

## EUROPE-AFRICA POLICY RESEARCH NETWORK (Concept Note)

### 1. Background and Rationale

In a context of rapidly evolving EU-Africa relations, there is an increasing need to foster stronger dialogue and co-operation between different actors in Africa and in Europe on several aspects of the EU-Africa partnership. Independent policy research institutes can play an important role in promoting dialogue and relevant policy analysis through partnerships among African and European research centres and networks and strengthen the interaction between the policy research and the policy making world (governmental, multilateral, EU & African bodies), as well as the policy dialogue with other stake-holders from civil society, private sector and the media.

There is already some type of Europe-Africa co-operation between policy research organisations. However, this is mostly done on an ad-hoc basis, mainly through contacts between experts, researchers and academics in regular conference settings. It appears that these events are not always connected in a structured way to the European and the African policy making world which could benefit from practical policy research analysis and advice for decision-making.

After two meetings in Lisbon, on 13 September and 5 December 2007, attended also by AU and EU officials, a group of European and African institutes/organisations decided to create the Europe-Africa Policy Research Network (EARN). Building as much as possible on existing networks and initiatives, EARN intends to bring added value on pooling and fostering policy research capacities, dialogue and partnership between European and African non-governmental research institutions on issues relating to EU-Africa relations. By bringing different actors and perspectives (e.g. security, development, migration, environment, trade) into the discussion and analysis about issues of common concern, EARN asserts its added-value in promoting a cross-cutting and holistic approach to an often compartmentalised discussion of issues that most often have an impact on well beyond the specific area of concern.

The Action Plan of the joint EU-Africa Strategy adopted at the 2007 Summit of EU-Africa Heads of State and Government, gave an important degree of legitimacy to the EARN initiative as it invites both the European and African parties *“to establish a platform for European and African **research institutes and think tanks** to provide independent policy advice”*.

### 2. Objectives

The objectives of the network are:

- a) To provide independent policy analysis on issues of common concern for Africa and Europe, such as peace and security, governance, human rights, democracy, the rule of law, reform of multilateral institutions, climate change, energy, trade and regional integration, pandemic diseases, migration, science and technology, and other key political and development issues;
- b) To contribute, through practical research, to the implementation of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, and to be part of the monitoring and follow-up mechanisms for its implementation;
- c) To encourage co-operation and partnerships between policy research institutes in Europe and Africa with a view to explore innovative ways of improving joint

responses to common problems and to develop the institutional capacities of the network members, so as to reduce asymmetries between African and European policy research capacities;

- d) To enhance interaction between the world of policy research and policy making to contribute to a better informed decision-making process of the European and African policy makers – multilateral, regional and national bodies;
- e) To increase public awareness on issues concerning EU and Africa within the academic world, the broad diversity of NGOs and civil society stake-holders, the private sector and the media.

### 3. Roles, Activities and Outputs

**3.1** In light of the aforementioned objectives, **EARN role** will be essentially three-fold:

**a) Policy research**, aimed at providing independent, relevant and timely policy analysis and advice to European and African policy-makers on key issues of EU-Africa relations;

**b) Dialogue**, aimed at fostering a better and shared knowledge and understanding of key issues in EU-Africa relations;

**c) Information**, aimed at stimulating and facilitating debate among key stake-holders involved in the EU-Africa partnership.

**3.2. EARN activities** and outputs will translate into publications (discussion papers, policy briefs, reports), workshops and conferences on relevant issues of EU-Africa relations, as well as other dissemination activities, including the setting up of a dedicated website (and of an electronic dialogue forum). Research and dialogue activities of EARN will be both supply driven (own initiatives) and demand driven (upon request of key policy interlocutors<sup>1</sup>).

#### Publications

Publications will be widely distributed in Europe and in Africa, mainly by email. To cover a broad range of countries and actors, some of these publications may be available in several languages (English, French and Portuguese), published in the website, available in PDF and, when pertinent, also in paper. Publications can take the form of:

- *Discussion papers*, designed for workshops, to analyse relevant developments and perspectives in EU-Africa relations;
- *Policy papers and briefs*, with a policy-oriented focus, to make concrete proposals and/or recommendations for high officials and decision-makers in EU and African institutions;
- *An annual report* on common concerns of the EU-Africa Political Dialogue, including a 'state of the art' of the implementation of the Joint Strategy, to be prepared for the network annual conference.

#### Workshops and Conferences

- *Workshops*, to focus on key issues of the EU-Africa partnership with a view of informing policy-makers, and in as much as possible and when appropriate, ahead of key meetings where those issues will be on the

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<sup>1</sup> European and African, institutional and private, state and non-state, according to the relevance of the issues and response capacity within EARN.

agenda. Similarly, workshops are also intended to fostering personal and working relationship among experts, reinforcing institutional capacities.

- *Annual Conferences*, organised on an alternating basis in Africa and Europe by members of the network, are occasions for creating synergies and cross-fertilising effects among the network members. Contrary to the workshops, conferences are designed to have a strong public impact, particularly in the countries where they are held. They will provide an opportunity for exchange of experience and knowledge between researchers, institutional partners from the EU, AU and regional economic communities (RECs), representatives of the private sector, civil society actors, and officials / decision-makers working on EU-Africa relations.

#### Other dissemination activities

- *Website*. To ensure a wider dissemination of the debates and research projects and products, a website will be created. The website is meant to be a useful research and information tool for both the network and beyond. It will be updated on a regular basis to reflect the real-time progress in the network's research findings and activities, as well as developments in issues pertaining to Europe-Africa relations.
- *Dialogue forum*. An electronic discussion forum amongst different stakeholders aimed at promoting the exchange of views on specific matters can also be envisaged within the website.

### **3.3. Outputs and Budget**

IEEI and ECDPM, who were charged in Lisbon (in December 2007) with the interim management of the Network until a governance structure is agreed upon and put in place, have prepared this plan of activities and budget to kick-start EARN for the period 2009-2010. In the April 2 meeting, EARN participants will approve the final plan of activities and budget. Its accomplishment will also depend upon funding availability.

EARN is planning to promote and publish in the course of 2009 and 2010 the following outputs:

- *An Annual Conference;*
- *An Annual Report;*
- *Several (possibly 4 to 8) discussion papers and workshops;*
- *Several (possibly 8 to 16 ) briefs or policy papers;*
- *A website (to be created on the course of the first year).*

The total estimated budget for such outputs (including the co-ordination costs) for the first couple of years of EARN activity (2008-2010) is 300.000 to 550.000 Euros per year (or 600.000 to 1.100.000 Euros for the two years), depending on the outputs and realisations of EARN.

### **4. Membership Criteria, Organisation and Management**

*EARN is a gradual endeavour. It will start with a core group of members and will grow bigger and more inclusive as its work progresses, relevant members and expertise are identified, and its 'modus operandi' and the network co-ordination and governance mechanisms are put to work and tested.*

## **1.1. Membership Criteria**

EARN privileges membership of think tanks and networks with interest, track record and expertise on broad and/or specific areas of concern of EU-Africa relations (e.g. development, humanitarian, political, security, migration, trade, environment, and other areas of concern to EU-Africa relations).

Membership is however not exclusive to these and can be enlarged to include academic centres and non-governmental organisations with relevant expertise and/or engaged in relevant activities. Advocacy institutions can also be allowed, as far as they conform to the membership criteria and are in explicit accordance with the idea and objectives of EARN. Regardless of membership, individuals with relevant expertise and experience in the areas of interest and activity of EARN can also participate in the network activities.

The decision to accept a new member should be taken according to the following criteria:

- Intellectual independence and non-interference on the work of the organisations/institutes by governments, multilateral bodies or funding agencies. This should be reflected in the mission statement, statutes and governance structure of members;
- Membership is subject to fees and to contributions through own means (financial and non-monetary means) to the activities. Ownership of the network will only be developed when members contribute effectively to the intended results of the network.

## **1.2. Organisation and Management**

EARN will start with a loose and flexible organisational and governance structure that will be revised in 2010 according to lessons learned from the experience, EARN growth, members commitment and funding.

An interim Steering Committee, composed of the leaders and co-leaders of a number of working groups on key issues defined by and among the members, will be decided in the next EARN meeting that will be held in Brussels, in April 2. The SC is responsible for identifying priorities, determining the annual activities of the network, supervising the budget allocations and accepting new members.

EARN members will organise around thematic working groups and appoint, among group members and in light of their capacity (human and financial), expertise and interest those (an African and a European) that can act as team leaders and co-leaders. The next EARN meeting will decide on the number and overarching themes of the Working Groups to be created and the priority issues these should address. The following key issues of EU-Africa relations were suggested: peace & security; governance (local and global) challenges; trade & integration; poverty reduction & key development issues. That would allow EARN to be effectively put to work and its activities to be integrated within the programmed (or future) activities of the EARN members, without adding too much strain on financial and human resources.

A small Co-ordination Team – one African, one European – will also be decided in the next meeting. Its responsibilities will be mainly to ensure the information flow to and among the members of the network, make funding proposals and support the SC (and WGs if

requested) to follow-up on activities. The Co-ordination team has no decision-making powers (other than those derived from mandates of the SC).

In the future, as it grows and consolidates its experience and activities, EARN members may need to consider establishing more structured governance and co-ordination bodies, including a General Assembly (GA) constituted by all its members. As the network develops, other WG may be suggested by at least two members, one African, one European, to allow research and debate on more specific areas. A member may participate in more than one WG, but can only act as team leader or co-leader to one.

The production of discussion papers can be of the responsibility of any of the members, taking into account expertise, parity and rotation criteria to ensure that they reflect different perspectives (European, African, regional, thematic). Some of these papers will form the basis for annual conferences and reports, and eventually be discussed in workshops, if relevant and if funding is available.

Briefs and policy papers will be produced according to relevant areas of expertise inside or outside the network. The topics for the briefs and the policy papers will be more contingent upon events with an impact on issues of the strategic EU-Africa partnership.

IEEI/ECDDPM, March 2008