

Corridors and Urban Systems in Africa – overview, main findings and conclusions

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In context of the 2021-2027 EU programming exercise, the identification and prioritisation of key strategic corridors in Africa, and focus on their development, is an opportunity to deepen the Africa-EU partnership by prioritising investments that can have the greatest mutually beneficial impact. Strategic corridors are also meant to support territorial development, both rural and urban, through the deployment and maintenance of reliable transport and logistics networks, and services, as well as digital and energy-related infrastructure.

The Political Guidelines for the European Commission 2024-2029¹ envisage the development of a range of new Clean Trade and Investment Partnerships, as part of the New Economic Foreign Policy. These partnerships are intended to help secure critical minerals, raw materials and clean energy along diversified and resilient supply chains. Within this framework, the European Commission foresees a new impetus in the partnership with Africa, including investments through Global Gateway in transport corridors, ports, renewable energy generation, green hydrogen production and raw material value chains.

In line with the Comprehensive Strategy with Africa² and Global Gateway³, since 2020 two departments of the European Commission – the Directorate-General for international Partnerships (INTPA) and the Joint Research Centre (JRC) have been jointly performing studies on ‘Corridors and Urban Systems in Africa’ (**CUSA**). Based on these studies, a shortlist of 11 envisaged strategic corridors was announced at the 6th European Union-African Union Summit, February 2022. Following a series of later political evolutions, the delineation of two corridors has been adjusted, while in November 2023 a new, twelfth corridor was added to the priority list. The CUSA team has analysed and assessed 11, out of these 12 corridors (**Figure A**), namely:

- **Corridor 1:** Abidjan-Lagos (Western Africa) – Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria;
- **Corridor 2:** Abidjan-Ouagadougou (Western Africa) – Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso;
- **Corridor 3:** Praia-Dakar-Abidjan (Western Africa) – Cabo Verde, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire;
- **Corridor 4:** Cotonou-Niamey (Western Africa): Benin, Niger;
- **Corridor 5:** Libreville-Kribi-Douala-N'Djamena (Central Africa) – São Tomé and Príncipe, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Chad;
- **Corridor 6:** Douala-Kribi-Bangui-Kisangani-Kampala (Central Africa) – Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda;
- **Corridor 7:** Dar es Salaam-Nairobi-Addis Ababa-Berbera-Djibouti (Eastern Africa) – Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti;

¹ Ursula von der Leyen, Candidate for the European Commission President, ‘Europe’s choice – Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2029’, Strasbourg, 18 July 2024.

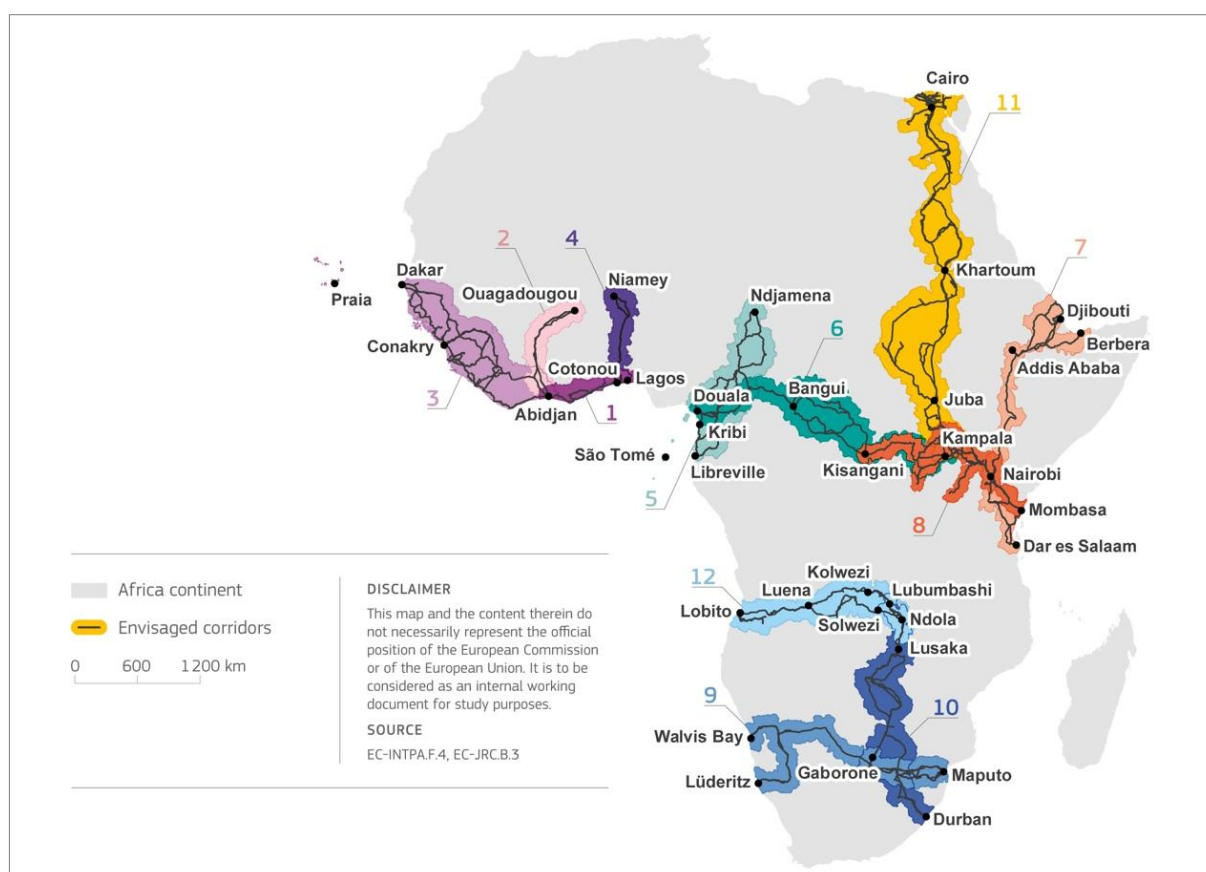
² JOIN(2020) 4 final, Brussels, 9.3.2020

³ JOIN(2021) 30 final, Brussels, 1.12.2021

- **Corridor 8:** Mombasa-Kisangani (Eastern Africa) – Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of the Congo;
- **Corridor 9:** Maputo-Gaborone-Walvis Bay-Lüderitz (Southern Africa) – Mozambique, South Africa, Eswatini, Botswana, Namibia;
- **Corridor 10:** Durban-Lusaka-Lubumbashi (Southern Africa) – South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Democratic Republic of the Congo;
- **Corridor 12:** Lobito-Kolwezi-Lubumbashi-Solwezi-Ndola (Southern Africa) – Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia⁴;

against **four sub-objectives**: 1) **Reduce carbon footprint** and **preserve biodiversity**; 2) **Digitalise the corridors**; 3) **Improve accessibility**: access to public services in the corridor territory, linking also rural road networks, urban mobility and connectivity in and between cities; 4) **Unlock productive areas** and support value chains' development, e.g. mining / including raw materials, agriculture / agri-business, industry, etc.; and the **overall objective** to **strengthen transport and trade corridor efficiency**.

Figure A: The 12 envisaged corridors.



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

⁴ The assessment of corridor 11: Cairo-Khartoum-Juba-Kampala (Northern & Eastern Africa) – Egypt, Soudan, South Sudan and Uganda, has been postponed.

The goal of this exercise has been to support the decision-making of the EU Delegations, European Investment Bank, EU Member States, International Financial Institutions, etc., in the context of the Team Europe Initiatives and beyond, with regard to specific funding and project decisions.

This report provides **consolidated comparative assessment of the 11 analysed corridors**.

The following **main conclusions** could be drawn:

1. All 11 shortlisted corridors are attractive for investments.
2. The largest benefits are expected from interventions in transport infrastructure and accessibility.
3. The investments in reducing carbon footprint and preserving biodiversity also appear quite promising.
4. The most challenging area for intervention seems to be digitalisation. Synergies with investments in transport and accessibility could be exploited, to reduce the cost of digitalisation interventions.
5. The challenges in boosting productivity appear as the most diverse ones and need to be further assessed by corridors, areas and sectors. A potential high-productivity cluster is identified in Western Africa.
6. Large urban agglomerations and major transport and logistics infrastructure entities often demonstrate different intervention profiles from the remaining wide corridor area. Additional in-depth studies are needed to better understand their specific challenges, opportunities and trade-offs.

The above conclusions have been drawn taking into account several important limitations, starting with the availability, accessibility and affordability of plausible data and information (especially – geo-localised ones), also because they were beyond the budget of the project. As modelling represents an abstraction of the real world, the modelling scenarios provide indicative results only, but do not suggest specific interventions. All scenarios presume stable political and security situation. The impacts of the service sector and tourism have not been analysed. No field visits have been performed, but the EU Delegations in Africa provided extremely useful local insights.

The potential follow-up steps could include analysis and assessment of urban specifics, sustainable territorial development aspects, critical raw materials, logistics and transport, cross-border issues and bottlenecks, etc., in close collaboration with the other EU Services, in particular the EU Delegations in Africa.