



Special Session Proposal

Corridors and Urban Systems in Africa

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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. The 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.

In line with the EU's Comprehensive Strategy with Africa and Global Gateway, 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). 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 ERSA Special Session on Corridors and Urban Systems in Africa aims to present and discuss with the broader research community selected approaches and results from these studies, related to: 1) Reducing carbon footprint and preserving biodiversity; 2) Enhancing digitalisation; 3) Improving accessibility – access to public services and rural road networks, urban mobility and connectivity within and between cities; 4) Unlocking productive areas and supporting the development of value chains with the overall objective of strengthening transport and trade corridor efficiency. The ultimate goals are to facilitate Africa-Europe and intra-African trade, improve sustainable, efficient, safe and secure connectivity between the two continents, and support development of diversified value chains in Africa that can benefit both African and European industries.

The session situates corridor development and urban systems within broader global transitions shaped by climate change, shifting trade regimes, digitalisation, and geopolitical reconfigurations, highlighting the role of corridors as strategic interfaces between global challenges and regionally grounded transition pathways.