Cameroon and the EU

Relations between the European Union (EU) and Cameroon go back several decades. The first agreement between the EEC (European Economic Community) and the 18 States making up the AASM (Associated African States and Madagascar) was signed in Yaoundé in 1963.

Political relations

The current challenges faced by Cameroon are to improve governance (particularly financial governance), fight corruption, and decentralise and revitalise the private sector. Agricultural productivity is poor, and company competitiveness is restricted by the high cost of factors and by the problems in the business community.

Political dialogue between the EU and Cameroon is defined by the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) for the 2008-2013 period (Cotonou Agreement). The issues of good governance and strengthening the rule of law are the guiding thread of these exchanges with the Cameroonian government.

Economic relations

The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) is the commercial pillar of the Cotonou Agreement. The EPA reflects a shared ambition to create a new partnership between the EU and the different ACP regions, including Central Africa. This strengthened economic partnership aims to use trade to benefit development.

An Economic Partnership Agreement is being negotiated with Central Africa (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Chad).

Nevertheless, given the inherent difficulties of negotiating an agreement to cover a large number of countries, the conclusion of an interim agreement (to apply until a regional agreement can come into force) was proposed in Cameroon and accepted by this country. The main advantage of this option was that it allowed Cameroon to continue enjoying commercial preferences which it would have risked losing, in line with the rules of the World Trade Organization.
The interim EPA with Cameroon

In December 2007, Cameroon signed an interim agreement, still known as the stepping stone EPA. It was signed on 15 January 2009 and ratified by Cameroon on 22 July 2014. This agreement became effective on 4 August 2016.

The interim EPA gives Cameroon duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market, imposing upon it only an asymmetric and progressive opening of its own economy. Cameroon has excluded a certain number of agricultural or processed products from the liberalisation, and will liberalise 80 % of its imports from the EU over a 15-year period.

The agreement also stipulates commitments from the EU and its Member States to help Cameroon become more competitive, as well as measures to help exporters meet EU import standards (sanitary and phytosanitary measures). Moreover, it includes cooperation on the establishment of more effective customs procedures, and fiscal adjustment, in order to guarantee that the suppression of customs duties will not destabilize the country's public finances.

More about

EPA EU-Cameroon (Central Africa)

Trade

Since 1975, trade relationships between ACP and EU countries have been based on a regime of non-reciprocal trade preferences giving almost all products from ACP countries duty-free access to the European market. However, these trade preferences have not stopped the growing marginalisation of ACP markets in world trade, or in exchanges with the EU. Nor have they made it possible to overcome the major dependence of ACP countries regarding certain export products.

Today, the EU is Cameroon's leading trade partner. Cameroon's exports towards the European market are estimated at 46 % of its total exports. Its imports from the EU account for around 35 % of all its imports. Most of Cameroon's global external trade flows are concentrated within the CEMAC zone. The same applies for almost half of GDP and of the sub-region's population. The EU remains Cameroon’s leading trade partner.

The Cotonou Agreement aims to smoothly integrate the ACP countries into the world economy, strengthening their production, supply and trade capacities. This requires a growing capacity to attract investment, establish strong trade and investment policies, and effectively deal with all trade-related matters.

Technical and financial cooperation

In 2014, in the context of the 11th European Development Fund (EDF), the EU and Cameroon signed a new National Indicative Programme (NIP) for a total of 185 billion FCFA, for the 2014-2020 period. The Delegation, together with the government, works to formulate new programs in this framework, particularly in the two major sectors covered by the EDF: Governance and Rural Development.

About the 10th EDF...
To fight the illegal exploitation of forests and fraudulent trade of Cameroonian wood, the EU set up the FLEGT (“Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade”) action plan in 2003, which is based on two components. The first component aims to develop a wood offer which is guaranteed to come from legal harvesting in voluntary producer countries. It was embodied by the signing of Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs). These agreements establish a system for verifying legality in producer countries, along with an authorization system at export (“FLEGT authorisations”). The second concerns the elimination of illegal wood across the whole European market. The EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) prohibits the trade of illegally harvested wood (sale of illegal wood) and of products derived from this wood, wherever it was harvested. Operators putting wood products on the European market for the first time (importers or timber growers) must exercise due diligence.

In 2009, the EU and Cameroon signed a Funding Agreement aiming to support the improvement of governance in the timber sector in Cameroon. The implementation of this Agreement called for a national Legality Assurance Scheme (LAS) for wood, and included three components: strengthening the capacities of the Ministry in charge of forests; supporting the establishment of a new traceability system for wood; and supporting the creation of an independent audit mechanism for the FLEGT system. This support for the establishment of the measures set out by the Voluntary Partnership Agreement also involves mobilizing the thematic budget headings of the European Commission under the Environment and Natural Resources Thematic Programme (ENRTP), which mainly supports the involvement of national civil society organizations in the FLEGT process. The EU's financial contribution for these different projects and programs is estimated at 6.6 billion FCFA.

Thanks to EU support, Cameroon has just acquired a software package for managing the balance and State personnel. This software package is part of a vast support program for public finance reform, which has a budget of 7.6 billion FCFA. For the EU, it is a matter of improving the performance of public authorities, the management of public finances and the efficiency of State services, particularly supported by a statistics component via a direct subsidy to the National Statistics Institute.

**Partnership with civil society**

In order to set a shared strategic framework, the European Union Delegation and Member States have jointly drawn up a “roadmap for the EU's commitment towards civil society”, which sets the major priorities and results to be achieved in this domain by 2020. The EU Delegation (EUD) supports civil society initiatives in several ways:

- **the Civil Society Strengthening Programme (PASC).** The [PASC](#) is a program funded by the 10th European Development Fund which ended in January 2016.

- **the Calls for Proposals.** The EU Delegation regularly publishes calls for proposals for the co-financing of projects put forward by civil society organizations in different areas, such as support for decentralization, Human Rights, or forest governance.

For more information on these funding opportunities: see our "Subsidies & offers" page.

See the "Current programs and projects" section for more information on EUD funded projects. NB: Subsidy attribution follows the principles of equity and transparency. Consequently, the EUD does not give ad hoc, on-demand subsidies.

- **Engagement with civil society in sectoral cooperation programs (11th EDF-2014/2020).** Civil society will take part in the formulation and implementation phases of the European Union/Cameroon
cooperation programs, under the 11th EDF. In order to identify the added value of these players from certain priority sectors, a process for mapping civil society organizations which are active in penal justice, public finance, and rural development has been devised. In addition, the EUD is currently working to formulate an active citizenship support program (PROCIVIS, 11th FED) which will work to strengthen capacities and improve the legal framework for civil society.

- **Dialogue with civil society.** As well as providing technical and financial support, the European Union Delegation to Cameroon listens to civil society organizations. These actors are considered key partners in EU/Cameroon cooperation.

### Documents

- Cameroon - National Indicative Program 2014-2020
- EU-Central Africa Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) for trade and development between the EU and Cameroon
- Joint annual report on the implementation of the FLEGT VPA in Cameroon 2012
- The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's commitment with civil society in the domain of external relations
- Information sheet on the Interim EU-CENTRAL AFRICA (Cameroon) Economic Partnership Agreement
- Roadmap for the EU’s commitment towards civil society

### See also

- Trade relations between the EU and Central Africa
- www.eeas.europa.eu

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