



Cotonou Infokit

The Institutions

The Cotonou Agreement foresees three official joint institutions to oversee the ACP-EU cooperation. In addition several other organisations are linked directly or indirectly to the implementation of the Agreement.

ACP-EU cooperation has spawned a rather complex labyrinth of institutions, each of them having a distinctive role to play in decision-making and management processes. In order to clarify the picture, four categories of institutions can be distinguished :

The Official Bodies

ACP-EU cooperation is formally steered by three 'official' bodies :

The ACP-EU Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers is made up of members of the Council of the EU, representatives of the European Commission, and a member of the government of each ACP country. The President of the Council alternates between the European Union and the ACP. The Council meets as a rule once a year. Its functions are:

- to conduct political dialogue (while involving non-state actors in the process);
- to adopt policy guidelines and take decisions necessary to implement the provisions of the Agreement, in particular as

- regards development strategies and as regards procedures; to examine and resolve any issue liable to impede the effective and efficient implementation of the Agreement or present an obstacle to achieving its objectives;
- to ensure the smooth functioning of the consultation mechanisms.

The Council takes decisions that are binding on the Parties and that frame resolutions, recommendations and opinions. It also takes into consideration resolutions and recommendations adopted by the Joint Parliamentary Assembly. The Council of Ministers may delegate powers to the Committee of Ambassadors.

The ACP-EU Committee of Ambassadors

The Committee of Ambassadors comprises, on the one hand, the permanent representative of each Member State to the EU and a representative of the Commission and, on the other, the head of mission of each ACP state to the EU, with an alternating chairmanship.

The Committee assists the Council of Ministers in the fulfilment of its tasks and carries out any task entrusted to it by the Council. The Committee monitors the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement.

The Joint Parliamentary Assembly

The Joint Parliamentary Assembly is composed of an equal numbers of EU and ACP parliamentary representatives. Its role is to:

- promote democratic processes through dialogue and consultation;

facilitate greater understanding between the peoples of the European Union and those of the ACP states and raise public awareness of development issues;

discuss issues pertaining to development and the ACP-EU partnership;

adopt resolutions and make recommendations to the Council of Ministers with a view to achieving the objectives of the Agreement.

The Joint Parliamentary Assembly meets twice a year in plenary session, alternately in the European Union and in an ACP country. In order to strengthen regional integration and foster cooperation between national parliaments, meetings between EU and ACP members of parliament may be arranged at regional or sub-regional levels. The Joint Parliamentary Assembly will be in regular contact with ACP-EU civil society to exchange views on how and whether the objectives of the Agreement are being attained.

The Brussels-based Institutions

Two major actors of ACP-EU cooperation deploy their activities from Brussels-based headquarters:

The ACP Secretariat

The mission of the ACP Secretariat is to facilitate the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement.

The Secretariat of the Group is charged with servicing the Council of Ministers, the Committee of Ambassadors, the Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the Economic and Social Committee as well as CDE and CTA.

The European Commission Directorate General ('DG-DEV')

The Directorate General for Development (DG Development) contributes to the formulation of the Community's development cooperation policy for all developing countries and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs). In addition, DG Development directly manages and coordinates Community relations with the 77 African, Caribbean and Pacific states and the 20 OCTs.

DG Development closely cooperates with other Commission services, in particular the Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), the External Relations DG and the Common Service for External Relations (SCR) to fulfil its mission. Community development cooperation is also to be coordinated with Member States' policies and, as far as possible, with major international donors.

Field-based Institutions

For actors and stakeholders in the ACP countries that want to participate in ACP-EU cooperation, two institutions are of paramount importance:

The National Authorising Officer

Each ACP country appoints a senior government official as the 'National Authorising Officer' (NAO) to represent it in all the operations financed by European Development Fund. The NAO works in close collaboration with the head of the EC delegation on preparing and appraising projects and programmes. The NAO is also responsible for tendering of contracts, authorising expenses and making the necessary adaptations to ensure proper execution of the projects or programmes.

The EC Delegation

The delegation of the EC functions as the first port of call for ACP actors in the field. The Head of Delegation works in close cooperation with the National Authorising Officer on the preparation, appraisal and evaluation of projects and programmes. The EC delegation will also inform on a regular basis the national authorities on issues directly related to ACP-EU cooperation.

Specialised Agencies

Building on past Lomé Conventions, two specialised ACP-EU institutions will remain active under the Cotonou Agreement:

Centre for Development of Enterprise (CDE)

The CDE supports the implementation of private-sector development strategies in the ACP countries. It provides non-financial services to ACP companies and businesses and supports joint initiatives set up by economic operators of the Community and of the ACP States. The CDE also informs the ACP private sector about the provisions of the Agreement, diffuses information among local ACP private sector about the product quality and standards required in external markets, and provides information to European companies and private sector organisations on business opportunities and modalities in ACP countries.

Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA)

The mission of the CTA is to strengthen policy and institutional capacity development and information and communication management capacities of ACP agricultural and rural development organisations.

It assists such organisations in formulating and implementing policies and programmes to reduce poverty, promote sustainable food security, preserve the natural resource base, and thus contribute to building self-reliance in ACP rural and agricultural development.

More Information

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