

The future of the EU as a global development actor

July 2022



The report builds on the result of the European Think Tanks Group (ETTG) and the Elcano Royal Institute cooperation, with the support of the Spanish State Secretariat for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation.

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Acknowledgements: The authors wish to thank Ina Friesen (IDOS) & Andrew Sherriff (ECDPM) for their kind support in the revision of this report.

The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors.

KEY MESSAGES

- The volatility of the current world context –significantly shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine crisis– poses several challenges for the EU in its ambition to consolidate its geopolitical narrative and maintain its position of global development leader. As the world's largest donor, the EU has a crucial role to play in upholding the multilateral system and advancing the 2030 Agenda, but it often struggles to find a unified, coherent and visible voice.
- The EU needs to critically rethink its partnerships with global partners, which have suffered from the loss of trust and credibility. In Africa this has fuelled perceptions that the EU fails to keep its promises and often employs double standards. The Union must also rekindle its partnerships with Latin America, a like-minded region with a great strategic potential for the EU. To achieve this, it needs to engage in genuine dialogue and consultation with partners, adopt differentiated approaches, offer attractive technical propositions and leverage the multilateral system. It must also pay special attention to certain key thematic areas, such as governance, global health and food security. **(continued next page)**



KEY MESSAGES (CONTINUED)

- There is a certain fragmentation and cacophony of approaches and tools that hinder the EU's capacity to engage in effective development delivery. Although Team Europe Initiatives and the Global Gateway are steps in the right direction, they should be combined with coordination and consultation –among member states and with partners– for the EU to act with unity and coherence on the ground. Addressing concerns regarding who bears the financial and human transaction costs to fully unlock the potential of the Team Europe initiative is thus essential.
- The EU needs to invest in a powerful narrative and a sophisticated communication strategy that highlights its comparative advantages and increases its visibility, in order to present itself as a reliable and attractive partner. It also needs to build the necessary knowledge to engage with partners with realism and work with all actors, not only central governments.
- All of these elements need to be strengthened in conjunction with a renewed approach to the EU's foreign policy that balances its values-based mentality with a pragmatic way of working. The Global Gateway seems to be going in that direction as a tool to compete with other geopolitical actors in the developing world, but it needs to be sufficiently owned by partners and fully implemented in a way that delivers tangible results, as well as being better communicated internally and externally to realise its value.

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

The EU's development policy is confronted with unprecedented challenges in the COVID-19 context and the ongoing Ukraine crisis. The EU will need all hands on deck to effectively play a leadership role in global development. Efforts will have to be made on many fronts: inclusive growth, investment and jobs, peace and security, migration and mobility, combating environmental degradation and climate impacts, governance, skills and education, research, innovation and the digital economy. The Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's idea of a 'geopolitical' Commission was intended to create a new political momentum to fundamentally re-energise the EU's role in the world and in the area of foreign policy and international cooperation. First COVID-19 and then the Ukraine crisis have confronted the Union with an urgent need to speed up the process.

In parallel, and for some years now, EU development cooperation tools have undergone a thorough reform. This includes not only the European Commission's instruments, now gathered in Global Europe-NDICI (Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument), but also initiatives that call for a deeper integration of all member states' development cooperation initiatives under the umbrella of Team Europe or, more recently, Global Gateway.

Questions arise, though, on how to connect and align, on the one hand, the general approach to a more strategic and geopolitical Europe and, on the other, the implementation of new instruments that imply a *de facto* deeper integration of EU development cooperation policy.

It is against this background that the European Think Tanks Group (ETTG) and the Elcano Royal Institute, with the support of the Spanish State Secretariat for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, organised a closed-door workshop, held in Madrid on 6 May 2022 under the Chatham House rule, to discuss the future of the EU in promoting global development. The event involved policy makers from the EU (the European Commission) and several of member states (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy and Spain), as well as ETTG think tank members (the European Centre for Development Policy Management –ECDPM–, the German Institute of Development and Sustainability –IDOS–, the

Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations –IDDRI–, the International Affairs Institute –IAI–) and other leading think tanks.¹

The underlying rationale of the event was, on the one hand, to foster a rethinking of EU international cooperation by better defining its distinctive features, added value and potential allies in the world and, on the other, to provide inputs for the Spanish Presidency of the EU in 2023. The workshop revolved around three main axes, which are further explored in this report: (1) the role of the EU as a global actor in a volatile world; (2) building solid alliances with 'like-minded' partners²; and (3) adapting approaches and practices to new realities.

The workshop allowed the identification not only of a long list of challenges but also of a promising set of proposals for future steps, all of which are listed and detailed in the Report. Four specific aspects were suggested by several participants, in each of the three sessions:

- a. Lack of coordination was identified as a major challenge for a more consistent and assertive European development cooperation policy. Coordination failures appear at all levels: among EU institutions, between technical and financial cooperation, among member states, between member states and EU institutions and between headquarters and delegations in third countries.
- b. Partly as a result, EU aid suffers from a profound communications problem at both the international and the local levels: on the one hand, according to recent polls, the EU is not recognised as a key partner in most African societies; on the other hand, European societies lack a deep knowledge of and engagement with foreign policy and external action, including development cooperation.
- c. Participants identified the importance of multilateralism and the need to urgently address its flaws and failure to respond to global challenges.
- d. European development cooperation needs a stronger capacity on the ground to collect knowledge, understand development priorities and work with local partners, including institutions from partner countries and EU delegations in the field.

1. See the Annex for a full list of the participants.

2. Note that the section on alliances with like-minded partners focuses on Africa and Latin America, but not Asia. This is only due to the structure and content itself of the seminar and does not entail a lack of relevance of the region for the European Union.



THE EU'S ROLE AS A GLOBAL ACTOR IN A VOLATILE WORLD

The COVID-19 pandemic and the climate emergency have shown the depth of current international interconnections and their benefits as well as their risks and threats. The ongoing war in Ukraine will also have long-term socio-economic implications on global and regional (food) security. After a 4.4% increase in ODA in 2021,³ which was mainly due to DAC members' support for COVID-19 activities (eg, vaccine donations), it cannot be excluded that these threats will have a negative spill-over effect on global development cooperation.

Against such a complex scenario, a more geopolitical role of the Union and a higher profile on the global scene strongly require a clarification of its precise voice and role in the current context –with a multifaceted conflict between the US and China that is escalating in an increasing number of fields (eg, trade, technology and innovation, and, more recently, relations with Russia).

While the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission Josep Borrell has claimed that the EU is learning to 'use the language of power', the EU should take stock of the decades of investment in development cooperation that have de facto moulded its global identity and defined its political, social and economic connections with the Global South. This flagship external policy –which is key to achieve the 2030 Agenda– also differentiates the EU from the two main global players and, particularly, from China, which relies on competing development and development cooperation models. In this respect, although the EU's hard power is being developed (visible in its military assistance to Ukraine), it is vital for the Union not to neglect its soft power, which has a track record and added value.

Therefore, being the world's largest donor (a global payer),⁴ the time is ripe for the EU to play a clear role and act as a global player. The EU has an essential role and voice in sustainable development but also more broadly in the defence-diplomacy-development triangle. The EU is also crucial in upholding the multilateral system and securing the 2030 Agenda, a roadmap that is universally agreed upon, encompasses all facets of development and has proved its relevance in the current context of the war in Ukraine and the food security crisis. For the EU to champion the 2030 Agenda, it requires more coherence and credibility, particularly in relation with its allies.



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3. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/ODA-2021-summary.pdf>.
4. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-global-actor_en?s=356.



BUILDING ALLIANCES WITH LIKE-MINDED PARTNERS

The EU needs to strengthen its relationships with partners in order to effectively play the role of a global development leader. These partnerships should focus on their transformational impact in line with EU values –such as transparency, the rule of law, democratic quality and good governance– and the 2030 Agenda. Human development must be sought through delivery to the people and the support of state-building and state-society relations that respond to the needs of the population, both for geopolitical and developmental reasons.

Where are the EU's partnerships with Africa?

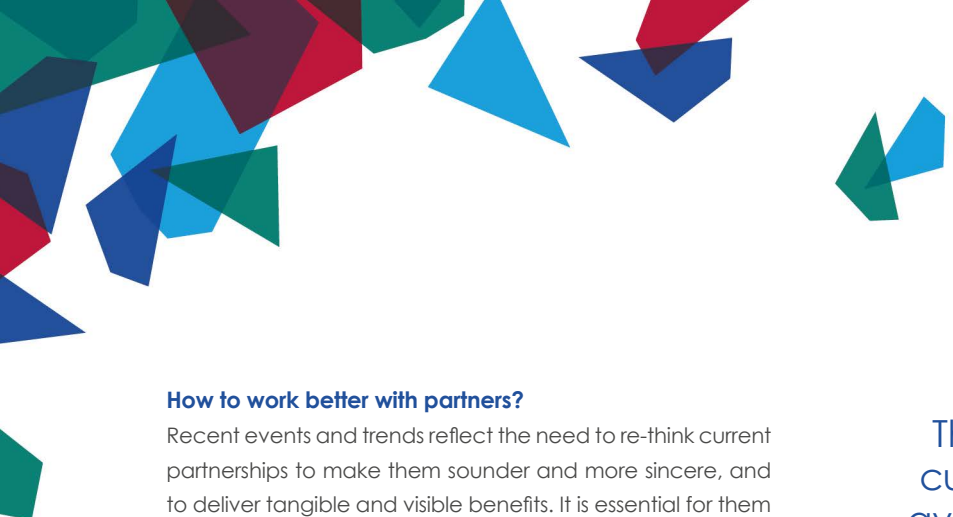
Regarding the EU's relations with African countries, recent events such as the AU-EU Summit and the voting outcomes at the UNGA in relation to Russia's invasion of Ukraine have contributed to making evident a complex underlying deterioration of partnerships and the loss of trust of African partners. There is a perception on Africa's part that the EU fails to keep its promises and offer a coherent approach, following double standards on key issues such as responding to migration flows, unconstitutional changes of government in Africa and the upholding of human rights and democratic standards even within Europe. Europe, despite investing in global vaccine distribution, was seen as entirely self-interested in much of Africa for not allowing patent waivers for the vaccines it produced. In addition, the adoption of unilateral measures during the COVID-19 pandemic (particularly travel bans to South Africa and neighbouring states in response to the emergence of the Omicron variant) also contributed to a deterioration of bi-regional relations. Another illustration of the divergence in views and interests between the EU and its African partners was their differing positions in UNGA voting to suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council.

Where are the EU's partnerships with Latin America and why are they relevant?

Over the course of the past few years, the EU has gradually disinvested in its relations with Latin America, despite a positive trade balance with the region of almost €17 billion in 2021.⁵ The failure to prioritise Latin America in EU development cooperation can be seen, for instance, in the budget allocations of the new Global Europe-NDICI. Although multiple member states have been gradually closing up their development agencies in Latin American countries, generating a feeling of disengagement from the region, current events have emphasised the importance of strengthening alliances worldwide and claims for a greater degree of cooperation with Latin America have recently started to gather more support.

Latin America is a strategically relevant area for the EU because it is, relatively, a region of peace with which the EU shares, in certain contexts, core values, such as democratic quality, freedom, gender concerns and culture. Strong institutions, including democracies and health systems, are needed everywhere in order to overcome global crises while leaving no one behind, and Latin America still faces severe development challenges that have been exacerbated by recent crises. For instance, the region, which is still slowly recovering from the pandemic, is heavily dependent upon fertilisers imported from Russia and the increase in prices in the global markets risk exposing it to serious risks. Cooperation with Latin America offers a great potential for strategic alliances through horizontal partnerships, as the region's main demand from the EU is normative and focused on sharing experiences, rather than on the disbursement of large amounts of economic resources. In fact, several countries in the region can also be key allies for the EU in upholding the multilateral system.

5. https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ext_ft_maineu&lang=en.



How to work better with partners?

Recent events and trends reflect the need to re-think current partnerships to make them sounder and more sincere, and to deliver tangible and visible benefits. It is essential for them to be constructed as equal and balanced by listening carefully and engaging in open dialogue –using all tools available to avoid 'silo approaches' and engaging with all actors, perhaps even those not necessarily like-minded such as China– to allow the EU to truly understand its partners' realities and needs. Double standards and the failure to deliver on promises have jeopardised the EU's credibility as a partner, and the latter needs to be restored through a single and integrated EU voice that is consistent and coherent.

Consultation with partners is the key to regain their trust. The EU should strengthen its communications, share information and explain decisions that concern its allies, such as the carbon border tax and the European Peace Facility. One way of engaging partners more actively in the decision-making process could be through standardised guidelines on how to approach partners and incorporate their feedback. The essential role of communication in this process will be further explained below.

Different partners require differentiated approaches. While EU development cooperation should continue to focus primarily on Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Middle-Income Countries require a different approach, bringing in the fuller EU toolbox and seeking to go well beyond ODA and traditional forms of political and policy dialogue. All in all, a move beyond aid mentality is needed when working with all partners, which involves cooperating as equals in a more horizontal manner in order to devise common solutions to common global challenges.

The EU must offer interesting and realistic technical propositions to partner countries that emphasise its unique selling points to remain competitive vis-à-vis other international partners (ie, China but also Russia, Turkey, the Gulf countries and others such as India and Brazil) and to be able to deliver on its promises with coherence. Some of the EU's comparative advantages are its provision of technical assistance across a broad range of topics including those in which Europe is itself a leader. This area is seen as an attractive asset by partners and –given the EU's engagement in governance dialogue with civil society– it is



The EU has to re-think current partnerships to avoid double standards and "silo approaches", deliver on tangible promises and engage in open and equal dialogue with all actors, included the not like-minded. This requires a single and integrated EU voice that is consistent and coherent.



an area in which the EU has little competition. Similarly, the EU needs a more dynamic discourse that can respond faster to changing needs and competing offers (the Global Gateway is partly seen as a belated response to China's Belt and Road Initiative, set up in 2013). Some useful tools at the EU's disposal are preventive diplomacy and public diplomacy, as well as the potential political sponsorship in third countries by heads of mission and EU delegations, whose presence on the ground can contribute to building stronger partnerships based on trust and mutual understanding. Yet these must be scaled up and used more strategically as at present they are underutilised.

As part of a necessary geopolitical approach to partnerships (where development matters are closely linked to a broader external vision) that nonetheless maintains EU values, it is vital to leverage the multilateral system and its opportunities for more public diplomacy to increase the EU's visibility. The EU should harness the potential of the UN system, which is perceived as a valid forum for development, through the organisation of ad-hoc meetings with the G7 (using ECOSOC as the meeting point with the EU) and with periodic meetings with UN Permanent Representations in New York. The four upcoming UN Summits (including the Summit on

Financing for Development) also provide relevant windows of opportunity to leverage common agendas with partners. The EU should adopt a common European position in key areas and use these meetings to present itself as a champion of multilateralism.

As regards its partners, it is crucial for the EU to expand its engagement beyond central governments and boost ties with actors at the local and community levels (cities and local authorities, civil society organisations, universities, cultural groups and the private sector, among others) in order to increase its ability to reach more remote areas and thus achieve a greater real impact, all the while prioritising ownership. The EU should also show an active attitude and ensure effectiveness is at the core of its action.

When it comes to engaging with African partners specifically, the EU should demonstrate its commitment to continued support in order to refute the current perception that key funding is being shifted from other development needs towards Ukraine. This perception has been heavily influenced by the change of modality and framing from the former African Peace Facility to the new European Peace Facility in Ukraine's support. The EU must pay particular attention to risks of Eurocentrism in its policies (for instance, the new German policy on Hydrogen can be interpreted as a reproduction of extractive roles). This intention could be transmitted by being more active in specialised agencies, funds and programmes to the benefit of African partners. A focus on the EU's own narrow commercial and strategic interests without considering how these are perceived and received in the global South is not a way to build sustainable long-term partnerships in a more dynamic world.

Importantly, there is still a significant margin for improved relationships with African partners, as negative perceptions of the EU are coupled with a persisting interest in working together and particularly with a certain set of ambitions of the younger generations that are in line with what the EU can effectively offer. Innovative ways of working with partners are needed to leverage on this interest.

Concerning Latin America, triangular cooperation can be a powerful tool to re-vitalise weakened partnerships. The rich history of South-South cooperation in the region and the entrenchment of triangular cooperation since the fading


of bilateral aid –especially in the sectors of health and agriculture– provide solid ground for the development of this modality of cooperation. It is an opportunity to do more with fewer economic resources, to strengthen bi-regional dialogue and increase the EU's presence in the region. What is more, many of the core principles of triangular cooperation are in line with the agenda of the Global Gateway.

The EU must also offer tailored interaction to its Latin American partners and show an interest in their alliances beyond the EU's own convenience, for which the EU presidencies can be used. Lastly, the EU can also play an important role in building a common 2030 Agenda framework in Latin America, where it seems to have weakened as its progress has been hampered, amongst other things, by energy and food prices.

What areas should be prioritised for working together?

When working with partners, the EU should pay particular attention to critical areas whose already great significance is likely to increase further in the years to come, namely:

- **Governance agenda:** the (inclusive) governance agenda is one of the EU's main added values and the EU should defend it, especially compared with Chinese investment. Stronger governance and preventive diplomacy can help preserve the rule of law over coups in Africa. This also includes starting a frank dialogue with African counterparts on how to stop dynastic transitions (eg, through limitations of the terms in office). Yet this agenda is an immensely challenging one to pursue because of the EU's historical legacy, its perceived double standards and a global trend of democratic decline. Nevertheless, the EU still has some credibility in this area and is still willing at times to invest political, policy and financial capital towards promoting it.
- **Global health** continues to be highly relevant in Africa, where COVID-19 persists alongside other epidemics such as tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/AIDS that are on the rise again after years of progress made against them. The EU must engage in genuine dialogue with African partners to understand their real needs and issues, such as their lack of access to medicine, treatments and vaccines, problems with 'last mile delivery' and health services. Partnerships with Africa in global health could benefit from medical regulatory agencies (eg, EMA and AMA) cooperating to



tailor regulatory models to each context. Pending debates in multilateral spaces, such as the TRIPS waiver at the WTO in response to COVID-19, must also be addressed in cooperation with partners. There is a risk of 'panic and neglect' of health issues as the EU's attention has shifted to Ukraine. The EU can be a key global health player as the global health architecture is currently being redefined, for instance through the increasing conversations concerning a future Treaty for Pandemic Preparedness and the preparation of a Financial Intermediary Fund for Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response at the World Bank. In this context, the EU needs to adopt a strong voice in multilateral forums and work on common solutions with LDCs to reform the WHO and build a common vision for a new treaty to tackle future pandemics.

- **Food security:** the impact of the Ukraine conflict on food prices and supplies affects all regions and countries, including MICs, and is likely to generate increasing conflicts and riots, with all the associated economic and political dangers. Humanitarian support will be needed urgently alongside structural development and local production efforts. Any related responses by the EU will need to account for the informal economy. Analysis shows that improving food security requires a long-term sustainable food-system approach and here the EU has many tools beyond development assistance (trade policy, technical assistance and global-standard setting) that if used appropriately could bolster long-term solutions.
- **World economy, trade and industrialisation:** partners from the Global South, and especially from Africa, are more likely to be hit the hardest by the economic crisis. They are denouncing the asymmetries in the global economic system, and specifically in global supply chains. Southern economic operators should be integrated in these supply chains as innovators (with the corresponding value share and job creation in the Southern countries). The EU ought to address trade-related bottlenecks in multilateral spaces, tackle its own incoherencies with one common voice (for which additional knowledge and consultation are required), and engage more actively in the World Bank and regional banks. Not enough attention is being paid to Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), on which the EU is being accused of lack of delivery. It is vital to engage in discussions with the Paris Club to address the debt crisis

and bring the Chinese on board, for instance by using the G20 Common Framework. Lastly, industrialisation and access to energy should be addressed as priority areas for African partners.

- **Climate:** the EU needs to work with partners to find a compromise between climate-related ambitions and local needs in order to allow a gradual and fair transition. For example, the Senegalese plans to build new gas supply infrastructures are already being contested among CSOs.
- **Human capital development:** EU development cooperation should also target vulnerable populations by investing not only in health but also in social security in fragile regions, which can in turn help ensure Europe's own security.
- **Other areas** where the EU can support its partners are taxation (in line with a beyond-aid mentality, the EU must support the institutional capacity and domestic revenue mobilisation capacity of countries), migration (where double standards are often observed), debt restructuring, telecommunications, agriculture, security and differential treatment to LDCs.
- **Cybersecurity:** although not a traditional development topic, its growing relevance provides an opportunity for the EU to consider it more seriously and perhaps work on a cybergovernance agenda. More broadly, digital transformation is an area that the EU is increasingly prioritising and here there are many possibilities for EU institutions and member states to form meaningful partnerships.



ADAPTING APPROACHES AND PRACTICES TO NEW REALITIES

A growing consensus has emerged among EU member states on the political importance of development policy. Unfortunately, the EU suffers from a cacophony of tools and instruments that sometimes make its action less effective. The Union has many tools to offer in terms of partnerships for development, yet their very multiplicity often makes these messages and values scarcely visible and unclear with respect to the partnerships offered by other competing actors on the global stage. The EU needs to consider its own domestic political constituency for these issues, which is currently limited to the development community. It must create awareness at home of a global political constituency in order to gather the necessary support to maintain humanitarian help.

In this context, the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have shown how crucial it is for the EU members to agree on a common coordinated approach to respond to external and internal crises. This is even more crucial for development cooperation, where finding a balance between realism and a values-based approach is no easy task. Stronger investment in communication and visibility is required in order to show the global partners the variety, impact and uniqueness of EU tools and programmes on the ground.

What are the EU's new tools, their potential and challenges?

There are two tools that the EU should harness at full capacity to deliver effective development policies: Team Europe and the Global Gateway. The Global Europe-NDICI and its European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+) were launched with the idea of setting up a new way of 'doing aid', by taking into account partners' needs and demands and by engaging more actively with the private sector. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the development of the Team Europe approach, with a stronger involvement of EU member states, including the smaller ones, in identifying common solutions and searching for impactful transformation regardless of the sector. Team Europe is also trying to involve banks in generating a mentality shift from the primary focus on grants towards loans and other banking services. Despite it being a relatively new instrument, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) have shown a stronger capacity to coordinate between themselves compared with the cooperation between capitals and their PDBs.

The next few years will be crucial to set up strategies and approaches to make Team Europe work more effectively, as at the current stage the programme is still perceived to be cumbersome in terms of resources, with significant gaps yet to be addressed. First, there are still significant costs (eg, transaction costs and human resources) that make it harder for the European Commission to ask members to work on it, as national officials have to take on Team Europe tasks in addition to their own jobs.



The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have shown how crucial it is for the EU members to agree on a common coordinated approach to respond to external and internal crises. This is even more crucial for development cooperation, where finding a balance between realism and a values-based approach is no easy task. It will be essential to fully harness the potential of NDICI, Team Europe and the Global Gateway, while investing in a new communication strategy.





Secondly, Team Europe initiatives still prioritise EU ownership over their partners' input, which negatively affects its credibility, ability to construct solid partnerships, and ultimately the sustainability of any results. There is therefore a need to incorporate partners' perceptions and concerns (and not just those of central governments) by listening and being willing to adapt. Moreover, partner countries and EU delegations should be more involved in the design and evaluation of programmes. As for the EU delegations, although they are asked to coordinate EU member states in recipient countries, this is not possible as they lack the capacity and manpower necessary to coordinate EU members on the ground. A clear example has been the distribution of vaccines, which has failed to account for last-mile delivery, shelf life and better communication of deliveries. However, by addressing these gaps, for instance by investing in personnel with the right skills and tools, Team Europe can be an important instrument to undertake effective analysis of the political economy of the countries in which teams are posted in order to better design and implement development programmes.

As for the Global Gateway, the plan has been announced with much fanfare and very high ambitions. The goal is that the European Commission and the member states will mobilise up to €300 billion in investments to boost smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy and transport sectors and to strengthen health, education and research systems across the world.⁶ Yet there is already criticism concerning the programme. First, it remains to be seen how the EU will be able to mobilise €300 billion. These resources might look more like a mere 'rebranding' of the already existing funding available under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-27. Secondly, since more than two-thirds of the promised resources should be mobilised by EU member states, several experts are sceptical that national capitals will reach a satisfactory compromise in a relatively short period of time. Third, the programme lacked involvement and co-creation from partner countries in the definition of its main priorities and objectives, and so can be perceived more like a 'marketing' exercise to sell the EU abroad in competition with the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. Fourth, although the global Gateway claims to be focused on several components of human development such as infrastructure development, education, digital development and connectivity, it still lacks important topics such as gender equality and migration. Experts claim that if compared with the NDICI, it can be seen that gender is not mainstreamed in the Global Gateway as is the case with gender action plans in the NDICI (85% of a project should be gender

sensitive or gender significant). Finally, the plan is still not visible to multilateral partners, so the EU should work more with multilateral partners, for instance by presenting the plan at the UN level in New York with partner countries' permanent representations.

The way forward: challenges and opportunities ahead

One of the main challenges the EU's development policy will have to face is its communication and visibility. A recent internal survey conducted by the EU Commission showed that the Union ranks 7th amongst its partners as the preferred actor in development. This means that the EU needs to invest in a new communication and visibility strategy built upon sound foundations. Mere public relations without substance behind is unlikely to yield results. This is crucial to generate a new brand that emphasises its comparative advantages versus other actors, to address what is at stake (climate change, poverty, employment and food security) while adhering to EU values, such as transparency and human rights. The EU's added value and its communication and visibility needs to be adapted to the highly differentiated contexts in which it works. In this respect, the European Commission and EU members need to be better coordinated and visible on the ground. A good recommendation is for the EUMS to coordinate with EU Heads of Delegations, with the aim of speaking on behalf of Team Europe when they are paying visits to LDCs at the political level. In addition, a new communication strategy is to better transmit the evaluation of the impact of EU action. The paradox is that the EU is investing many resources on projects but fails to involve local partners, including the younger generations and to explain why these programmes are beneficial to them. The EU still lacks a toolbox or standardised guidelines on how to approach partners, including the private sector, and incorporating their feedback. In other words, the EU needs a powerful narrative to: (a) understand what kind of visibility the Union wants; and (b) show both externally and domestically the benefits of its development cooperation. This implies identifying both the best audience as well as the best actors to amplify its visibility and (re) build trust amongst local partners. In this respect, the EU should target not only central governments but also local institutions, think tanks in Europe and recipient countries, in addition to CSOs and NGOs in order to involve the population at large. Think tanks can play a crucial role in providing more knowledge and policy analysis to EU Delegations, understanding local needs and institutional mechanisms, providing capacity building and shaping communication and engagement strategies in ways that reflect the necessary drivers for change. ■

6. http://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en

TAKEAWAYS



1. THE EU AND ITS MEMBER STATES NEED TO IDENTIFY MORE EFFECTIVE MECHANISMS TO IMPROVE COORDINATION INTERNALLY AND TO INCREASE THE LEVEL OF CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS.

The days when EU institutions and EU member-states could 'muddle along' without a severe geopolitical cost are gone. This is crucial not only to boost the effectiveness of Team Europe initiatives or the Global Gateway, but also to raise its visibility and rebuild trust with partners. On the one hand, there is a clear demand from the EU's capitals to understand how to make Team Europe initiatives work on the ground. On the other hand, the recent EU-AU summit confirmed that developing countries are calling for a stronger consultation role in these processes.



3. THE EU MUST FIND A SATISFACTORY BALANCE BETWEEN A VALUE-BASED VERSUS A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO FOREIGN POLICY.

The Global Gateway seems to be going in that direction as a tool to compete with other geopolitical actors in the development sector, but it needs to be fully implemented and communicated better internally and externally to be recognised as a valuable tool. There is a clear risk that the programme will be considered a new-old Eurocentric promise with no clear consultation between funders (EU members) and recipients (partner countries). In this respect, investing in stronger coordination and communication in multilateral forums such as the UN, for instance through periodic coordination meetings between the EU Delegation and those of the targeted developing countries, could be an interesting starting point.



2. THE EU AND ITS MEMBERS MUST ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF WHO WILL BEAR THE TRANSACTION COSTS OF INCREASED COORDINATION.

Addressing these issues implies an ambitious investment in both financial and human resources to allow both the EU and its members to have the proper tools in the capitals and on the ground to be more visible as well as more efficient, by avoiding duplications in the field. In this respect, think tanks and research institutions can play an essential role in providing the knowledge, but also in facilitating the creation of platforms where EU representatives can meet and engage regularly in frank dialogues and discussions to address challenges and share best practices that can be reported and replicated at the national level.



4. THE EU MUST ENGAGE WITH NON-TRADITIONAL ACTORS ON THE GROUND.

There is a growing consensus that despite being a 'global payer', the EU's programmes are not able to engage properly with the most vulnerable communities and marginalised groups, such as women and the youth. Through its delegations, the EU needs to engage more regularly with local actors such as cities, local authorities, the private sector, CSOs, NGOs, community groups and youth in order to involve them in the design, implementation, communication and evaluation of the projects launched. This is essential to boost the local communities' trust in the EU and to increase its visibility in the eyes of recipient populations.



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