

This special lecture examines the argument that the EU has had a unique and an important role as a model for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) countries' development and regional integration. This lecture offers a new insight and analyzes whether or not the argument mentioned is appropriate and applicable.



Special Lecture

“ The European Union as a Model and Trade Partner for Sub-Saharan Africa: A Reappraisal”

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SINDZINGRE**

Speaker:

National Centre for
Scientific Research
(CNRS, France)

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Campus

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Abstract

The presentation analyses two key questions: i) the EU as a model for Sub-Saharan Africa/SSA of a regional integration that is the most achieved and the most capable of fostering growth; and ii) the EU as a trade partner for these countries. It argues that these two dimensions have been questioned since the mid-2000s and that this questioning stems from common interrogations on the legitimacy, or, in economic terms, on the credibility and the efficiency of the EU's policy choices - both in academic debates and public opinions. The first step of the argument is that while the EU has represented for many developing countries (e.g., the WAEMU in SSA) a paradigmatic model of successful and 'developmental' regional integration arrangements throughout its successive phases of deepening, the EU's increasingly explicit adherence to specific theoretical assumptions and policies has eroded the economic credibility of its model and of the associated policies as an optimal tool of growth and welfare. These assumptions include the affirmation of the benefits of competition, limitations to state aid, trade openness, economic stabilisation and fiscal adjustment as the only routes towards growth. This erosion has taken place both inside the EU for many of its citizens and outside the EU for many developing countries' governments that seek to enhance their regional integration. The second step of the argument is that the increasing adherence to the above-mentioned theoretical assumptions and associated policy choices have been a key element in the evolution of the external trade relationships of the EU with developing countries: these assumptions have influenced the evolution of the theoretical framework and trade policies devised for the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, from the end of the Lomé Conventions to the Cotonou agreement (2000) and then the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) (2007). The EPAs promote reciprocal free trade between the EU and the ACPs via the claim that the latter will have developmental impacts and foster ACPs groupings own integration: the wide criticism of EPAs and the resistance to them since their launch, particularly from SSA countries and groupings, as well as the important delays in their implementation, demonstrate that the EU has made policy choices regarding its trade policies towards developing countries, which appear to be inefficient as tools for these countries' growth.