

March 2025

#AUEUTracker

Infosheet Bulletin: EU-South Africa

Infosheet Bulletin: EU-South Africa Cooperation

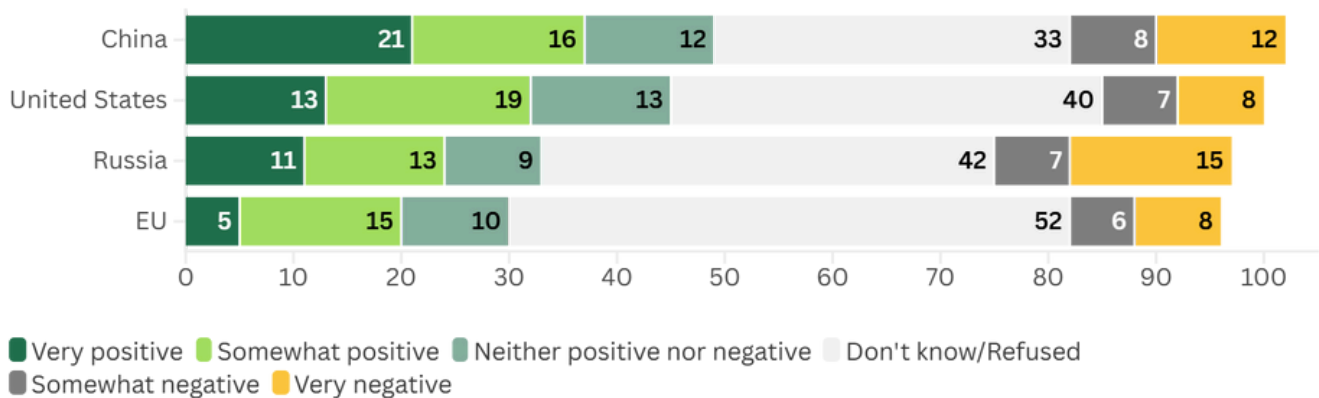


EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW ¹

- **March 13, 2025 marked the first bilateral summit in seven years between the EU and South Africa.** Hosted by President Cyril Ramaphosa, with EU high-level representatives António Costa (President of the Council) and Ursula von der Leyen (President of the Commission). The EU announced a €4.7 billion investment in South Africa to support green energy and vaccine production, as well as initiate talks on new trade deals.
- Joint commitments on enhancing scientific cooperation were also confirmed at the Summit. **South Africa is the EU's biggest partner in research and Innovation in Africa, and it is the first among African countries in participating to Horizon Europe.**
- **Peace and Security is higher now on the agenda,** with a joint commitment to assess and address together the funding gap for Africa's peace operations.
- At the multilateral level, **South Africa's current G20 Presidency provides a strategic platform for the Africa-Europe Partnership to step up cooperation and drive the global agenda** (an Africa-led G20 taking place not long after the African Union's membership of G20 and coinciding with the defining Financing for Development International Conference).
- **The 1st Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting of South Africa's G20 Presidency (26-27 February, Cape Town) reinforced Domestic Resource Mobilisation (DRM)** as an agenda Africa-Europe can advance together. The G20 Chair's Summary underlined DRM is "foundational to achieving fiscal sustainability and SDGs" and raised the critical issue of debt.
- In addition, the EU and South Africa are ready to enhance their partnership on the reform of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), with the March 2025 Summit positively acknowledging **the establishment of an independent High-Level Group of Eminent Persons to revitalise the WTO.**
- **Within South Africa, positive public perceptions of the EU's collaboration remains limited (latest survey of Afrobarometer) despite the fact that South Africa is the EU's largest trading partner in sub-Saharan Africa and the EU is South Africa's primary trade and investment partner.** In the previous year, there was evidence of enhanced negative perceptions of "double standards" towards the EU related to the Israel-Gaza War despite the reality of different positions between individual EU Member States.

¹ This Bulletin provides an overview of the current scope of cooperation between South Africa and the EU. It has been produced by the Africa-Europe Foundation (AEF) as part of AEF's initiative to independently track and facilitate the implementation of joint AU-EU finance/policy commitments. The resources referenced are all publicly available, including the latest outcome note from the South Africa-EU Summit, with the analysis benefiting from AEF's multi-stakeholder 'Africa-Europe Strategy Groups' and cross-continental research network.

Perceptions survey reveals the EU’s influence in South Africa is largely unnoticed



Source: Afrobarometer, 2022, "As South Africa looks to Russia, how do citizens see influence of foreign powers?"

The EU remains South Africa’s main trade and investment partner worldwide



Source: EEAS, 2025, based on trade statistics of 2023

SOUTH AFRICA’S G20+1 PRESIDENCY PRIORITIES

- **Advancing equality and solidarity:** With the theme “Solidarity, Equality and Sustainable Development,” South Africa announced its focus on promoting fairness and equal opportunities globally - including just transition.
- **Reforming global governance and multilateralism:** South Africa aims to modernize and reform international institutions, especially the United Nations, to be more inclusive and reflective of current geopolitical realities. In addition, South Africa is calling for substantial reforms in the international financial system to promote equitable prosperity.
- **Africa’s development, Agenda 2063 and the SDGs:** South Africa will prioritize Africa’s development goals, aligning with the African Union’s Agenda 2063. This focus includes leveraging the newly granted G20 membership status of the AU to amplify African voices. With the 2030 Agenda deadline approaching, South Africa stresses the urgency of “turbo-charging” resource mobilization and implementation efforts to close the SDG gap.
- **International tax:** Despite the US’s attempt to block any new mandate for the G20 finance/tax work-stream, the 1st Finance Ministers’s Meeting of February 2025 included several new references to South Africa’s international tax priorities (Domestic Resource Mobilisation; inequalities; taking stock of the G20 progress; and tax certainty).

AU-EU PARTNERSHIP – TRACKING COOPERATION WITH SOUTH AFRICA

- For the Bilateral Summit of March 2025, the [EU announced a Global Gateway Trade and Investment Package worth €4.7 billion](#) to boost sustainable growth, resilience and job creation. This package includes grants and a combination of public and private loans from European financial institutions and the European private sector. The investment is structured around three pillars: (1) Enhancing Vaccine Production and Pharmaceutical Value Chains, (2) Supporting the Just Energy Transition, namely green hydrogen, critical raw material, green logistics and renewable energy, and (3) Improving Connectivity (Transport & Digital) Infrastructure.
- The EU and South Africa launched in February 2025 the global campaign '[Scaling up Renewables in Africa](#)', to be rolled-out in the lead-up to the G20 Summit in South Africa in November 2025.
- There is continued support for **South Africa's Just Energy Transition**, with the EU financing of €63 million between 2021 and 2027, aiming to facilitate a sustainable and well-managed energy transition in South Africa, fostering job creation and skills development. This action aligns with the Just Energy Transition Partnership established between the EU, South Africa, and other G7 countries at COP26.
- In January 2023, the EU and its member states partnered with South Africa to invest over €280 million in its Just and Green Recovery through the **Just and Green Recovery Team Europe Initiative**. This includes €87.75 million from the EU budget. The investment supports policy reforms for a green recovery, unlocking green investments, and building a knowledge-based transition. Moreover, €40 million in EU grant funding has been allocated to facilitate investment in public infrastructure through blended finance.
- **Bridging Inequalities through Greener Municipal Services**, with the EU allocating €15 million to South Africa to address inequality and support its energy transition by enhancing climate- and environment-focused municipal services. This project contributes to South Africa's Just and Green Recovery.
- South Africa is the EU's biggest partner in research and Innovation in Africa, and it is the first among African countries in participating to Horizon Europe. South Africa is an active member of the meetings of the Bureau of the [AU-EU High-Level Policy Dialogue on STI](#), and played an important role in the development of the [AU-EU Innovation Agenda](#), hosting in Cape Town the first ever [AU-EU Innovation Festival](#) in June 2023.
- JSTCC at its 17th meeting in November 2024 highlighted plans to enhance cooperation in areas such as Open Science, bioeconomy, climate change, sustainable energy, and health. South African research institutions are set to increase participation in Horizon Europe and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions starting with Work Programme 2025. The Joint Science and Technology Cooperation Committee (JSTCC) monitors and facilitates bilateral scientific collaboration within the broader EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership under the **bilateral Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement** of 1997.
- Building on the success of the inaugural South Africa-EU Investment Seminar in February 2024, and in parallel to the 2025 Mining Indaba, the EU will host a **second edition high-level event**, bringing together policy makers and business leaders from both Europe and South Africa to accelerate South Africa's ambition to develop critical raw material (CRM) value chains.
- In September 2024, the EU pledged \$35 million in grants to South Africa to boost its **green hydrogen initiatives**. This includes \$7.8 million dedicated to supporting Transnet's infrastructure.

AFRICA-EUROPE FOUNDATION & SOUTH AFRICA

Since its inception in 2020, the Africa-Europe Foundation (AEF) has continued to deep its cooperation with South African partners. Most recently this has included:

- **A first MoU co-signed in 2025 with South Africa** (The National Treasury) to support and shape an impactful finance and tax track in the framework of the G20 Presidency, and cooperation agreements with the South Africa-based African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and African Climate Foundation (partner in co-founding AEF).
- **Cooperation with leading think-tanks and research institutes**, among them: the South African Institute of International Affairs (member of the AEF Ocean Strategy Group and partner on G20); Nelson Mandela University's Cultural Observatory (co-lead of the Africa-Europe Research Initiative on 'Skills Foresight' to be published in 2025); the African Peer Review Mechanism Secretariat (connected to AEF's work on commitment tracking); and ICLEI Africa (in relation to the AEF Energy Strategy Group).

RESOURCE LINKS AND REFERENCES

- 8th EU-South Africa Summit Joint Declaration, 13 March 2025, [link](#)
- 16th EU-South Africa Ministerial Political Dialogue Joint Press Release, 19 February 2025, [link](#)
- Africa-Europe Foundation (2024) 'The State of Africa-Europe Report 2024', [link](#)
- Afrobarometer (2022) 'South Africa Round 8 summary of results', [link](#)
- EEAS (2025) 'EU-South Africa Factsheet', [link](#)
- European Commission (2025) Press Release: 'President von der Leyen in South Africa unveils €4.7 billion Global Gateway package', [link](#)
- Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2024) '2024 Ibrahim Forum Report - Financing Africa: where is the money?', [link](#)
- Official Journal of the EU (2016) 'Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and its Member States and the SADC EPA States', [link](#)
- South Africa (2024) G20 South Africa Presidency Key Messages, [link](#)
- South Africa (2025) Press Release, 17 March 2025: 'South Africa and the European Union look to the future', [link](#)
- South Africa Institute of International Affairs (2024) Policy Note 11, December 2024, 'The Future of Sovereign Debt Architecture: Priorities for the South African G20 Presidency', [link](#)
- [South Africa's Just Energy Transition](#)

