



# RENEWAL OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN A POST- PANDEMIC WORLD

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# RENEWAL OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

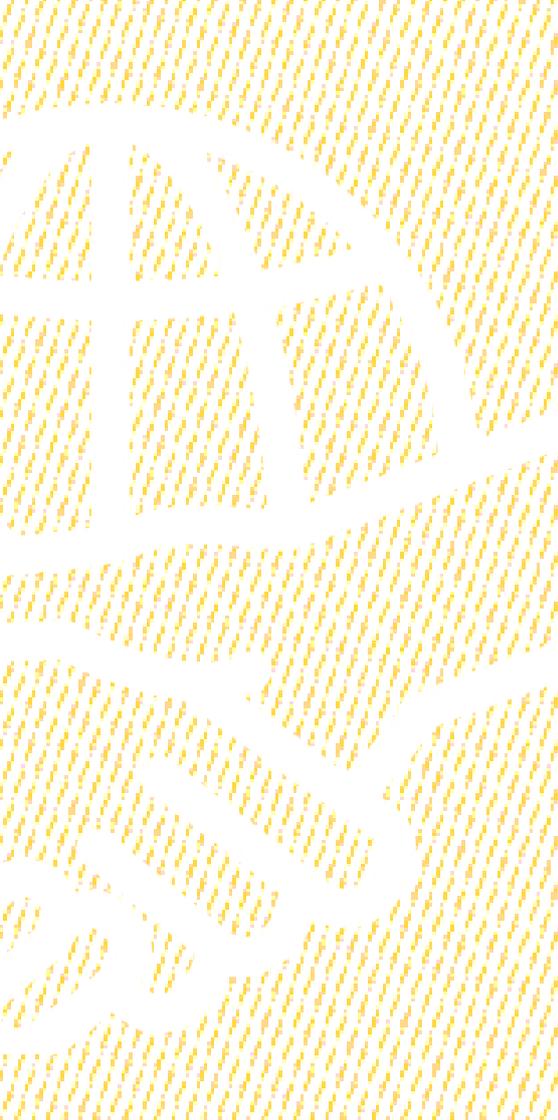
EVENT REPORT

<https://eurac.tv/9Sf2>

*Over the past year, international cooperation has been facing challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic repercussions, as well as by the push for a greener future.*

*International development actors are seeking sustainable solutions for a sustainable transformation of global societies.*

*This event report explores how the pandemic has affected EU-Africa relations, as well as development and international cooperation as a whole, and how technical expertise provided to third countries can contribute to tackling the challenges.*



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The text presented at the Palais Bourbon aims to fulfil President Emmanuel Macron's pledge to increase development aid to 0.55% of the country's gross national income by 2022 by increasing the share of donations to 19 priority countries, "to make a real difference".

"The health of some depends on the health of all. This is the thrust of our fight to turn COVID-19 vaccines into new global public goods, as part of the ACT Accelerator initiative (launched by the WHO)," said Le Drian. "It is no longer a question of acting for the countries of the South but with them (...), because the challenges we face are common challenges."

As part of the new bill, Expertise France will also join France's development agency, known as AFD, with the French state and the EU as partners. "We are an agency that is as much European as it is French", underlined Jérémie Pellet, chief executive of Expertise France and former deputy CEO of AFD.

## RETHINKING THE GOVERNANCE MODEL

According to Pellet, the change in approach is significant. "We no longer do technical cooperation as we did 30 or 40 years ago. Today cooperation is open, partnership-based, done with all the actors, from civil society, the public sector, local authorities, the diaspora...".

Michel Miraillet, the director-general for globalisation, culture, education, and international development at France's foreign ministry highlighted the multiplier effect the EU can have.

"We must now also look at its capacity to appear as a fundamental player in development through its banks and financial institutions," Miraillet said, noting that there should be "a fundamental debate" about whether there should be "a European Investment Bank and a European Bank for Reconstruction and Development with a greater presence in Africa."

## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN COVID-TIMES

UNAIDS Executive Director and UN Under-Secretary-General, Winnie Byanyima, underlined that "COVID-19 is not an ephemeral pandemic, it is the sign of an existential crisis that threatens all humanity. We will not be able to overcome such common threats by responding through current international rules and unbridled competition between countries".

Byanyima reminded that nine out of 10 people from the poorest countries will not get the jab this year, adding that "if they are lucky, it will be in 2022 or 2023", and noting that vaccine manufacturers "don't produce enough vaccines and charge developing countries higher prices for them".

According to Byanyima, production methods must be reformed in order to meet global demand. "Developing countries are not asking for charity, they want to produce their own vaccine. Sharing licences, know-how, and expertise is in the interest of the whole world," she added.

According to Tunisian Economy

Minister Ali Kooli, the coronavirus pandemic has exposed common global vulnerabilities.

"Faced with the disease, we have found a form of equality. It is important not to maintain a North-South divide, and this requires access to medicines and vaccines," he explained. "Every country first had to deal with the urgency and political pressure from its own public. Now we have to put the panic effect behind us and think more globally: everyone has their share of success. Otherwise, we will find it increasingly difficult to manage our policies," he added.



After the pandemic revealed shortcomings in public communication on scientific data, French Nobel prize winner, virologist Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, called for greater unity within the research and health sectors and highlighted the need to "communicate better with society".

"Restoring public confidence in science would require more interaction with citizens, through

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science ambassadors for example,” said the virologist, adding that better cooperation between researchers, healthcare personnel, political decision-makers, and civil society would be “critical in responding to pandemics [...] in the future”.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL INNOVATION**

Digital tools also had a dominant role in responding to the pandemic. At the International Cooperation Meetings, several attendees addressed the issue of innovation and its role in development cooperation.

Kenyan immunologist Yvonne Mburu, the founder of Nexakili (a network for knowledge transfer in the world of health, science, and technology), called for a “revolution in the world of international cooperation”.

According to Mburu, the health and environmental crises are “forcing each country to review its development model”. The time has come for the launch of “a real development cooperation that recognises that we all have something to learn,” rather than divide the world into “those who teach and those who receive”.

This view was shared by Rémy

Rioux, director-general of the French Development Agency (AFD).

“We are all in sustainable development [...] and solutions are emerging everywhere,” he explained, adding that there are “lessons to be learned from the way the COVID-19 crisis was handled in Africa”.

## INTERVIEW

# 'Stars are aligned' for EU-African relations

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By Alexandra Brzozowski | EURACTIV.com



As the EU and African Union seek to make up for lost time in 2020 by accelerating talks on a new 'strategic partnership' covering political and economic cooperation one of the risks is that the talks take place in a vacuum at high political level with little regard for local communities. [EPA-EFE/STR]

The EU's plans to strike a 'strategic partnership' with Africa were one of the victims of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Portuguese government, which holds the six-month rotating EU presidency, is anxious to conclude the agenda by the summer.

"We will have this year a new African Commission with new priorities, so I think the stars are aligning now for stronger EU-African relations," Jeremy Pellet, CEO of Expertise France, a French agency for international technical expertise and

development aid, told EURACTIV.

"The pandemic has challenged almost every project we have everywhere in the world," said Pellet.

According to Pellet, one of the main challenges for the next few months will be to deal with the economic and development impact of the crisis.

"In this context, the future EU external funds will be essential to help countries recover from this crisis," Pellet said.

The EU's €70.8 billion Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument for 2021-2027 (NDICI) is intended to support sustainable development in Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Pacific and the Caribbean.

"The EU's support for development is and remains very strong for the years to come, and it is also more political than before, which shows that the EU wants to be present not only as a donor but also as a diplomatic actor," Pellet said.

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His agency is set to soon merge with the French Development Agency (AFD) to support finance projects in developing countries and the French overseas territories.

“We will be able to offer comprehensive support to our partners and to beneficiaries and we will be able to make financial solutions and technical assistance work, the real strength of this integration,” Pellet said.

One of the key French priority areas will be the focus on Africa.

“We will be there to respond to the French and European priorities in terms of international development: Africa, dealing with global challenges, climate action, health, economic development, will be key given the pandemic,” he said.

“We will focus on the Sahel region, where we have a specific interest in supporting the states to be present in all territories – we are dealing with several issues there where we support efficient security systems, the development of public services and work to improve governance and the State of law,” Pellet said.

In mid-January, President Emmanuel Macron opened the door to potentially withdrawing some troops from Africa’s Sahel region, saying France could “adjust” its operations after successes against Islamist militants and the arrival of more

European forces.

France, the former colonial power in the region, has the West’s largest military presence waging counterinsurgency operations in Mali and the wider Sahel, an arid region of northwest Africa just below the Sahara desert.

A decision on this is meant to be taken at the next joint summit of France and the G5 Sahel countries in February in N’djamena, the capital of Chad.

A the same time, China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is set to forge intertwining economic, political, and security ties between Africa and China, and will advance Beijing’s geopolitical interests.

Over the past few years, China has rapidly accelerated its presence on the continent, from infrastructure development to trade and education.

China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi used his recent visit to Africa to signal that Beijing was still willing to fund infrastructure projects under the Belt and Road Initiative, despite fears that the multibillion-dollar scheme faces budget cuts amid a looming pandemic downturn.

European diplomats are worrying that Beijing could be winning the so-called battle for hearts and minds on the African continent by purporting to offer development aid “with no strings attached”-approach, without the conditions that the EU attaches to its

financial assistance.

“When it comes to China, we should not be naive as we know that sometimes behind international cooperation approaches, there might be diplomatic interests,” Pellet said.

Asked how much he sees Franco-African relations being challenged by China economically, Pellet said that “the response should be a European one”.

“Our best response is to work among Europeans to develop our partnerships in Africa together, relying of high-quality expertise and a strong spirit of solidarity,” he added.

PROMOTED CONTENT

*DISCLAIMER: All opinions in this column reflect the views of the author(s), not of EURACTIV Media network.*

# The pandemic reveals the importance of enhanced cooperation between the EU and its partner countries

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*By Gaston Schwartz, Jean Van Wetter, Jérémie Pellet and Koen Doens*



[Expertise France]

**I**n March 2020, the entire world was thrown into an unprecedented crisis. Although this isn't over yet, a number of lessons can already be drawn.

*Koen Doens is the Director General for International Partnerships at the European Commission. Jérémie Pellet is the CEO of Expertise France. Gaston*

*Schwartz is the CEO of LuxDev. Jean Van Wetter is the CEO of Enabel.*

The pandemic started by putting solidarity to the test. But Europe stood firm on its core values and chose to not only maintain, but even strengthen its commitment to support its partners. This was a critical choice, especially while Europe was faced with the worst

economic downturn ever experienced since the Second World War.

On 8 April 2020, barely a month after the World Health Organisation (WHO) reclassified COVID-19 as a pandemic, the European Union, the world's leading donor, announced the launch of a support package to help its partner countries address

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the pandemic. The overall value of this package has now reached €38.5 billion.

To achieve greater impact, the EU established the “Team Europe” approach to combine the resources and know-how of European institutions and Member States as well as their technical operators and financial institutions. This approach gave rise to a unique coordination effort as early as spring 2020.

On 10 November 2020, Europe adopted a new multi-year budget with a significantly higher envelope earmarked for external action, including development aid. The “Team Europe” approach will be central in deciding on the distribution of this envelope.

The health crisis has made us collectively aware that, despite our respective specificities, the biggest challenges of this century will be common to us all. Our partnerships with the rest of the world will therefore be critical, especially with the African continent.

- European institutions and Member States’ development and cooperation agencies should pursue their joint efforts around three goals:
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- Leveraging the political experience of EU integration and its underlying values to promote new ways of living together and new means of governance for global public goods;
- Building alliances to address

the major global challenges of our time – climate change, mobility, peace and security, digital transformation, equality;

- Promoting peer exchange to address our partners’ needs, and mobilising high-level European expertise to develop innovative ways forward.

Building ambitious European cooperation means strengthening the partnership approach between European institutions, Member States, and their technical operators and financial institutions. This was confirmed on 4 May 2020 at the annual meeting of the [General Assembly of the European Practitioners’ Network](#).

Cooperation agencies such as Expertise France, Enabel and Luxdev are fully engaged in this effort, and this synergy-seeking approach must also be driven in partnership with Europe’s financial institutions. As stated in the closing remarks of the “Finance in Common” summit, the financial systems of partner countries are key to their sustainable development.

In France, the forthcoming integration of Expertise France into AFD Group will help build greater leverage to support these systems. Creating a closer linkage between the European Practitioners’ Network (currently co-chaired by Enabel-Luxdev) and development banks might also be a way to achieve that.

“In great crises, feverish thinking and ideas are salutary”, said Emile de Girardin back in the 19th century. The pandemic is urging us to think of

new frameworks for action: let’s work together in a #TeamEurope approach to face the challenges of tomorrow!



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