

# EU–Africa relations: looking through a gender lens

Anna Cichecka, *University of Wrocław (Wrocław, Poland)*

E-mail: [anacichecka@gmail.com](mailto:anacichecka@gmail.com)

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7837-5684

## Abstract

The expiry of the Cotonou Agreement encourages European states to change their approach towards African countries. Efforts undertaken by the European Union may end the relationship based on dependency and may open access to a more equal partnership with common interest at the centre. The consequences of the ongoing negotiations between the EU and Africa constitute important determinants for shaping economic, political and social relations in the coming years, and therefore deserve special attention. The results of this discussion will be also crucial to women's status and gender concepts. Accordingly, the main aim of this article is to evaluate gender initiatives undertaken between the EU and Africa in selected aspects of their cooperation, with particular emphasis on the ongoing negotiations. The article has been elaborated on the basis of gender-sensitive analysis, that is also called a gender-lens perspective. Firstly, this article presents an overview of the evolution of gender agenda in institutional and legal framework of cooperation between Europe and Africa. Secondly, this text refers to the agreements and disagreements over gender agenda during the ongoing negotiations. And the last part of the article are conclusions. The research is based on the following methods and tools: critical analysis of existing sources (*desk research*); content analysis of subject literature, press releases and the information published by the European Union and African Union; as well as the *field research* and interviews that the author has conducted with representatives of the non-governmental organisations in Tanzania. The *field research* was funded by a grant from the National Science Centre – PRELUDIUM 9, number: 2015/17/N/HS5/00408.

**Keywords:** European Union, Africa, equal partnership, gender equality, women's status, gender agenda

## Relacje na linii UE–Afryka: perspektywa równouprawnienia

### Streszczenie

Wygaśnięcie umowy z Kotonu skłania państwa europejskie do zmiany podejścia wobec państw afrykańskich. Europa stara się wejść w rolę zrównoważonego mediatora, który stanowiłby alternatywę wobec Chin i USA. Podejmowane starania mogą przesądzić o losach wzajemnej współpracy na linii UE–Afryka, a konsekwencje trwających obecnie negocjacji stanowią istotne determinanty dla

kształtowania partnerskich relacji gospodarczych, politycznych i społecznych w nadchodzących latach i zasługują na szczególną uwagę. Wyniki tej dyskusji będą również kluczowe dla statusu kobiet i agendy równouprawnienia. W związku z powyższym, podstawowym celem niniejszego artykułu jest ewaluacja inicjatyw równościowych, podejmowanych między UE a Afryką – w wybranych aspektach współpracy, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem trwających negocjacji. W pierwszej części tekstu dokonano przeglądu inicjatyw równościowych, odnosząc się do instytucjonalno-prawnych ram współpracy między Europą i Afryką. W drugiej części wskazano i przeanalizowano punkty wspólne i sprzeczne, prezentowane przez Unię Europejską i Unię Afrykańską odnośnie agendy równouprawnienia. W ostatniej części sformułowano wnioski. Artykuł został przygotowany w oparciu o analizę literatury przedmiotu, prasy oraz informacji publikowanych przez UE i UA, jak również na podstawie badań terenowych finansowanych w ramach grantu Narodowego Centrum Nauki – PRELUDIUM 9, numer: 2015/17/N/HS5/00408.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Unia Europejska, Afryka, równe partnerstwo, równouprawnienie, status kobiet, agenda równouprawnienia

The expiry of the Cotonou Agreement encourages European states to change their approach towards African countries. Europe is trying to play the role of a balanced mediator that would be an alternative to both China's economic expansion, and the aid strategies proposed by the U.S. Moreover, efforts undertaken by the European Union (EU) may end the relationship based on dependency and may open access to a more equal partnership with common interest at the centre (Knoll, Mucchi 2020). Accordingly, the consequences of the ongoing negotiations between the EU and Africa constitute important determinants for shaping economic, political and social relations in the coming years, and therefore deserve special attention. The results of this discussion will be also crucial to women's status and gender concepts, especially that inclusion of the gender dimension is particularly key in COVID-19 recovery efforts in the short, medium and long term perspectives (United Nations 2020).

## The aim and methodology of the research

Preliminary research on the role of gender agenda in the ongoing negotiations between EU and African Union (AU) has led to two important remarks. Firstly, it is widely assumed that gender strategies play a key role in the Euro-African relations (Guerrina, Wright 2016). Secondly, it has been noticed that there are points of controversy in the field of equality (Debusscher, van der Vleuten 2012). These insights serve as a starting point for critical analysis of the presented issue. **The aim of this article** is to evaluate gender initiatives undertaken between the EU and Africa in selected aspects of their cooperation, with particular emphasis on the ongoing negotiations. **The research question is:** what opportunities, challenges and threats result from the current state of the gender agenda in Euro-African relations?

The article has been elaborated on the basis of gender-sensitive analysis, that is also called a gender-lens perspective. This method was proposed by V. Spike Peterson and

Anne Sissin Runyan to help answer Cynthia Enloe's famous question: "Where are the women?" (Enloe 2004). This approach suggests to look in unconventional way on both, the position of women in global politics as well as on the role of gender agenda in various strategies (Tickner, Sjoberg 2011). Gender sensitive analysis is not limited to research on women or on gender relationships only. It provides broad perspective, because it takes into account gender as a significant variable in the analysed topics, pays attention to the similarities and the differences between men's and women's experiences or viewpoints, and aims to identify the vulnerabilities. "Engendering research means that the gender dimension was mainstreamed into every component of the research: identifying the problem; defining the conceptual and analytical framework; choosing the methodology; [and] analysing the findings..." (Leduc 2009; p. 2).

As has been mentioned, this article attempts to investigate gender initiatives undertaken in the field of cooperation between EU and AU, with particular emphasis on the ongoing negotiations. However, the analysis is limited to selected aspects of Africa–EU partnership due to the fact that the topic is too broad to provide comprehensive description in one text. Furthermore, the article does not aim at presenting the situation of women neither in Europe<sup>1</sup> nor in Africa<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the article, firstly, presents an overview of the evolution of gender agenda in institutional and legal framework of cooperation between Europe and Africa. Secondly, it refers to the agreements and disagreements over gender agenda during the ongoing negotiations. The last part of the article are conclusions.

The research presented in the article is based on the following tools and methods: a critical analysis of existing sources (*desk research*); content analysis of subject literature, press releases and the information published by the EU and AU; the *field research* and interviews that the author has conducted with representatives of the non-governmental organisations in Tanzania. The used research methodology made it possible to understand better the issue and to reflect on opportunities, challenges and threats that result from the current state of the equality agenda in EU–Africa relations.

## **Gender agenda in institutional and legal framework – an overview**

The history of the contemporary institutional forms of cooperation between Europe and Africa dates back to the establishment in 1957 of the European Economic Community (EEC), later – the European Union (EU). The first initiatives with the Sub-Saharan African region were primarily focused on development and were undertaken for geopolitical and economic reasons (Frankowski, Słomczyńska 2011: p. 47–49). Over the decades, these relations have changed and the main content of the cooperation has evolved as well. Firstly, former colonies gained both their independence and a new position at this inter-regional level (Davidson 1994). Secondly, the legitimacy and effectiveness of old policy paradigms were contested by African governments, non-governmental and

<sup>1</sup> See more in: Simonton 2010.

<sup>2</sup> See more in: Cichecka 2020.

intergovernmental organisations (Debusscher, van der Vleuten 2012). As a result, in the 1980s, the priorities of cooperation were reformulated, and geopolitical and economic reasons were supplemented by political and social ones. This process was accompanied by political and economic transformation in African countries, launched under the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), that were proposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) as a response to the economic and political instability across African continent (Mercer 1999: p. 248–249). Economic liberalisation and democratisation process created the space for both political pluralism and non-governmental initiatives, many of which responded with enthusiasm to the actions undertaken by the United Nations Organisation (UN) at that time. The UN activity was focused on popularising the rhetoric on women's rights and equality (Tripp 2009; Subrahmanian 2004). Thus, as a result, these issues have also been incorporated into strategies of partnership between the EU and Africa (Debusscher, van der Vleuten 2012). It was explained that inclusion of these elements is essential for effective and fruitful cooperation and underlined that no development would have been possible if the needs of women had been neglected.

The first references to women's rights in EU–Africa relations can be found in the Third Lomé Convention (signed in 1984 with 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific – ACP countries). It states that “co-operation shall support the ACP States' efforts aimed at enhancing the work of women, improving their living conditions, expanding their role and promoting their status and the production and development process” (The Third ACP–EEC Convention 1984: art. 123, par. 1; Debusscher 2014: p. 96). It should be noticed that the part dedicated to women in this document is short. Moreover, nowadays it would be criticised by feminist scholars, because it called for the exclusion of women from the development process by creating specific conditions for women instead of proposing an inclusive policy based on equal access to development (Celis et al. 2008: p. 101–104). Full subsection on women was included in The Fourth Lomé Convention, signed in 1989. The Article 287 states that projects and programmes dedicated to cooperation between the EU and Africa should take into account “cultural, social, gender and environmental aspects” (see: The Fourth ACP–EEC Convention 1989: art. 287, par. 2b; Debusscher 2014: p. 96). It may be observed that the narrow focus on women proposed in the previous version of the Lomé Convention was replaced by a broader perspective, which emphasised the important role of societal problems and unequal gender relations in the process of empowering women<sup>3</sup>.

The breaking point came after the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). That meeting was a great opportunity for networking among thousands of activists working for equality, which resulted in skill sharing and numerous debates. Moreover, the previous achievements have been discussed and priorities for the next years have been set. Participants flagged 12 key areas where urgent action was needed to ensure greater equality: (1) women and poverty; (2) education and training of women; (3) women and health; (4) violence against women; (5) women and armed conflict; (6) women and

---

<sup>3</sup> The similar reflections has been included in the publication: Cichecka 2021.

the economy; (7) women in power and decision making; (8) institutional mechanisms; (9) human rights of women; (10) women and the media; (11) women and the environment; (12) the girl child (see more: UN Women W/Wa).

The conference also contributed to popularising the concept of gender mainstreaming (Subrahmanian 2004: p. 89). Gender mainstreaming became then the fundamental concept based on the assumption that improving women's status requires "the shared responsibility of women and men in removing imbalances in society" (Council of Europe 1998; Debusscher 2014: p. 96) and that the gender equality perspective should be incorporated into all policies (Tripp 2009: p. 10–12). Detailed guidelines on the implementation of gender mainstreaming were written in the progressive blueprint for advancing women's rights – the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (UN Women 2015), and have been adopted by state and non-state actors, among which the EU was not an exception. This trend has been reflected in the provisions of the EU Treaty, which stated that the European Community should make an effort to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality between men and women (see: TEU) within the Community and in relations with its partners. Accordingly, when the Lomé Convention was replaced by new Partnership Agreement signed in Cotonou in 2000, gender mainstreaming was also incorporated into EU–African policy (Debusscher, van der Vleuten 2012). Consequently, the Cotonou Agreement provided the foundations for systematic adoption of the gender-sensitive approach and underlined that the adoption of specific positive measures in favour of women should be present at every level of development cooperation (Cotonou Agreement 2000; Arts 2006).

The legal structure of the EU–Africa partnership is based on several pillars and fields. Firstly, these actors cooperate through multiple frameworks, such as the Cotonou Agreement and the *Joint Africa–EU Strategy* (see: African Union W/Wa). Secondly, EU–Africa relations are also developed "through formal dialogues at various levels: EU–Africa summits (at the level of heads of state or government, are held in principle every three years), ministerial-level meetings (held regularly, gather representatives from African and EU countries, the African Union Commission, and EU institutions, including the Council of the EU), commission-to-commission meetings" (European Council W/Wb). In addition to these frameworks, three regional strategies for the Horn of Africa, the Gulf of Guinea and Sahel have been adopted. There are also Council preparatory bodies that are responsible for EU–Africa relations: Africa Working Party (COAFR), Mashreq/Maghreb (MAMA) Working Party, and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Working Party (see: EU Monitor W/W; European Council W/Wb). Moreover, in December 2020, the Africa–Europe Foundation has been established. It "is a consortium entity founded by a leading European think-tank, Friends of Europe, and a leading African Foundation, Mo Ibrahim Foundation, in partnership with the African Climate Foundation and the ONE Campaign and with a multitude of stakeholders from civil society, business, policymaking and the youth sector across Africa and Europe". Its role is to advice political decision-makers during the ongoing negotiations and after (Friends of Europe W/W).

The ongoing negotiations between the EU and Africa refer mostly to the above-mentioned Cotonou Agreement and the *Joint Africa–EU Strategy*, and to the main fields

of cooperation as well. The Cotonou Agreement was initially due to expire in February 2020, nevertheless its provisions have been extended until 30 November 2021, because the discussion dedicated to the content of the new agreement has not been concluded yet (Strauss 2021). However, "on 3 December 2020, the EU and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) reached a political deal on the text for a new Partnership Agreement" that is supposed to succeed the Cotonou Agreement (see more: European Council W/WWa) and serve as the new legal framework for EU–Africa relations after November 2021. As has been mentioned previously, joint priorities are expected to be finally formulate at the 2022 EU–African Union Summit (see: Fox 2021).

The ACP–EU Cotonou Partnership Agreement is an all-encompassing agreement with a wide range of policy fields including human rights, good governance, the rule of law, peace building and gender issues as well (European Council W/WWa,b). It may be noticed that the gender agenda is not the core of the document, but according to its provisions a gender sensitive approach is a necessary element of development, including macroeconomic policies, strategies and operations (van der Vleuten, van Eerdewijk 2020). The *Joint Africa–EU Strategy* provides the overarching long-term framework for Africa–EU relations. It is implemented through commonly identified purposes, which are defined as of common interest to both of the partners. Within each field of cooperation, the attention is put on different thematic areas of partnership. Among these priorities may be peace and security, regional integration and trade, migration and mobility, climate change and others (see more: European Council W/WWb). Similarly to the Cotonou Agreement, these initiatives are not gender oriented, however the gender aspects are sometimes included in specific strategies devoted to the above-mentioned fields (van der Vleuten, van Eerdewijk 2020; Flint 2009).

### **Consent and disagreements over the gender agenda in the ongoing negotiations**

According to the UN, that is recognised as one of the most influential in strengthening and popularising equality (Taylor, Curtis 2008), gender agenda is a concept based on several assumptions and targets, among which the following are indicated as crucial (United Nations W/WWa):

- to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere;
- to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation;
- to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation;
- to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate;
- to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life;

- to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences;
- to undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws;
- to enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women;
- to adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels (United Nations W/Wa; Tallis, Mathonsi 2018: p. 4; United Nations 2015).

This broad definition sets the framework for the equality agenda in both, the EU and the AU (Tripp 2006).

Furthermore, over the past decades, the above-mentioned definition of gender agenda has been expanded to include LGBTQ+ rights (Dioli 2011; European Commission 2015; Hildebrandt 2012; United Nations W/Wb). When this issue has become a matter of interest in global politics, social movements, study of sexuality (Baiocco et al. 2018) and others, it has reached great prominence and has also expanded ways to experience equality (Serrano Amaya, Ríos González 2019). As a result, the assumption that gender and LGBTQ+ agendas are separate fields has been critically discussed and replaced by extensive understanding of equality. Simultaneously, LGBTQ+ became a key topic in the UN gender agenda, as well as in many other policies dedicated to the issue of equality (European Commission 2015; United Nations W/Wb).

As has been noticed, the gender agenda was a part of EU–Africa relations in the past (Kotsopoulos, Mattheis 2018: p. 447–449). Both sides agreed that equality is an important element of EU–Africa relations. A similar point between these two actors was that theoretically, the norms and values of equality were central in both the EU and the AU treaties and policy documents (van der Vleuten, van Eerdewijk 2020)<sup>4</sup>. However, in practice they

<sup>4</sup> The key document in the EU is the *Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025*, which sets out key policy objectives for the coming years (European Commission W/Wa). The provisions of this document address women's empowerment not only within the EU but also in relations with non-European partners. Another document with the great importance for the equality issue is the EU's third action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment in external relations – GAP III). When it comes to Africa, the strategy for gender equality and women's empowerment (*The AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2018–2028* – GEWE) is an important part of its legal framework. In this document it has been underlined that women are crucial for development and should be perceived as the source of potential for further political, economic and social transformation (see: African Union W/Wb; Knoll, Mucchi 2020: p. 4). Promotion of gender equality is also visible in the AU Constitutive Act, as well as in other continental and global commitments – including the UN Security Council's *Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security*. At the same time, the AU does not present any specific policy for promoting the gender agenda in external relations with its partners. Instead, the strategies proposed by the AU rather focus on progress on the African continent. At the same time, it may be observed that while both the AU and the EU have adopted policy frameworks for advancing gender equality, this topic has made only fragmented appearances in joint AU–EU strategies (Knoll, Mucchi 2020).

considered the gender agenda from different perspectives (Briggs, Weathers 2016). Both the African Union and the EU have adopted policy frameworks for advancing gender equality, but the meanings given to gender policy have been formulated differently in the EU and AU (van der Vleuten, van Eerdewijk 2020). For example, in the EU gender equality was – and still is – a core value, which is usually linked to the human rights catalogue, and which is supposed to be implemented not only within the EU Member States, but also in external relations (Booth, Bennett 2002). Meanwhile, in the AU gender equality was – and still is, recognised as the crucial point of development and one of the goals of the peoples-oriented regional integration, and as a policy that should serve as a solution for regional challenges rather than as a part of international relations (van der Vleuten, van Eerdewijk 2020). The expectation that some of these trends would be present during the ongoing negotiations may be seen as reasonable.

Indeed, the ongoing Euro-African discourse refers to the importance of equality. As “gender equality and women’s empowerment have long been championed by the EU, the AU and their individual member states”, it is not surprising then, that a comprehensive partnership between Africa and Europe is recognised as less effective if gender considerations will be not an integral part of joint cooperation (Knoll, Mucchi 2020: p. 28). The EU and AU formulated the proposal of five key global trends that should be recognised as a basis for their relations: (1) partnership for the green transition and energy access; (2) partnership for digital transformation; (3) partnership for sustainable growth and jobs; (4) partnership for peace, security and governance; (5) a partnership on migration and mobility (European Commission W/Wb). Both, the AU and the European Commission<sup>5</sup> highlight that the gender perspective has to be included in all of the above-mentioned areas of cooperation (European Commission W/Wb). Therefore, the general consensus on the need to implement the gender agenda may be observed.

Moreover, when the EU–AU negotiations have been unexpectedly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, they have been reshaped twofold (Lebovich 2020). Firstly, the discussions have actually been stalled by this event (Strauss 2021); but secondly, pandemic forced the move into new direction of partnership – focused on post-pandemic recovery, one of the primary goals of which is the empowerment of women. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, emerging reports have shown the pandemic’s disproportionate impact on women and girls’ socio-economic welfare (see: UN Women 2021). It is indicated that a strong gender dimension of pandemic – with women at the frontline as health and care responders – is a worldwide pattern, and that the situation of women and girls in developing countries is especially difficult (Morrica, Nguyen 2021). Simultaneously, this means that the huge social and economic consequences effected negatively both the EU and the AU population, however the post-pandemic situation is worse in African states, and especially among African women. As a response to these challenges some spotlight initiatives have been formulated by both the EU and AU. For

---

<sup>5</sup> The European Commission along with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and Display Missions accredited to the European Union are the key actors responsible for the ongoing EU–AU negotiations.

example, *A green and gender-driven COVID-19 recovery in Africa* (ECDPM 2020) – that is dedicated to improving the situation of women, may serve as example. Therefore, it may be assumed that (paradoxically) the role of gender agenda has been strengthened due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that Europe and Africa present a common approach and consensus view in this issue<sup>6</sup>.

When it comes to disagreements, it may be noticed that previous various perspectives of the European and African sides have not been harmonised yet, and that different meanings given to gender agenda in the past have remained present and valid despite the timeframe. Differences in the EU and AU visions of gender equality are based on the specific perception of the gender agenda role. African states recognise women's empowerment as a cross-cutting theme of the AU–EU partnership. For instance, "in a proposed text for the renewed partnership, the AU mentions gender inclusion and responsiveness to gender issues in relation to infrastructure, value chains and the multilateral trading system" (Knoll, Mucchi 2020: p. 6) – all recognised as the basis of development.

The AU agrees that women and girls are vulnerable groups which should be treated with special consideration, but the terms "gender equality" and "sexual and reproductive health and rights" are avoided. In contrast, the EU explicitly "mentions gender equality and gender-based discrimination – including on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity – as a fundamental principle that has to be incorporated into all actions and cooperation throughout the partnership" (Knoll, Mucchi 2020: p. 6; European Commission 2020).

It may be also observed, that the EU's ambition is to play a key role in gender mainstreaming in its external relations, and thus at the partner-country level in Africa as well. Moreover, the EU has often led to one-sided initiatives, while neglecting the point of view presented by the African side (Guerrina, Wright 2016).

One of the most significant example of a lack of consensus may be found in the debate about the fight against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and reproductive rights. When the former EU Development Commissioner – Neven Mimica, pointed out that these issues should be treated with concern and should be a part of the Africa–EU partnership, the OACPS reacted negatively (see: European Parliament 2019). In some African states particularly, homosexuality is a crime under the law (Tripp 2009), so it should not be a surprise that Mimica's proposal met with objections. The AU explained also that it should not be pushed to promote values, which are recognised as opposite to its tradition and beliefs (Dlamini 2006: p. 130–134), so this reaction may be perceived as a part of wider trend, according to which tradition is often used to justify discrimination and crackdowns on human rights (Wadesango et al. 2011). For women, traditional values can be a tool that curtails their human rights and that are sometimes used to justify forced

---

<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the pandemic is sometimes used as a pretext for minimising the importance of the equality agenda and stating that the other negative consequences of COVID-19 are equally or even more important (van der Vleuten, van Eerdewijk 2020).

marriages, virginity testing, honour crime, genital mutilation and marital rapes. "For LGBT people, the language of traditional values tends to cast homosexuality as a moral issue, and not a rights issue – as a social blight that must be contained and even eradicated for the good of public morality" (Reid 2013). At the same time, one should be aware that different meanings given to the importance of gender agenda in the EU and AU have been formulated on the basis of different political, economic and socio-cultural backgrounds, so the expectation of compliance in all areas may be perceived as unjustified (Obi 2010).

## Conclusions

The aim of this article was to evaluate gender initiatives undertaken between the EU and Africa in selected aspects of their partnership, with particular emphasis on the ongoing negotiations. Firstly, it has been concluded that gender agenda was a part of the partnership between the EU and AU in the past, and that gender equality was and still is one of the important elements of the institutional-legal framework dedicated to Euro-African relations. Moreover, it has been observed that the importance of the paradigm dedicated to women's rights has changed from a marginal and conservative approach (called *Women in Development* – WID) to a wide-ranging transformative approach (*Gender and Development* – GAD, or *gender mainstreaming*, see more: Jaquette 2017: p. 245–248) that includes the perspective of African women represented by African formal and informal organisations. Secondly, it has been stated that current discourse dedicated to the post-Cotonou partnership refers to the gender agenda twofold. On the one hand, the EU and Africa agree that the implementation of gender initiatives is an important element of further partnership, especially in terms of post-pandemic recovery. Thus, the consent in this regard may be recognised as a chance for effective, engendered cooperation within each field of partnership. On the other hand, they propose different perspectives in regard of the role and meanings that are given to gender agenda, which may be perceived as potential threat and/or challenge.

The background for the EU–AU negotiations consists, among others, of the ongoing internal issues of both Europe and Africa. Therefore, it is worth noting that at the European regional level the gender agenda seems to have stagnated since the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008, while it has been further developed in the AU despite its internal problems (van der Vleuten, van Eerdewijk 2020). Furthermore, many EU Member States have experienced a backlash on women's rights in recent years. The most radical reaction could be observed in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as violence against women (European Parliament 2018). These internal tensions, however, do not stop the EU from speaking with one voice on the gender agenda at the international stage and in external actions with its partners. When it comes to the African side, it may be observed that the most important disagreement between member states of the AU, and between the AU and EU, remains on the language around sexual and reproductive health and rights and sexual orientation. The main accusation here is, that the language dedicated to these gender issues, proposed by the EU, is not consistent with

the language presented in key AU policy documents. In other words – that reproductive and LGBT rights are not defined the same in Europe and Africa, and that Europe is too dominant in imposing its version.

Differences in the approaches presented by the EU and AU may influence how the gender agenda can be integrated into the AU–EU partnership, and it seems that these nuances create a disadvantages. The potential for connecting Europe and Africa on the basis of sharing gender experience is therefore far from perfect. It is also interesting that trends characterised with regard to the role of the gender agenda in the ongoing EU–Africa negotiations are similar to the narratives, which go along with other fields of negotiated partnership. Firstly, it may be observed that particular priorities are accompanied by contradictory discourse. For instance, it is underlined that the provisions of the new agreement should serve as a basis for the partnership of equals while at the same time it is said that no equality will be achieved while the African continent depends so much on assistance from Europe (Fox 2021). Secondly, negotiations on a strategic partnership are imbalanced and dominated by the EU perspective (Strauss 2021). And lastly, similarly to other components of EU–AU relations, the gender agenda will draw on EU financing. This fact "points to a risk that cross-cutting gender aspects on which no agreement can be reached may be dropped or minimised, weakening the foundation" not only "for transforming gender relations" (Knoll, Mucchi 2020: p. 6), but also for other parts of partnership in subsequent years.

**Anna Cichecka** – PhD, University of Wrocław, Faculty of Social Sciences. In her research, she is focused on the socio-political situation in Sub-Saharan Africa with particular emphasis on the situation of women and the role of social movements in democratisation. She carries out a research project concerning the role of the EAC in integration processes in this region. She is also focused on EU–Africa relations. She is the author of academic papers and reports, as well as a book dedicated to women's non-governmental organisations in Tanzania and its impact on the socio-political changes in this state.

**Anna Cichecka** – doktor, pracuje na Uniwersytecie Wrocławskim (Wydział Nauk Społecznych). Zajmuje się badaniami sytuacji społeczno-politycznej w Afryce Subsaharyjskiej ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem sytuacji kobiet i roli ruchów społecznych w demokratyzacji. Prowadzi projekt badawczy dotyczący roli EAC w procesach integracyjnych w tym regionie. Koncentruje się również na stosunkach UE–Afryka. Jest autorką artykułów naukowych i raportów, a także książki poświęconej kobiecym organizacjom pozarządowym w Tanzanii i ich wpływowi na przemiany społeczno-polityczne w tym państwie.

## ➔ References:

- AFRICAN UNION (WWWa), *The Partnership and Joint Africa–EU Strategy*, <https://africa-eu-partnership.org/en/partnership-and-joint-africa-eu-strategy> (30.06.2021)
- AFRICAN UNION (WWWb), *AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*, <https://au.int/en/articles/au-strategy-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment> (02.07.2021)

- ARTS Karine (2006), *Gender in ACP-EU Relations: The Cotonou Agreement*, in: Marjorie Lister, Maurizio Carbone (eds), *New Pathways in International Development: Gender and Civil Society in EU Policy (1st edition)*, Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781351152525
- BAIOCCO Roberto, PISTELLA Jessica, SALVATI Marco, IOVERNO Salvatore, LUCIDI Fabio (2018), *Sports as a risk environment: Homophobia and bullying in a sample of gay and heterosexual men*, "Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health", vol. 22, issue 4. DOI: 10.1080/19359705.2018.1489325
- BOOTH Christine, BENNETT Cinnamon (2002), *Gender Mainstreaming in the European Union: Towards a New Conception and Practice of Equal Opportunities?*, "The European Journal of Women's Studies", vol. 9, no. 4. DOI: 10.1177/13505068020090040401
- BRIGGS Ryan C., WEATHERS Scott (2016), *Gender and location in African politics scholarship: he other white man's burden?*, "African Affairs", vol. 115, issue 460. DOI: 10.1093/afraf/adw009
- CELIS Karen, CHILDS Sarah, KANTOLA Johanna, KROOK Mona Lena (2008), *Rethinking Women's Substantive Representation*, "Representation: Journal of Representative Democracy", vol. 44, no. 2. DOI: 10.1080/00344890802079573
- CICHECKA Anna (2020), *Kobiece organizacje pozarządowe w Tanzanii*, Warszawa
- CICHECKA Anna (2021), *Polityka równouprawnienia w relacjach UE-Afryka. Wybrane aspekty*, "Rocznik Bezpieczeństwa Międzynarodowego", vol. 15, no. 2. DOI: 10.34862/rbm.2021.2.4
- COUNCIL OF EUROPE (1998), *Gender mainstreaming: Conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices*, Final report of Activities of the Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming (EG-S-MS), May 1998, Strasbourg, <https://www.unhcr.org/3c160b06a.pdf>
- COTONOU AGREEMENT (2000), 2000/483/EC: Partnership agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000 – Protocols – Final Act – Declarations, OJ L 317, 15.12.2000.
- DAVIDSON Basil (1994), *Modern Africa: A Social and Political History*, Routledge, London
- DEBUSSCHER Petra (2014), *Gender Mainstreaming in EU Development Policy towards Southern Africa and South America*, in: A. van der Vleuten, A. van Eerdewijk, C. Roggeband (eds), *Gender Equality Norms in Regional Governance*, Gender and Politics Series, Palgrave Macmillan, London. DOI: 10.1057/9781137301451\_5
- DEBUSSCHER Petra, VAN DER VLEUTEN Anna (2012), *Mainstreaming gender in European Union development cooperation with sub-Saharan Africa: promising numbers, narrow contents, telling silences*, "International Development Planning Review", vol. 34, no. 3. DOI: 10.3828/idpr.2012.19
- DIOLI Irene (2011), *From Globalization to Europeanization – And Then? Transnational Influences in Lesbian Activism of the Western Balkans*, "Journal of Lesbian Studies", vol. 15, no. 3. DOI: 10.1080/10894160.2011.530149
- DLAMINI Busangokwakhe (2006), *Homosexuality in the African Context*, "Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity", no. 67. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4066801>
- ECDPM (2020), *A green and gender-driven COVID-19 recovery in Africa: How EU development finance can boost energy access for all*, European Centre for Development Policy Management, <https://ecdpm.org/events/green-gender-driven-covid-19-recovery-africa/> (27.10.2020)
- ENLOE Cynthia (2004), *'Gender' is not enough: the need for a feminist consciousness*, "International Affairs", vol. 80, issue 1. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2346.2004.00370.x

- EU MONITOR (WWW), <https://www.eumonitor.eu/> (01.12.2021)
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION (WWWa), *Gender equality strategy*, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en) (02.07.2021)
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION (WWWb), *Africa–EU Partnership*, [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/topics/africa-eu-partnership\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/topics/africa-eu-partnership_en) (29.11.2021)
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2015), *List of Actions by the Commission to Advance LGBTI Equality*, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/lgbtiq-equality-strategy-2020-2025/list-actions-advance-lgbti-equality-2015-2019\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/lgbtiq-equality-strategy-2020-2025/list-actions-advance-lgbti-equality-2015-2019_en) (29.11.2021)
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2020), Joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council – *Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa*, JOIN (2020) 4 final, Brussels, 09.03.2020.
- EUROPEAN COUNCIL (WWWa), *Cotonou Agreement*, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/cotonou-agreement/> (01.12.2021)
- EUROPEAN COUNCIL (WWWb), *EU–Africa relations*, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-africa/> (30.06.2021)
- EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (2018), *Backlash in Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Rights*, June 2018, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/604955/IPOL\\_STU\(2018\)604955\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/604955/IPOL_STU(2018)604955_EN.pdf) (30.06.2018)
- EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (2019), *On-going negotiations for a new EU–ACP Partnership Agreement*, 28 November 2019, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0084\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0084_EN.html) (28.11.2019)
- FLINT Adrian (2009), *The End of a "Special Relationship"? The New EU–ACP Economic Partnership Agreements*, "Review of African Political Economy", vol. 36, no. 119. DOI: 10.1080/03056240902863595
- FRANKOWSKI Paweł, SŁOMCZYŃSKA Irma (2011), *Unia Europejska – Afryka Subsaharyjska. Uwarunkowania, mechanizmy, efektywność współpracy*, Lublin.
- FRIENDS OF EUROPE (WWW), *Africa–Europe Foundation*, <https://www.friendsofeurope.org/initiatives/africa-europe-foundation/> (02.12.2021)
- FOX Benjamin (2021), *Africa must answer its own 'Kissinger question', say EU diplomats*, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/africa/news/africa-must-answer-its-own-kissinger-question-say-eu-diplomats/> (03.06.2021)
- GUERRINA Roberta, WRIGHT Katharine A.M. (2016), *Gendering normative power Europe: lessons of the Women, Peace and Security agenda*, "International Affairs", vol. 92, no. 2. DOI: 10.1111/1468-2346.12555
- HAASTRUP Toni, MAH Luis, DUGGAN Niall (2020), *The Routledge Handbook of EU–Africa Relations*, London.
- HILDEBRANDT Timothy (2012), *Development and Division: the effect of transnational linkages and local politics on LGBT activism in China*, "Journal of Contemporary China", vol. 21, no. 77. DOI: 10.1080/10670564.2012.684967
- JAQUETTE Jane (2017), *Women/Gender and Development: the Growing Gap Between Theory and Practice*, "Studies in Comparative International Development", vol. 52, no. 2. DOI: 10.1007/s12116-017-9248-8
- KNOLL Anna, MUCCHI Virginia (2020), *Africa–Europe relations beyond 2020: Looking through a gender lens*, ECDPM Discussion Paper No. 285.

- KOTSOPOULOS John, MATTHEIS Frank (2018), *A contextualisation of EU–Africa relations: Trends and drivers from a reciprocal perspective*, "South African Journal of International Affairs", vol. 25, issue 4. DOI: 10.1080/10220461.2018.1551154
- LEBOVICH Andrew (2020), *After covid: Resetting Europe–Africa relations for mutual benefit*, [https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_after\\_covid\\_resetting\\_europe\\_africa\\_relations\\_for\\_mutual\\_benefit/](https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_after_covid_resetting_europe_africa_relations_for_mutual_benefit/) (08.06.2020).
- LEDUC Brigitte (2009), *Guidelines for Gender Sensitive Research*, ICIMOD.
- MERCER Claire (1999), *Reconceptualizing State-Society Relations in Tanzania: 'Are NGOs Making a Difference'?*, "Area", vol. 31(3). DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-4762.1999.tb00089.x
- MORRICA Valerie, NGUYEN Nga Thi Viet (2021), *Gender (In)Equality: The Pandemic has Impacted Women in Croatia on More Levels than Men*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2021/03/05/gender-inequality-the-pandemic-has-hit-women-at-more-levels-than-men> (05.03.2021).
- OBI Cyril (2010), *Oil as the 'curse' of conflict in Africa: peering through the smoke and mirrors*, "Review of African Political Economy", vol. 37, no. 126.
- REID Graeme (2013), *The Trouble with Tradition*, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/01/11/trouble-tradition> (11.01.2013).
- SERRANO AMAYA Jose Fernando, RIOS GONZALEZ Oriol (2019), *Introduction to the Special Issue: Challenges of LGBT research in the 21st century*, "International Sociology", vol. 34, issue. 4.
- SIMONTON Deborah (2010), *Women in European Culture and Society: Gender, Skill and Identity from 1700*, Routledge.
- STRAUSS Marina (2021), *Post-Cotonou: EU reaches agreement with African, Caribbean and Pacific States*, "Deutsche Welle", <https://www.dw.com/en/post-cotonou-eu-reaches-agreement-with-african-caribbean-and-pacific-states/a-57220259> (16.04.2021).
- SUBRAHMANIAN Ramya (2004), *Making sense of gender in shifting institutional contexts: some reflections on gender mainstreaming*, "IDS Bulletin", vol. 35, no. 4.
- TALLIS Vicci, MATHONSI Claire (2018), *Shifting discourses – from gender to feminisms: Can global instruments impact on the lives of African women?*, "Agenda", vol. 32(1). DOI:10.1080/10130950.2018.1460109
- TAYLOR Paul, CURTIS Devon (2008), *Organizacja Narodów Zjednoczonych*, in: John Baylis, Steve Smith (eds) *Globalizacja polityki światowej. Wprowadzenie do stosunków międzynarodowych*, Kraków
- TEU, Treaty on European Union, OJ C 326, 26.10.2012.
- The Third ACP-EEC Convention (1984) signed at Lomé on 8 December 1984, OJ L 86/3, 31.03.1986.
- The Fourth ACP-EEC Convention (1989) signed at Lomé on 15 December 1989, OJ L 229/3, 18.08.1991.
- TICKNER J. Ann, SJOBERG Laura (2011), *Feminism and International Relations Conversations about the Past, Present and Future*, Routledge.
- TRIPP Aili Mari (2006), *The evolution of transnational feminisms: consensus, conflict, and new dynamism*, in: Myra Marx Ferre, Aili Mari Tripp (eds), *Global Feminism: Transnational Women's Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights*, New York.
- TRIPP Aili Mari (2009), *African Women's Movements: Transforming Political Landscapes*, Cambridge.
- UNITED NATIONS (WWWa), *Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/> (01.12.2021)
- UNITED NATIONS (WWWb), *UN Free&Equal: Campaigns*, [www.unfe.org/campaigns/](http://www.unfe.org/campaigns/) (29.11.2021)
- UNITED NATIONS (2020), *Policy Brief: The impact of COVID-19 on women*, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women> (09.04.2020).

- UN WOMEN (WWWa), *12 critical areas*, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw59/feature-stories> (02.07.2021)
- UN WOMEN (2015), *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing+5 Political Declaration and Outcome*, UN Women Headquarters, [https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/PFA\\_E\\_Final\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/PFA_E_Final_WEB.pdf) (31.01.2015)
- UN WOMEN (2021), *Impact of COVID-19 on violence against women and girls and service provision: UN Women rapid assessment and findings*, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Impact-of-COVID-19-on-violence-against-women-and-girls-and-service-provision-en.pdf> (29.11.2021)
- VAN DER VLEUTEN Anna, VAN EERDEWIJK Anouka (2020), *The Fragmented Inclusion of Gender Equality in AU-EU Relations in Times of Crises*, "Political Studies Review", vol. 8, no. 3. DOI: 10.1177/1478929920918830
- WADESANGO Newman, REMBE Symphorosa, CHABAYA Owence (2011), *Violation of Women's Rights by Harmful Traditional Practices*, "The Anthropologist", vol. 13, no. 2. DOI: 10.1080/09720073.2011.11891187