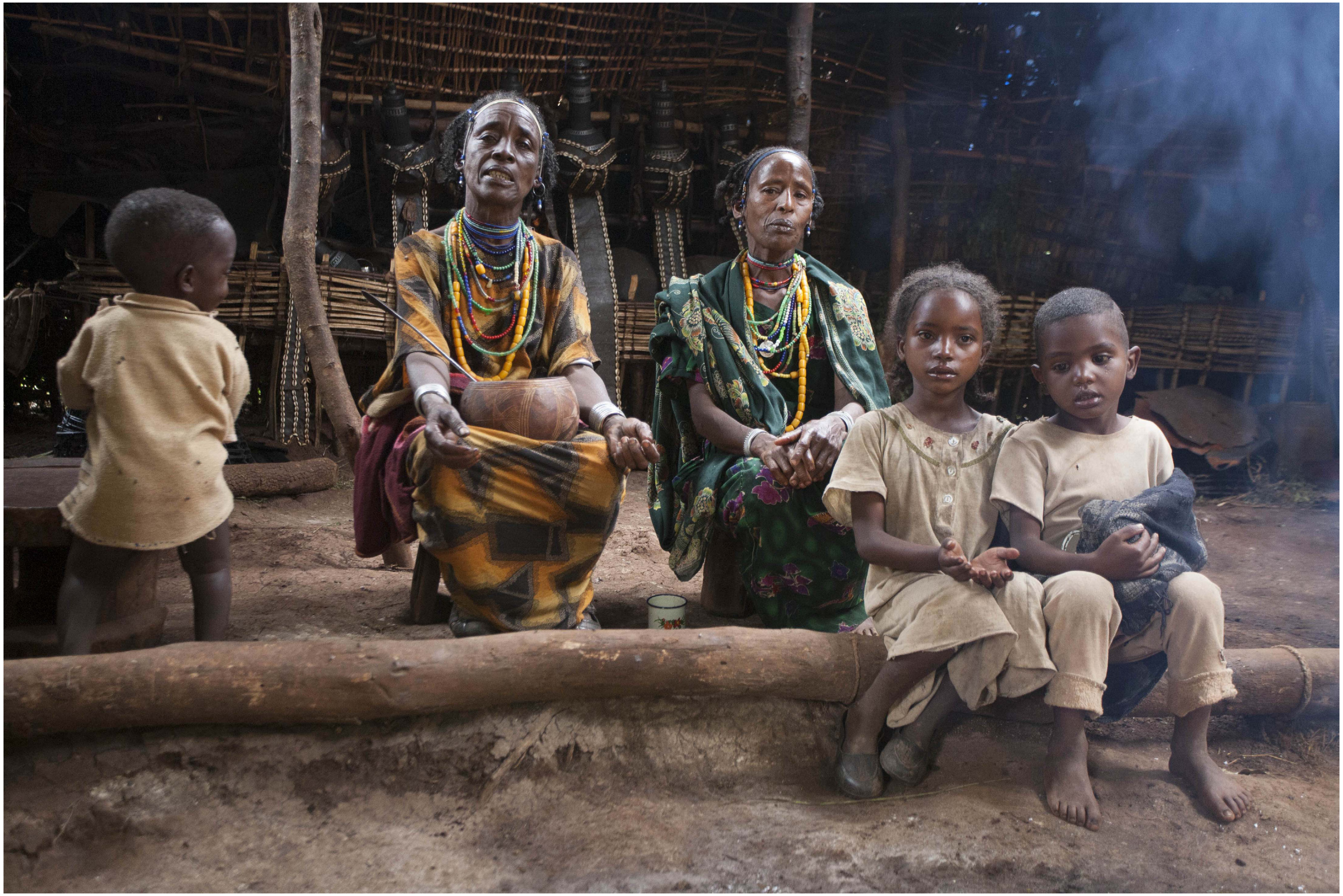

photo by S. Pecio

ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ECOWAS – AN ILLUSORY INTERDEPENDENCE, A DECLARED COOPERATION, AND A NECESSARY COMPETITION

BEATA PRZYBYLSKA-MASZNER

article abstract

THE AIM OF THIS ARTICLE IS TO ANALYSE BOTH THE DETERMINING FACTORS FOR THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS AND THE FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EU AND THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS). ECOWAS HAS BEEN RECOGNISED AS ONE OF THE BEST EXAMPLES OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA. THE THESIS OF THE ARTICLE WAS BASED ON AN ASSUMPTION THAT THE EU-ECOWAS RELATIONS ARE CHARACTERISED BY A VISIBLE DISCREPANCY IN POWER, STEMMING FROM THE EU'S CLEAR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ADVANTAGE. THE GROWING INTERDEPENDENCE COINCIDES WITH THE PROCESS OF CHANGE WITHIN BOTH ORGANISATIONS. THIS, IN TURN, HAS AN EFFECT ON THE DYNAMICS OF COMMITMENT OF THE TWO PARTIES. WHILE POINTING TO THE DETERMI=NANTS INFLUENCING THE RELATION, ONE HAS TO NOTE THE DYSFUNCTIONALITY OF THE EU'S APPROACH, AND ECOWAS'S LIMITATIONS REGARDING ACTUAL POSSIBILITIES FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE REGION.

keywords

ECOWAS, EU-AFRICA RELATIONS, WESTERN AFRICA, EPA

Since the EEC was established, cooperation with the African countries has been an important aspect of the external economic relations for the member countries. This fact has been grounded in politics of the former colonial countries, which became a separate level of the cooperation between the EU and the countries of the North and Sub-Saharan Africa. The cooperational framework with the ACP countries, created in the 1950s, has undergone some changes due to the restructuring of the EEC and, later, the EU. With time, a subregional approach in relations with the African countries has become more visible in the EU documents. This is the result of the strengthened position of the African regional organisations, which have been recognised as an important partner able to influence the economic and political order. The aim of this article is to analyse both the determining factors for the current state of affairs and the future prospects for the cooperation between the EU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) – which has been recognised as one of the best examples of regional integration in Africa. The thesis of the article was based on an assumption that the EU-ECOWAS relations are characterised by a visible discrepancy in power, stemming from the EU's clear economic and political advantage. The growing interdependence coincides with the process of change within both organisations. This, in turn, has an effect on the dynamics of commitment of the two parties. While pointing to the determinants influencing the relation, one has to note the dysfunctionality of the EU's approach, and ECOWAS's limitations regarding actual possibilities for making a difference in the region. There is a clash between political declarations on partnership and more attention to particular interests of respective countries. The network of economic, security, and development cooperation links, constructed mostly on the European initiative, was meant to guarantee to realise the interests of both parties. However, the existing mechanism, being a result of a difficult to accept compromise, does not satisfy either of the concerned sides. The EU-ECOWAS relations are increasingly under the influence of other actors, who declare beneficial and competitive terms and conditions of cooperation. The West African countries take their European partners into consideration selectively, and reluctantly make any economic commitments; this can be proved by the decade-long negotiations before any admission to the EPA took place, which in turn proved unsuccessful before the fourth EU-Africa summit in April 2014. Despite repeated bilateral declarations on partnership and the willingness to cooperate, the situation is stalled. Not only is there no progress, but also delaying tactics of the West African countries cause many negative implications for the European countries. The African side is wary of any mutual commitments; on the other hand, the European party is reluctant to introduce any positive changes affecting the position of the West African partners, Nigeria especially.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The two economically and politically opposing worlds are about 4000 kilometres apart. On the one side there is the EU, considered the major economic and in statu nascendi political power. The EU's aim, verbalised in the Lisbon Strategy and the Strategy 2020, is to transform itself into the most competitive economy of the world: such an economy, whose influence is based on the political power of the member countries and their experience in the international arena. On the other side, there is West Africa, comprising 16 countries[1] and considered the least developed region of the world with only one affluent country: Nigeria, whose natural deposits guarantee its development and the role of regional leader. Since the signing of the Treaty of Lagos in 1975, the influence over the region has been exerted by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).[2] However, any attempts towards economic development are bound to fail due to an unstable political situation, which leads to numerous and prolonged conflicts. International security threats have been more and more visible in this region since the 1990s; these are the derivatives of the West African governments having

1 West Africa countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

2 ECOWAS is a regional group of 15 West African countries founded on Treaty of Lagos in 1975. Its mission is to promote economic integration. In 2002 Mauritania withdrew from ECOWAS, having announced its intention to do so in December 1999.

lost control over their own territories. This has an effect on the rise of local extremist and terrorist groups. Political instability not only promotes the illegal transfer of weapons, drugs, and capital, but also provides an impulse for migration. Given these threats, the West African region has become an object of a special attention of the international community, including the European Union.

Against the background of the evolutions of the EU and regional African organisations, what begins to reach the surface are the frames of economic and political interaction between the EU and respective African regions and countries. The EEC/EU's policy towards the West African countries, as expressed in the guidelines for the cooperation with the ACP (African, Caribbean, and Pacific) countries, was motivated by the shared interests of the member countries, yet visibly addressed the colonial past of some of them. France especially, and after the accession also Great Britain (1973) and Portugal (1986) have pressed for a more pronounced level of cooperation with the West African countries, whose development they still want to control.[3]

The group of the West African countries stands from the ACP countries on three basic issues. First, there are historic ties between the member countries. Second, the socio-economic situation is hard. Third, there are common threats for the EU, which have been regularly been highlighted. Fourteen out of sixteen countries in the region have been taken up in the list of 44 the least developed countries in the world in 2012.[4] This, to a large extent, has been a result of the never-ending internal conflicts.[5] Unrest in one of the countries tends to spill over the rest of the countries in the region. The majority of them have been plagued by riots, conflicts, and civil wars, the consequences of which can be observed in the levels of socio-economic development. Any desired changes, which can be noticed in the

3 The West African countries share a colonial past of being part of French West Africa and British West Africa. This fact has had an effect on the specificity of economic regulations and their approach to political standards. The territories colonised by France include Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo, Ivory Coast. The biggest country in the West Africa, Nigeria, used to be a British colony. Just like Gambia, Ghana, Sierra Leone. The Portuguese colonised Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau. (Liberia was under Anglo-Saxon influence, as it was internally colonised (mostly) by freed slaves from the US. The republic maintained good ties with the US and Britain – Editor's note – JVdB)

4 Human Development Index (HDI) rank: Niger – 186, Burkina Faso-183, Mali – 182, Guinea -178, Sierra Leone – 177, Guinea Bissau – 176, Liberia – 174, Ivory Coast. – 168, Benin – 166, Gambia -165, Togo – 159, Mauritania – 155, Senegal – 154, Nigeria – 153. (UNDP 2013: 146-147)

5 Over the past two decades, ten Western Africa's countries have experienced conflicts of high intensity, civil wars or violence during elections.

majority of the West African countries aiming at restoring political stability and rebuilding their economies, are transitional and often fragile in nature. Nigeria obviously stands out as the economic leader of the region, together with Ghana and the Republic of Cape Verde.

West Africa, due to its unstable political situation, has been posing a threat to the European countries. Illegal trade flows, drug trafficking, illegal fishing, and rising terrorist groups are major challenges for the EU. In consequence, a renewed interest in the region can be observed, which is visible in the EU policies and regulations, as well as in its strategic approach. At the meeting of the European Council composed of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, held on 23 March 2012, the conclusions regarding the Union strategy for security and development in the Sahel Region were adopted. The strategy's main focus was to improve the consistency and effectiveness of the EU actions, given the lack of security in the region and the violent overthrow of the government in Mali. Severe poverty, the effects of climate change, unstable governments, corruption, unresolved internal conflicts, the risk of violent extremism and radicalisation, illegal trade, and the risk of terrorist attacks represent challenges for the region. It has been emphasised many times that this region displays a strong correlation between security and development.[6]

> "THE WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES ACCOUNT FOR 40% OF ALL TRADE BETWEEN THE EU AND THE AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC REGION

The economic dimension has been the most important field to foster mutual relations between the EU countries and the ECOWAS. The West African countries account for 40% of all trade between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific region. Of this region countries the Ivory Coast, Ghana and Nigeria account for 80% of the exports to the EU. According to Eurostat (2010), the trade with ECOWAS constitutes 1,5% of the overall EU trade.[7] The EU's share of African trade is roughly 17%. Its value is estimated at 21 billion Euros. A substantial part (more than two thirds) of the EU's imports from ECOWAS consists of mineral fuels, including crude oil from Nigeria. This trade component constitutes two thirds of the ECOWAS's turnover and one third of the EU-27's export. The other trade component is food products, especially cocoa beans. The exporting countries are the Republic of the Ivory Coast and Ghana.[8] EU exports mostly machines and transport equipment. Overall export of the ECOWAS countries to the EU has reached 18%, whereas import has reached 16% (Table 1). For the EU, the most important partner is Nigeria. From the data from the last decade, the overall value of imports and exports between the two blocks has risen considerably (Table 2).[9]

Table 1: EU-27 exports/imports of goods to ECOWAS countries (Euro million)[10]

IMPORTS	2000	2005	2009	2010	Growth rate 2009/2010	Annual average growth rate 2000/2010	In Total Extra EU-27 imports (2010)	Shares in EU-27 imports from Africa (2010)	In EU-27 imports from ECOWAS (2010)
ECOWAS	11 561	13 738	16 496	21 169	28,3%	6,2%	1,41%	15,83%	100,00%
Benin	81	33	31	31	0,5%	-9,1%	0,00%	0,02%	0,15%
Burkina Faso	70	30	82	99	20,5%	3,6%	0,01%	0,07%	0,47%
Cape Varde	13	19	27	36	35,00%	11,00%	0,00%	0,03%	0,17%
Gambia	32	6	11	18	61,4%	-5,6%	0,00%	0,01%	0,09%
Ghana	1 173	978	1 097	1 458	32,9%	2,2%	0,10%	1,09%	6,89%
Guinea	523	445	384	472	22,9%	-1,0%	0,03%	0,35%	2,23%
Guinea-Bissau	5	3	2	6	143,5%	1,2%	0,00%	0,00%	0,03%
Côte d'Ivoire	2 059	1 978	3 054	3 215	5,3%	4,6%	0,21%	2,40%	15,19%
Liberia	435	926	533	341	-35,9%	-2,4%	0,02%	0,26%	1,61%
Mali	76	42	20	27	34,5%	-9,8%	0,00%	0,02%	0,13%
Niger	95	130	219	196	-10,6%	7,5%	0,01%	0,15%	0,93%
Nigeria	6 419	8 389	10 417	14 592	40,1%	8,6%	0,97%	10,91%	68,93%
Senegal	410	521	261	297	13,6%	-3,2%	0,02%	0,22%	1,40%
Sierra Leone	105	121	100	159	59,5%	4,3%	0,01%	0,12%	0,75%
Togo	65	116	258	221	-14,4%	12,9%	0,01%	0,17%	1,04%

6 During the initial phase of the strategy implementation the emphasis was placed mainly on the three West African countries: Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. Four fields were attended: development, good government, and solving of the internal conflicts; political and diplomatic aspects; security and the rule of law; counteracting violent extremism.

7 Mavraganis 2012.

8 EU exports to the Ivory Coast and Ghana are dominated by industrial goods, machinery, vehicles and transport equipment and chemicals. EU imports from the West African countries are dominated by a limited number of basic commodities. Nigeria is a major oil exporter, recently followed by Ghana. Ghana and Ivory Coast are the world's two largest cocoa exporters. They also export bananas and, together with Cape Verde and Senegal, processed fisheries products. Other exports from the region include a range of agricultural commodities (pineapple, groundnuts, cotton etc.) and to a far lesser extent metals (copper, gold) and diamonds. (Ec.europa.eu)

9 The EU-27 has a surplus in trade with the ECOWAS countries. The surplus fell in 2007 mainly because of the situation in Sierra Leone.

10 Eurostat 30-11-2011a.

EXPORTS	2000	2005	2009	2010	Growth rate 2009/2010	Annual average growth rate 2000/2010	In E E ex (2	Total xtra U-27 ports 010)	Shares in EU-27 exports from Africa (2010)	In EU-27 exports from ECOWAS (2010)
ECOWAS	12 498	13 215	18 665	22 110	18,5%	5,9%	1,	64%	17,78%	100,00%
Benin	563	420	912	1275	39,7%	8,5%	0	09%	1,03%	5,76%
Burkina Faso	225	304	390	427	9,5%	6,6%	0	03%	0,34%	1,93%
Cape Verde	247	274	397	493	24,0%	7,1%	0	04%	0,40%	2,23%
Gambia	100	104	107	113	5,2%	1,2%	0	01%	0,09%	0,51%
Ghana	1 281	1 251	1 752	2 182	24,5%	5,5%	0	16%	1,75%	9,87%
Guinea	340	372	571	583	2,1%	5,5%	0	04%	0,47%	2,64%
Guinea-Bissau	45	83	76	72	-6,2&	4,6%	0	01%	0,06%	0,32%
Côte d'Ivoire	1 443	1 127	1 503	1 744	16,0%	1,9%	0	13%	1,40%	7,89%
Liberia	2 158	441	565	714	26,4%	-10,5%	0	05%	0,57%	3,23%
Mali	335	393	508	607	19,5%	6,1%	0	05%	0,49%	2,75%
Niger	182	228	356	382	7,2%	7,7%	0	03%	0,31%	1,73%
Nigeria	4 011	5 972	9 197	10 661	15,9%	10,3%	0	79%	8,57%	48,22%
Senegal	1 032	1 486	1 628	2 167	33,0%	7,7%	0	16%	1,74%	9,80%
Sierra Leone	210	193	125	178	42,0%	-1,7%	0	01%	0,14%	0,81%
Togo	325	567	576	513	-10,9%	4,7%	0	04%	0,41%	2,32%

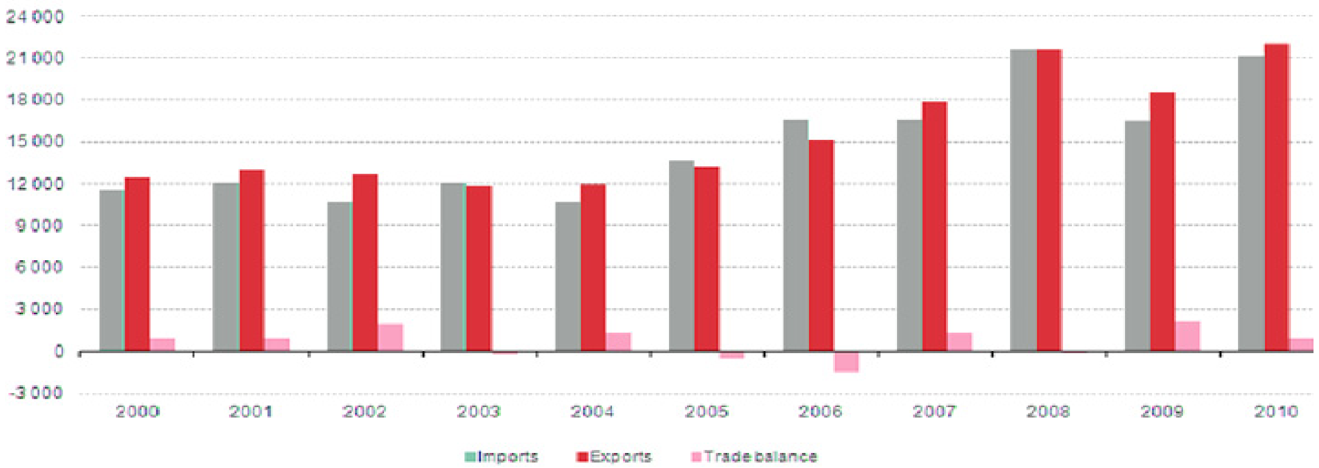

Table 2: EU-27 trade in goods with ECOWAS countries (Euro million)[11]

11 Eurostat 30-11-2011b.

THE EVOLUTION OF APPROACHES

For more than 50 years of its existence, the European Union has transformed from a regional organisation of an economic nature to a political body operating across all the continents, which role in the international political relations has become a high-profile one. The directions of the EU's engagement have been determined by particular strategic choices of its member states, whose aim is to strengthen their position by means of the EU mechanisms. Policies towards Africa, including its western part, have been at the centre of the European leaders' attention since the objectives of the Rome Treaty on the European Economic Community were drafted (the Treaty entered into force on 1 January 1958).[12] A collective dimension of the external trade relations with the region was established; directions for the EU's support under the instrument of the European Development Fund were also specified.[13] The preamble of the Treaty includes a provision for the founding EEC countries "to confirm the solidarity which binds Europe and the overseas countries to ensure the development of their prosperity, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations." This reference pertains to the colonies or the former colonies of the member countries, which had previously been privileged in trade relations with their respective metropolises. Articles of the Treaty regarding the overseas countries and territories recognised these subjects as the areas having the status of the association and enjoying special relations with the EEC.

Policy mechanisms of the EEC/EU have been changing, together with the ability to engage in the international affairs, including African matters. The Cotonou Agreement, signed on 23 June 2000, came as a consequence of the previous conventions (Yaoundé I 1963, II 1969, Lomé I 1975, II 1979, III 1984, IV 1990, V 1995) and set a new comprehensive framework for relations between the EU and a group of 79 ACP countries. All the West African countries entered this convention. The abovementioned framework was strengthened by regional and state elements, as well as complemented by a financial component supported by the European Development Fund

12 The provisions of the treaty had anticipated what happened later in Africa, especially if one considers the history of the so-called Year of Africa. It is important to note the two approaches to the African issues: the Western European one, used in the context of the integration actions under the EEC, and the British one, which keeps French propositions at a distance.

13 According to the Convention Implementing the Association of the Overseas Countries and Territories with the Union, as annexed to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, the aim of the fund was to promote economic and social development of the overseas countries and territories of Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and Italy. After the conclusion of the Yaoundé Convention in 1963 another edition of this fund was constituted, renaming the fund as the European Development Fund II.

(EDF). In symbolic terms, a new approach towards the African problems was presented during the first EU-Africa summit in Cairo in April 2000. The pan-African dialogue launched there gave rise to the construction of the strategic partnership in such fields as economy, respect for human rights, principles of democracy, the rule of law, peace-building, conflict prevention in Africa, conflict management, and poverty eradication. The first summit between the EU and Africa opened a possibility for an institutionalised political dialogue between the two parties. The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), established in 2001, and the African Union (AU) in 2002 had an effect on the EU-African dialogue. A transfer of regional African issues to the pan-African level was also visible in the subsequent years.

Current relations between the EU and West Africa are governed by the same rules as the cooperation with other Sub-Saharan countries, as determined by the 2000 Cotonou Agreement and the 2007 EU-Africa Strategic Partnership. Both documents focus on political and economic levels, and address the issue of development cooperation as well. The abovementioned Cotonou Agreement was concluded for a set period of 20 years and can be amended every 5 years. The Cotonou Agreement has been revised twice: in 2005 and 2010.[14] The term "partnership," used in the agreement, aims at highlighting mutual commitment and responsibility in realisation of the jointly determined tasks. In practice, partnership is illusory in character due to a comparative advantage of the EU.

The Cotonou Agreement provides a possibility for signing regional agreements on economic partnership (EPA) in order to change the 30-year-old system of trade preferences. At the same time, it includes the improvement of the economic situation by aid of better integration of the ACP countries into the global economy. New, separate trade agreements, containing specific regulations regarding the terms and conditions of the trade flow, competition policies, protection of intellectual property, and a codification of the health and phytosanitary measures were meant to be signed between the EU and the ACP countries. The World Trade Organisation mediated in this, initiating dispute settlement proceedings concerning the import regime which provided preferential treatment to the ACP countries. The EU lost the case and was forced to abandon non-reciprocal trade preferences from the moment the fourth Lomé Convention expired. The new ACP agreement, signed in Cotonou, was constructed according to the rules and mechanisms of the WTO; the European Union proposed that the double derogation system be enacted, in order to establish free trade zones.[15]

14 Revisions of the agreement did not introduce any substantial changes for none of the contracting parties.

15 Kołodziejczyk 2009: 392-393.

After 2004, the EU combined the political dialogue framework with arrangements for the economic and development cooperation. In October 2005 the unilateral EU Strategy for Africa was adopted, in order to support the effort to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG).[16] This strategy aimed at strengthening a strategic partnership for security and development between the EU and Africa. In order to ensure the development, the partnership was to concentrate around the following topics: peace and security, good government, trade, infrastructure, social cohesion, and environment protection. On this foundation new levels of bilateral relations were constructed. A new opening in the European engagement was demonstrated by the multilevel formula, which proclaimed three dimensions of action: state, regional, and continental. On these three levels the EU and its member countries were to achieve their goals under the principle of subsidiarity, which assumes that only those issues which cannot be addressed at a lower level can be sent to the higher one. The continental dialogue was placed at the highest political level. What is more, the necessity to increase African solidarity was highlighted and accepted as a rule.

In December 2005 the participants of the EU-Africa ministerial meeting in Bamako agreed on the actions leading to the adoption of a common strategy.[17] Both parties accepted the Joint Africa-EU Strategy on 31 October 2007; this set the framework for a new strategic partnership.[18] The aim of the Joint Strategy was the cooperation between the EU and Africa, based on the promotion of sustainable development, human rights and dignity protection, as well as solidarity, peace, and security.[19] It was highlighted that bilateral cooperation must be compliant with the tenets contained in the strategy. Under the provisions of the Strategy and as a result of the second EU-Africa summit in December 2007, the EU Action Plan 2008-2010 was adopted. According to the Plan, eight detailed partnerships were to be fulfilled. One of them was "trade, regional integration, and infrastructure," which enabled the EU to engage in the dialogue for regional economic integration. The EU-Africa Strategy's provisions were as follow: looking beyond the cooperation for development with a simultaneous opening up of the EU-Africa relations

16 The strategy was adopted at the joint meeting with the AU Commission. The European Commission adopted the Communication on the EU Strategy for Africa, which was formally authorised by the European Council in December the same year. The strategy was meant to improve the cohesion and coordination of the European Commission and the member countries' policies regarding Africa.

17 This stance was later confirmed by the European Council in December 2006 and at the AU summit in January 2007.

18 The idea of strategic partnerships was foreseen in the European Security Strategy in 2003.

19 More information on this topic can be found in: Mangaba 2013: 15-46, Przybylska-Maszner 2011: 183-200.

to the issues important for both sides, e.g. trade; looking beyond solely Africa-related issues, in order to face global challenges, such as migration, climate change, security. Implementation of the joint EU-Africa strategy and thematic was carried out under two action plans (2008-2010 and 2011-2013) during high-level sessions and inter-institutional meetings. After seven years since its adoption, it has been concluded that the strategy requires a revision and a renewal. This fact seems to have been confirmed already at the sixth European Commission meeting before the fourth EU-Africa summit in 2014.

ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

Economic partnership agreements are the major instrument for regulating trade between the EU and the African countries compliant with the WTO rules and announced in the Cotonou Agreement.[20] The agreements were meant to embrace comprehensively the economic cooperation between the AU and the ACP countries, including the issues concerning trade, services, and the rules of origin. The first phase of negotiations with the ACP countries took place in September 2002. Negotiations with the West African countries on the shape of relations at a regional level began in October 2003; they were expected to end in 2008. Both parties have been negotiating the agreement for ten years. The talks have come to a standstill due to the West African countries' anxiety about eliminating import duties which can possibly make harm to the developing branches. Negotiations were resumed two years ago, when the West African countries reached an agreement about the customs union. ECOWAS contributed to the harmonisation of the regulations, especially regarding such members as Ghana or the Republic of Ivory Coast.[21] Until today, only two of the ECOWAS countries, Ghana and the Republic of Ivory Coast, have signed bilateral interim agreements with the EU – interim EPAs, in 2007 and 2008.[22] Thanks to these, when the Cotonou Agreement expires, it will be possible to use the preferential export arrangements for such goods as cocoa or bananas. Although the agreements have not yet been ratified, their adoption may, according to the rest of the ECOWAS members, hamper the construction of future agreements. The

20 For an elaboration on the issue consult: Sicurelli 2010: 74-75; Babarinde, Faber 2004: 27-47; Frankowski, Słomczyńska: 2011: 202-210.

21 All the ECOWAS countries, apart from Nigeria, Ghana and the Republic of Ivory Coast, are classified as *Least Developed Countries* and can already export anything but weapons to Europe, without exposure to costly tariffs or quotas.

22 The Interim Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and the Ivory Coast covers duty and quota-free EU market access for Ivory Coast products. The interim agreement includes a gradual removal of duties and quotas over a period of 15 years. An important part of the agreement is EU support to help local companies become more competitive and meet EU import standards.

reason behind this is the reluctant EU's attitude towards granting higher preference levels than mentioned in the agreement.[23] Nigeria is the only country which has been using duty exemptions under the GSP[24] since 2008, and the Republic of Cape Verde was included in the GSP+ in 2011. Other countries regarded as least developed have been granted full access to the market under the EBA[25] initiative.

The West African countries of ECOWAS have become the most advanced group in the EPA negotiations process. Taking into consideration the implementation of EPA in West Africa, the main declarative assumption of the new regulations is a gradual and long-term transformation of the ECOWAS-EU relations from the current dependence into a partnership in trade. The agreements, at least in theory, are designed to contribute to regional integration and diversification of the economies. There are, however, problems stemming from a disproportional development of the two economic blocks. Despite the EU's approbation of the ECOWAS countries to employ some protective measures in order to protect the new branches of industry and sensitive products, such anxiety concerning the economic dependence prevented the countries from signing the agreements.

The EPA agreements put the principle of symmetry into focus. This means the complete opening of the EU market, as well as conditional and limited mutual obligations of the West African countries. These countries are, however, supported by the EPA Development Programme. ECOWAS is going to open 75% of its markets in 20 years. Initially, the EU put forward 80% of the markets in 15 years, while the ECOWAS states had asked for a 60% figure. Under the agreement, the EU agreed to give the ECOWAS a € 6,5 billion package in the next 5 years, in order to cover the expenses related to the integration with the global economy. ECOWAS demanded € 2 billion more. These assets are going to be transferred from the resources already allocated in the EDF.[26]

A new dimension (compliant with WTO rules) of the trade relations between the ECOWAS and the EU could contribute to a more dynamic development of West Africa; it would not only facilitate trade, but also strengthen the regional integration process.[27] However, it is worth noticing that under the adopted regulations, the EU grants preferential treatment to the ACP group (including the West African states) but excludes other

23 Bartels 2011.

24 "Generalised Scheme of Preferences" (Editor's note – JVdB)

25 "European Banking Authority" (Editor's note – JVdB)

26 Flint 2009: 79-92.

27 Sicurelli 2010: 84.

developing countries from this scheme.[28] The President of Ghana, John Mahama, who chaired the 2014 ECOWAS summit, has been persuading the countries to sign the EPA: "We have to negotiate EPA because it is beneficial for our subregion and will contribute to the development of individuals."

> " THE EPA AGREEMENTS PUT THE PRINCIPLE OF SYMMETRY INTO FOCUS

One of the most important benefits resulting from the signing of EPA is the creation of a trade area for services, investments and goods. This helps maintain security of trade in the region, and clearly benefits manufacturers, entrepreneurs, and banks, which operate in the EU markets. EPAs may give an advantageous position to the whole region. Gradual liberalisation of customs tariffs in West Africa may also contribute to an increased movement of European goods in this region. When it comes to the origin of goods, there is no conflict of interest. In general, there are different goods in trade flow between the two regions; hence, there is no competition between them. The ECOWAS countries import mostly cars and chemicals, whereas the EU imports resources, especially crude oil and minerals, as well as agricultural products (coffee, cocoa, bananas). When it comes to competing goods, such as cereals, flour, olive oil, and vegetables, the agreements exclude the possibility to liberalise such customs tariffs (e.g. with Ghana and the Republic of the Ivory Coast). In a long run, reduced tariffs will have an effect on the import costs from Europe which, in turn, may be advantageous for local manufacturers and industry. This may stimulate economic growth, generate new jobs, and reduce poverty. Some analysts claim that the trade volume may also rise, the market for goods may expand, and foreign investment may increase.[29]

What is more, when it comes to taxation, EPAs force the ECOWAS countries to move away from a system that depends on collecting high import duties and turn to a system that depends on domestic tax. This may result in a changed plan of income and a more regular budget planning and implementation. Import tax reduction would be progressive in character and take up to several years. There are doubts, however, whether there is enough time for the modernisation of the West African countries' national tax administration. Certain efforts to regulate tax legislation have already been made by ECOWAS.

28 Kühnhardt 2010: 85.

29 Kołodziejczyk 2009: 394.

Under new agreements, the EU has agreed to remove trade barriers from all goods (including agricultural and sensitive ones) imported from the ACP countries. Thus, all the ACP countries would be granted full access to the EU market; until recently, this has been possible only for the least developed countries under the EBA (Everything But Arms) initiative. This offer, considered by the EU member countries as already quite a far-reaching, caused understandable anxiety among the West African countries. The LDC countries do not show themselves to be equal partners to the European Union – their economies are too weak to compete with strong global players. The West African countries would not be able to export their goods to European markets; instead, they would be forced to import cheaper goods from the EU. This may lead to a disappearance of production in the poorest countries and their growing dependence on the European Union. Countries that sign the new agreements would bear the costs of restructuring and modernisation of many sectors of their economy. The West African countries are not likely to create competition while exporting sensitive goods or those depending on subsidies. Despite safeguards clauses, it is doubtful whether they are ready for the market opening. Benefits resulting from the agreements are disproportionate. It is estimated that the full implementation of EPA may lead to a fourfold increase in the EU export, whereas the African export may see a significant slump.[30] A rapidly declining economic condition of the countries which are forced to import cheaper goods from the EU may put a halt to the regional integration process. The West African governments and non-governmental organisations protest against the signing of EPA.

It is worth noting that the majority of ECOWAS countries have already been benefitting from what EPAs would provide.[31] The best example is provided by Sierra Leone: the country benefits from the full access to the European markets, apart from the circulation of arms. Thus, such countries do not usually demonstrate a lively interest in signing the agreement. The negotiations accelerated after new laws governing the access to the EU markets had been adopted. The deadline for the implementation of the interim agreements has been determined on 1 October 2014. In case of a failure to comply with the time limit, the countries will lose their preferential access to the EU market guaranteed by the current framework. However, the majority of the West African countries, being the least developed ones, will have the opportunity to obtain the EBA status, which guarantees tariff-free and quota-free market access to the EU.[32]

30 Weller, Arsova, Aid 2007.

31 Mazur 2012: 242-243.

32 Ramdoo, Bilal: 2013.

COMPETITION

The shape of the EU relations with ECOWAS is heavily influenced by the competition with other players for a strategic partner status. To achieve this status for the West African countries, the EU has been competing mainly with China and the USA.[33] The last ten years have put China in the most favourable position to strengthen its presence on the continent. This has been caused by the following reasons: a history devoid of colonial relations, and the hope that China will transplant their own model of growth into the African continent. China is becoming increasingly confident; the country has intensified its actions in West Africa, especially in Nigeria. In response to this, the EU has been stepping efforts that have already been made to consolidate the relations with the West African countries. The Former EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, in the publication Africa – Europe: The indispensable alliance ensures that "Europe is better placed than anyone to help Africa get exceptional added value from its immense natural resources through a economic and commercial dynamic profitable to both continents and support for the emergence of local processing companies."[34] This stance seems to be at odds with the fact that there has been a considerable increase in Chinese investments in the region.

According to World Bank data, 85% of the African export to China comes from five countries – major producers of crude oil (e.g. Nigeria). The Chinese invest and the Chinese government supports these investments by special aid schemes, which provide both state-owned Chinese corporations and private investors with not only financial aid, but also with know-how about the African market.[35] Chinese diplomatic missions collaborate closely with their citizens that decided to move to Africa and set up their own business there. The Chinese engage in massive development investments, e.g. telecommunications networks. A special economic zone in machine construction industry has been operating in Nigeria since 2007. Apart from special economic zones, China can offer the West African countries two more important instruments: the China-African Development Fund, and a tariff-free and quota-free movement of products from the least developed countries. The former instrument was established in 2006 and has been supporting Chinese investors and their African partners in such fields as agriculture, infrastructure, mining, and industry. Regarding the latter, a list of products entitled to zero payment was negotiated in 2004. The list was extended in the subsequent years.

While the China-Africa economic ties are growing stronger, European policies are getting heavily criticised by Africans. European offers are generally not quite well accepted by the African partners. The European offer is weaker in comparison to the Chinese one mainly because of the EU's negative attitude towards the autocratic and non-democratic local authorities, as well as the adopted policy concerning the training and arming of both local security forces and the army. The declared role of the EU in protecting human rights and combating corruption has influenced its ability to use trade relations. The USA has been intensifying its actions to increase the range of treaties concerning free trade and investments. There are also plans to negotiate the trade and investment framework agreement with the ECOWAS. It is also important to mention the American efforts to create a web of mutual dependence not only in economy, but also regarding combating piracy and terrorism.

THE FOURTH EU-AFRICA SUMMIT IN BRUSSELS

The fourth EU-Africa summit in Brussels began on 2 April 2014. The main slogan of this two-day meeting of the EU and African Heads of State was "Investing in Peace, Prosperity and People." The Brussels summit (taking place after the meetings held in Cairo – 2000, Lisbon – 2007, and Tripoli – 2010) did not bring any groundbreaking changes regarding the EU-African relations. It has confirmed ever deepening divisions and animosities between the two parties. Apart from the 23 EU and 40 African Heads of State, the meeting was attended by the representatives of the African integration organisations (the African Union), and regional ones: ECOWAS, UEMOA, IGAD and SADC. At the heart of the meeting were the issues of African security, economic cooperation, and the development of education. The summit sought to emphasise the EU's partnership relations with Africa at the political and practical levels, such as economic initiatives, educational exchange programmes, climate change, piracy, terrorism, and organised crime.

Over ten-year-long negotiations on signing the EPA were expected to terminate in 2014. A few weeks before the summit the EU Commissioner for Trade, Karel de Gucht, had expressed his optimism that a consensus

33 Olsen 2013: 43; Xu Yi-Chong 2008: 16-37.

34 Michel 2008: 33.

35 The companies from the PRC enjoy the best relations with military and political elites of the African countries. The PRC's expansion into the continent has been, however, criticised by the citizens of the countries due to the Chinese companies' practices to maximise profit without investing in either local workforce or infrastructure able to improve people's living conditions.

between the EU and the West African countries could be reached. Eastern and Southern Africa had put forward unacceptable conditions for the EU. The main axis of controversy pertained to the rules of origin.[36] Initially, it was expected that the EU-Africa summit on 2-3 April 2014[37] would lead to a formal signing of the agreement. However, the EU's expectations concerning the privileged access to the West African markets caused discontent among the African leaders.

Nigeria's reluctant position, caused by its unwillingness to forgo export taxes on minerals and energy-producing raw materials, was reason enough to protest against the agreement. Nigeria was anxious about the significant influence of the agreement on its key industry sectors. Nigeria's position was set out at the summit; it was claimed that, given Nigeria's current condition as an import-dependent economy, it would be counter-productive to completely open the door for imports without first developing the country's industrial sector to compete globally. The protest was joined by the Republic of Ivory Coast, Ghana and Senegal. But also internal divides can be observed within the ECOWAS. Economic diversity has influenced mutual relations and those with third parties. The EPA's negotiations have threatened to split West Africa between countries that need a free trade deal to keep their preferential access to the EU market (Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana), and those that do not.[38] Already during the forty-fourth ECOWAS summit (28-29 March) in Yamoussoukro in Ivory Coast, ECOWAS set a two-month deadline to sign the EPA. Although the countries reached a consensus, they have been aiming at postponing the formal signing of the EPA.

> “ NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN HISTORY IN THE EU-WEST AFRICAN RELATIONS

The Brussels summit is the second (after Lisbon in December 2007) gathering of the EU and African Heads of State. Despite the hope expressed in political declarations, it did not lead to a successful conclusion with the signing of the EPA. The majority of the African countries opposed the commercial policy promoted by the EU. It was already during the previous Lisbon summit that the Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade claimed that: “We are not talking anymore about EPA. We will only meet to discuss the content of other agreements which will replace EPA. We have talked about this many times during plenary sessions and confirmed that definitively yesterday. Africa does not want Economic Partnership Agreements.”[39] Seven years later the situation remains constant. EPA was meant to be a big step forward in the strategic cooperation between the EU and Africa. It was also meant to strengthen the EU's position in Africa against the competition of China and the USA. African countries oppose such a movement as they are not afraid that they will lose the ability to operate on the free trade market, as this would go against the EU's own interests. The situation has been slowly reversing: the EU has become dependent on mutual economic relations due to new political challenges and will have to make a decision, which countries should be granted preferential trade treatment.

36 The rules of origin lay out the extent to which specific goods may be processed in one country without a formal change of the country of origin. It is also important to determine what duties affect those goods that were manufactured in the EPA country and later processed in another country, which are not covered by the EPA regulations.

37 The fourth EU - Africa summit took place in Brussels, 2-3 April 2014. The EU and African Heads of State, as well as heads of the EU and the UA institutions attended the summit. The participants were gathered under the watchword “Investing in Peace, Prosperity and People” to discuss the issues of peace, security, investments, climate change, and migration.

38 Bilal 2014:1.

CONCLUSION

The EU's involvement in the West Africa has been subjected to changes since 1993. On the one hand, this has been a result of the transformations within the EU structures; on the other hand, there was a strategic reorientation by the EU member states' individual interests and shared threats connected with the region. This is a model of a classic multilevel management. The European Union has been taking action in the West Africa, which results shaped multilevel, multidimensional, and interdependent mechanism of cooperation.

The instruments employed under the EU policies in the West African region contribute to a construction of the web of mutual dependence between the EU and the West African countries, especially regarding the economy. Asymmetric relations are caused by still growing differences in the economic and political potential of both parties. Taking this into consideration, the EU employs policy mechanisms unilaterally and selectively. The West African party often plays the role not of a partner but of a beneficiary in the process of shaping a comprehensive EU regional strategic approach. The declared approach to the region is not quite adequate to the factual actions, and the declared aims are not compliant with the interest of the EU member countries.

39 Deutsche Welle 2007.

The EU policy towards West Africa is determined by the actions of several countries. This condition was derivative upon the colonial past and translates into the shaping of strategic directions of the EU's engagement in the region. European engagement constitutes a controlled completion of the EU member countries' politics in the region. Nothing is more important than history in the EU-West African relations. Past experiences have shaped today's attitudes. The West African countries have used the historical experience as a political basis for the cooperation with the EU.

Despite the growing strength of African regional organisations, their role in the cooperation with the EU has been limited. On one hand, the EU restricts its engagement in the region and delegates the responsibility to regional organisations, especially when it comes to concerns maintaining stability or solving local conflicts. On the other hand, the EU aims at creating strong economic ties with the West African countries. Due to certain dysfunctional elements which occur in the relations between the EU and the regional organisations, the EU maintains cooperation with the member countries regarding economic issues. Three issues deserve special attention when analysing the economic relations between the EU and the ECOWAS:

- regional integration in West Africa has not provided enough possibilities to interact with the EU;
- growing interdependence in shaping inter-institutional relations (EU-ECOWAS) has no direct bearing on intergovernmental relations (between EU member states and ECOWAS countries);
- due to growing competition in the region, the party which cares the most about the realisation of its own interests becomes the most active one and willing to compromise.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Babarinde, Faber 2004 — Babarinde, O., Faber, G., "From Lomé to Cotonou: business as usual?," *European Foreign Policy Review*, no. 9, 2004.

Bartels 2011 — Bartels, L., Goodison, P., "EU proposal to End Preferences of 18 African and Pacific States: An Assement," *Commonwealth Trade Hot Topics*, no. 91, November 2011.

Bilal 2014 — Bilal, S., Economic Partnership Agreements. Towards the finishing line?, ECDPM, 11.02.3014, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/

Deutsche Welle 2007 — "EU-Africa Summit Ends With Meager Results" 9 December 2007 (http://www.dw.de/eu-africa-summit-ends-with-meager-results/a-2996175.)

Ec.europa.eu — EU-ACP West Africa "trade in goods" statistics. (http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/regions/West Africa/)

Eurostat 30-11-2011a — EU-27 exports/imports of goods to ECOWAS countries. (http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/File:EU-27_exports_of_goods_to_ECOWAS_countries,_2000-2010_%28EUR_million%29.PNG)

Eurostat 30-11-2011b. — EU-27 trade in goods with ECOWAS countries. (http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/File:EU-27_trade_in_goods_with_ECOWAS_countries,_2000-2010_%28EUR_million%29.PNG)

Flint 2009 — Flint, A., "The end of a "special relationship"? The new EU-ACP Economic Partnership Agreements," *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 36, no. 119, 2009.

Frankowski, Słomczyńska 2011 — Frankowski, P., Słomczyńska, I., Unia Europejska – Afryka Subsaharyjska. Uwarunkowania, mechanizmy efektywność współpracy [European Union-Sub-Saharan Africa. Conditions, mechanisms, cooperation's effectiveness], Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2011.

Kołodziejczyk 2009 — Kołodziejczyk, K., Polityka Unii Europejskiej wobec grupy krajów AKP [European Union policy for AKP countries], in: Dyplomacja czy siła? Unia Europejska w stosunkach międzynarodowych [Diplomacy or force? European Union in international relation], Parzymies, S., ed., Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2009.

Kühnhardt 2010 — Kühnhardt, L., African regional integration, in: *A Global Security Triangle, European, African and Asian interaction*, Bello, V., Gebrewold, B., eds., Routledge 2010.

Mangala 2013 — Mangala, J., Africa-EU Stategic Partnership: Historical Background, Institutional Architecture and Theoretical Frameworks, in: *Africa and the European Union. A strategic Partnership*, Mangala, J., ed., Palgrave Macmillan 2013.

Mavraganis 2012	Mavraganis, N., "Trade between EU and West Africa, 2000-2010 EU-27 surplus with ECOWAS countries for both goods and services," Statistics in focus, Eurostat, no. 5, 2012, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-12-005/EN/KS-SF-12-005-EN.PDF, accessed on 1.03.2014.
Mazur 2013	Mazur, G., *Relacje Unii Europejskiej z krajami Afryki, Karaibów i Pacyfiku. Historia i perspektywy [European Union relations with the countries of Africa*, Caribbeanand Pacific. History and perspectives], DIFIN, Warszawa 2013.
Michel 2008	Michel, L., Africa–Europe: the indispensable alliance, Office des publications officielles des Communautés européennes, Luxembourg, 2008.\
Olsen 2013	Olsen, G. R., The EU's Africa policy between the US and China: interests, altruism and cooperation, in: *The European Union in Africa. Incoherent policies, assymetrical partnership, declining relevance?*, Carbone, M., Manchester University Press 2013.
Przybylska-Maszner 2011	Przybylska-Maszner, B., "Od strategii Unii Europejskiej na rzecz Afryki do strategicznego partnerstwa z Afryką – dylematy o realnej wizji współpracy na rzecz rozwoju [From European Union Strategy for Africa to strategic partnership with Africa- dilemmas on realistic vision of cooperation for development],," Przegląd Strategiczny, no. 1, 2011.
Ramdoo, Bilal 2013	Ramdoo, I., Bilal, S., What would it take to make an EPA economically and politically feasible for Europe and Africa? Elements for consideration ahead of the Africa-EU Summit of April 2014, ECDPM Briefing Note 57, ECDPM, Maastricht, 2013 (http://www.africa-eupartnership.org/sites/default/files/documents/evaluation_apf_i_final_report_en.pdf).
Sicurelli 2010	Sicurelli, D., T*he European Union's Africa Policies. Norms*, Interests and Impact, Ashgate, 2010.
UNDP 2013	Human development Report 2013, *The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World*, UNDP 2013.
Weller, Arsova, Aid 2007	Weller, Ch., Arsova, T., Aid, C., Powell, S., *The Real Costs and Benefits of EPAs*, www.epa2007.org, accessed on 1-03-2014.
Xu Yi-Chong 2008	Xu Yi-chong, "China and the United States in Africa: Coming Conflict or Commercial Coexistance?," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 62, no. 1, 2008.

Dr Beata Przybylska-Maszner is an adjunct professor at the Department of Research on European Integration, Faculty of Political Science and Journalism, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. She is a graduate of European studies at AMU and finished postgraduate studies at Université Nancy 2 (Département de Sciences Juridiques). She defended her doctoral thesis, entitled European Security and Defence Policy in 2004. Her research interests focus on issues of EU's external actions and especially EU relations with African states, as well common security and defence policy.

find out
where are we from

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

Faculty of Political Science and Journalism

R/evolutions: Global Trends & Regional Issues,
Volume 2, Issue 1, June 2014.

r-evolutions.amu.edu.pl

get the whole issue#2

R E GLOBAL TRENDS REGIONAL ISSUES