



Strategy Implementation Plan 2018-2021

December 2018

ABOUT ECDPM

The European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) is an independent think tank working on international cooperation and development policy in Europe and Africa.

Our mission is to promote forms of international cooperation that can effectively address key global development challenges and generate inclusive and sustainable solutions.

We support European, African and global actors in devising coherent, integrated policies and in ensuring their effective implementation. We partner with and support responsive institutions and engaged societies, working together with others to establish innovative cooperation frameworks and tools.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Agreement
AFET	EU parliamentary committee on foreign affairs
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
BOAD	West African Development Bank
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DEVCO	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (European Commission)
DEVE	EU parliamentary committee on development
DFI	development finance institution
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EEAS	European External Action Service
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIP	External Investment Plan (EU)
EPA	economic partnership agreement
EU	European Union
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
ICT	information and communication technology
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IT	information technology
LQS	Learning and Quality Support (ECDPM unit)
MFF	multiannual financial framework (EU)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
PCSD	policy coherence for sustainable development
REC	regional economic community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TDB	Trade and Development Bank
ToC	theory of change
YIP	Young International Professionals (ECDPM programme)

1. INTRODUCING THE **STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

OUR STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN EXPLAINS HOW WE AT ECDPM ORGANISE OURSELVES TO DELIVER ON OUR 2017-2021 STRATEGY

This implementation plan spells out how ECDPM engages to deliver on its 2017-2021 Strategy. That Strategy explores the changing global context of our work and explains the rationale underlying the four areas of impact to which the Centre contributes. Those impact areas are the following:

- (i) Effective international cooperation frameworks and tools for tackling global challenges
- (ii) Legitimate and accountable public institutions and engaged societies
- (iii) Peaceful societies based on the rule of law, social cohesion and human dignity
- (iv) Sustainable economic transformation with shared prosperity and decent jobs

Our Strategy implementation plan explains how we at ECDPM organise ourselves to deliver on our 2017-2021 Strategy. Key building blocks are the following:

- (i) The **ECDPM way of engagement**, including the theory of change approach that we apply in our planning, monitoring and learning processes and the way we address identified risks
- (ii) **Our organisational structure**, with five core **programmes**, each with its own long-term aim and context, and the horizontal support functions of the Centre
- (iii) The **ECDPM approach to strategic planning and learning, monitoring and evaluation**
- (iv) ECDPM's **strategic partnerships and our approach to fundraising**

The more detailed focus areas of each programme are explained in the annual work plans of the Centre.

2. ECDPM'S ENGAGEMENT

2.1 ADDED VALUE

The added value of ECDPM rests on several assets that we have cultivated over time to maintain the Centre as a credible and effective actor in the complex and rapidly evolving global context.

Our core roles

We go beyond policy research and analysis to offer independent advice to policymakers and practitioners. ECDPM's engagement, activities and outputs centre on three core roles:

- (i) **Generating knowledge** that is politically informed, evidence-based and practical
- (ii) **Facilitating uptake of knowledge** by key public and private actors through dialogue, implementation support and smart communication
- (iii) **Acting as a non-partisan broker**, leveraging our expertise, knowledge and network in Europe and Africa

ECDPM is known for its in-depth knowledge of the approaches and views of actors in Europe and Africa. We are respected for our non-partisan and knowledge-based approach and wide network of partners with privileged access to key stakeholders and policymakers in the foreign and development policy communities of Europe, Africa and beyond.

Our focus on implementation

We combine the three core roles, keeping a watchful eye on implementation to help ensure that policies work. ECDPM is a 'think and do tank' because we look at what works and what does not. ECDPM has a track record of providing actionable insights and recommendations. This work 'in the kitchen' of policymaking and policy implementation requires relationships based on trust, regular dialogue and a willingness to engage over a long period of time.

Our way of thinking and working politically

Our political economy analysis approach is a major asset in considering power relations (including gender), political and economic interests, institutions and incentives. It adds value to our brokerage role, though this often means covering sensitive ground. Our internal quality processes encourage the use of common analytical frameworks and take account of cross-cutting issues such as gender and climate change (Box 1).

Box 1. ECDPM's political economy approach: Learning the art of the possible

Development practitioners and international relations experts have come to appreciate the importance of power, politics and institutions in development. They increasingly question overly technocratic and politically unfeasible responses to development challenges that are in fact deeply political in nature. Transplanting 'best-practice' institutions and policies associated with good governance, rule of law, multi-party democracy and free markets from rich countries to poorer ones has largely failed. The Centre promotes a dual political economy agenda. First, it supports efforts to think politically about development challenges and change dynamics. It does this by tool development and by engaging in policy-to-practice research programmes and hands-on training. Second, it emphasises the need to alter ways of 'doing development'. One major ECDPM work stream that illustrates the Centre's political economy approach is that on regional organisations and regional dynamics in Africa. ECDPM has created space within the organisation to effectively implement this dual agenda.

Our ability to bridge different policy domains

In our approach we bridge different policy domains, given their frequent interdependencies or overlapping and competing interests. We link domains, focusing on the nexus between themes and sectors. This requires multi-actor dialogue processes and a joint search for feasible solutions adapted to contextual realities. ECDPM maintains a multidisciplinary staff. Our people are experienced in facilitating synergies across policy areas, fostering multi-stakeholder dialogues and promoting coherence across different levels of intervention, while navigating complex institutional and political environments.

Our 30 years of experience in Africa-Europe relations

Consecutive external evaluations have concluded that our knowledge of African and European institutions is a distinguishing quality. We have strong links with and expertise on African and European states and organisations, the business community, civil society and development partners. This sets us apart from organisations working in the same field. North Africa is now fully incorporated into our geographic remit.

2.2 THEORY OF CHANGE APPROACH

For a greater clarity of thinking and sense of purpose, the Centre has devised theories of change for the Centre as a whole (see annex 1) and for each of our main work streams. In line with good practices, we see theories of change as a 'living thing', owned by all staff and allowing closer scrutiny of envisaged contributions to change dynamics and policy processes.

The Centre-wide theory of change paints the bigger picture of how ECDPM seeks to achieve impact and fulfil its mission, given the key opportunities and challenges identified. ECDPM fulfils core roles and realises outputs so as to deliver on generic outcomes that should ultimately contribute to the four key impact areas identified in our 2017-2021 Strategy, taking into account a number of key assumptions.

2.3 ADDRESSING RISKS IN IMPLEMENTATION

Specific theories of change for each of our main work streams were formulated by the Centre's five programmes. Their expected contributions to change trajectories and to outputs and outcomes are consistent with the Centre-wide theory of change. The specific theories of change, furthermore, present detailed assumptions and choices aligned with the specificities of each work stream. The theory of change process involves participatory and critical assessments of envisaged changes, as well as of change trajectories and the contextual factors underpinning them.

The section on **strategic planning and learning, monitoring and evaluation** further explains how ECDPM uses this theory of change approach in its strategic planning, learning and review cycle.

Management has identified a number of risks to strategy implementation as a first step towards their mitigation. Our risk mitigation pragmatically combines an understanding of the various types of risks we face (e.g., financial or reputational) with their potential source. We identify four categories of risk:

External risks

External risks entail threats originating from the external environment in which ECDPM operates, including our work with various external stakeholders, such as international, regional, national and local institutions. The Centre assumes its partners and stakeholders will continue to call on it to assist them with external analysis and facilitation to further their development-related interests, despite political changes. Though political developments are unlikely to affect the delivery of ECDPM outputs, they might influence their impact.

ECDPM has carefully built up a strong reputation as an independent, honest broker, delivering non-partisan, high-quality work taking into account multiple stakeholders' perspectives. Nonetheless, reputational damage is always a risk. Management steps to reduce potential threats to ECDPM's reputation include:

- (i) Proactively encouraging all ECDPM staff to do their work in the ECDPM spirit, applying the Centre's independent, non-partisan approach and delivering high-quality results
- (ii) Monitoring external reactions to and discussion on ECDPM's work to anticipate on and deal with sensitive issues and address any misunderstandings that may nevertheless arise.
- (iii) Continuing to invest in maintaining a diverse funding base

Programmatic risks

Programmatic risks relate to how the Centre operates. They arise from the core of what ECDPM delivers and from our delivery of outputs, outcomes, impacts and other ECDPM obligations, contractual or otherwise. A key mitigation measure is ECDPM's emphasis on well-defined work plans and budgets. These are presented to the Board for scrutiny and approval. The Learning and Quality Support unit monitors progress and reports to the Management Team. Other measures to improve quality include internal debate, teamwork, external reporting and quality control by funders. Staff performance is monitored, building on our competency-based human resources management system.

For an organisation like ECDPM, working on complex change dynamics and policy processes heavily influenced by a multitude of actors and factors (e.g., the political environment), it is very difficult to 'claim impact' or a causal link between impacts and Centre inputs. In order to assess and measure processes leading to impacts, we apply our theory of change approach, guided by the Learning and Quality Support unit. The ultimate tools for assessing impact in the current strategy period are the mid-term review in 2019, the internal assessment in 2020 and the external evaluation in 2021.

Organisational risks

Organisational risks are those related to, for example, our facilities, ICT infrastructure, insurance and human resources management. As a knowledge organisation, staff capacity is by far our most important asset. ECDPM is large enough to cope with short-term staff turnover, and ECDPM's senior-level staffing base is stable. Staff competencies-related risks are nonetheless closely monitored by a senior human resources officer.

To remain relevant within a rapidly changing environment, the Centre needs a clear vision and well-established leadership. To mitigate risks associated with a lack of vision or strategic leadership, the Board is composed of a mix of established professionals to guarantee a wide spectrum of knowledge, experience and commitment related to Centre objectives, while considering gender, region and country of origin. An important system is our internal monitoring system for supporting fundraising and reporting to donors (including IATI reporting). The Learning and Quality Support unit, in collaboration with the Finance and Operations team, maintains this internal system and guarantees its suitability.

Finance, planning and control risks

This category deals with financial and control risks, such as the effective preparation of management information, solid accounting (including our overall administrative systems and checks and balances) and accountability and transparency in reporting.

The Finance and Operations team prepares the financial statements; the auditor checks compliance with internal procedures and best practice. The Board appoints an external auditor to audit the Centre's finances twice a year. In terms of transparency, the Centre prepares an annual report with financial statements and an auditor's report, as well as a separate elaborate financial report that includes a section on our funding modalities. These are posted on the Centre's website for a wider readership. Transparify, an international non-governmental organisation provides a rating of the financial transparency of major think tanks. ECDPM always receives its highest score.

3. OUR PROGRAMMES

3.1 EUROPEAN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

This programme focuses on European external action, particularly in relation to foreign policy and international development related to Africa.

The EU's legitimacy and ability to effect change will be repeatedly challenged in the coming years. Domestically, EU external action, development and security policies continue to be influenced by the exit of the United Kingdom from the EU, alongside the reviving but still mixed economic growth within Europe and the challenge of accommodating and resettling refugees. The continued threat of security incidents and terrorist attacks and increasing pressure on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) also play a role.

Internationally, the EU and its member states have seen their influence diminished in a burgeoning multipolar world and in the context of weaker multilateralism and the fallout from the Trump presidency in the United States. Instability and conflict on Europe's doorstep are expected to continue to dominate the EU foreign policy and security agenda, with knock-on effects on development policy and spending. EU external action frameworks and tools need to be continuously adapted and renewed to address these and future challenges. In this environment, the EU needs to pursue a stronger, more interest-driven agenda abroad while implementing or at least incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in EU policy. This is not an easy reconciliation.

The European External Affairs programme engages with major change processes. Examples are the development and implementation of overarching policy frameworks, such as the EU Global Strategy and Consensus on Development, as well as EU-Africa and EU-ACP processes and negotiation of the EU budget for 2021-2027 and the programming of EU assistance.

ECDPM has in-depth knowledge of EU external action systems, processes and interinstitutional relations. It relies on multidisciplinary expertise in areas vital to EU action in Africa, such as foreign policy, diplomacy, governance, development, finance, migration and conflict prevention. In terms of key actors, the programme engages with relevant EU institutions, such as the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU delegations, the EU parliamentary committees on development (DEVE) and foreign affairs (AFET), the EU presidencies and EU member states, both in their capitals and in Council formations in Brussels. The programme pursues the following outcomes:

3.2 AFRICAN INSTITUTIONS AND REFORM DYNAMICS

- (i) Politically informed and adaptive policymaking processes in Europe and Africa
- (ii) More inclusive European policy dialogues and international cooperation processes
- (iii) More effective, coherent and integrated European policies to tackle global challenges
- (iv) A reduced gap between policy commitments and actual implementation
- (v) European institutions, member states and non-state actors that are better equipped to operate in the EU's established legal, financial and policy frameworks and effectively contribute to the 2030 Agenda

African countries and regions are taking major steps to develop and implement policies to promote their own socio-economic development. But progress is not linear. While peaceful political handovers, economic reform and poverty reduction are happening, meaningful institutional reform is often undermined, hijacked or even reversed by specific groups or individuals operating according to interests, incentives and a combination of formal and informal 'rules of the game'. Rather than discounting hurdles as anomalies or as 'risks' to manage, the African Institutions and Reform Dynamics programme studies the actors and factors at work within different reform processes. It does so by developing and applying a framework to analyse the political economy drivers and constraints to reform at the continental, regional and national levels. This means following reform dynamics in the African Union (AU), in various regional economic communities (RECs) and in selected African countries to help policymakers and their external partners take account of the realities that shape state-society relations at these different levels.

Our starting assumption is that any political or economic reform creates winners and losers who have different degrees of influence over how reforms are implemented. Improved insights into the institutional environment and the incentives at play can inform stakeholders about affected groups and possible reform coalitions, thereby unmasking opportunities and step-by-step reforms with more chance of success. The programme pays particular attention to how economic and political institutions interact and shape interests and incentives as well as scope for productive state-business relations and economic transformation.

The programme sees as an opportunity the increased effort to reduce the heavy dependence of national, regional and continental organisations on external support, especially European assistance. This will take time. Further, attempts at political and institutional reforms have often been hampered by ill-adapted, fragmented or overambitious donor approaches. The programme aims to help policymakers and their partners promote more politically realistic and technically feasible reforms. It pursues adapted support, informed by research. To this end, it facilitates discussions on context-specific drivers and blockers.

Concretely, in this five-year strategy, the programme seeks to contribute to the following outcomes:

- (i) Strengthened regional and continental reform agendas building on politically feasible and technically sound dynamics such as ongoing continental and regional institutional reforms, regional market integration and arrangements for the governance and financing of regional institutions
- (ii) Improved methodologies and approaches for brokerage and facilitation in national-level state-society reform dynamics, such as domestic resource mobilisation
- (iii) Enhanced knowledge of political and economic institutions in different contexts in Africa, of how these shape reform and development opportunities and their implications for reformers, alongside tool development for analysing these
- (iv) Informed external partners and support strategies that strengthen African-led institutional reforms and transform the nature and degree of external dependence into effective or productive relations

3.3 MIGRATION

The Migration programme focuses on the governance of migration and mobility, aiming to maximise migration's development potential and address the challenges it presents within Africa-Europe cooperation. Indeed, migration and displacement remain key topics in the relations between Africa and Europe.

The African agenda on migration got a boost with the AU's revised Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Protocol on Free Movement of Persons. Adding to these is the envisaged establishment of the African Observatory for Migration and Development. Many African countries, however, still have not developed strategic policy frameworks on migration and development. In Europe, the topic of migration and asylum has revealed deep differences between EU member states. The European Agenda on Migration and the EU Partnership Framework continue to guide the EU's policies on migration, influencing negotiations on the new multiannual financial framework (MFF) and post-Cotonou agreement with African partners. As revealed by the dynamics around the United Nation's adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees and Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, there are conflicting narratives, values, interests and dynamics within Europe, and between Europe and Africa, on migration-related challenges.

One challenge has been to fully inform African and European processes with migration realities and to balance competing security, development and humanitarian demands. European and African actors differ in their narratives, approaches and perceptions of migration. Bridging these differences is important to strengthen partnerships and craft strategies and policies that exhibit a 'good fit' in engagement between Europe and Africa.

The Migration programme has unique knowledge of the approaches and views on migration among actors in Europe and Africa. We seek collaboration with partners such as the European Think Tanks Group and other research entities. The programme envisages four main outcomes:

- (i) An improved understanding and evidence base for addressing migration-related development challenges and opportunities, to inform European policy and partnerships with the AU, the RECs and African countries
- (ii) Enhanced links between the different sectors and policy domains that touch upon migration strategies in the context of Africa-Europe relations
- (iii) Politically informed policymaking processes on migration and displacement governance in Europe and in Africa
- (iv) A shift away from a short-term, security- and crisis-oriented approach to managing migration, towards a more positive narrative and forward-looking policies embedded in global development frameworks

3.4 SECURITY AND RESILIENCE

This programme promotes better crisis response, conflict prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding by the EU and African regional organisations. We focus on responses to conflict-prone and fragile environments and situations of protracted crisis in Africa, including the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and North Africa. While the number and intensity of interstate conflicts have declined in recent years, other types of violent conflicts involving state and non-state actors have been on the rise. Instability in Africa fuelled by political unrest, governance deficiencies, terrorism, radicalisation and climate change – all reinforced by conflict-induced migration – harms primarily the poor. This continues to be a key concern to politicians, policymakers and practitioners in Africa and Europe.

The AU has put peace and security high on its policy agenda. In 2015, it adopted the ‘Silence the Guns by 2020’ roadmap and appointed a High Representative to oversee this objective. Yet, while comprehensive peacebuilding approaches may be desirable, to address immediate medium-term and long-term security challenges, responses have to be adapted and brokered in context-specific ways to the actors and opportunities available. Our work concerns the European and African policy frameworks and institutional arrangements set up in Europe and in Africa to respond to emerging or re-emerging, current and protracted crises. Of particular concern for the Centre when engaging in fragile and conflict-affected environments is enhancing gender sensitivity.

The wider context for our work is shaped by the 2030 Agenda, the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy and the EU’s commitment to pursue an ‘integrated approach’ to external conflict and crisis. Our primary activities relate to the EU MFF and external action financing instruments, implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) as set out in the 2016-2020 APSA Roadmap, as well as the peace and security strategies of regional mechanisms in Africa.

The Security and Resilience programme has solid knowledge of European and African policy and institutional frameworks, approaches and processes for dealing with fragility and conflict, including mediation, peace-support operations, and military and civilian crisis management missions. The programme also has a wide network of European and African stakeholders working on peace and security issues, humanitarian questions, resilience and development, and interlinkages between these. This enables us to engage effectively in policy discussions. We pursue the following outcomes:

- (i) European and African public authorities and non-state actors that are better equipped to respond to fragility and conflict
- (ii) More inclusive and better informed crisis response processes, with enhanced European and African dialogues and cooperation to reduce fragility and prevent conflict
- (iii) More effective, coherent and integrated European policy frameworks for preventing crisis and conflict, particularly in Africa
- (iv) More effective partnerships between European and African actors in crisis response, conflict prevention, enhancing resilience and peacebuilding

3.5 ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

The Economic and Agricultural Transformation programme promotes simultaneous progress towards a range of economic, agricultural and food systems goals across different areas of intervention. As ECDPM's largest programme, it encompasses three linked work streams: (1) trade, investment and finance; (2) food systems and agricultural transformation for food security; and (3) private sector engagement.

(1) Trade, investment and financing for sustainable development

This work stream focuses on the development and implementation of trade, investment and financing policies by European and African states and regions. The overriding objective is to understand the role of public and private development finance in stimulating initiatives for inclusive, sustainable and gender-sensitive economic transformation and creation of decent jobs.

The European External Investment Plan (EIP), launched at the 2017 Africa-EU Summit, is intended to help achieve the SDGs while tackling some of the root causes of migration in Africa and the EU neighbourhood. The EIP seeks to mobilise sustainable financing for economic and social development and to strengthen public and private partnerships. Complementing this are actions by EU member states, such as the German Marshall Plan with Africa. Development finance institutions (DFIs) and multilateral development banks are also actively involved, including the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the African Development Bank and the World Bank, with its associated International Finance Corporation (IFC). Other African development banks have indicated interest as well, such as the West African Development Bank (BOAD), the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) and the Trade and Development Bank (TDB), alongside international and African initiatives for economic transformation, such as the G20 Compact with Africa.

Coherence and complementarity among approaches, actors and instruments and across policies, particularly for improving the governance, institutional and regulatory environment as envisaged in the EIP, are critical to achieve the expected leverage for sustainable, inclusive and transformative development. We must harness the potential of trade and regional integration, embodied in the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and the economic partnership agreements (EPAs) in Africa. Another key aspect is promotion of sustainability and gender equity in value chains and EU free trade areas, for example, in extractive industries. The review of the EU's Aid for Trade Strategy and the emergence of a new EU economic diplomacy offer further opportunities to increase the coherence and complementarity of EU policies and instruments for sustainable and inclusive investment and private sector engagement.

ECDPM has a strong reputation and extensive network on trade, investment, financing and extractive resources policy issues. We are also working to establish close partnership with a set of African think tanks and private sector organisations. This work stream envisages three outcomes:

- (i) Greater coordination, coherence and synergies among initiatives and instruments in trade, investment and development financing, such as the EIP and EPAs
- (ii) More effective and inclusive partnerships and multi-stakeholder approaches linked to the governance of industrial and artisanal mining
- (iii) Stronger contributions of European economic diplomacy to sustainable development

(2) Food systems, agricultural transformation and food security

This work stream supports the efforts of African stakeholders and international partners to formulate and implement coherent policies and investments for agricultural transformation and improved food and nutrition security.

Eradicating poverty, feeding the world's population and adapting to climate change require simultaneous and coordinated action on multiple fronts. Improved production and processing have to go hand in hand with, for example, facilitation of trade between food surplus and food deficit areas, greater food systems efficiency, more nutrient-rich diets and more inclusive climate resilience policies. Effective regional cooperation can make an important contribution, together with better and more inclusive partnerships between public and private stakeholders.

Effective multi-actor partnerships and reduced policy implementation gaps can be achieved only by focusing on specific value chains, countries and regions. We understand the bottlenecks to sustainable and inclusive agricultural value chain development and intra-regional trade. We are applying that knowledge in western, eastern and southern Africa to help resolve such bottlenecks there. In addition, we integrate gender perspectives into our work and seek to address existing gender imbalances around food security, value chains and sustainable agriculture.

To assure effective regional cooperation and public-private partnerships for food security, not only for boosting productivity but also for maintaining the sustainability of food systems, we are working on nutrition and on the environmental sustainability and climate resilience of food value chains in Africa. This touches on, for example, climate-smart agriculture and involves support for key food and environmental multilateral organisations and processes.

Our value added for effective engagement lies particularly in our partnerships and networks. We are consolidating our long-term partnerships with the continental New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Agency, the African RECs, regional farmer organisations, private sector organisations, development partners and others. For the more innovative sustainable food systems work, we are partnering with universities, the CGIAR Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centres, the Rome-based United Nations agencies and specialised environment and climate think tanks. Focusing on western, eastern and southern Africa, we envisage four outcomes:

- (i) Synergy and coherence between regional initiatives for food security, nutrition and sustainable food systems
- (ii) Regional organisations and value chain stakeholders better informed on the implications of food-related policies and practices and productive participants in policy processes such as regional and national continental agricultural initiatives under the umbrella of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)
- (iii) More effective multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration between the public and private sectors, through establishment of inclusive partnerships across value chain actors, including the most vulnerable, that is, smallholders and women
- (iv) Better understanding of the knowledge, policies and incentives required for more nutritious, sustainable and climate-resilient food systems in Africa

(3) Private sector engagement

This work stream seeks to contribute to more effective European and African policies, approaches and instruments to foster and leverage the African and European private sector for sustainable development in Africa.

The 2030 Agenda emphasises the role of private actors as a development partner and source of funding. In line with this, African and European policymakers have developed new frameworks and instruments to support private sector engagement for sustainable development.

Many African governments are seeking to improve their business environment and attract domestic and foreign investment to create more and better jobs. This is part of national economic transformation and development strategies, and is also reflected in regional policies and the AU's Agenda 2063.

The EU and its member states have put in place a range of development cooperation and commercially-oriented instruments to stimulate inclusive and sustainable investment in Africa. In some cases, these are framed as part of strategies to address the root causes of migration. With the new European Consensus on Development, the EU and its member states have committed to further increase their cooperation with the private sector, particularly through the EIP, and to support responsible business practices and management of supply chains. They are also seeking ways to create a more business-friendly environment that respects international standards of human rights.

ECDPM is uniquely positioned for a key role in knowledge generation and sharing in this field, which is still often dominated by ideological and institutional divides, lack of evidence, insufficient policy coherence and donor coordination, and implementation challenges. Our engagement considers a diversity of actors, from African and European policymakers and small and medium-sized enterprises, to large multinationals and civil society organisations operating at different levels of value chains. We envisage three key outcomes:

- (i) Evidence-based practical insights enabling actors to design or redesign and implement effective private sector engagement policies, approaches and instruments
- (ii) A reduced gap between private sector engagement policies and their implementation
- (iii) More effective multi-stakeholder dialogues and collaboration for sustainable private sector development

3.6 CROSS-CENTRE TASK FORCES AND POLICY COHERENCE

Gender task force

The gender task force supports implementation of a Centre-wide strategy for integrating gender across ECDPM's work and operations. The task force assists the programmes in identifying areas where gender-sensitive analysis is needed and in developing gender-sensitive approaches. It strengthens staff capacities to engage critically with issues of gender and gender mainstreaming and to contribute to policy discussions on women, gender and development within Africa-Europe relations. At the organisational level, the task force promotes a gender-sensitive culture in management and in our day-to-day working environment. It implements gender-sensitive practices, for example, in human resources, and promotes external initiatives contributing to gender equality. Instilling gender sensitivity throughout ECDPM's culture and activities is an important conduit for credible, gender-sensitive engagement outside the Centre.

Europe-Africa relations task force

The Europe-Africa relations task force reflects on and coordinates many Centre activities with a bearing on Europe-Africa relations. The task force has five main focuses:

- (i) Promoting more balanced partnerships by strengthening African regional dynamics and legitimate institutions that can make deals on crucial dossiers such as migration and trade
- (ii) Finding ways to make EU support for African responses to conflict and security more effective.
- (iii) Designing creative actions to overcome the closing space for non-state actors by stimulating multi-actor partnerships and making use of the dynamic force of the African youth, private sector and civil society
- (iv) Promoting credible governance initiatives that explore ways to build convergence between European and African agendas on values
- (v) Exploring ways to mobilise European and African public and private finance to underpin the new political partnership

North Africa task force

The North Africa task force capitalises on ECDPM's skill in knowledge brokerage and dialogue facilitation and our expertise on the EU context to help us better understand the drivers behind EU policies and approaches in North Africa. The task force builds on the Centre's ability to foster informed debate, both in partner countries and in Europe. We know from experience that a multi-dimensional pathway must be followed to effectively deliver on our objectives as a knowledge organisation. The task force collaborates with local partners to deepen our knowledge of the local context and help key partners translate knowledge into policy instruments – for example, through joint knowledge production, joint events and networking with partners like the Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission. We use tested political economy analysis and other methodologies for dialogue facilitation and to contribute to purposeful EU external action in the region at key moments in the policy process.

Policy coherence for sustainable development

ECDPM has worked on policy coherence since it was first introduced in the EU Treaty in Maastricht in 1992. The principle of promoting coherence between policies is fundamental to efficient policy implementation and therefore of core interest to ECDPM. It surfaces in many areas of the Centre's work and therefore often appears as a thematic angle in Centre engagement. With the inclusion of policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD) in the SDGs the concept has gained even wider recognition.

The PCSD work stream advances the conceptual solidity and operational effectiveness of integrated policy and PCSD. This is one of ECDPM's proven approaches in policy engagement, and a means to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

4. HORIZONTAL SUPPORT

4.1 LEARNING AND QUALITY SUPPORT

The five programmes are supported by six cross-cutting teams and units.

The Learning and Quality Support (LQS) unit provides core functional support to programme staff in strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, and in developing a culture of learning through, among other things, our theory of change approach. We promote linkages with human resources and develop and support methodologies for quality assurance and improvement. This unit also provides expertise and horizontal quality support on a number of topics within the organisation:

- (i) **On thinking and working politically**, by integrating a political economy approach in projects and programmes, strengthening analytical capacities and promoting the political economy approach among external partners
- (ii) **On gender**, acting as a back-up for the gender task force
- (iii) **On methodologies and skills** underpinning the three core roles of the Centre ('write', 'listen and speak' and 'broker')
- (iv) **On mainstreaming climate change** within the organisation

4.2 COMMUNICATIONS

Effective communication is critical to shape policy and practice. It ensures that relevant information gets to the right people at the right time. We share all of ECDPM's original research through a variety of channels to a mainly African and European audience. The Centre's communications work strives to meet four standards:

- (i) **Coherent**. All ECDPM communications are in line with the Centre's overall Strategy and complement the work done at programme level
- (ii) **Bespoke**. We develop programme communication strategies to target specific needs and audiences of the individual programmes
- (iii) **Integrated**. Communication efforts are integrated into the research process from the start
- (iv) **Long-term**. Our communication activities are planned and analysed with a medium- to long-term policy change perspective

4.3 INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Institutional Relations and Partnerships unit increases and diversifies ‘smart’ multi-annual funding resources that are strategically aligned to our mandate and have strong results and impact potential. We also facilitate partnerships, networks and alliance building with governmental and non-governmental entities in Europe, Africa and beyond.

We work towards three outcomes:

- (i) Increased recognition of ECDPM as a non-partisan facilitator of dialogue and source of practical research and analysis in Europe, Africa and the ACP and on the global stage
- (ii) Partnerships and alliances equipped to address and accomplish the complex and ambitious 2030 Agenda
- (iii) A solid institutional culture for fundraising within ECDPM, with diversified institutional funding and programme and project funding that enables the Centre to consolidate and strengthen its roles and impact

4.4 YOUNG INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONALS

Young International Professionals (YIP) is a programme for circulation of talent. Highly motivated young African researchers with a post-graduate qualification in a relevant academic discipline or with at least one year’s work experience join us as junior researchers for a year. These young professionals are integrated into one of ECDPM’s programmes for mutual learning experiences. The YIP programme gives African researchers and practitioners a unique opportunity to learn more about Africa-EU relations, to be exposed to EU policymaking, to get training in policy research methodologies, such as political economy analysis, and to expand their networks.

4.5 HUMAN RESOURCES

To achieve its objectives, the Centre’s Human Resources team has to make the most of the talents our staff bring to their jobs. We cultivate an environment of inspiration, teamwork and personal growth. For this, we pursue three human resources objectives:

- (i) Succession planning within the leadership team and middle management. The Centre promotes advancement of staff over external hires. We look first at our in-house human resources potential and formulate development and training plans to enable promotions whenever opportunities arise
- (ii) Enhancement of our already modernised competency-based management system, including a continuous feedback loop to fully embed it within the organisation
- (iii) Further enhancement of our effectiveness by seeking optimal IT tools, maintaining an ongoing dialogue with staff and providing support and coaching where needed

4.6 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Financial Management team pursues the highest transparency and accountability standards. In addition to presenting information on our financial health during the past year, our financial reports analyse trends. This gives management and the Board, as well as institutional funders, clear insight into our financial affairs. Transparify, an organisation that rates the financial transparency of think tanks all over the world, has awarded ECDPM its highest gold standard rating for several years running. Our external auditor plays an important role too, not only checking the hard figures, but also verifying whether procedures and internal controls are in good order and operating smoothly.

ECDPM uses an integrated accounting system, meaning that all expenditures and funding are allocated to the programmes and other operational clusters that deliver on the activities foreseen in the work plan. This integrated planning enables results-based management and strengthens the capacity of both Centre and programme managers to steer next year's work programme effectively. The 2017-2021 Strategy sets the tone for distributing available funds between the programmes and other units. Considerable effort goes into the process of strategically allocating the available funds over the programmes so they can achieve their intended outcomes and impacts while ensuring that external funding responsibilities are realistic.

Centre staff work at our headquarters in Maastricht and in our Brussels office, situated in the European district. Most of our overhead costs are tied to contractual agreements, whereas operational costs are linked to our funding modalities. The Centre continually works to improve efficiency while ensuring optimum support to the programmes.

ECDPM holds a general reserve derived from an endowment granted upon the Centre's establishment by the Dutch ministries of Foreign Affairs and Economic Affairs. Each year, any positive or negative operational result is added to or deducted from ECDPM's equity. The general reserve thus serves a useful buffer function. Management keeps these additions or withdrawals to a minimum. They are generally within the plus or minus €100,000 range.

5. STRATEGIC PLANNING AND LEARNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

ECDPM is a transparent and accountable organisation that prioritises learning from complex change dynamics. We develop and share knowledge, inform strategic programming and learn from both failures and successes, adapting implementation in ways that improve policies and practices. Part of all this is ensuring alignment between our means, ambitions and effective outcomes.

5.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND LEARNING

We plan our activities in the form of comprehensive integrated **work plans** and a **Centre-wide budget**. Both require annual Board approval and must be consistent with our five-year Strategy and financial framework. We review budgets on a quarterly basis, and make up mid-year forecasts to lay a sound basis for financial control. Our management team goes on annual strategic retreats to review progress and agree on programme adjustments where necessary in implementing the five-year Strategy.

As we engage in policy processes that are invariably complex, multi-actor, non-modular and contingent, our strategic planning must be flexible and adaptive. Centre-wide learning also deserves a central place. Our theory of change approach contributes to systematic learning about the complex change dynamics the Centre engages in. The **specific theories of change** formulated for each of our work streams at the start of the strategic period form our baseline. These allow us to better articulate and question the assumptions underlying our strategies and approaches. The theory of change approach involves peer review processes, updating and – when and where needed – adaptation of the work streams. The review process provides inputs for our annual work plans. The aim is to become more knowledgeable about the policy processes we engage with, the brokerage roles we play and what is likely to work and the reasons why. This makes us more effective in contributing to outcomes and transformational change.

We have a standardised format for the specific theories of change to ensure that different work streams systematically consider the cross-cutting themes that are important to the Centre. Key dimensions include political economy factors, gender in terms of both context and contributions, and the relevance of climate change to the work stream. If climate change is considered relevant we ask how it is to be integrated. Obviously, in terms of envisaged changes and route to impact, all work streams must be aligned to the ECDPM way of engagement, the six generic outcomes and the impact areas defined in the all-Centre theory of change and results framework (annex 1 presents the ECDPM theory of change).

5.2 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

To support Centre-wide monitoring and evaluation, we designed a five-year **results framework** which translates the Centre-wide theory of change into results pursued by through the 2017-2021 Strategy (annex 2 presents the full results framework). The diagram is built up as a logical framework, though we know that intervening in complex policy arenas is not as straightforward as such a diagram might suggest. As a tool, the diagram supports monitoring and evaluation routines. Given the complexity of policy processes, the outputs and outcomes listed in the results framework must necessarily remain general, not least to keep our monitoring and evaluation processes practical and manageable.

The **specific theories of change** for each of our main work streams bridge the gap between generic outcomes and the actual complexity of our work. Using the theories of change approach, we aim to become more explicit about likely linkages between our planned activities and the envisaged outcomes of the results framework. The specific theories of change are as explicit as possible regarding how the various work streams pursue specific intermediate outcomes and contribute to the generic Centre-wide outcomes.

We report our monitoring data in line with the standards of the **International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)**. Progress reports clearly state what we do, where, how much, with whom and to what effect. Each quarter we update the information in IATI. For each work stream, we report on budgets and expenditures, participating organisations and geopolitical and sector spread. In terms of performance, we report on both outputs and outcomes for each work stream. The output reporting includes an overview of our activities to generate politically informed, evidence-based and practical knowledge. It also details our facilitation of knowledge uptake by key public and private actors through dialogue, implementation support and smart communications. The outcome narratives reflect on the contributions made to the changes envisaged in the specific theories of change. The narratives also address the cross-cutting themes and plausible contributions to generic outcomes and impact areas.

Our monitoring and evaluation cycle includes **annual financial reports** and **annual narrative reports** prepared at year's end for approval by the Board. In 2019, which is halfway through the five-year strategic period, the Strategy will be subjected to an **internal mid-term strategy review** to monitor progress and achievements and make any adjustments required.

Assessing our impact and continued relevance can only be done at relatively long intervals. As decided by the ECDPM Board of Governors, our main instrument for impact assessment is a five-yearly **external evaluation** performed by independent, external professionals. The next external evaluation is set for 2020-2021. The external evaluation will be preceded by an **internal assessment** in 2020. To pave the way for the external evaluators, our staff will synthesise outcomes and possible impacts, in addition to normal reporting routines.

6. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDRAISING

A ROBUST NETWORK OF INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

ECDPM has a robust network of institutional partners in Europe that provide us with financial support through their foreign affairs ministries or ministries of development cooperation. These valued institutional partners include the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden and Switzerland. We have concluded multi-annual arrangements with all of our institutional partners over the years, and these have been systematically renewed.

Multi-annual institutional funding is fundamental to our work. This flexible funding strengthens the Centre's ability to act as an independent 'think and do tank', to be a source of reliable policy analysis and a non-partisan broker in complex and, at times, strained policy processes. In addition, it provides us autonomous space to independently identify strategic priorities and anticipate major policy debates, to stay ahead of the curve. It also enables us to walk the extra mile in terms of facilitating uptake of policy-oriented diagnostics and brokerage support. Finally, it helps us develop and strengthen partnerships with African stakeholders.

In addition to institutional support, ECDPM receives programme funding for larger assignments, mainly from bilateral and multilateral donors. The Centre also implements a range of smaller projects (less than 100,000), including activities on behalf of African stakeholders and partners. These projects are important in helping us to expand our networks. They also allow us to diversify our funding base while remaining coherent with our Strategy. We rigorously assess all project proposals for their strategic significance and ability to generate public goods.

The Centre has committed itself to focus its fundraising efforts in three regards:

- (i) Consolidating and prioritising 'smart funding'; that is, seeking funding that is strategically aligned with our mandate and core business, which ensures a high cost recovery and has a strong potential to achieve results and impact
- (ii) Diversifying funding sources to access larger-scale programme and project funding envelopes that could provide the necessary flexibility and autonomy for the Centre and reduce administrative burden
- (iii) Building an institutional culture and aligning systems for fundraising across the Centre, involving programme staff, institutional relations, finance, communication, senior management and the Board of the Centre

ANNEX 1: ECDPM THEORY OF CHANGE

OUR MISSION


We support European, African and global actors in devising coherent, integrated policies and in ensuring effective implementation that can address key global development challenges and generate inclusive and sustainable solutions. (Direct link with five selected Global Goals: 2, 8, 10, 16 and 17.)

KEY IMPACT AREAS


 Effective international cooperation frameworks

 Accountable institutions and engaged citizens

 Peaceful societies based on the rule of law, social cohesion and human dignity


 Sustainable economic transformation

OUTCOMES

 Informed actors

 Inclusive dialogues and processes

 Coherent and integrated policies

 Reduced policy/implementation gap

 Empowered institutions and actors

 Effective multi-actor partnerships

OUTPUTS

Evidence-based and practical knowledge

 WRITE

Generating politically-informed, evidence-based and practical **knowledge**

Improved access to and use of knowledge

 LISTEN AND SPEAK

Facilitating **uptake** of knowledge by public and societal actors

Innovative frameworks, practices, tools and methods

 BROKER

Acting as a non-partisan **broker** between parties to search for common ground and feasible solutions

ECDPM APPROACH & ROLES

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

The universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The imperative of finding more effective ways of organising international cooperation in order to meet the Global Goals

The shift to a multi-polar world and growing assertiveness of African institutions


Increasing demand for more inclusive and accountable development


The growing recognition of the need for more coherent and integrated policies


ASSUMPTIONS

Five key factors influencing change (as a non-linear, long-term transformation process):

- power and politics
- societal demand
- receptive and capable institutions
- actors open to cooperate
- relevant and practical knowledge

 **Write:** includes research, policy briefs, discussion papers, studies, evaluations, blogs, newsletters and websites.

 **Listen and speak:** includes networking and contributions to policy events, seminars, multi-stakeholder consultations and strategic discussions.

 **Broker:** includes support to and advisory services for networks, coalitions and key policy actors, as well as innovative practices, frames and methods.

The specific ToCs for the main work streams describe the envisaged links between our activities and the all-Centre outcomes.

A THEORY OF CHANGE IS, IN ESSENCE, AN ATTEMPT TO BETTER UNDERSTAND COMPLEX AND NONLINEAR CHANGE PROCESSES

Starting at the bottom of the graphic, our contextual analysis suggests future international cooperation will be increasingly knowledge-driven. This is the result of the following opportunities and challenges:

- (i) An ever-expanding and complex global development agenda
- (ii) A shift to a multi-polar world involving a growing number of players with competing interests, including African institutions with their own agendas
- (iii) The resulting imperative to rethink ways of engaging in international cooperation towards the SDGs
- (iv) Pressures emanating from societies to provide better public services and goods
- (v) A growing recognition that this all ultimately requires more coherent and integrated policies

These opportunities and challenges create a favourable environment for a ‘think and do tank’ such as ECDPM, whose mission is to broker new forms of and approaches to international cooperation.

The second layer of the graphic relates to our tried and tested roles and approaches. Building on three decades of practical experience, we activate three complementary roles to achieve impact. Our specific theories of change make clear choices as to which ‘mix’ of roles is required to maximise the chances of positive outcomes, depending on the nature of the work stream or policy process involved.

The third layer depicts the outputs of our policy processes. In a dynamic and iterative manner, we engage in trajectories of change leading to six types of outcomes (falling within the realm of what a ‘think and do tank’ can achieve). Here too, the specific theories of change plot the most suitable pathways to change and identify which outcomes are central to the envisaged policy process.

The two upper layers of the graphic reflect the four transformational changes to which our 2017-2021 Strategy contributes, and our overall mission statement.

A theory of change is, in essence, an attempt to better understand complex and nonlinear change processes and, on this basis, to define a navigation route to achieve certain outcomes in a policy process. We pay particular attention to the assumptions underlying envisaged changes so as to identify realistic trajectories towards achieving them. These basic, and often implicit, assumptions need to be questioned throughout the intervention cycle. Based on our past experiences, we believe there are five essential assumptions underlying change in policy processes:

- (i) The configuration of state-society relations needs to be properly understood to identify the scope for reforms or progressive change, hence the need to use political economy analysis to identify realistic pathways to change
- (ii) Reforms need to be pushed by a clear and well-articulated demand, meaning that our theories of change must identify drivers of change or coalitions within society and public authorities
- (iii) Public institutions play a critical role at various levels in pushing for better policies and implementation, calling for robust institutional analyses to underpin our specific theories of change
- (iv) Multi-actor partnerships can be a critical vector of change, though the question then arises of how such partnerships, including those with external actors, can be forged and operationalised
- (v) Reforms need relevant and practical knowledge to move forward; this assumption relates to our core business as a knowledge broker, as our specific theories of change must specify how we manage the chain of knowledge production, uptake and brokerage to promote change in the best possible manner

ANNEX 2: ECDPM **RESULT** FRAMEWORK

The results framework diagram specifies our intended contributions and those of our partners to activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts. Each of our work streams uses a strategically chosen **mix of roles**, including a range of **activities** that produce three main types of **outputs**, which can be measured by quantitative **indicators** in terms of the number of outputs, as well as more detailed information on reach.

The results framework sets out six generic outcomes. The work streams may contribute to several or all of these. The specific theories of change define the most suitable pathways to change and set out specific plausible outcomes. Common qualitative pointers rather than indicators are used to link our work to these generic outcomes. These pointers are benchmarks, dependent in part on the context and what stakeholders require in order to advance their own policy processes. These pointers suggest or encourage development of narratives about how specific work streams contribute to specific outcomes. While the specific theories of change describe the links between our activities and change dynamics, our contributions to generic outcomes are much harder to demonstrate, given the contextual and causal complexities of change dynamics. Together, the outcomes of each of the work streams are expected to contribute to the four impact areas.

ECDPM RESULT FRAMEWORK

OUR MISSION	ECDPM APPROACH & ROLES	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	INDICATORS	OUTCOMES	COMMON QUALITATIVE POINTERS	KEY IMPACT AREAS					
Pathways to change: the main steps and actions envisaged are detailed in specific ToCs for the main work streams					The specific outcomes are detailed in specific ToCs for the main work streams							
<p>We support European, African and global actors in devising coherent, integrated policies and in ensuring effective implementation that can address key global development challenges and generate inclusive and sustainable solutions. (Direct link with five selected Global Goals: 2, 8, 10, 16 and 17.)</p>	<p>1) Write: generating politically-informed, evidence-based and practical knowledge</p>	<p>Practical policy-oriented research and strategic knowledge and information services</p>	<p>Evidence-based and practical knowledge</p>	<p># policy briefs, discussion papers, studies, evaluations, blogs, newsletters and websites</p>	<p>Knowledge: informed actors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced availability and access to policy-oriented knowledge and information (incidence of changed perceptions attributed – in part – to ECDPM's work) Practical use of policy-oriented knowledge and information (number of actors using materials, frames and approaches resulting from ECDPM's work) 	<p>Effective international cooperation frameworks</p>					
						<p>2) Listen and speak: facilitating uptake of knowledge by public and societal actors</p>		<p>Promoting the use of knowledge and initiating, informing and framing multi-actor dialogue processes</p>	<p>Improved access to and use of knowledge</p>	<p># discussions, consultations and workshops</p>	<p>Inclusiveness: inclusive dialogues and processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More effective participation in policy-processes by a range of public and private actors from Europe and Africa (incidence of actors viewing things from different angles) Winning trust of policy partners so as to be able to play a facilitating role in (sensitive) policy processes Inputs of weaker actors are taken more seriously (priorities are recognised and made part of the negotiation process)
												<p>3) Broker: Acting as a non-partisan broker between parties to search for common ground and feasible solutions</p>
	<p>Institutions: empowered institutions and actors</p>	<p>Enabling processes that support the development of institutional capacity</p> <p>Applying political economy analyses to support institutional development and change</p>	<p>Partnerships: effective multi-actor partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rebalancing power relationships and building mutual trust and respect Encouraging collective action for effective implementation (among other things by identifying mutual interests) Encouraging mutual accountability 								
					<p>Accountable institutions and engaged citizens</p>							
	<p>Peaceful societies based on the rule of law, social cohesion and human dignity</p>											
	<p>Sustainable economic transformation</p>											

ecdpm

**European Centre for Development
Policy Management**

**www.ecdpm.org
KvK 41077447**

HEAD OFFICE

Onze Lieve Vrouweplein 21
6211 HE Maastricht
The Netherlands
Tel +31 (0)43 350 29 00
Fax +31 (0)43 350 29 02

BRUSSELS OFFICE

Rue Archimède 5
1000 Brussels
Belgium
Tel +32 (0)2 237 43 10
Fax +32 (0)2 237 43 19

Art direction and design: Yaseena Chiu - van 't Hoff
Design and layout: Robin van Hontem