

Record of outreach meeting with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Secretariat

We held outreach meetings with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) on 28 January and 12 February 2013. The following is a record of the statements made by the representatives at that meeting.

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Key points

- Shared competency is a good model. It allows for both sides to implement programmes at various levels, at different budgets and allows both EU and EU Member States to complement each other. There are also areas where each can bring comparative advantage which allows for each player to deliver concrete results. However, interactions between the different EU institutions remain an issue, particularly in bringing together policies around development and trade which can complement each other better. In the future, there could be a bigger role for the European Parliament and Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) to give the partnership more depth.

Policy making

- The ACP Secretariat welcomed the Agenda for Change and felt this was becoming a reality under the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). Some other priorities that the EU will undertake will focus on areas where there can be a large impact such as energy, agriculture and private sector development.

Policy coherence for development (PCD)

- Looking ahead, one area of importance is that of PCD. The Secretariat were keen to see better PCD coordination at the national and Brussels levels. The question now remained whether this could be addressed at the EDF level, especially under the MFF. The Secretariat said that the ACP Summit in Malabo will be addressing how to have better capacity on coherence around development and trade. Joint Programming will help towards achieving policy coherence objectives.
- The ACP Secretariat particularly highlighted the EU's important role in trade, for example in concluding Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs).

EU comparative advantages

- In relation to comparative advantage, the Commission could provide large scale resources and this is a clear example of the beneficial role the EU brings.
- The EU is best placed to deal with regional bodies. An example used was that of DG Trade which is best placed to deal with regional bodies concerning trade. There are, however, concerns about the cost and delays associated with EU bureaucracy.

Institutional relationships

- The ACP Secretariat felt that the Lisbon Treaty allows the Commission and Council to have more power and this is evident in discussions around the EPAs. The ACP Secretariat also felt that there could be a growing role for the European Parliament. This could give more weight to the JPA which is an important governing body to the relationship. As of now, the ACP Secretariat felt that Member States had the leading role in decision making processes. However, they noted that there is a possibility that the creation of the European External Action Service would lead to a lesser role for Member States.

Future challenges and opportunities

- The ACP Secretariat felt that Cotonou post-2020 will define the future of the current relationship. It would be about EU having a vision of the relationship and ACP having a big stake within that.

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