



From Cairo to Luanda: Parliamentary Reflections on 25 Years of AU-EU Relations

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KEY MESSAGES

1. As the AU-EU relationship marks its 25th year amid global shifts, it must evolve from a historical, often paternalistic dynamic into a genuine "partnership of equals" driven by shared interests, equity, and strategic foresight. This requires moving beyond "summit rituals" to concrete actions overseen by strong parliamentary engagement to bridge the gap between elites and citizens.
2. Security cooperation must shift from asymmetry to equity by boosting African ownership of peace operations and securing predictable funding, notably through the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2719. Strategies should prioritize conflict prevention by addressing root causes like social inequality, governance failures, and the climate crisis rather than solely focusing on counter-terrorism.
3. The EU's Global Gateway must avoid reproducing colonial extraction models by aligning radically with the African Continental Free Trade Area to foster local industrialisation and intra-African value chains. Investments, particularly in critical raw materials, should prioritize mid- and downstream sectors within Africa to ensure trade benefits are retained locally rather than facilitating raw exports.
4. To address Europe's workforce shortages and Africa's youth bulge, mobility must be recognized as a win-win right, supported by simplified legal pathways and skills standardisation. Concurrently, the partnership must tackle the African debt crisis—which currently consumes education budgets—by pushing for global financial architecture reform and debt relief.

1. The authors would like to thank all honorary members of the Pan African Parliament for their invaluable contributions during the event "From Cairo to Luanda: A 25-Year Parliamentary Stocktake of AU- EU Relations", held at the Pan-African Parliament in Midrand on 7 November 2025. Their insights and presentations were key to elaborating this Policy Brief.



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INTRODUCTION

This Policy Brief outlines key findings and strategic recommendations on how to transform the partnership between Europe and Africa. These were derived from a recent inter-parliamentary event titled “From Cairo to Luanda: A 25-Year Parliamentary Stocktake of AU-EU Relations”, held at the Pan-African Parliament in Midrand on 7 November 2025. The event, which was co-organised by the European Think Tanks Group (ETTG), the Open Society Foundations (OSF), the Centre for Human Rights, the Pan-African Parliament and the European Parliament, aimed at assessing the bi-regional relations, with a focus on the areas of peace and security, critical raw materials (CRM) and Global Gateway, and migration and mobility. The recommendations outlined in the Policy Brief seek to inform joint efforts by the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) and the European Parliament (EP) to enhance parliamentary oversight, ensure accountability of governments, and promote a balanced, win-win relationship. They are presented in several thematic blocks: the partnership as a whole, peace and security, Global Gateway, and mobility and skills. These recommendations are followed by a concluding reflection on three conundrums that the partnership should confront in relation to ambition, engagement and diversity.

The relationship between the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) stands at a pivotal, yet increasingly complex juncture as leaders convened in Luanda for the 7th AU-EU Summit. Marking the 25th anniversary of the formal Africa-EU Partnership established in Cairo in 2000, this summit—co-chaired by Angolan President João Lourenço and European Council President António Costa—takes place amid profound global uncertainties, shifting geopolitical dynamics and a deep need to reform multilateral institutions (African Union, 2025b; Fabricius, 2025).

The partnership is defined by the Joint Vision for 2030 and its operationalisation through the four pillars agreed upon at the 2022 Summit (Prosperity, Peace and Security, People and Planet), coupled with persistent debates over equity, financing and the growing influence of other global actors in Africa (European Parliament, 2025). As the global order shifts and both continents face mounting pressures, the partnership between the AU and the EU must transition from an historical relationship to one built on genuine shared interests (including the promotion of social justice and economic development, and support for multilateral solutions), equity, and strategic foresight (Erforth, 2025). African leaders are pressing for a genuine ‘partnership of equals’, which includes supporting the reform of the global multilateral system—from the UN Security Council to international financial institutions—to ensure greater and more equitable representation for Africa, which seeks to make its voice heard (Mishra, 2025). The Luanda Summit should be seen as an opportunity to move beyond ‘summit rituals’ and superficial declarations, resolve major disagreements and discuss partnership in a rapidly changing geopolitical context (Laporte, 2025).

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1. BALANCING A COMPLEX HISTORY AND A CHANGING GLOBAL ORDER

The AU-EU partnership operates against a backdrop of complex history, a changing global order that has not sufficiently advanced African interests and benefitted African countries, and increasingly pronounced political divergences. Events like the COVID-19 pandemic, climate protection and conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, but also in Sudan, the Eastern DRC, Mozambique and the

Horn of Africa have exposed different views on health justice, sovereignty and the rule of law, leading to varied approaches across both continents (Erforth, 2025). On the one hand, the EU remains Africa's foremost trade and investment partner. EU-Africa trade flows reached approximately €355 billion in 2024, with the EU accounting for about one-third of Africa's total trade. Furthermore, the EU's stock of foreign direct investments in Africa stood at €239 billion in 2023 (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2025), with the Global Gateway coming to the fore as the core financial and infrastructural vehicle for the EU's commitment towards the continent. However, despite the EU maintaining its status as the first investor, trading partner and donor in Africa, the continued perception of paternalism and lack of equality remains a critical impediment to a genuine partnership.

Table 1: Evolution of AU-EU partnership: List of summits

DATE	LOCATION	NOTES
3-4 April 2000	Cairo, Egypt	1 st summit – Inaugural meeting
8-9 December 2007	Lisbon, Portugal	2 nd summit – Relaunch of strategic partnership
29-30 November 2010	Tripoli, Libya	3 rd summit – Focus on investment and peace
2-3 April 2014	Brussels, Belgium	4 th summit – Migration and security
29-30 November 2017	Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire	5 th summit – Youth and sustainable development
17-18 February 2022	Brussels, Belgium	6 th summit – Joint vision for 2030
24-25 November 2025	Luanda, Angola	7 th summit – Planned, 25th anniversary of the partnership, will build on the outcomes of the 3rd AU-EU Ministerial Meeting (held in Brussels in May 2025)

Source: Compiled by Keijzer (2025)

AU-EU relations are increasingly shaped by the AU's assertion of a more independent, self-defined position within the rapidly evolving global order. On the one hand, the AU's theme for 2025 is the 'Year of Reparations', a theme that should prompt acknowledgement and engagement with the legacy and effects of colonialism in the partnership (Tembo et al., 2025). On the other hand, the continent is diversifying its partnerships, including the expansion

of the BRICS group to include countries like Egypt and Ethiopia (Laporte, 2025). Meanwhile, Europe has been also expanding its relations with other regions—Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean—and is currently engaged in significant soul-searching about its role as liberal institutionalism faces challenges, as well as in addressing the consequences of the conflict in Ukraine, which poses an existential threat to the Union.

Box 1: Policy recommendations for strengthening bi-regional relations

PAN-AFRICAN PARLIAMENT	EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
ASSERT DEMOCRATIC CONTROL: Proactively evaluate and provide strategic guidance on international agreements, including trade, climate, migration and industrial policies, ensuring they align with African development goals, as defined in the Agenda 2063.	BALANCE HISTORY AND PRAGMATISM: Acknowledge limitations and identify opportunities of the partnership. Commit to forward-looking shared ownership in a select number of priority areas.
BRIDGE THE ELITE-CITIZEN GAP: Utilise the PAP's oversight function to strengthen the link between African political elites and the lives of ordinary people, ensuring the partnership translates into tangible improvements for constituents. Strengthen relationship with the EP in the areas identified by the AU-EU renewed partnership.	PROMOTE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY EXCHANGE: Systematically foster people-to-people and parliament-to-parliament exchanges between summits to build trust, address critical issues (like perceived double standards) and ensure continuous dialogue.
DEMAND COMPLEMENTARITY: Enforce the principle that the partnership is non-exclusive and must be aligned to Africa's interests and complementary to its necessary engagements with other global players like China, whose relationship is often seen as purely economic. Prioritise its involvement in the implementation and evaluation of partnerships signed by the AU.	COMMIT TO IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING: Shift focus from declarations to verifiable implementation and monitoring of joint projects, increasing transparency and accountability through regular reviews.
AFRICAN INTEGRATION: Prioritise PAP work for the implementation of the norms and policies adopted by the AU, supported by the EP.	

Redefining EU-Africa partnership requires political visionaries committed to a fairer and more effective multilateralism, focusing on implementation and fostering common interests in areas like economic development, climate change and mobility. These visionaries should be of the practical kind, and contribute to turning the commitments made at the Luanda Summit into concrete and accountable actions. The PAP's and EP's

roles in providing oversight and bridging the disconnect between African and European elites and their citizens is crucial for solidifying any long-lasting strategy. Lastly, forms of cooperation and collaboration also need to acknowledge the many differences between the two regions, also with respect to the regional institutions and their scope, capacities and mandate.

2. PEACE AND SECURITY: EMBEDDING EQUITY AND PREVENTION

The current security status in Africa is complex, marked by proliferating conflicts, the rise of violent extremism across the Sahel and Horn of Africa, and the destabilising effects of unconstitutional changes of government (AU Peace and Security Council, 2024; Caruso, 2024). The contemporary threats facing Africa are multifaceted, including rising intra-state and proxy conflicts (e.g., in the Horn of Africa), terrorism (e.g., Sudan, Sahel, Somalia), social media misinformation, and the climate crisis. A key finding is that insecurity is deeply rooted in social inequalities, weak governance and the lack of job opportunities, emphasising that peace and security are not merely technical issues but crucial political ones demanding a focus on prevention and on social and economic justice.

Against this backdrop, the AU-EU partnership maintains a robust security cooperation framework, notably through joint civilian and military training missions and strengthening the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) (African Union, 2025a). Although this long-standing cooperation has been confirmed by the recent 16th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting of the EU Political and Security Committee and the AU Peace and Security Council, such a cooperation also remains highly asymmetrical. The partial European withdrawal from the Sahel and increased bilateralisation of support have contributed to undermining the APSA (Bergmann, 2025). Despite the EU being the main external supporter of APSA via the African Peace Facility (integrated into the European Peace Facility (EPF) in 2021), new funding mechanisms have been criticised for having ‘too many strings attached’, causing reluctance among African partners. The new EPF current geopolitical environment—characterised by conflicts in Sudan and Eastern DR Congo, among others—highlights persistent challenges in providing predictable, sustained funding for AU-led peace operations. Table 2 provides an overview of the main features and differences between the African Peace Facility and the European Peace Facility.

Table 2: From the African Peace Facility to the European Peace Facility

	AFRICAN PEACE FACILITY (2004-2021)	EUROPEAN PEACE FACILITY (SINCE 2021)
Geographical focus	Africa	Global
Eligible partners	AU, Regional Economic Communities	International and regional organisations, third countries
Type of activities funded	African-led peace support operations, capacity building of APSA institutions, early response mechanism	Funding of common costs of EU military operations, support to multilateral peace operations (global, regional, unilateral), military capacity building (incl. delivery of lethal equipment)
Formal involvement of partners in decision-making	Yes	No
Parliamentary co-decision rights	No	No
Financial volume	€3 billion (2004-2021)	€ 17 billion (2021-2027)

Source: Compiled by Bergmann (2025)

A stronger AU-EU security partnership needs to focus on equity and conflict prevention. A major step towards embedding equity is boosting African ownership of peace operations and security governance. This would require strengthening the APSA, while ensuring that EU support is demand-driven and aligned with the AU's priorities, such as the Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2030 (African Union, 2020). This also means securing predictable and sustainable funding for AU-led peace support operations. In this sense, the UN Security Council Resolution 2719 (2023) represents a major diplomatic success and needs to be fully implemented, as it formally allows for the use of UN-assessed contributions to partially fund AU-led operations authorised by the UN Security Council (Mishra, 2025).

On conflict prevention, the AU and EU needs to better recognise the impact of climate change on resource scarcity and displacement, boosting existing but highly fragmented early warning systems in African countries to incorporate climate risk data, as well as satellite and environmental intelligence for instance via a deeper collaboration between Copernicus and the AU regional economic communities (Council of the EU, 2025). This double focus on equity and prevention is essential to avoid the AU-EU security dialogue being dominated by European security concerns, such as counter-terrorism and migration control, and to genuinely prioritise the AU's vision for durable peace and human security. The Luanda outcomes must demonstrate concrete mechanisms for shared decision-making and financing that solidify this move towards a truly equitable partnership.

Box 2: Policy recommendations for strengthening bi-regional relations

PAN-AFRICAN PARLIAMENT	EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
ENHANCE PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY: Proactively engage in preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention efforts, utilising PAP's political position for early warning and information sharing with the EP and the AU.	STRENGTHEN GLOBAL SECURITY DIALOGUE: Establish dedicated, case-specific exchanges with the African Union to strengthen dialogue on global peace and security challenges, including the situations in Sudan, Ukraine and Gaza, to identify common strategies.
STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT OF APSA: Play a key role in the strategic oversight and evaluation of AU peace operations and EPF-supported missions, demanding accountability and providing concrete ideas to redefine the scope and financial envelope dedicated to peace-keeping and peace-enforcing activities, if sustainable peace is not being achieved.	ADVOCATE FOR UNSC 2719: Jointly make the case in international fora for the full and operational implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2719 (UNSC, 2023) to secure predictable and sustainable funding for AU-led peace support operations.
PRIORITISE ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES: Advocate for security policies grounded in equity and job creation, linking security budgets to programmes that reduce mistrust, injustice and youth unemployment, as these are primary drivers of insecurity.	EMBED CAPACITY BUILDING: Ensure that military capacity building support is always embedded in broader political partnerships and non-military cooperation strategies, fostering knowledge transfer and local ownership rather than creating ad hoc coalitions.
ENHANCE COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION: Making the most of the annual meetings in bi-regional exchanges and enhancing cooperation at all levels of hierarchy beyond the established formats.	



3. THE GLOBAL GATEWAY: FROM EXTRACTION TO PROSPERITY

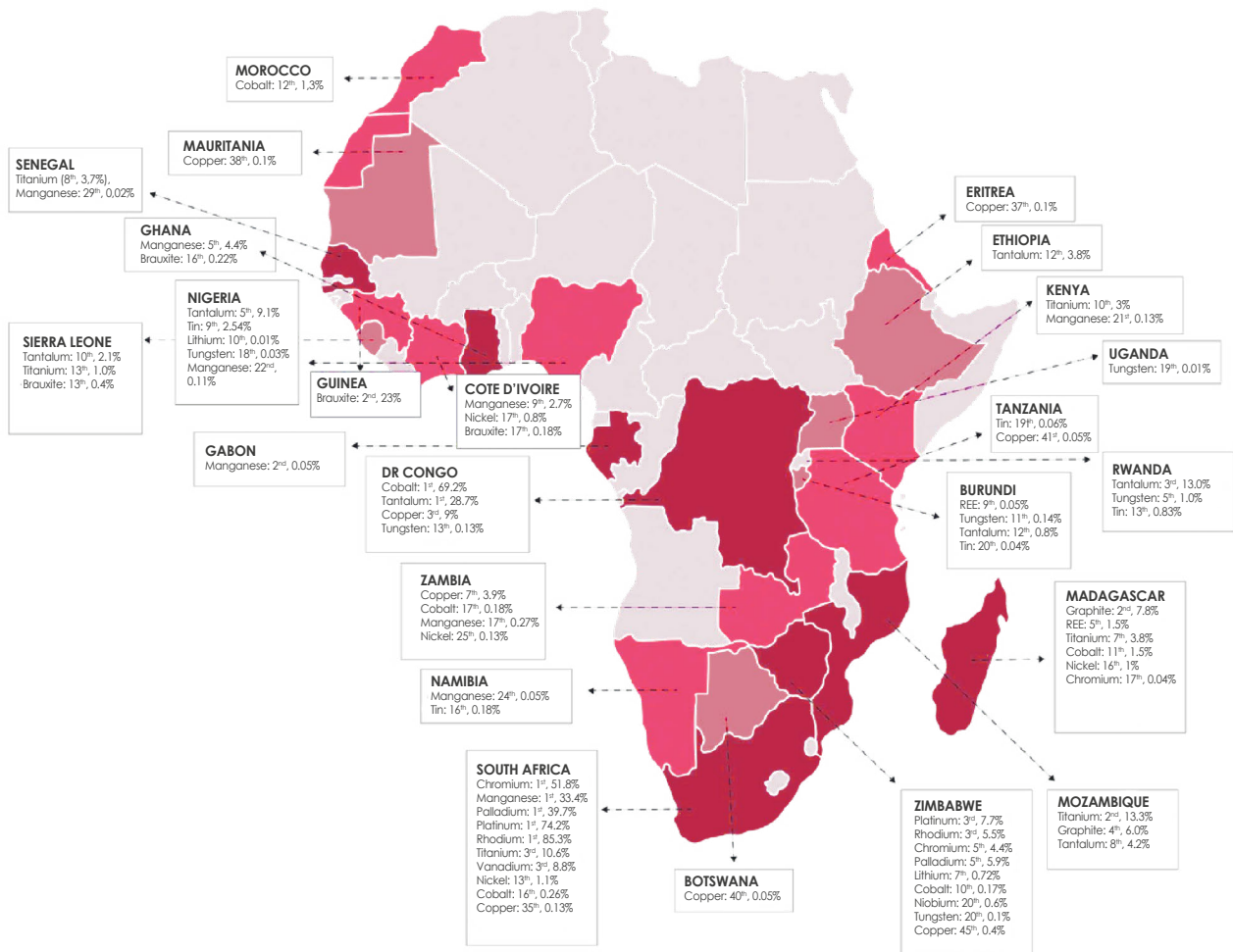
The economic dimension of the AU-EU partnership can be encapsulated by the European Union's flagship Global Gateway (GG) Africa-Europe Investment Package, which aims to mobilise up to €150 billion by 2027 boosting investments and cooperation in the fields of clean energy, digital transformation, transport and human development (European Commission, 2024). On energy cooperation, important results have been achieved in the past years, though with obvious different degrees of success across the various African regions. For instance, since its launch at the 2007 Africa-EU Summit, the Africa-EU Energy Partnership has led to important initiatives (e.g., the Africa-Europe Green Energy Initiative) and infrastructure projects in hydropower plants (e.g., the Nachtigal hydropower plant in Cameroon) and transmission lines (e.g., the Zambia-Tanzania Interconnector). Although structured spaces for dialogue and transparency on delivery are needed, this partnership has fostered other important initiatives such as the so-called Just Energy Transition Partnerships with countries like South Africa (aiming at phasing out coal, and boosting investments in hydrogen or electric vehicles) and Senegal (support to achieve renewable energy targets), just to name a few (Hege, 2025).

The massive political commitment on the GG has been considered by many as a geo-economic and geo-political answer to China's Belt and Road Initiative, leveraging public and private funds to tackle Africa's staggering infrastructure financing gap. The EU's GG strategy presents a significant opportunity but carries the risk of reproducing typical extractivism. As African leaders prepare for the Luanda Summit, the core challenge remains ensuring this investment pivot genuinely supports Africa's prosperity and industrialisation goals, in addition to serving European security needs, and that both regions benefit from moving up in the value chain. In this sense, the main tensions persist on critical raw materials, which are vital for Europe's Critical Raw Materials Act (European Commission, 2024) and its own green transition.

Africa holds between 30% and 40% of the world's Transition Mineral reserves, presenting a profound opportunity for industrial growth (Africa-Europe Foundation, 2025; Logan and Acheampong, 2025). This explains why African partners are now vehemently demanding that investment shift from mere extraction—the old model that often bypasses local communities and adds minimal value—to support local beneficiation and processing capabilities. This means that GG investment must prioritise funding the mid- and downstream sectors (e.g., refining, battery manufacturing and component creation) across Africa, aligning with the AU's African Green Minerals Strategy (Langalanga et al., 2025). While the EU has signed strategic partnerships on CRMs with several African countries, including Namibia, Zambia and the DRC, critics including civil society question whether these arrangements prioritise EU supply security over deep, localised industrial development, warning of a potential 'war for minerals' rather than development (Gerasimcikova & Sial, 2025).

On the one hand, to effectively bridge the existing gap between resource extraction and sustainable prosperity on the continent, the European Union's Global Gateway initiative must be radically harmonised with the goals and frameworks of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Currently, the Global Gateway risks being perceived as a continuation of historical, extraction-focused aid models unless its projects are explicitly co-designed to support AfCFTA's core objective: fostering intra-African value chains, industrialisation and continental economic integration. Radical harmonisation, therefore, means shifting the focus of EU investment from facilitating the export of raw materials to instead funding infrastructure (such as regional transport corridors and digital networks) that connects African manufacturing centres to other African markets, thereby promoting local processing and ensuring that trade benefits are retained and reinvested within the continent to drive long-term, equitable economic growth. The Lobito Corridor is a clear example of this. While it has the potential to connect the Copperbelt to the Atlantic, the project should primarily serve intra-African trade and support regional economic integration rather than exclusively facilitating exports to Europe.

Figure 1: Critical raw materials in Africa: Geography and ranking



Source: Africa-Europe Foundation (2025)

On the other hand, a strong consensus exists that Africa possesses the resources to become a 'deal maker, not a deal taker', especially concerning CRM, which are seen as the new coal and gas of the 21st century. However, to maximise benefits, Africa needs to negotiate as a bloc and develop industrial and processing capacity to link CRM to the rest of the economy, moving beyond simple

raw material export, for instance by fully harnessing the potential of new tools such as the Africa Mining Vision (African Union, 2009) that has to be fully coordinated by the African Minerals Development Agency. Parliamentary oversight is essential to hold both European and African leaders accountable for project selection, transparency and implementation.

Box 3: Policy recommendations for strengthening the bi-regional relations

PAN AFRICAN PARLIAMENT	EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
ESTABLISH CRM STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT: Formally establish a PAP Committee on Critical Raw Materials to provide policy and legislative guidance, potentially developing a CRM Model Law that dictates licensing and exploitation to ensure African prosperity.	ENSURE FULL POLICY ALIGNMENT: Ensure all GG projects, particularly those related to CRM and digital infrastructure, fully align with the EU Green Deal, providing consistent political guidance to avoid policy contradictions.
DEMAND A PERMANENT JOINT OVERSIGHT MECHANISM, in close cooperation with the EP to assess and properly evaluate the selection, transparency and implementation of all GG projects and investments in Africa.	IMPLEMENT ROBUST OVERSIGHT: Commit to the establishment of the joint EP-PAP oversight mechanism with specific powers to review the political and developmental impact of GG projects before and after implementation.
FOSTER LOCAL VALUE CHAINS: Advocate for GG investments that prioritise local industrial and processing capacity and transformation facilities, integrating CRM development with broader economic diversification across the continent.	PROMOTE NEGOTIATION AS A BLOC: Publicly support and incentivise African countries to negotiate as a bloc on major resource and infrastructure deals, thereby strengthening Africa's leverage with global partners, including at the G20.
RATIONALISE AND OPERATIONALISE THE COMMON AFRICAN POSITIONS AND POLICIES AROUND STRATEGIC MINERALS focusing on equitable industrialisation through the Africa Green Minerals Strategy and the Africa Mining Vision, coordinated by the African Minerals Development Agency.	

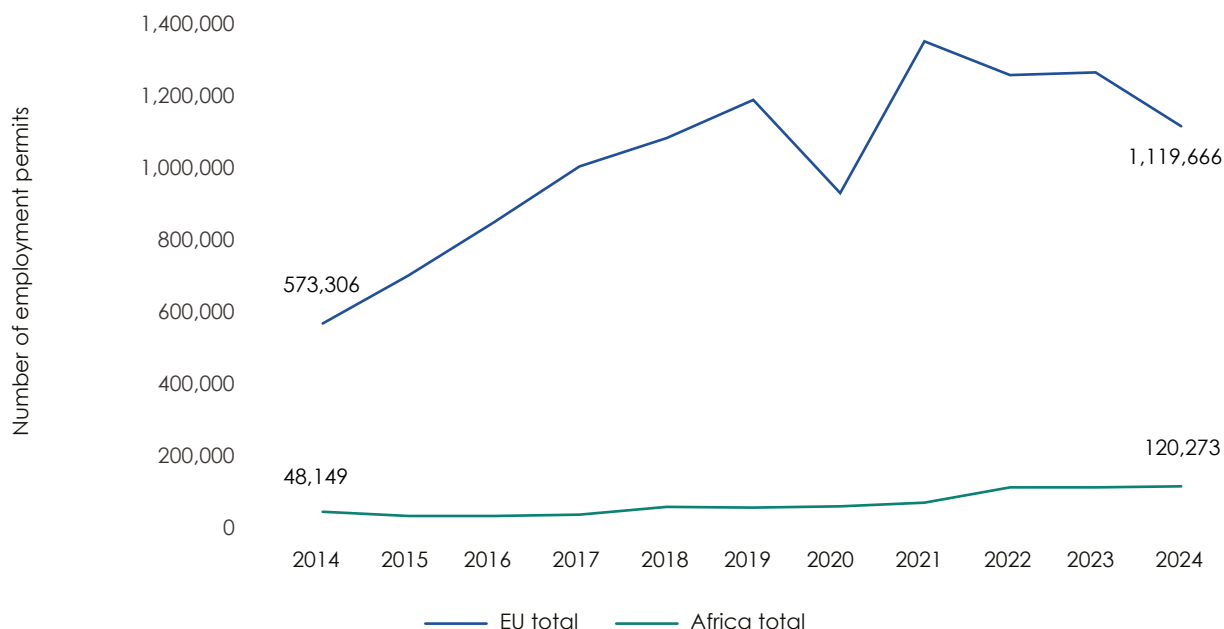
4. MOBILITY AND SKILLS: INVESTING IN HUMAN CAPITAL AND DEBT RELIEF

The overarching status of the AU-EU relationship, as it heads into the Luanda Summit, is defined by the critical interconnection between investing in human capital and addressing systemic financial instability. Africa's burgeoning youthful demographic is poised to become a significant portion of the global workforce by 2050 (Niño Perez, 2025), whereas Europe is experiencing a chronic workforce gap in several sectors particularly in ICT, healthcare and green construction (Kumar, 2025). By 2030, half of all newcomers into the global labour force will come from sub-Saharan Africa, requiring the creation of up to 15 million new jobs

annually (Laws et al., 2024). This challenge is particularly acute in fragile, conflict-affected and low-income economies that account for nearly 80% of the region's annual job creation needs. In these countries the lack of investments in skills building makes part of the unemployed youth practically unemployable.

Therefore, the partnership needs to promote those initiatives aimed at tackling Africa's 'brain drain' and seek a new narrative on migration and mobility based on mutual benefits rather than restriction. This means establishing legal pathways and solid and long-lasting capacity building programmes that help develop the needed skills to face the twin transition of digital and green transformation, by fully taking on board African countries, as well as African diasporas in Europe (Phiri, 2025). However, progress still remains really low in this regard, and opening legal pathways for migrants in Europe faces a strong political

Figure 2: EU employment permits issued for African nationals between 2014 and 2024

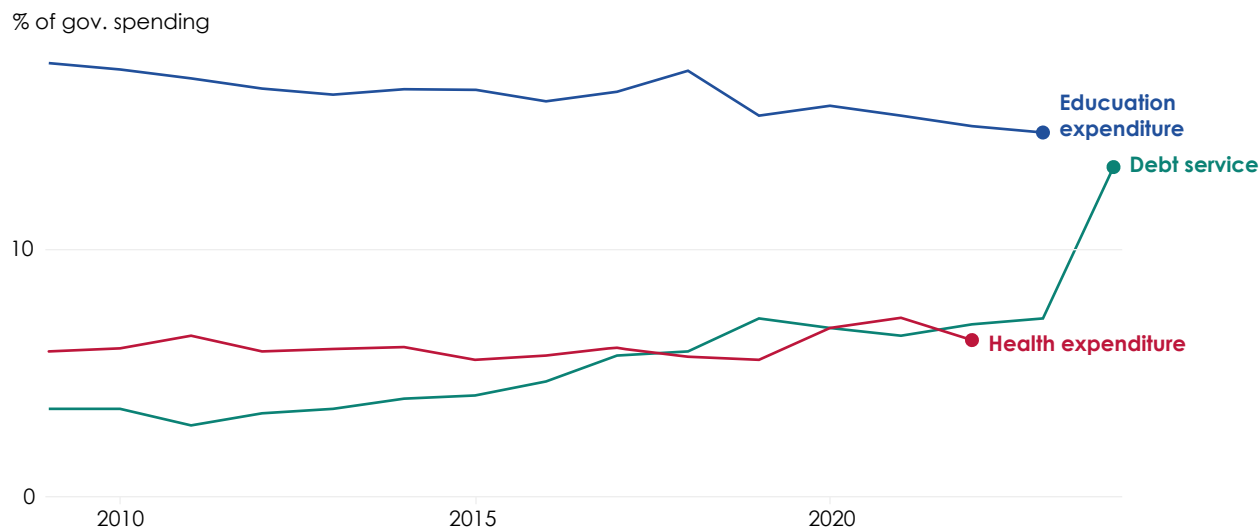


Source: Kumar (2025)

inaction. As a result, the issuance of work permits has almost doubled in the past ten years (Figure 4). Yet, in 2024, only 11% of work permits for foreign workers in Europe were granted to Africans. In any case, these figures show a mismatch between, on the one hand, the anti-migration narrative that is gaining traction in several European political spheres, and, on the other, the workforce needs

of the private sector. Mobility must be explicitly recognised as a right and a central, win-win component of the AU-EU partnership. In this sense, the EU should also fully support the African Continental Qualifications Framework, which has the potential to better harmonise standards and foster intra-African mobility. This is not smooth sailing, as this process cannot work without taking domestic politics into account.

Figure 3: Debt service compared to government spending on education and health in Africa



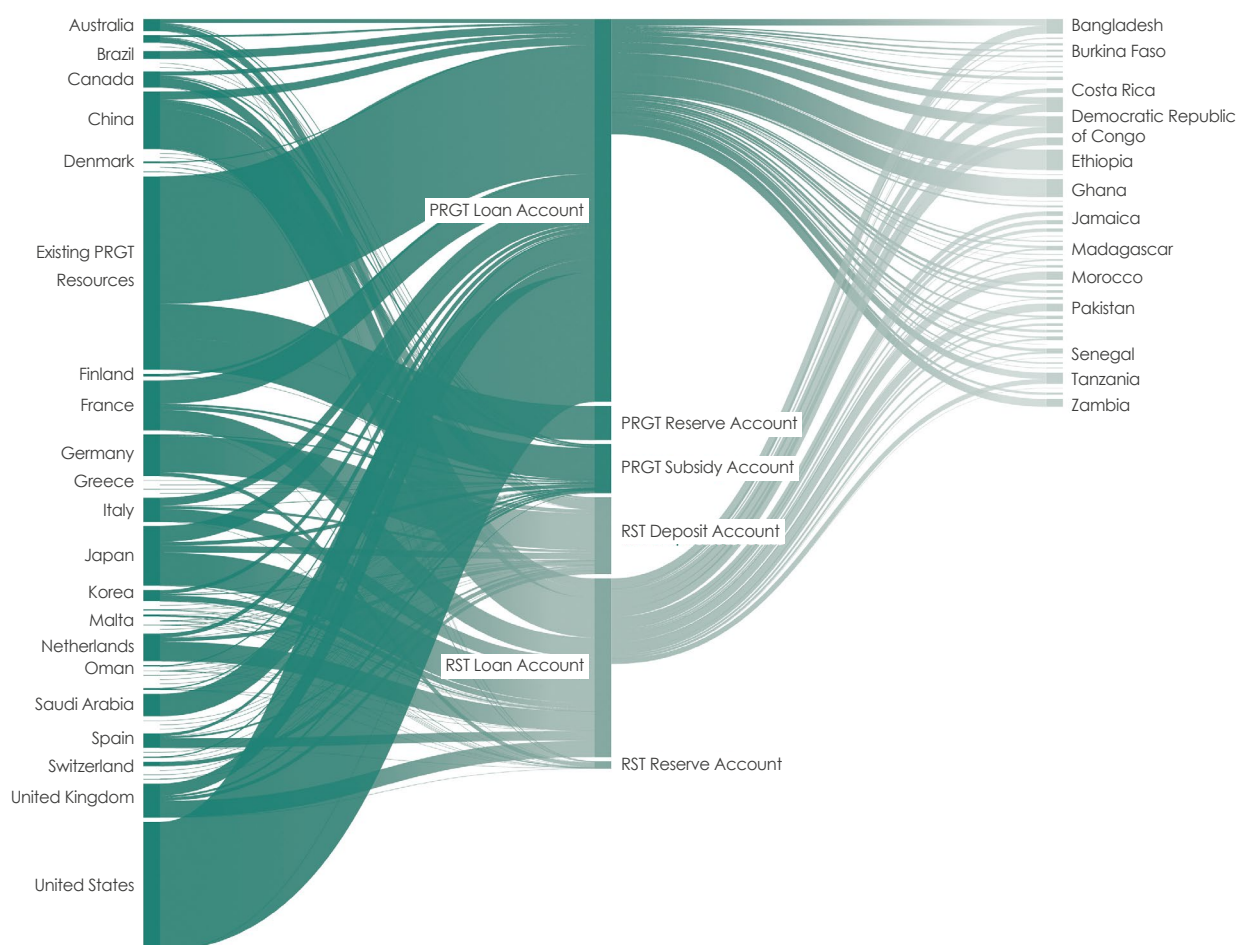
Source: Phiri (2025) and ONE DATA

Meanwhile, lagging investments in R&D, as well as skills mismatch of African education systems are critically accelerated by a number of factors, including the African debt crisis, in particular costs related to debt service. African nations are coping with mounting debt distress and diminished fiscal space, and studies show that 28 of the 52 African Union countries are spending over 12% of their national budgets on debt servicing, and 20 of them over 18%. This means that several countries are spending more on debt service than on education and this further exacerbates disparities in the continent (Archer & Mtsumi, 2024).


Recognising this barrier, the EU and the AU should jointly push for a comprehensive reform of the international financial architecture, demonstrating political support for the AU's push for debt sustainability through South

Africa's 2025 G20 Presidency. Crucially, the EU is making tangible financial contributions via the channelling of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), wherein EU Member States allocate a portion of their reserve assets to the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust (PRGT) and the Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST). Since August 2021, SDR 67 billion (96 billion of the 100 billion US dollars) has been recycled from 55 countries (and the European Commission) to these two IMF trusts (Plant & Ward, 2025). Although these funds can provide vulnerable countries with affordable, long-term financing—often at zero interest—to address climate preparedness and debt, their potential has not been fully harnessed, also due a resistance of the European Central Bank, warning that SDRs may not preserve the reserve asset characteristic of the SDR and may violate the prohibition on monetary financing (Paduano, 2023).

Figure 4: Pledges and commitments to/from the PRGT and RST since August 2021, in SDR millions



Source: Plant and Ward (2025).



PAN AFRICAN PARLIAMENT	EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
RECOMMIT TO EDUCATION INVESTMENT: Advocate strongly for respective African governments to re-examine their education funding models and recommit to agreed targets for government spending on education and R&D.	ADDRESS DEBT AND FINANCING: Advocate for international campaigns targeting international financial institutions and G20 countries for debt relief and fiscal space, supporting multi-stakeholder reform coalitions like the Bridgetown Initiative.
STANDARDISE AND MOBILISE SKILLS: Prioritise the finalisation and implementation of the African Continental Qualifications Framework to standardise qualifications, avoid fragmentation and facilitate intra-African mobility and academic integration.	ALIGN VISAS WITH LABOUR NEEDS: Use official European data on chronic workforce shortages (e.g., in healthcare and green construction) to inform policy, advocating for significant, simplified and transparent legal pathways for African workers.
ESTABLISH CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE: Support the creation of AU-led Centres of Excellence focusing on the technical skills required to fully benefit from CRM and the green economy, facilitating technical policy proposals and technology transfer within the continent.	SUPPORT INTRA-AFRICAN MOBILITY: Provide targeted support and co-create knowledge with the AU to strengthen intracontinental mobility for research and education, recognising that internal mobility is a necessary precursor to global mobility.

5. CONCLUSION: CONFRONTING THREE CONUNDRUMS

Figuring out the right approach to implementing the recommendations proposed in this policy brief requires, in any case, prior reflection on the depth and scope of bi-regional relations—dimensions that need to be reassessed in this rapidly changing international context and in a historical moment marked by geopolitical tensions.

The extent of both depth and scope will, in turn, result from the solutions or answers provided to a series of dilemmas. More specifically, there are at least three conundrums—those of ambition, engagement and diversity that political actors on both sides of the Mediterranean need to address.

1 AMBITION. In a context of decreasing trust between international partners and intra-regional fragmentation, one option is to adopt a practical approach. Focusing on the low-hanging fruit that can be achieved in the context of the 7th AU-EU Summit can demonstrate that there is still room for continued bi-regional cooperation, grounded in a wide range of economic, political and social exchanges. However, this very messy and complex context also requires bold and ambitious responses from the international community's decision-makers. For instance, having difficult and uncomfortable conversations on topics of disagreement—such as migration, peace and security, or the reform of the Bretton Woods institutions—would foster a better understanding of the different players' positions and political priorities.

2 ENGAGEMENT. Should the EU engage deeply and politically in the region, or should it take a step back, avoiding political interference in regional agendas and the domestic priorities of African states? During the event *From Cairo to Luanda: A 25-Year Parliamentary Stocktake on AU-EU Relations*, the leadership of the PAP expressed the need for the Parliament to deepen its functions and work in the process of harmonising African legislation—a process that would significantly benefit from EU support. This very legitimate request also implies the involvement of an external actor—the EU—in a key foundational process for African integration, namely how societies organise their norms and coexistence. At the same time, several African voices, including parliamentarians who participated in this joint event, called for greater autonomy and independence from external actors.

3 DIVERSITY. Several times throughout the sessions, EU-Africa relations were described as 'special', implying a certain degree of political priority, when compared to those between Europe and Latin America, for instance, or African countries' relations with China. This 'exclusivity' is rooted in an extensive shared past—which is also the source of the complex nature of these bi-regional relations. Africa has played a role in the very foundations of the European Union—as stated in the Schuman Declaration—while the history of Africa is inextricably linked to that of its former European metropolises. At the same time, the evolution of the multilateral system and the international community goes hand in hand with countries expanding their international alliances, strengthening ties with a wide range of partners and deepening collaboration in some policy areas with countries that may be competitors in others. In this sense, the EU, its Member States and African countries will need to redefine the 'exclusivity' of this bi-regional relationship in an increasingly multipolar world.

There are no right or wrong answers to the above conundrums. Different actors from both regions will need to determine the appropriate levels of ambition, engagement and diversity across the many political areas in which the two regions interact.

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