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External Evaluation of the European Union's Cooperation with the West Africa Region (2008-2016)

Summary

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This report has been prepared by



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Summary

Purpose of the evaluation

This report presents the external evaluation of the European Union's (EU) strategy of cooperation with the West Africa region and of its implementation over the period 2008-2016. Its main objectives are: i) to provide both the EU institutions and a broader audience with an independent and global analysis of EU's past and present cooperation relations with West Africa; and ii) to identify the key lessons and make recommendations with a view to improving current and future strategies, programmes and activities of the EU. These recommendations relate to the time frame up to 2020, which is the end of the period covered by the Regional Indicative Programme (RIP) of the 11th European Development Fund (EDF). They also provide food for thought on regional cooperation strategy post-2020.

Evaluation methodology

Based on a reconstitution of the intervention logic highlighting causal relations between planned activities, expected results and pursued impacts, the evaluation team formulated eight evaluation questions (EQ) and associated evaluation criteria and objectively verifiable indicators. The evaluation grid is structured around three cross-cutting issues – relevance of the strategy to the context and its evolution (EQ 1); intervention means and approaches (EQ 2); coordination, complementarity and coherence (EQ 8) – as well as issues concerning five sectors – peace, security and regional stability (EQ 2); regional economic integration (EQ 3); interconnection: transport and energy (EQ 4); food security and nutrition (EQ 5); sustainable natural resource management (EQ 6).

For the purposes of this evaluation, the evaluation team has consulted more than 470 documents, interviewed almost 340 people and examined some 21 projects in greater detail. Field missions were conducted in two phases (November 2017 and January 2018) in 11 West African countries. Finally, an online survey was conducted with the Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CCI) of West Africa as well as with the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEWACCI).

Background information

The geographical scope of this evaluation covers 16 countries: the 15 Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo) together with Mauritania. Eight of the 15 ECOWAS Member States also belong to the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo). ECOWAS and WAEMU are the two duly-mandated regional organisations (DMROs) for the negotiation and signature of the RIPs.

During the period under review, the region enjoyed rapid economic growth, at least until 2014. Over the same period, several West African countries experienced serious crises of various types: food (Sahelian countries), health (Ebola crisis in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone), political (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and others) and security issues (Sahelian countries, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria, among others). Some 40 years after the creation of ECOWAS and 20 years after that of WAEMU, West Africa is one of the African regions where regional integration is most advanced, in particular in terms of the free movement of people and financial and macroeconomic integration. During the period under review (2008-2016), a major discrepancy was nevertheless observed between West African leaders' ambitions for regional integration and

what was actually achieved (trade liberalisation scheme, transport regulation, foreign trade policy, etc.).

EU – West Africa cooperation

The cooperation strategy for the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) (2008-2013) was founded on two focal sectors: i) regional integration, competitiveness and the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA); and ii) political governance and regional stability. At the end of the mid-term review (end 2011), some funds were reallocated to the EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund (AITF) to contribute to the “Sustainable Energy for All” initiative. The 11th EDF (2014-2020) strategy is structured around three focal sectors: i) peace, security and regional stability; ii) regional economic integration and support for trade and the private sector; and iii) resilience, food security and nutrition and natural resource management. In both West Africa and the other ACP regions, the programming and implementation of the 11th EDF RIP were accompanied by several institutional changes aimed at making regional cooperation more effective, including the diversification of implementation stakeholders, an increase in the funds allocated to blending, and the implementation of regional cooperation strategy steering committees.

Throughout the period under review (2008-2016), regional cooperation between the EU and West Africa represented a total commitment of €1,164 million. The regional EDF provided 76% of this sum, while the regional programmes of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (€110 million), the African Peace Facility (€53 million) and the budget of the European institutions [thematic budget lines FOOD (€43 million) and Instrument of Stability/Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (€33 million)] supplied the remaining 24%.

Conclusions

Overall conclusion:

At the beginning of the period under review (as in the previous period), regional cooperation between the EU and West Africa reflected the integration model at work within the EU, i.e. a law-based approach. Through failure to give adequate consideration to the political, social and economic factors impeding such an approach, EU-West Africa regional cooperation yielded few lasting outcomes. The doubling of the regional envelope between the 9th and 10th EDFs has more to do with the stakes involved in the negotiation of a free-trade agreement (EPA) between the two regions than with regional cooperation performance. Similarly, the further doubling of the envelope between the 10th and 11th EDFs is mainly the result of factoring in new interdependencies between the two regions (notably in security and migration) than to the achievement of any significant progress in regional cooperation and integration within the West African space. Despite the improvements made in the governance of EU-West Africa regional cooperation since the beginning of the 11th EDF, the two partners' lack of common policy directions in terms of their vision of regional integration or the practical outworking of their partnership is weighing on their cooperation today.

Conclusions by evaluation criteria:

Relevance:

C1. The vision underlying regional cooperation between the EU and West Africa is far less clear now than it was ten years ago. This reflects the tension between the principles underlying the Cotonou Agreement and the priorities of the recent Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy for the European Union. The 10th EDF cooperation strategy was founded on a relatively clear regional integration project involving support for liberal economic integration through the implementation of a customs union and the negotiation of a free-trade agreement with the EU; a strengthening of ECOWAS's role in consolidating peace and security;

and support for regional cooperation actions aimed at handling interdependencies or common problems such as protected cross-border areas and the prevention of food crises. Since then, the picture has become blurred on two (interlinked) levels: on the one hand, in both Europe and West Africa, the consensus among leaders as well as public support for regional integration projects has weakened. On the other hand, to assert its common foreign and security policy, the EU is keen to more effectively defend its interests and protect its security, which affects the orientations (and conditions) of its development cooperation policy. These shifts in EU policy have had repercussions on its cooperation with West Africa due to interdependencies between the two regions. This situation is no longer in line with the texts currently governing regional cooperation (Cotonou Agreement, 10th EDF and 11th EDF RIPs) and is affecting the conditions of the dialogue with the two DMROs. These two factors mean that the different stakeholders within the European institutions and the West African DMROs are keenly aware of the somewhat unclear course currently guiding cooperation between the two regions. This being so, there is a pressing need to set up a fresh regional integration project, in which the stakeholders (the EU and the West African partners) fully agree on the objectives and scope.

C2. Regional cooperation focused on the main integration challenges facing West Africa although for several key programmes, the theories of change have displayed major flaws due to: i) program design weaknesses (objectives and results sometimes too ambitious, as well as insufficiently developed risk monitoring and mitigation hypotheses and measures); ii) the wide thematic scope covered by regional cooperation between the EU and West Africa as a whole. While the two DMROs have very ambitious mandates and roadmaps by comparison with their human and financial resources, EU cooperation has not helped to define priorities or focus regional cooperation on a limited number of fields, sub-fields or actions.

C3. Regional cooperation between the EU and West Africa has adapted to the changing context, first by putting greater emphasis on preventing and managing food crises and second, by using a range of instruments or programmes (EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, African Peace Facility and thematic budget lines) to adapt to the increasing number of crises affecting West Africa during the period under review. This increase in the number of regional cooperation tools has had a cost in terms of coherence, complementarity and synergies between the different measures, particularly in the “peace and security” sector. Furthermore, **the EU’s regional cooperation has failed to learn from previous interventions**. In particular, the reasons for failing to achieve the expected results have not been analysed in depth, so continue to weigh on the effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the interventions.

Effectiveness:

C4. A large number of the expected outputs of EU regional cooperation were obtained. This support helped make significant headway in raising awareness of issues that require concerted action at regional level, such as the elimination of road vehicle overloading, sustainable land management and the protection of cross-border natural resources. It also smoothed the way for developing common methodologies for use by all West African countries in such fundamental areas as public finance management or the prevention of food and nutrition crises. Lastly, EU support facilitated the drafting and adoption of policies that were essential for strengthening regional integration, especially as regards the free movement of goods and people, the establishment of a customs union and the definition of regional quality standards. **However these positive contributions are not generally translated into the effective application of community rules by West Africa states, or investments to meet the needs identified at regional level.** Numerous factors explain this low level of effectiveness, in particular: i) programme designs, most of which favour a rights-based approach without paying sufficient attention to the analysis of stakeholders’ coalitions in favour, or not, of furthering regional integration; ii) the lack of importance accorded to regional issues in the national policy dialogue

conducted by the EU; and iii) the difficulties or weaknesses encountered in regional cooperation management.

Efficiency:

C5. During the period under review, the efficiency of the regional cooperation programmes, though difficult to measure, was somewhat mixed. Poor performance, in particular with regard to the implementation schedule, results of flawed programme designs, a lack of ECOWAS and WAEMU organisational and managerial capacities to implement or manage the actions falling under their responsibility and an absence of genuine coordination between these two regional organisations. For certain regional programmes, absence or delayed mobilisation of the counterparties owed by the two regional organisations contributed to undermining efficiency.

Impact and sustainability:

C6. Sustainability of the EU's regional cooperation actions is generally weak, irrespective of the sectors. Reasons are mainly superficial ownership by the various West African stakeholders concerned, the lack of capacities among the non-state actors (civil society organisations, private sector, etc.) to more actively contribute to formulating and monitoring regional policies, lack of capacity of the regional organisations to fulfil their mandates and flaws in the capacity-building actions' design and implementation. While ECOWAS and WAEMU are still officially the co-pilots of regional cooperation strategy, it appears that during the period under review, this function gradually lost substance (responsibility being shared between the two DMROs and the EU).

C7. With regard to specific impacts, the contribution of EU regional cooperation – where it can be evaluated – to the observed progress or the limitation of deterioration of the situation was weak. With regard to most of the impacts targeted by the EU's cooperation strategy, the regional situation deteriorated during the period 2008-2016. The EU's regional cooperation was either weak or non-existent. This lack of contribution to development results, including in the areas in which EU regional cooperation has long been focused, reflects the intensity of the constraints weighing on the process of regional integration in West Africa as well as intervention design failures (including the lack of means allocated to pursued goals), implementation delays, lack of coherence between interventions and a lack of continuity in EU cooperation on certain themes.

Coordination and EU added value:

C8. There was little “natural” added value of the EU in terms of support to regional integration. Although the EU allocated substantially higher sums to regional cooperation, its actions were poorly coordinated with its Member States' regional actions (except in the field of food security) and with those of other technical and financial partners. The EU developed few complementarities or synergies between cooperation actions at regional level and those at national level. Overall, the EU's regional cooperation has lacked visibility both in the regional organisations' communications and in those of West African states. Finally, very limited use was made of the expertise and experience available within the European institutions to formulate, implement and monitor regional policies.

Complementarity and coherence:

C9. Within and between the cooperation sectors, complementarity, coherence and synergies were globally weak, due to the fragmented support and insufficient coordination and dialogue within the EU (in particular between the regional and national European Union Delegations). These findings are reinforced, at the end of the period, by the delegation of programme execution to different implementing agencies and the introduction of new instruments (such as

the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa). With regard to the interactions between regional cooperation strategies and other EU policies, the results differ from one sector to another.

Cross-cutting issues:

C10. The effective incorporation of cross-cutting issues (gender equality, human rights, HIV-AIDS, the environment) into EU regional cooperation actions was weak. The internal EU mechanisms for incorporating these aspects into the operations were reinforced and standardised, although this gave rise to a mechanical approach which, in addition with the absence of in-depth socio-economic analyses, do not allow these problems to be grasped correctly upstream of the operations. Furthermore, the mechanisms were not followed by sufficient measures during the implementation of the interventions.

Capacity building:

C11. EU regional cooperation allocated considerable resources to capacity building for stakeholders, and in particular the DMROs. Support in this area was deployed without an in-depth initial diagnostic and, barring a few exceptions, achieved very little. When positive results were observed, they primarily relate to individuals and/or tools, with major doubts remaining as to the skills acquired within the organisations and thus their institutional sustainability. This problem is exacerbated by the increasing number of regional cooperation organisations and/or initiatives. The lack of robust theories of change on which regional programmes were founded once again serves in part to explain this situation (assumptions insufficiently examined with regard to the specific roles of regional organisations vis-à-vis the states and other stakeholders).

Recommendations

General recommendations:

R1. Pursue regional cooperation with West Africa beyond 2020 (end of the current 11th RIP). With this in mind, and in close connection with the “post-Cotonou” considerations, this would involve preparing a joint communication (European Commission and European External Action Service – EEAS) to the Council and the Parliament on the topic of regional integration in developing countries. In connection with the preparation of this communication, a specific review of the regional cooperation should be organised with the West African stakeholders (regional organisations, member states and non-state actors). This review would, in particular, deal with operational multi-country cooperation by examining the circumstances and circumstances in which these display significant advantages compared to cooperation at regional level.

R2. Within the framework of knowledge-management policy adopted by the Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), **organise regular stocktaking processes for each major theme of regional cooperation between the EU and West Africa.** These processes would be fostered upstream by political economy analyses with a view to ensuring a better understanding of the political and economic obstacles to enhanced regional cooperation and integration in West Africa in the different sectors of activity.

R.3. Pursue improvement of the institutional organisation within the European institutions related to steering and monitoring of regional cooperation with the West Africa region i) by strengthening the staff dedicated to these issues (within the unit responsible for West Africa, the European Union Delegations (EUDs) to Nigeria and Burkina Faso and other EUDs in charge of regional programmes), ii) by improving consultation and coordination between the two EUDs with a regional mandate and with the other EUDs in West Africa and finally, iii) by improving the PAGODA negotiation process (with the agencies of the EU member

states and with the international organisations) in order to ensure true convergence of views and to achieve a reduction in implementation costs.

R4. Strengthen the importance of regional issues in the policy dialogue conducted by the EU with each member state of ECOWAS (and WAEMU) and examine the feasibility of allocating additional financial envelopes that would be granted to each country in the region (for example in the form of a top-up in a budget support operation), providing that all of them have complied with or implemented regional commitments. This type of incentive would be particularly suitable for economic integration sectors (including transport and energy).

R5. As part of implementing the 11th EDF RIP, improve the coherence and synergies between the different interventions, in particular in “regional economic integration” and “peace and security” sectors.

R6. Support ECOWAS in developing its tools and capacities for monitoring and evaluating regional integration in order to increase its legitimacy vis-à-vis its member states in steering the regional integration process and to be more credible in its dialogue with technical and financial partners. To complement this support, the “monitoring and evaluation culture” should be strengthened in the EU’s regional cooperation programmes.

R7. Strengthen the incorporation of cross-cutting issues when formulating and implementing regional actions on the basis of in-depth socio-economic analyses.

R8. Improve the relevance and coherence of the capacity-building strategies and approaches (individual and institutional) when formulating and implementing regional actions. This should concern not only the DMROs but also the other stakeholders (currently or potentially) playing a key role in the regional integration process.

Sector-specific recommendations:

Regional economic integration:

- Help to relaunch the process of regional economic integration by supporting a dual dynamic: one involving the Member States, the other involving groups (private sector, civil society, etc.) that transcend strictly national interests.
- Give greater consideration to the inclusiveness and sustainability of the growth processes when drawing up economic integration processes and thereby fall into line with the New European Consensus on Development from 2017.

Transport:

- Combine the pursuance of blending operations on regional corridors with a regional programme aimed at promoting the gradual alignment of national policies on regional directives concerning the liberalisation and professionalisation of the transport industry, the facilitation of transport and efforts to eliminate overloading and abnormal practices. To achieve this alignment, special-interest platforms should be set up to enable the countries in the region to exchange information and ideas, and national and regional policy dialogue should be more closely linked.

Energy:

- Continue investing in regional interconnection through blending, and strengthen the ties with the initiatives carried out using NIP funding, to make sector governance more open, more efficient and more transparent about prices.

Food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture and resilience:

- Conduct political economy analyses (cf. R2) on themes specific to the sector.
- Apply the recommendation regarding additional financial allocations (cf. R4) to themes specific to the sector, in particular eliminating the constraints on cross-border seasonal migration, or harmonising and rationalising information systems.

- Given the tendency of regional institutional systems in the sector to expand and multiply, encourage the ROs to coordinate their initiatives, and guide the reform processes under way towards a rationalisation of institutional systems;
- Actively contribute to the coordination among TFPs by playing a strong role in supporting regional leadership.

Environment and climate change:

- In efforts to protect environment and to attenuate the populations' vulnerability to climate change, add a "bottom-up" approach to the current "top-down" normative approach, through a number of actions that complement each other.