the TRII partnership, an outstanding challenge for the partnership would be to make clearer the links and areas of complementarity between the existing processes at sub-regional level, among others EPAs, and the activities carried out at continental level in the framework of the JAES¹⁷.

¹² Awareness of the RECs on the JAES at the regional level is limited while some contacts have been established with the liaison offices of the RECs in Addis.

¹³ [Lisbon Declaration](#), December 2007.

¹⁴ The AU has requested to hold a workshop on financing aspects late May, cf. the last Joint Africa-EU Task force meeting, March 2009.

¹⁵ [Report](#) from the 12th Africa-EU Ministerial Troika meeting, 28 April 2009:

¹⁶ Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions, [‘Regional integration for development in ACP countries’](#), October 2008.

¹⁷ The European Parliament has also drawn attention on the coherence issue in the Report Maertens, [One Year after Lisbon: the Africa-EU partnership at work](#), Report Maertens, 19 February 2009, ‘the Joint Strategy should also address issues which, although formally belonging to a different institutional architecture, have a profound influence on the future of Africa and which shape the relationship between the two continents’.



Identifying those 'bridges' is likely to increase further the perception of an added value of the TRII, by the actors currently not fully involved.

- **Institutional capacity of the African Union Commission and the RECs**
The African Union strives to foster African integration, e.g. through a Minimum Integration Programme, and the AUC was mandated by AU Ministers to take a coordinating role in the EPA process. However, capacities of the Economic Affairs Department are limited; hence if there is the political will to give a prominent role to the AUC to engage in matters of trade and regional integration, the department's capacity will need to be increased in order to achieve these objectives. Similarly, limited capacity seems to be an important driving factor behind the low involvement of the RECs in the TRII.

3.2 Opportunities and recommendations

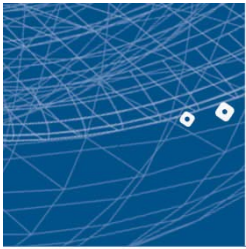
The implementation of the TRII partnership is a challenging process. The following **recommendations** are pointers towards the way forward in the face of those challenges.

- **Increased information and communication**
Sustaining interest in the partnership and increasing the participation of the RECs and member states is critical to the JAES, especially at the early stage of its implementation. Clearer communication on the objectives and specific activities of the JAES in the area of trade, regional integration and infrastructure as well as on the roles expected from the RECs and member states in this regard is likely to foster their engaging interest further.

Sustaining and strengthening the information and communication efforts currently being made is likely to be essential to increase awareness and participation with a view to realizing the objective of the JAES as the primary framework for dialogue between the two continents.

- **Trade and RI agendas better informed by the RECs**
In addition to the communication issues outlined above, an important issue at stake is the potential for higher input of the RECs in setting the trade and regional integration agendas of the partnership. Making financial resources available could be one way to tap this potential. Specific support to the RECs could be directed at increasing their capacities in this regard¹⁸.
- **Seizing opportunities to increase member states' participation**
Member states are now able to participate in the meetings of the Joint Africa-EU Task Force. This gives them a chance to be part of the agenda-setting process and therefore to shape further the substance of the TRII partnership. In turn, this opportunity is likely to encourage them to engage in a deeper manner in the TRII partnership.

¹⁸ The broader objective of the priority action stated in the Action Plan is 'Enhanced capacity to implement the integration agenda'.



- **A platform for linking up existing processes**

Treating Africa as one is one of the objectives of the JAES. More specifically, the first priority action of the TRII partnership is expected, among others, to increase synergies between African integration processes and EPAs, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and bilateral trade agreements. One way the JAES framework could potentially play a coordination role between those existing processes would be by offering a platform for sharing experiences and knowledge on EPAs and Euro-Mediterranean processes.
- **Refining the implementation roadmaps**

Implementation of the TRII partnership is likely to benefit from roadmaps outlining future activities in a manner which is as detailed as possible. The JEGs have been asked by Ministers to refine further the roadmaps. Some points on which concrete activities would likely to be beneficial are the following:

 - On support to the African integration area, the role and added value of EU-Africa dialogue and joint action at continental level could be defined more clearly. If policy-makers perceive an added value at this point, the roadmap could foresee dialogue in the institutional bodies of the JAES on specific issues such as support to the AU and RECs in implementing the MIP, exchange of experiences with implementing FTAs with the EU in North and Sub-Saharan Africa, the coordination of future monitoring mechanisms for EPAs at subregional level and adapting EU support to regional integration (through RIPs, regional Aid for Trade packages) in the context of rationalisation of the RECs. While such areas for dialogue could be refined further by the JEG, holding actual discussions on these in JAES institutions would only yield results if there is participation of a sufficient number of RECs and experts in these bodies.
 - The definition of capacity building needs for the implementation of regional trade agreements could be linked explicitly to ongoing needs assessments in the EPA context.

4 Conclusion

The last Ministerial troika, held on 28 April 2009 in Luxembourg, has endorsed eight draft roadmaps for the implementation of the first Action Plan (2008-2010), specifying activities and their timeline, as well as the role of the different actors and their financial contribution. The TRII partnership is gaining from this exercise, which directly contributes to the wider reflection on the progress on the implementation of the JAES. Participation and progress are effectively likely to increase once stakeholders have a clearer idea of the value addition of discussing trade and RI issues in this new pan African framework.



Annex 1: Outcomes of the Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure partnership to date

Structure	Meetings	Participants	Outcomes
EU-Africa summit	December 2007, Lisbon		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adoption of the JAES and Action plan for 2008-2010 - Recognition of the importance of early progress and concrete deliverables in the implementation
JEGs	- October and November 2008; April 2009	Chaired by South Africa and DG Development	<p>OCTOBER/NOVEMBER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Definition of the role of the JEGs: implementation - Agreed on a set of priorities and activities for 2009: capacity and institutional development, strengthening regional regulatory frameworks, implementation of the MIP and continuation of policy dialogue on RI and EPAs - Results of implementation of the Action Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * EC support to RI agenda through EC Communication on RI 10th EDF RIPs (80% to economic RI); setting regional AfT packages * training programmes on SPS through the EC initiative « Better Training for Safer Food in Africa », EC to support assessment studies on customs unions procedures and RoO harmonization * 146 million € committed in the Infrastructure Fund, 8 major projects approved, 10 million € support to the start-up phase through 9th EDF - Participation of the RECs to the next JEGs is needed <p>APRIL</p> <p>Three items were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure the full participation of actors in the partnership - draft a roadmap for the partnership to be endorsed by the Ministerial troika - improve communication
EU ITs	July and November 2008	EC: DEV, Trade, SANCO MS: Belgium, France, Portugal, Czech Republic, Sweden (July)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contacts with AUC are few due to low capacity - but 1st contacts on priority action 2 : AUC's interest in pan-african SPS, RoOs, trade statistics (waiting formal agreement) - Need to go further in the harmonization of RoOs, building on progress made with EPAs - MS contribution in terms of initiatives and financing of implementation activities is encouraged further
Ministerial troika	September 2008, November 2008 and April 2009	AU Commissioner for Economic affairs/peace and security EU Commissioner for Development, EU High Representative	<p>SEPTEMBER 2008</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutional architecture approved - Recognised that initial progress has been made with the advancement of free trade areas and customs unions and welcomed that specific attention is given to training on RI - Reiterated importance of EPAs promoting RI, continuing political dialogue on the contentious issues



		for foreign and security policy MS: Minister/representative of Foreign affairs (Tanzania, Ghana, Czech Republic), Secretary of State of Cooperation Affairs (France)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognised the need to strengthen dialogue on the implementation of the start-up activities of the Infrastructure priority action - Welcomed signing of AU/RECs Protocol and SADC/COMESA/EAC Tripartite Summit - Will ensure coherence between JAES and activities within the Union for the Mediterranean
			<p>NOVEMBER 2008</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognised that progress has been made as presented by the JEGs - Recognised the need to: increase progress on the implementation of the 8 partnerships, increase the involvement of key actors including EU/AU MS and RECs, and emphasise communication on the progress/results as an important cross-cutting priority - Decided that JEGs should establish roadmaps on the implementation of the Action Plan
			<p>APRIL 2009</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Endorsed the 8 draft implementation roadmaps elaborated by the JEGs - Invited JEGs to refine the roadmaps, tackle shortfalls, reach out to stakeholders, and undertake a mid-term assessment of their respective partnerships. - Endorsed the holding of a workshop on financing aspects, in September 2009.
EU ITs	-11 March 2009, Brussels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EC (DEV, Trade, Regio, Sanco) - MS co chairs + Spain, Germany 	
Joint Africa-EU Task force	17-18 March 2009, Brussels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eu MS: none - Af. MS: lead South Africa - AUC et EC (DEV, TAXUD, SANCO, EU delegation to AU) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decided to establish a roadmap of activities/timeline/financing, present it to the next JEG for endorsement at the next ministerial troika - Recognised the need to increase the involvement of the RECs



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