



# The Netherlands and the EU-Africa partnership

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## Introduction

The EU seeks to transform its relationship with Africa into a mutual, equal partnership. This has been set out in the EU's Joint Communication '[Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa](#)'. The '[kabinetsappreciatie EU-Afrika strategie](#)' concludes that:

- the Netherlands priorities are convincingly reflected in the proposals of the Commission;
- the government welcomes the proposed integrated approach to conflicts and crises;
- as far as the government is concerned, the challenge now is mainly in the further elaboration of the proposals;
- the Netherlands appreciation regarding the subsidiarity and proportionality of this proposal is positive. The EU is in a position to develop and implement policies in an integrated way through the wide range of European instruments.

## The recommendations in this position paper in short:

- *The Netherlands has more to offer than funding.*
- *Organise a more active contribution of Dutch stakeholders in agenda setting of the EU-Africa Partnership, and in the implementation of EU programmes.*
- *Use the Dutch strength to build local capacities, design integral (systematic) approaches, engaging all stakeholders.*
- *Science contributes to solving problems. Three European-African ministerial meetings have acknowledged this. Ensure implementation of such resolutions.*
- *Use the network of African experts (African alumni of Dutch universities and African partner organisations) to engage in full dialogue, rather than limited discussions with a few representatives of African organisations like AUC or AUDA.*
- *Involve the African and European research communities in the development and consultations of Thematic and country Multi-annual Indicative Plans or the 'Innovation Agenda'.*
- *To fully use the Dutch potential to meaningfully contribute to EU actions in Africa, develop a joint strategy including strategic stakeholders.*

## Integrated approach in the EU-Africa partnership

The EU-Africa Partnership identified a number of mutual interests and responsibilities:

- developing a green growth model;
  - improving the business environment and investment climate;
  - boosting education, research and innovation;
  - the creation of decent jobs and value addition through sustainable investments;
  - maximising the benefits of regional economic integration and trade;
  - ensuring food security and rural development;
  - combatting climate change;
  - ensuring access to sustainable energy and protecting biodiversity and natural resources;
  - promoting peace and security;
  - ensuring well-governed migration and mobility;
  - engaging together on the global scene to strengthen the multilateral rules-based order, promoting universal values, human rights, democracy, rule of law and gender equality.
- It also states that 'positive developments in one of these areas depend on progress in other areas'.

The systems approach is an important element of the research and education system at WUR. Agriculture is considered to be more than food production; it includes management of natural resources, climate change, trade regimes, competition for investments, research and innovation, veterinary and public health, food safety, creating stability, etc. This requires an integrated approach, like the food systems thinking, to develop coherent policies and development actions that are interconnected.

The [European Union's Integrated Strategy in the Sahel](#) proposes to use a triple nexus approach (peace – development – humanitarian aid) to address root causes of poverty, violent conflicts and migration. As part of an integrated and coherent approach, the policy states that the EU will base its actions on the nexus between humanitarian aid, support for sustainable development and support for peace. This is complex, especially in fragile countries where the authority of the state has eroded. This might possibly be the reason why few EU actions, implemented by international organisations, have been developed along the proposed integrated approach.

*The Netherlands is acknowledged for its systems and multi-actor (Dutch diamond) approach. It encourages meaningful participation of multiple stakeholders in the development and the implementation of actions and policies. Together with the strengthening of local capacities, the context-sensitive integrated approach sought after by the EU, can be ensured. **Use this Dutch strength to build local capacities, design integral (systematic) approaches, engaging all stakeholders.***





## Operationalisation of the EU-AU partnerships: who sets the agenda in an equal partnership?

European and African interests do not always converge. It is assumed that the EU's own priorities are relevant for Africa, without paying much attention to the impacts these policies may have on Africa. While climate change and greening the agri-food sector is a topic of common interest, the EU Green Deal is not only about mutual benefits. Some probable consequences are:

- a reduction in agricultural trade between Europe and Africa;
- additional requirements (barriers) to access the European market;
- the need to increase food production in Africa.

Achieving higher food production in Africa, while mitigating the increase of greenhouse gasses (GHG) requires closing the yield gap with high quality inputs and good agricultural practices. From this perspective it is questionable if the research focus on agro-ecology as the main trajectory to intensify agricultural production in Africa under the [Africa Initiative](#) is the outcome of a discussion among equal partners.

*WUR is one of the largest trainers of African PhD's worldwide. The majority of these African PhD's return to their home country. Moreover, our research activities are implemented with African partner organisations. The extensive network of African organisations and experts are very capable to voice their priorities. **Use the network of experts to engage in full dialogue, rather than limited discussions with a few representatives of African organisations like AUC or AUDA.***

## Importance of evidence based policies and development actions

Incomplete analysis of root causes of problems can lead to policies and projects with unintended and unnecessary negative consequences. An example; the rise in food demand of Africa's growing population is seen as a good opportunity to boost job creation in the food economy. There is a proliferation of youth specific and youth-targeted interventions. In the Sahel, international development partners often narrowly frame the problem as a "youth employment" crisis and presume a causal link with violence. However, research suggests that

- a) joblessness is not the sole explanation for violent mobilization, but rather the perceived injustices in the distribution of economic resources, and
- b) a focus on youth-targeted interventions distracts policymakers and stakeholders from developing the needed policy agenda for structural change.

**Science contributes to solving problems.** *Declarations of three Africa-Europe ministerial meetings (Research & Innovation, Agriculture, Foreign Affairs) have recognised the role of science, technology, innovation, education and skills development, and have emphasized the importance of joint collaboration in these fields. Implementation of such resolutions through involving the African and European research communities in the development and consultations of [thematic and country Multi-annual Indicative Programmes](#) or the ['AU-EU Innovation Agenda'](#) that will be discussed during the upcoming Africa-Europe Summit, could be first steps.*

## Subsidiarity: Netherlands role in European agenda setting

The Netherlands has a long history of collaboration with Africa, in trade, development collaboration and research and education. Dutch universities are highly appreciated in Africa and many alumni are well positioned in Africa. There is extensive knowledge on Africa, and long-standing relations can be mobilised to contribute to Europe's wish for a partnership among equals, and an agenda of genuine joint interests and mutual benefits. The knowledge and relationships provide a comparative advantage that the Netherlands government and African partners can use to influence the agenda's of the five proposed Africa-Europe Partnerships under the 'Comprehensive strategy with Africa'.

***The Netherlands has more to offer than funding. Organise a more active contribution of Netherlands stakeholders in agenda setting. Science diplomacy can help deepening the EU's engagement with Africa in identifying mutual benefits and interests.***

## Subsidiarity: Netherlands role in implementation

The NDICI (Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument) is the main source of finance to implement the joint partnerships and policies. A large part of this financial instrument will be used as a tool for leveraging private capital through guarantees and blending. The Dutch private sector has a well recognised innovative power; yet Africa's food systems transformation do not require simply exporting Dutch innovations. For the Dutch private sector to make a meaningful contribution solving African challenges, an approach that includes investment in capacity building is needed.

Another part of NDICI is to be used as grants for development activities. The Netherlands government can make use of these EU funds through Delegated Cooperation Agreements. Experience shows that the Netherlands needs to advocate more profoundly that it is able to develop integrated, context specific, and evidence-based development programmes that can address African problems. Currently only a handful of European countries appear to make use of these EU funds.

Grants for joint Research & Innovation cooperation are used for:

- public health,
- green transition (food, climate change and energy)
- innovation and technology; and
- capacities for science.

The secretariat of the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnerships (EDCTP) is based in the Netherlands. This is seen as a highly successful Partnership, has received (by far) the largest financial contribution and is seen as the big example of how to cooperate with Africa. Because there is unclarity on the financial contribution of the Netherlands to EDCTP3, it is not certain if the European secretariat will remain in the Hague.

***The Netherlands has the capacities and experiences to meaningfully contribute to EU actions in Africa. To fully use this potential requires a joint strategy, under the leadership of the Netherlands government.***

