

Research Paper

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Central and Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa Prospects for Sustained Re-engagement



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Summary

- The countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and sub-Saharan Africa have started to re-engage with each other after many years of limited interaction following the end of the Cold War. While renewed partnership will not become a top priority for countries on either side, it is likely that mutual interest will remain at higher levels than in the past three decades.
- For CEE countries, foreign affairs and trade institutions, the business sector, civil society organizations and European Union (EU) membership support and enhance these renewed relations. However, limited top-level political attention and resources, insufficient institutional and research capacity, and regional dynamics restrict the pace and depth of re-engagement.
- EU membership enables CEE countries to engage in discussions and influence decisions on the EU's relations with Africa, to make financial contributions (significant for their budgets) to the European Development Fund (EDF) and other EU financing instruments, and to receive up-to-date information and analysis about current affairs in Africa. At the same time, EU membership also poses challenges for CEE governments that have to consider the implications and constraints of their EU membership when re-building bilateral relations with Africa.
- CEE governments lack the confidence to engage more fully in sub-Saharan Africa because of the latter's perceived complexities. However, the recent economic and migration crises in Europe and sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation have pushed CEE governments to make more concrete steps towards re-building relations with sub-Saharan Africa.
- The core motivation for re-engagement is identical on both sides: a strong interest in diversifying economic relations and increasing trade and investment. These are counterbalanced by the concerns of CEE countries about security in the EU's eastern neighbourhood and the Middle East, which may limit the sustainability of their commitment to Africa.
- Sub-Saharan African governments, while interested, place less emphasis on their re-engagement with CEE counterparts, which indicates that they have higher priorities and are not convinced of the sustainability of CEE policies. But if CEE countries demonstrate a sustained commitment to the region, it is likely that this attitude will change.
- Rebuilding relations may be initially costly for both sides, but could provide economic, security and political benefits given the structure of the economies, needs and resources of the two regions. Strengthening relations will, however, be a long-term process, considering the particularities of both CEE and sub-Saharan African countries, therefore a strategic approach is needed. The building blocks for this could include high-level dialogues and analysis of core bilateral needs, capitalizing on mutual trust (where it exists) for expanding trade and investment, sharing experiences of transformation, and putting in place mechanisms that enable stronger people-to-people relations in areas such as education, research, civil society, media and culture.

- The case for stronger relations is enabled by compatible economies; opportunities for strengthening trade, investment and business development; proximity; similar economic, political, security and social transformations in the past three decades; similar current transformation challenges; and good levels of trust among several of the countries in the two regions.
- Some core challenges to be tackled include limited high-level political commitment for strengthening relations; low awareness about current realities in the two regions; lack of sufficient institutional and organizational mechanisms for advancing bilateral trade and investment; uncertain positioning of CEE countries within the EU and in their relationship with Western European countries in Africa; and hesitation on the European Commission's side to facilitate participation of CEE actors in the EU's Africa and development policies and practices.

1. Introduction

The countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)¹ are rediscovering their old relations with Africa. Over the last few years, a growing number of CEE embassies and trade offices have been established in sub-Saharan Africa (referred to in this paper simply as Africa),² indicating that the relations between the two regions are gaining renewed attention. The two regions had complex relations from the 1950s to the early 1990s. This was followed, in the 1990s and 2000s, by an abrupt disengagement by the CEE, with signs of renewed bilateral relations only emerging in the late 2000s. After three decades of focusing on domestic transition, EU integration and economic crises, CEE countries have realized the importance of being better connected globally, including in Africa.

But, while recent developments show a growing mutual interest between the countries of the two regions, the path to stronger re-engagement is by no means without challenges. Their relations have the potential to strengthen both regions, but these relations will not become sustainable and mutually beneficial without a strategic approach on both sides, that is yet to be developed.

Africa is of growing interest to CEE countries for several reasons. Its economic and trade potential – and geographic proximity – have become relevant in a context where European economic crisis has demonstrated the risks of relying mainly on intra-EU trade. Africa is also at the forefront of the EU's foreign and development agendas. If CEE countries wish to participate more fully in EU foreign, security and development policy, they need to develop a better understanding of Africa. Moreover, heightened attention to transnational security threats such as terrorism, migration, and illegal flows of drugs, people and weapons has elevated Africa's importance.

Recent security challenges in Ukraine and the Balkans, instability within the EU and growing tensions in relations with Russia and Turkey may influence the ability of CEE countries to maintain their current impetus in re-engaging with Africa. But, even as Europe's broader neighbourhood context is being reshaped, certain aspects of this will nevertheless enhance the CEE's interest in Africa, for example, economic sanctions against Russia and more inward-looking US and Western European countries.

CEE countries are of increased interest to Africa due to their economic and technological achievements, experience with transition and institutional capacity-building, bilateral aid and, not least, membership of the EU. They produce high-quality goods at appealing prices and maintenance costs for African countries, and they also present opportunities for investment in Africa. CEE countries are now bilateral donors, though the relevance of this is not due to the levels of aid they have committed to (0.33 per cent of gross national income (GNI) by 2030) but to the successful transformation of their centralized, communist states into free-market economies and functioning

¹ Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. This paper treats CEE as a region because of the shared history of its countries, while it is acknowledged that politically and economically they are diverse. It therefore exposes patterns of cooperation as well as of divergence. Within the context of the EU, CEE countries do not act in concert with the exception, at times, of the Visegrád Group consisting of Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

² While a focus on the entire continent would be justified, the relations of CEE countries with North Africa differ substantively from those with sub-Saharan Africa, which are less explored. This paper treats sub-Saharan Africa as one region, while acknowledging that there are broad differences among its countries. While focusing primarily on Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania and South Africa, the paper draws inferences for the entire region.

democracies. Moreover, CEE countries that are Africa friendly and well informed may contribute to higher levels of EU aid, and a more sustained and effective EU engagement in Africa; whereas their being less engaged in Africa may lead to more pressure within the EU to direct focus and resources towards other regions, primarily the eastern neighbourhood. Either dynamic could be intensified by the growth in the relative importance of CEE countries within the EU after Brexit.

Rebuilding the CEE–Africa relationship comes in a broader context of growing international competition for access to Africa’s resources, markets and business opportunities, and the weakening of CEE countries’ Cold War ties with Africa. These ties emerged due to important investments in technical assistance and scholarships by CEE countries from the 1950s to the 1980s and, while they are slowly fading, they are nevertheless still remembered on both sides.

This paper provides an overview of the trends and current relationship between CEE countries and Africa, highlights challenges and sets out potential options for governments in both regions and for the European Commission. It is part of a three-year project and aims to kick-start a broader discussion on the relations between the two regions.³ This paper starts with a brief review of the relations between CEE and Africa from the 1950s to the present. It then reviews the political, economic and development dimensions of the engagement between the two regions, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of current approaches as well as potential challenges for furthering relations. It also suggests means of strengthening relations.

³ This paper is based on individual interviews as well as roundtable discussions carried out in Czech Republic, Ethiopia, Germany, Hungary, Mozambique, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, South Africa and Tanzania. The interviews were carried out between November 2016 and April 2017 under anonymity.

2. A Brief History of CEE–Sub-Saharan Africa Relations

The Cold War

The communist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe engaged substantively with several African countries for economic, political and ideological purposes during the Cold War. The first efforts to establish connections started in 1953. CEE countries engaged with newly independent states in Africa to strengthen their own position in the communist world and their domestic prestige, not always under the direction of the Soviet Union, and at times even competing with the latter's interests. They were well regarded by African countries because of their non-colonial history, small size and unthreatening partnership approach. The most active CEE countries in the 1950s and early 1960s were East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.⁴

The juxtaposition of Cold War interests with decolonization conditioned the policies of CEE states.⁵ Their relations with Africa grew not only in economic terms but also politically and militarily, with support provided to the anti-colonial struggles in several countries. The engagement between communist CEE and Africa expanded rapidly. By the 1960s, one observer described their relations – comprising of ‘trade ties, delegation exchanges, training programs, broadcast schedules, contacts between semi-official organizations and trade unions, journalists, youth and sporting groups’ – as impressive.⁶ By the early 1980s, the cumulative investment of CEE countries in Africa was more than half that of the Soviet Union. Their exports to less-developed countries (including those from Africa) amount to roughly half of their exports to developed ones.⁷

Table 1: Central and Eastern Europe trade, 1960–81, \$ billion

	Total trade	Communist countries		Non-communist countries	
		Total	Developed countries	Less developed countries (inc. in Africa)	
1960					
Exports	7.63	5.53	1.52	0.58	
Imports	7.76	5.56	1.71	0.50	
1975					
Exports	45.21	30.12	10.31	4.79	
Imports	51.23	30.55	17.13	3.55	
1981					
Exports	83.95	53.12	20.33	10.50	
Imports	86.96	55.51	23.54	7.90	

Source: Based on data from Aspaturian, V. V. (1984), ‘Eastern Europe in World Perspective’, in Rakowska-Harmstone, T. (ed.) (1984), *Communism in Eastern Europe, second edition*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

⁴ Brzezinski, Z. (1963), *Africa and the Communist World*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, p. 84.

⁵ Schmidt, E. (2013), *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, p. 2; Westad, O. A. (2011), *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of our Time*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁶ Brzezinski, Z. (1963), *Africa and the Communist World*, p. 85.

⁷ Aspaturian, V. V. (1984), ‘Eastern Europe in World Perspective’, in Rakowska-Harmstone, T. (ed.) (1984), *Communism in Eastern Europe, second edition*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, p. 32.

CEE countries also offered large amounts of technical assistance and loans to counterparts in Africa, at times surpassing those provided by the Soviet Union. East Germany and Romania were at the forefront of this.⁸ A significant component of their assistance to Africa, which had a strong impact on long-term political relations, consisted of scholarships and training opportunities. The number of students coming from Third World countries to CEE countries on scholarships grew significantly, reaching tens of thousands in total by the end of the 1980s.⁹ These exchanges contributed to creating broadly positive engagement between CEE and African countries, primarily at the level of people-to-people relations.

There are lessons to be learned from CEE countries' strong history of engaging with Africa during the communist period, despite the differences in the ideological, political and economic global context between then and now. Technical assistance, education, and assistance in infrastructure and agriculture were effective not only in improving relations, but also in terms of positioning CEE countries as relevant global partners. Currently, however, CEE governments pay little attention to historical relations with Africa and appear not to draw on past experiences for strengthening current policies, even in those areas where relevant. The past investment of the CEE countries in Africa generated connections that remain meaningful today. The large number of African students who studied there and the memory of former partnerships and utility of the CEE products offer a basis for re-engagement.

Relations since 1989

The end of the Cold War led to a complete revision by CEE countries of their policies towards Africa and to the impossibility of maintaining the same levels of engagement. Embassies were closed, the number of scholarships was reduced and the volume of trade collapsed. In spite of African interest in continuing relations,¹⁰ CEE countries became completely absorbed by their efforts to join the EU and NATO as well as with internal struggles with transitions from communism to such an extent that their relationships with other parts of the world became a secondary priority or disappeared. The political and economic links with Africa diminished substantially. Due to the restructuring of CEE economies, trade relations contracted, influenced by privatization processes and reductions in production.

Few opportunities emerged for new relations to be established. Business people alongside political leaders and policymakers in each region have retained an outdated image of the other. In CEE, much of the business community, government officials, politicians and the wider population are exposed mainly to negative news stories about Africa. In Africa, there are few, if indeed any, stories about new developments in CEE. African perceptions range from the positive, about the educational institutions, to the irrelevant as a result of the collapse of the communist regimes.

The lack of political contact has been reinforced by the limited infrastructure available to support analysis and research on both sides. The number of universities offering courses on the politics and international relations of the two regions is currently limited, as is the number of research institutes and researchers concentrating on this relationship.

⁸ Barnett, T. P. M. (1992), *Romanian and East German Policies in the Third World: Comparing the Strategies of Ceaușescu and Honecker*, Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger; and Oprea, M. (2009), *Development Discourse in Romania: from Socialism to EU Membership*, PhD dissertation, University of Bologna, http://amsdottorato.unibo.it/2228/1/Oprea_Mirela_tesi.pdf (accessed 23 Jan. 2017).

⁹ Aspaturian, V. V. (1984), 'Eastern Europe in World Perspective', p. 36.

¹⁰ Cervenka, Z. (1992), *African National Congress Meets Eastern Europe: A dialogue on common experiences*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Appendix 3.

Between 2004 and 2013, the CEE countries achieved their objective of joining the EU, which brought about three important shifts in their foreign policies. First, as the aim that dominated their agenda was achieved, more space opened up for pursuing other objectives. Second, they became part of a broader set of EU instruments and treaties (e.g. the Cotonou Partnership Agreement and the European Development Fund) that commit them to providing input into policymaking and contributing financially to the EDF. Third, as EU members CEE states have committed to provide development assistance bilaterally, and some CEE countries have built development partnerships with African countries.

The focus on EU integration has also led to stronger economic and trade relations between CEE countries and their EU partners. Their economies are highly dependent on intra-EU trade.¹¹ However, the 2008–10 economic crisis showed the negative consequences of over-dependence on this trade and played an important role in shifting CEE interests towards other parts of the world, including Africa. This realization was strengthened by the security challenges perceived by CEE countries in relation to the recent migration crisis as both the number of migrants from African countries is increasing and, in the perception of some CEE countries, migration is connected to terrorism and other security threats.

Therefore, while relations between CEE and Africa had deteriorated considerably by the early 2000s, there have been signs of a revival from 2008–09.¹² Most CEE countries are now rethinking their policies towards Africa, with Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary at the forefront.

¹¹ Eurostat, 'International Trade in Goods', http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/International_trade_in_goods (accessed 21 Jan. 2017).

¹² Research interviews, 2016–17.

3. Current Political, Economic and Development Relations

The political dimension

In bilateral terms, there is a growing institutional infrastructure for engagement by CEE countries in Africa through an increasing number of embassies and honorary consulates. Several ambassadors in the region see developing their networks of honorary consuls as one of their primary objectives.¹³ The strengthening of relations is also substantiated by the increase in the number of meetings, visits and bilateral memoranda and commissions.

From a multilateral perspective, there has been increased cooperation between the countries in the two regions within the framework of the UN and the Africa–EU partnerships. The political dimension of relations became more complex after the CEE countries joined the EU. The UN has also enabled cooperation around candidatures for non-permanent seats in the Security Council and joint initiatives (e.g. the Slovakian–South African cooperation on security-sector reform).

There is limited multilateral cooperation among the CEE countries in their relations with Africa, with the partial exception of the Visegrád Group. Visegrád House was opened as a representative office in Cape Town, South Africa in 2010, and there are plans to include common relations with Africa on the agenda of the group's 2017 meeting.¹⁴ But, overall, there are few signs of broader CEE cooperation with regard to Africa.

The role of the EU

The EU has brought opportunities for CEE–Africa relations. Being part of the EU institutional framework has undoubtedly contributed to CEE countries learning not only about Africa, but also about the positions and interests of the EU and its older member states towards Africa. This exposure is relevant in terms of information and learning, and for increasing the perceived relevance of Africa in CEE trade, foreign, security and development policymaking.

The EU also raises challenges for deeper CEE–Africa relations. First, the commitments from being part of the EU require substantial foreign-policy focus and resources from CEE countries. Second, the size and strength of the EU's engagement with Africa, as well as that of older member states, make CEE efforts to reconnect with the region seem marginal. Third, while Western European and CEE countries are together members in EU institutions, they have not analysed the opportunities and challenges deriving from their bilateral relations with Africa.

Fourth, common EU approaches towards African challenges make it seem highly complicated, costly and risky for CEE states to have substantive bilateral relations with Africa. The costs and risks reside in the complexities of the African challenges as well as in the current reduced capacity of CEE

¹³ Research interviews, 2017.

¹⁴ Research interviews, 2016.

countries to build a robust understanding of the region, to mitigate risks for business and civil-society engagement, and to develop strategic and adequately resourced foreign policies.

Finally, joining the EU came with predetermined trade and development partnerships with Africa (e.g. the Cotonou Agreement) as well as with specific expectations in terms of contribution to aid budgets and agreeing to common EU positions on African issues. These aspects will limit the ability of CEE countries to articulate their own development, trade and foreign policies towards Africa, and will require stronger engagement at the level of the EU in order for CEE perspectives and interests on Africa to be reflected in EU policies.

A negative experience with the European Development Fund (EDF) may lead to a sceptical attitude among CEE countries to the EU investing more in its partnership with Africa.

A negative experience with the European Development Fund (EDF) may lead to a sceptical attitude among CEE countries to the EU investing more in its partnership with Africa. Despite CEE governments making substantial contributions (relative to the size of their national development budgets) to the EDF, CEE companies and NGOs are not able to apply for EDF tenders because of bidding requirements.¹⁵ This is of significant concern for several CEE governments as well as to civil society and appears to get little attention from the European Commission or older member states.

Moreover, the EU's strong commitment to African countries has come at the cost of attention to Eastern Europe's needs, and some CEE countries put significant efforts into bringing greater EU resources to bear in the Balkans, the Black Sea region and the Caucasus. Consequently, there is less enthusiasm on their part for the flow of resources to Africa.¹⁶

Nevertheless, as the CEE states become more embedded in EU structures and practices, they appear to attribute increasing relevance to African countries. And, as they become more comfortable within the EU, they will be better able to advance their perspectives and concerns. This implies a variety of new perspectives in African–EU cooperation, as post-Cotonou negotiations have started to indicate. The CEE governments are insisting on giving priority to the Eastern Partnership, a strong preference for conditional approaches to development cooperation and expectations of shared benefits from the partnership.¹⁷

Current bilateral political and diplomatic relations

While the development policies of CEE countries have received some attention (see below), a regional perspective on their policies towards Africa has attracted little interest.¹⁸ Individual country

¹⁵ Research interviews, 2016–17. See for example the co-financing requirements and the standard grid used in evaluating applicants that has implicit expectations in terms of previous experience in the field and size of budgets.

¹⁶ Szent-Ivany, B. and Lightfoot, S. (2009), 'Central and Eastern European transition experience in EU development policy', paper presented at the European Union Studies Association, <https://eustudies.org/conference/papers/download/13> (accessed 23 Jan. 2017).

¹⁷ Tindemans, T. and Brems, D. (2016), *Post-Cotonou: Preliminary positions of EU Member States*, European Centre for Development Policy Management, <http://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/BN87-Post-Cotonou-Positions-EU-Member-States-February-2016-ECDPM.pdf> (accessed 23 Jan. 2017).

¹⁸ Bugajski, J. and Teleki, I. (2006), *America's New Allies: Central-Eastern Europe and the Transatlantic Link*, Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies; Edwards, G. (2006), 'The New Member States and the Making of EU Foreign Policy', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 11:2; Allen, D. and Webber, M. (2013) 'The New Europe: Germany and Poland', in Webber, M. and Smith, M. (eds) (2013), *Foreign Policy in a Transformed World*, New York, NY: Routledge; Baun, M. and Marek, D. (eds) (2013), *The New EU Member States and the European Union: Foreign Policy and Europeanization*, New York, NY: Routledge; Kugiel, P. (2016), 'The Visegrad Countries' Relations with South Africa: Gateway to Africa', in Kugiel, P. (ed.) (2016), *V4 Goes Global: Exploring Opportunities and Obstacles in the Visegrad Countries' Cooperation with Brazil, India, China and South Africa*, Warsaw: Polish Institute of International Affairs, www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=21522 (accessed 21 Jan. 2017).

analysis, for instance on Czech Republic,¹⁹ Hungary,²⁰ Romania²¹ and Poland,²² often focuses on development policy.

CEE policies towards Africa have been defined by domestic political imperatives, despite some awareness of African issues in public institutions, businesses and civil society organizations. The focus by Hungary and Poland on Africa being triggered by the economic and migrant crises is a good example. The downside is that policies are vulnerable to changes in political leadership, resulting in limited consistency and coherence.²³

On the African side, government attention and capacity is allocated mainly to the relationship with core trade and development partners: China, South Africa, Western Europe and the United States, as well as increasingly India, Turkey, Russia and the Middle East. To date, CEE countries have not managed to position themselves as priorities for African countries. Even getting the attention of top African officials can prove challenging.

Table 2: CEE diplomatic missions in Africa

Country	Embassies	Consulates and honorary consulates*
Bulgaria	Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa	Cameroon, DR Congo, Namibia, South Africa
Croatia	South Africa	Ethiopia, Sudan
Czech Republic	Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Zimbabwe ^a	Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Congo, DR Congo, Djibouti, Gambia, Guinea, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Seychelles, Tanzania, Togo
Hungary	Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa	Botswana, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Djibouti, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Nigeria, Namibia, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia
Poland	Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa ^b	Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mozambique, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe
Romania	Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Zimbabwe	Benin, Burundi, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Congo, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda
Slovakia	Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa	Cameroon, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Zambia
Slovenia	Under consideration ^c	Kenya, Mauritius, South Africa

Source: Compiled from the lists of diplomatic missions available on the websites of CEE foreign ministries.

*The majority are honorary consulates.

^aCzech Republic is in the process of closing its embassy in Zimbabwe and is opening an embassy in Zambia.

^bPoland is in the process of opening an embassy in Tanzania.

^cSlovenia is considering opening an embassy in sub-Saharan Africa.

¹⁹ Horký-Hluchán, O. and Rudincová, K. (2015), 'Sub-Saharan Africa in Czech Foreign Policy', in Kořan, M. et al. *Czech Foreign Policy in 2013: Analysis*, Prague: Institute of International Relations, pp. 256–57.

²⁰ Tarrósy, I. and Morenth, P. (2013), 'Global Opening for Hungary: A New Beginning for Hungarian Africa Policy?', *African Studies Quarterly*, 14:1-2. Horký-Hluchán, O. and Rudincová, K. (2015), 'Sub-Saharan Africa in Czech Foreign Policy', pp. 256–66.

²¹ Oprea, M. (2009), *Development Discourse in Romania*.

²² Stoltenberg, S. (2016), 'Understanding the Mental Templates of Polish Foreign Policy', paper presented at the Council for European Studies Conference; Kaminska, J. (2014), *Poland and EU Enlargement: Foreign Policy in Transformation*, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan; Copsey, N. and Pomorska, K. (2013), 'The Influence of Newer Member States in the European Union: The Case of Poland and the Eastern Partnership', *Europe-Asia Studies Journal*; 66:3.

²³ Horký-Hluchán and Rudincová show in their analysis of Czech policy towards Africa how the Foreign Ministry's strategy towards the continent was blocked by a change in government. Horký-Hluchán, O. and Rudincová, K. (2015), 'Sub-Saharan Africa in Czech Foreign Policy', pp. 256–57.

Between 1989 and 2017, the number of CEE embassies and staff in Africa decreased compared to during the communist period. Currently, CEE presence on the ground is limited and tends to be confined to the same countries, such as South Africa, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya and Angola. Ghana, Senegal and Zimbabwe also host CEE representations (see Table 2). The African presence in CEE is also limited – countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Sudan and DR Congo are among the few that are represented in the region (see Table 3). The number of consulates and honorary consulates reflects a stronger engagement, though.

Table 3: African diplomatic missions in CEE

Country	Embassies	Honorary consulates
Bulgaria	South Africa, Sudan	Ghana, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Mauritius, South Africa, Uganda
Croatia		Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Namibia, South Africa, Sudan
Czech Republic	DR Congo, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan	Benin, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Mali, Mauritius, Niger
Hungary	Angola, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan	Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Ghana, Guinea, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia
Poland	Angola, DR Congo, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa	Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia
Romania	DR Congo, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan	Burundi, Central African Republic, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Madagascar, Senegal, Sierra Leone
Slovakia		DR Congo, Mali, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Uganda
Slovenia		Angola, Guinea Bissau, Seychelles, South Africa

Source: Compiled from the lists of diplomatic missions available on the websites of CEE foreign ministries.

The closing of CEE embassies during the 1990s and the limited presence on the ground on both sides has broader implications for bilateral relations. While the last three decades have seen major transformations in the political and economic systems of both regions, their ability to track each other's developments has been limited. The number of staff working on bilateral relations in both regions – both in foreign ministries and in the missions – is minimal, with most embassies having only a few posts. Coupled with highly bureaucratic procedures and centralized decision-making processes, CEE diplomatic missions on the ground can at times be less efficient.²⁴

With the drastic reduction of scholarships offered to study in CEE and the limiting of the development assistance that once took a significant number of CEE practitioners to Africa, personal relationships connecting the regions contracted. As a result, perceptions remain anchored in the past.

The current trend in bilateral relations, however, is positive. The recent spike in CEE interest in Africa has manifested itself through the adoption of specific policies, the organization of high-level and trade visits, and the re-opening of diplomatic and trade missions on the ground. Poland launched its 'Go Africa' policy in 2013 together with the first Poland–Africa Congress.²⁵ Hungary followed with its 'Opening to the South' policy in 2015, which was presented at the second Budapest–Africa Forum,²⁶

²⁴ Research interviews, 2016–17. Reviewing the available diplomatic lists from Kenya and South Africa shows that most CEE embassies have 3–6 posts.

²⁵ Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Poland (2013), 'Go Africa – strategy aimed at supporting export and expansion of Polish enterprises', 19 October, www.premier.gov.pl/en/news/news/go-africa-strategy-aimed-at-supporting-export-and-expansion-of-polish-enterprises.html (accessed 21 Jan. 2017); Wnukowski, D. (2015), *GoAfrica: Results of the Promotion of Polish Business in Africa*, Warsaw: Polish Institute of International Affairs, www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=19799 (accessed 21 Jan. 2017).

²⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary (2015), 'Péter Szijjártó heralded the Opening to the South strategy', 6 March, www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-foreign-affairs-and-trade/news/peter-szijjarto-heralded-the-opening-to-the-south-strategy (accessed 21 Jan. 2017).

but a stronger focus on Africa has been on its agenda since 2009.²⁷ Czech Republic has been one of the most active CEE countries in re-establishing its relations with Africa. Since 2012, it has taken concrete steps and organized its 2013 East–West Forum under the name ‘Emerging Africa’.²⁸

The CEE presence on the ground in Africa has increased in recent years, primarily due to Hungary re-opening embassies. Poland is expected to re-open its embassy in Tanzania, while Czech Republic and Slovenia are also considering opening additional embassies in Africa.²⁹ This year’s visit by Slovakia’s president to Kenya was the first visit of a Slovak president to sub-Saharan Africa.³⁰ But despite increased institutional reconnection, the number of high-level visits remains low.

In terms of the content of bilateral relations, CEE and African governments are starting to build frameworks for deeper cooperation such as memoranda of understanding and bilateral commissions. On both sides, the trade and investment dimension is the top priority. Mozambique has concluded a memorandum of understanding with Czech Republic and is negotiating one with Romania.³¹ Economic, trade and investment, educational and scientific agreements are being reviewed or negotiated anew. Ethiopia is negotiating agreements guaranteeing investments with Czech Republic and Poland.³² Romania and South Africa are currently negotiating agreements on education, culture and science and research.³³ Political discussions touch on current global and national challenges and opportunities as well as on sharing transition experiences.

With regard to military and security cooperation, CEE and African countries are concerned with global security threats such as terrorism, illegal trafficking, conflicts and resulting migration flows. These topics are also likely to affect the size and direction of EU and bilateral development aid, which is of great relevance for most of the African countries with which CEE is re-engaging. Military cooperation encompasses CEE training and support for training institutions in African countries, repairs of military equipment (some of which was sold by CEE and other former communist countries to Africa during the Cold War), and at times armament contracts. A Romanian company won a recent contract for reconditioning Mozambique’s eight MiG-21 fighter jets. This was accompanied by training for Mozambique’s air force.³⁴ All CEE countries are producers of armaments and several of them are under scrutiny for how they conduct arms exports.³⁵ In the 1990s several CEE countries sold weapons to countries in conflict such as Angola, DR Congo and Eritrea.³⁶

CEE’s participation in EU–Africa relations

The participation of the CEE countries in the EU’s relations with Africa comes with both challenges and opportunities. Given their low level of knowledge on the situation of African countries and their limited presence on the ground, they are perceived to have little to contribute to the substance of

²⁷ Tarrósy, I. and Morenth, P. (2013), ‘Global Opening for Hungary’.

²⁸ Horký-Hluchán, O. and Rudincová, K. (2015), ‘Sub-Saharan Africa in Czech Foreign Policy’, pp. 256–66.

²⁹ Research interviews, 2016.

³⁰ Office of the President, Slovakia (2017), ‘President started official visit to Kenya in Nairobi’, 13 February, www.prezident.sk/en/article/prezident-zacal-v-nairobi-na-oficialnu-navstevu-kene/ (accessed 21 Apr. 2017).

³¹ Research interviews, 2017.

³² Research interviews, 2016.

³³ Research interviews, 2017.

³⁴ Martin, G. (2014), ‘Aerostar completes Mozambican MiG-21 upgrade’, DefenceWeb, 15 July, www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35396 (accessed 21 Jan. 2017).

³⁵ Marzouk, L., Belford, A. and Futersak, J. (2016), ‘Arms Exports to Middle East: A Question of Legality’, Balkans Insight, 20 July, www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/arms-exports-to-middle-east-a-question-of-legality-07-26-2016 (accessed 21 Jan. 2017).

³⁶ Bonner, R. (1998), ‘Bulgaria Becomes a Weapons Bazaar’, *New York Times*, 3 August, www.nytimes.com/1998/08/03/world/bulgaria-becomes-a-weapons-bazaar.html (accessed 21 Jan. 2017) and ‘Despite Cutoff by U.S., Ethiopia and Eritrea Easily Buy Weapons’ *New York Times*, 23 July, www.nytimes.com/1998/07/23/world/despite-cutoff-by-us-ethiopia-and-eritrea-easily-buy-weapons.html (accessed 21 Apr. 2017).

EU strategies and policies, often leading to their withdrawal and passivity.³⁷ Where CEE countries are represented on the ground, they do not tend to be very engaged in EU discussions due to the low number of staff in their embassies and their limited expertise.

CEE's lack of engagement and expertise is deepened by broader perceptions of the nature of the relationship between older and newer EU members. The older member states are seen as less ready to listen to and respect the points of view of their newer counterparts. This dynamic has important implications for the EU's Africa policy, as it may limit the prospects for CEE countries to become constructively engaged in supporting the EU's efforts.

In its engagement with Africa, however, the EU can benefit from the presence of the CEE states. Enlargement has brought into the union more countries that have no colonial past. This could help to take the political discussions with some African partners beyond the colonial or post-colonial narrative that is sometimes encountered. In security terms, CEE countries contribute to EU peacebuilding efforts in Africa. In development terms, African countries may value CEE transition experiences, which could enable a more meaningful CEE contribution to the EU's efforts.³⁸

Strengthening political relations

A strategic approach

Limited resources require CEE and African countries to be strategic and creative in rebuilding relations. Most CEE governments realize that their re-engagement with Africa demands a coherent strategy.³⁹ Engaging strategically requires high-level visits, good balancing of bilateral and multilateral relations, knowledge and constant analysis. African stakeholders (governments, universities, business, civil society and students) need to be involved in shaping CEE policies that reflect the realities of contemporary Africa. Some of the key questions CEE and African governments have to address revolve around: how to engender top-level political will for strengthening bilateral engagements; how to consolidate their disparate efforts in a coherent strategy; how to better sense and support drivers for re-engagement from the business sector, academia and civil society?

Both regions have limited resources in terms of producing knowledge about each other. In CEE, the number of institutes, academics and researchers focused on Africa is small, though it has seen a slight increase in recent years.⁴⁰ Access to courses on Africa is minimal. In Africa, the situation is even less encouraging. The policy-research and academic links between the two regions are also limited, though increasing. The International Organization of the Francophonie makes a positive contribution.⁴¹ Polish and Romanian universities have established partnerships with counterparts in South Africa.⁴²

No real engagement can be sustained in the long-term without investment in educational and research infrastructure. There could be individual or joint initiatives in this area, such as expanding traditional scholarship programmes to include exchanges of researchers, professors or university managers, as well as establishing joint research funds, educational programmes and degrees. Important resources

³⁷ Research interviews, 2016.

³⁸ Research interviews, 2016–17.

³⁹ Research interviews, 2016.

⁴⁰ There are African studies centres (several established recently) in Pilsen and Prague, Czech Republic; Pecs, Hungary; Krakow and Wroclaw, Poland; Cluj-Napoca and Timisoara, Romania; Bratislava, Slovakia; and Ljubljana, Slovenia.

⁴¹ Among the organization's members are 25 sub-Saharan African states and two CEE ones (Bulgaria and Romania) as well one and six respectively as observers.

⁴² Research interviews, 2017.

are offered by EU mobility scholarships and research grants. In 2010 Romania's Foreign Ministry, in collaboration with the UN Development Programme, offered grants to five of the country's universities to set up master's degree programs in international development.⁴³

Reversing outdated perceptions

Mutual outdated perceptions have a direct impact on the strength of CEE and African policies for engagement. Addressing this challenge requires interventions at all levels – government, business, civil society and society at large. By the end of the 1980s, people from the two regions had built up good networks of personal relationships as a result of the high number of students from Africa attending CEE universities. These links have now loosened and are slowly disappearing as the relevant generations age. Current generations of opinion formers, such as journalists, politicians, academics and business leaders from one region are not well informed about the other. The investment made by CEE countries during the communist period is seldom capitalized on.

Attempts to do so are made, though, as in the case of Hungary. Hungary organized its Global Alumni Forum in 2016 for the first time. Also, it launched in 2013 its revamped scholarship programme for international students coming from 55 countries, of which seven are in Africa. The Stipendium Hungaricum Programme's mission is to 'increase the number of foreign students in Hungary and to encourage Hungarian higher education institutions to attract top foreign students.' Approximately 4,000 students are expected to start their studies through the programme in 2017.⁴⁴ The number of scholarships for African countries has reached 900, of which 100 are designated for South Africa.⁴⁵

EU dynamics and the EU's role in strengthening political relations

For building a strategic re-engagement with Africa, CEE countries need to address some key questions related to their EU membership – e.g. what does it mean for the CEE countries to develop bilateral relations with Africa in their capacity of EU members? That question requires a CEE position on the relations with the older EU members in Africa, as well as with the EU delegations. For the EU, a more informed and deeper engagement by CEE states in its Africa policy can bring more support for the commitment towards the region. For enabling a quality engagement, however, the European Commission can do more to support their access to information and presence on the ground.

The EU could contribute to enhancing the capacity of CEE countries to understand and engage with Africa. Interventions could include placing CEE staff in the EU's delegations in the region, ensuring opportunities for CEE stakeholders to engage with the region, sharing information and analysis in a more targeted and timely manner, investing in research on learning from the CEE's transition experiences, and strengthening the capacity on Africa in CEE ministries, universities and civil society.

The economic dimension

Central and Eastern European countries have traditionally prioritized trade in their relations with Africa. From the early 1950s, when more robust engagement between the two regions began, '[t]rade and other types of economic relations are, perhaps, the most tangible sign of Eastern Europe's growing

⁴³ These are Alexandru I. Cuza University in Iași, Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, the Bucharest Academy for Economic Studies, University of Bucharest, and West University of Timișoara.

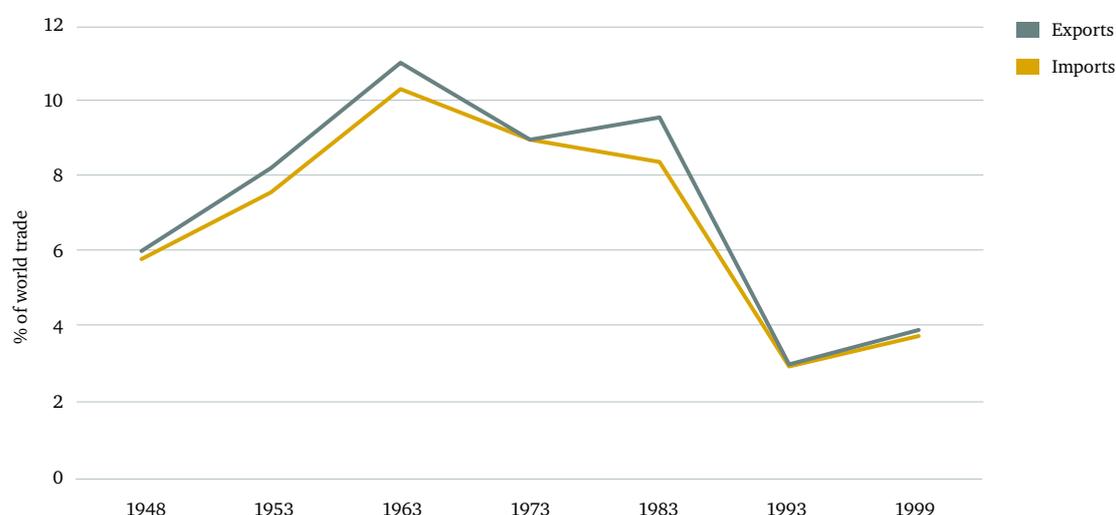
⁴⁴ Tempus Public Foundation, 'Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Programme', www.tka.hu/international-programmes/2966/stipendium-hungaricum/ (accessed 21 Apr. 2017).

⁴⁵ Research interviews, 2016–17.

interest in sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁶ While the trade dynamic declined from 1989 to the early 2000s, the CEE countries have retained their focus on economic relations in their re-engagement with Africa. This time, however, the broader context is different. In the 1950s and 1960s, the array of competitors included the US, Western Europe and the Soviet Union. Competition is stronger today, with the additional engagement of China, India and Turkey.

The years immediately after the transitions of 1989 saw a decline in CEE trade with Africa, remaining at low levels throughout the 1990s. The shift from planned to market economy in CEE was accompanied by a substantial reduction in production (see Figure 1), which limited trade with African countries and impacted negatively on trade networks and volumes.⁴⁷

Figure 1: CEE and Soviet/former Soviet share in world merchandise trade, 1948–99



Source: World Trade Organization, ‘World merchandise trade by region and selected economy, 1948–99’, www.wto.org/english/res_e/statistics/its2000/section2/ii02.xls (accessed 21 Jan. 2017).

Since the early 1990s, CEE countries also have re-oriented their focus towards Western economies. They succeeded in becoming functioning market economies, narrowing the gap in development and experiencing higher growth rates than Western European countries.⁴⁸ The CEE economies are dependent on trade with the EU in both goods and services, most of them at levels above 70 per cent of total trade.⁴⁹

A sense of over-dependence on intra-EU trade and the experience of the 2008–10 economic crisis contributed to an interest by CEE countries in reinvigorating trade relations with Africa. Trade and investment partnerships have grown more robustly than political relations. In fact, political relations appear to be driven to a large extent by an interest in trade and investment diversification in the two regions. This is indicated by the increase in different trade-related interactions: in the number of CEE trade officers, economic attachés and honorary consuls in Africa, in the presence of business delegations

⁴⁶ Brzezinski, Z. (1963), *Africa and the Communist World*, p. 88.

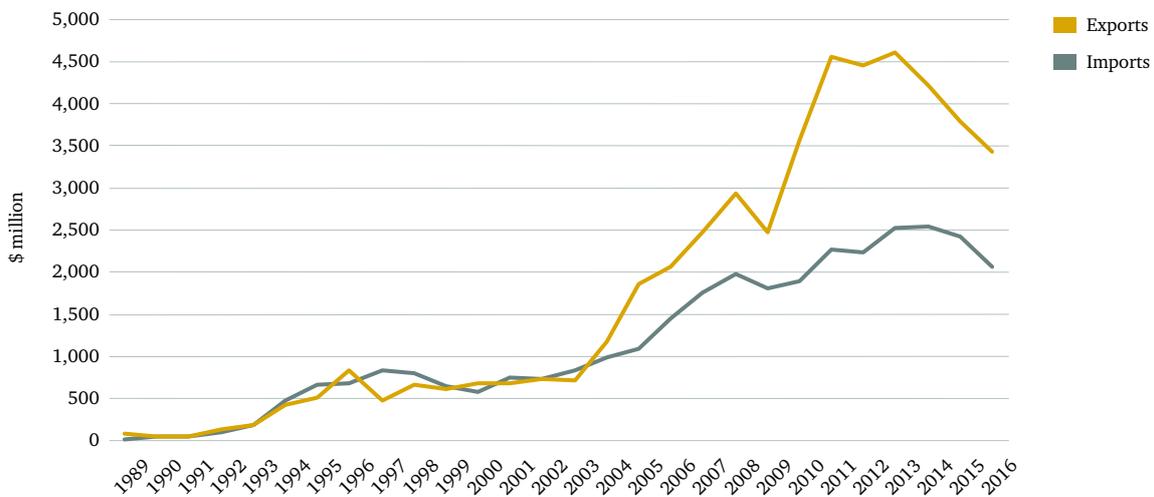
⁴⁷ Cervenka, Z. (1992), *African National Congress Meets Eastern Europe*, Appendix 3.

⁴⁸ Trapczynski, P., Puslecki, L. and Jarosinski, M. (eds) (2016), *Competitiveness of CEE Economies and Businesses: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Challenges and Opportunities*, Cham: Springer International Publishing; and Roaf, J. et al. (2014), *25 Years of Transition: Post-Communist Europe and the IMF*, Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/reo/2014/eur/eng/pdf/erei_sr_102414.pdf (accessed 21 Jan. 2017).

⁴⁹ Source: Eurostat, ‘International Trade in Services’, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/International_trade_in_services and ‘International Trade in Goods’, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/International_trade_in_goods (accessed 21 Jan. 2017).

as part of high-level visits and in the number of trade forums and conferences. Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia have some form of bilateral or trilateral business forum for enhancing relations. Recent business visits include delegations from Slovakia to Angola and Ethiopia; Czech and Polish delegations to Tanzania; Hungarian and Romanian trips to South Africa, and a Nigerian delegation to Slovenia. Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia put a focus on business delegations accompanying official visits, while Hungary and Romania rely more on business-to-business visits. These CEE efforts to increase trade levels with Africa are, however, recent and it is too soon to evaluate their success.

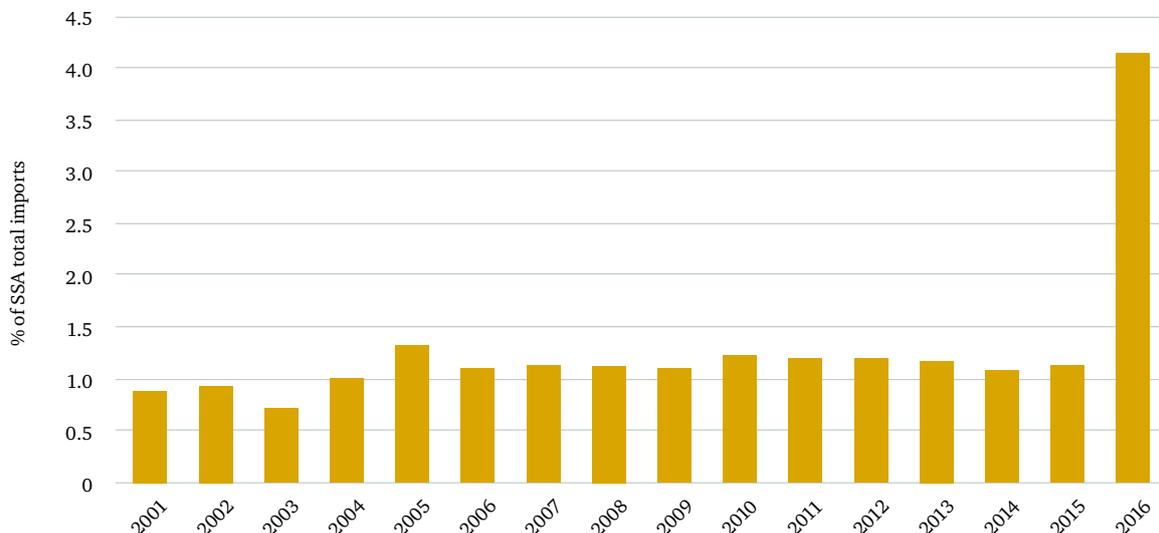
Figure 2: CEE exports to, and imports from, sub-Saharan African



Source: Compiled from data available from the World Integrated Trade Solutions, World Bank, <http://wits.worldbank.org>.

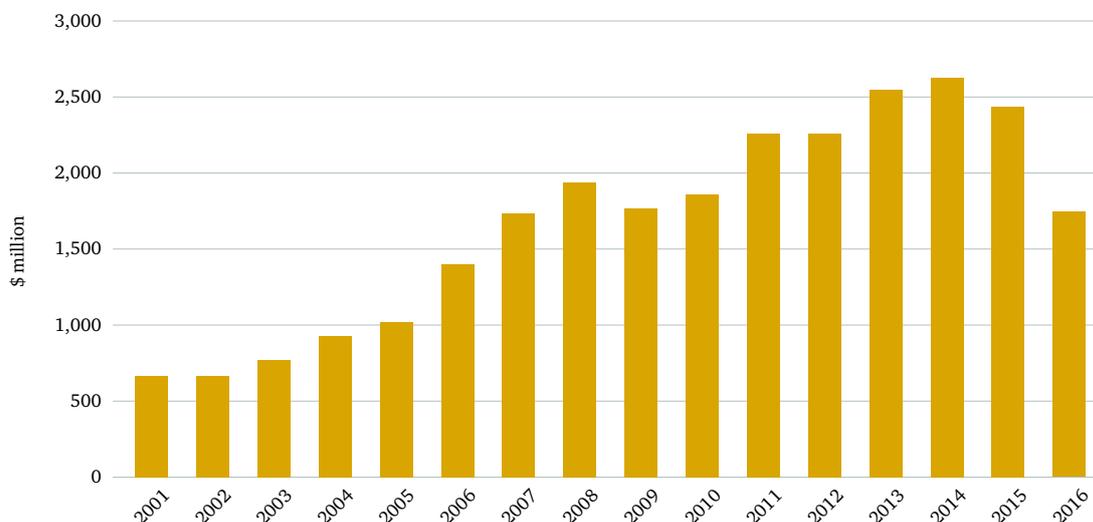
Trade statistics are presented in figures 2 to 7. While CEE exports to Africa have decreased in terms of absolute value since 2013, they reached 4 per cent of total African imports in 2016, up from just over 1 per cent since 2014. African exports also decreased in absolute terms, but the proportion of African exports to CEE increased from less than 1 per cent to over 2 per cent of total exports.

Figure 3: CEE exports as percentage of total Sub-Saharan African imports



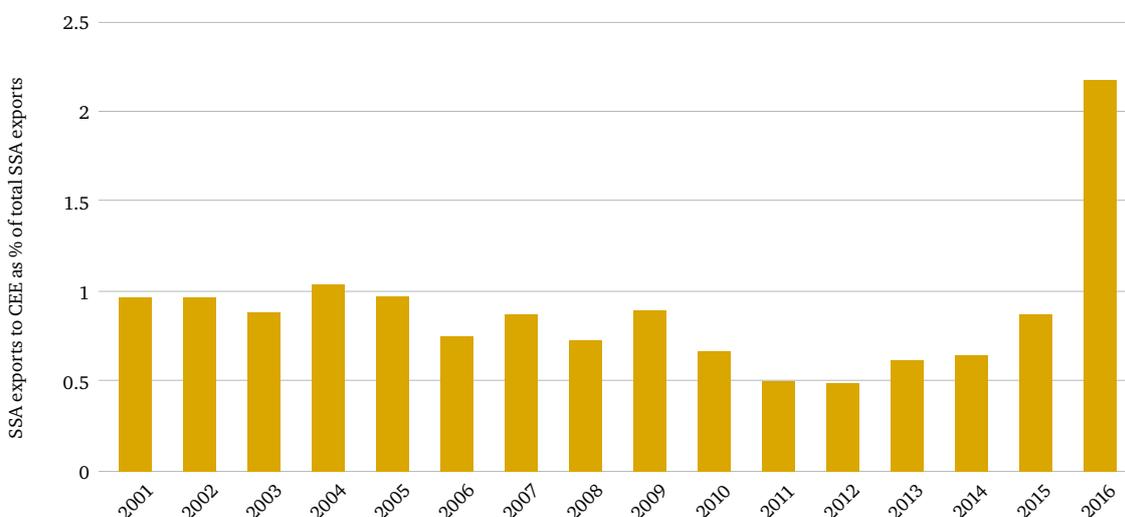
Source: Compiled from data available from the International Trade Centre www.trademap.org.

Figure 4: CEE imports from sub-Saharan Africa



Source: Compiled from data available from the International Trade Centre www.trademap.org.

Figure 5: Sub-Saharan African exports to CEE as percentage of total exports

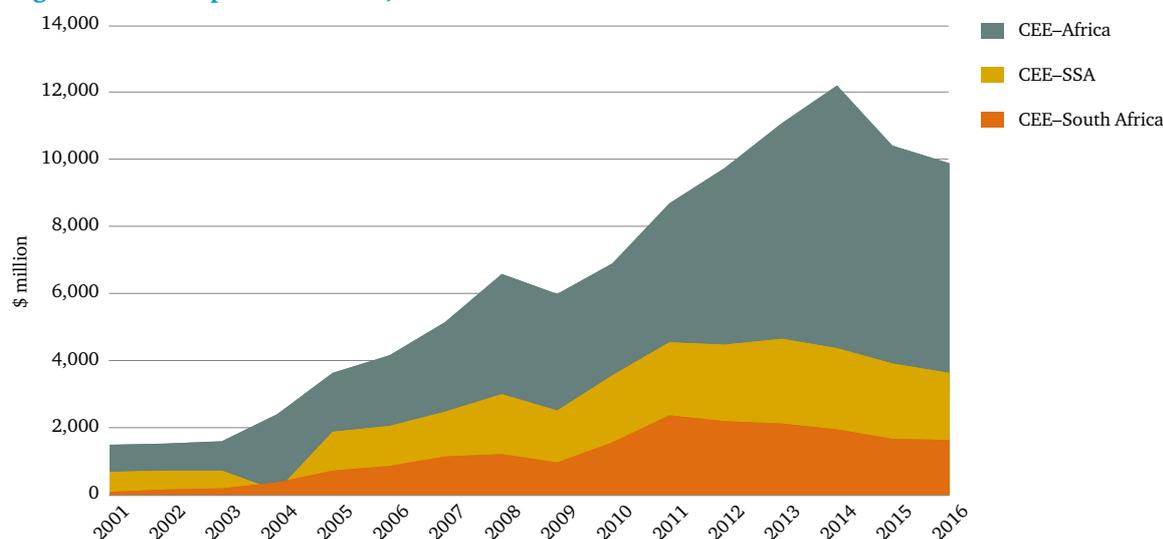


Source: Compiled from data available from the International Trade Centre www.trademap.org.

Figures 6 and 7 look at CEE exports to Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa, revealing that CEE countries have been focusing their attention on North Africa, where trade has grown strongly. Sub-Saharan Africa has gained slowly in importance, with South Africa accounting for roughly half of all CEE exports to the region.

CEE exports have slowly increased throughout most of the 2000s. After a moderate decrease in 2009, there was a steep increase in trade with sub-Saharan Africa in 2010–11 and with North Africa in 2010–13. The period 2014–16 saw a decrease in the volume of CEE exports, potentially due to lower global commodity prices that affected the purchasing power of African countries.

Figure 6: CEE exports to Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa



Source: Compiled from data available from the International Trade Centre www.trademap.org.

Figure 7 shows individual CEE country exports to Africa as a whole, sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa. This reveals that trade has been volatile, reflecting variations in the ability of CEE companies to secure and maintain contracts.

Czech Republic and Poland have been the most active in enhancing their trade relations with Africa. A 2014 report from Poland’s foreign ministry states:

Our Go Africa programme is designed to help find business opportunities for Polish companies in countries where diplomatic support still carries enormous weight. In 2013, i.e. less than a year after the Go Africa programme kicked off, Poland sold USD 2.64 billion worth of goods in African markets; this represents a 34 percent increase in our exports relative to 2012. Today around three thousand Polish companies are trading with African countries. We will place emphasis on developing relations with North African countries, the Republic of South Africa and Nigeria, as well as Ethiopia, Senegal and Angola, countries which we are discovering anew.⁵⁰

Hungary has made the most institutional efforts to expand its network of trade offices.⁵¹ Romania performs well despite not having an articulated focus on Africa. In recent years, these four countries have increased their presence in the region through trade offices, economic attachés and honorary consulates. While the Hungarian approach seems to be running at a loss in the short term,⁵² the Czech and Polish strategies, which rely more strongly on honorary consulates and trade attachés, seem to have produced a more positive trend in trade volumes.⁵³

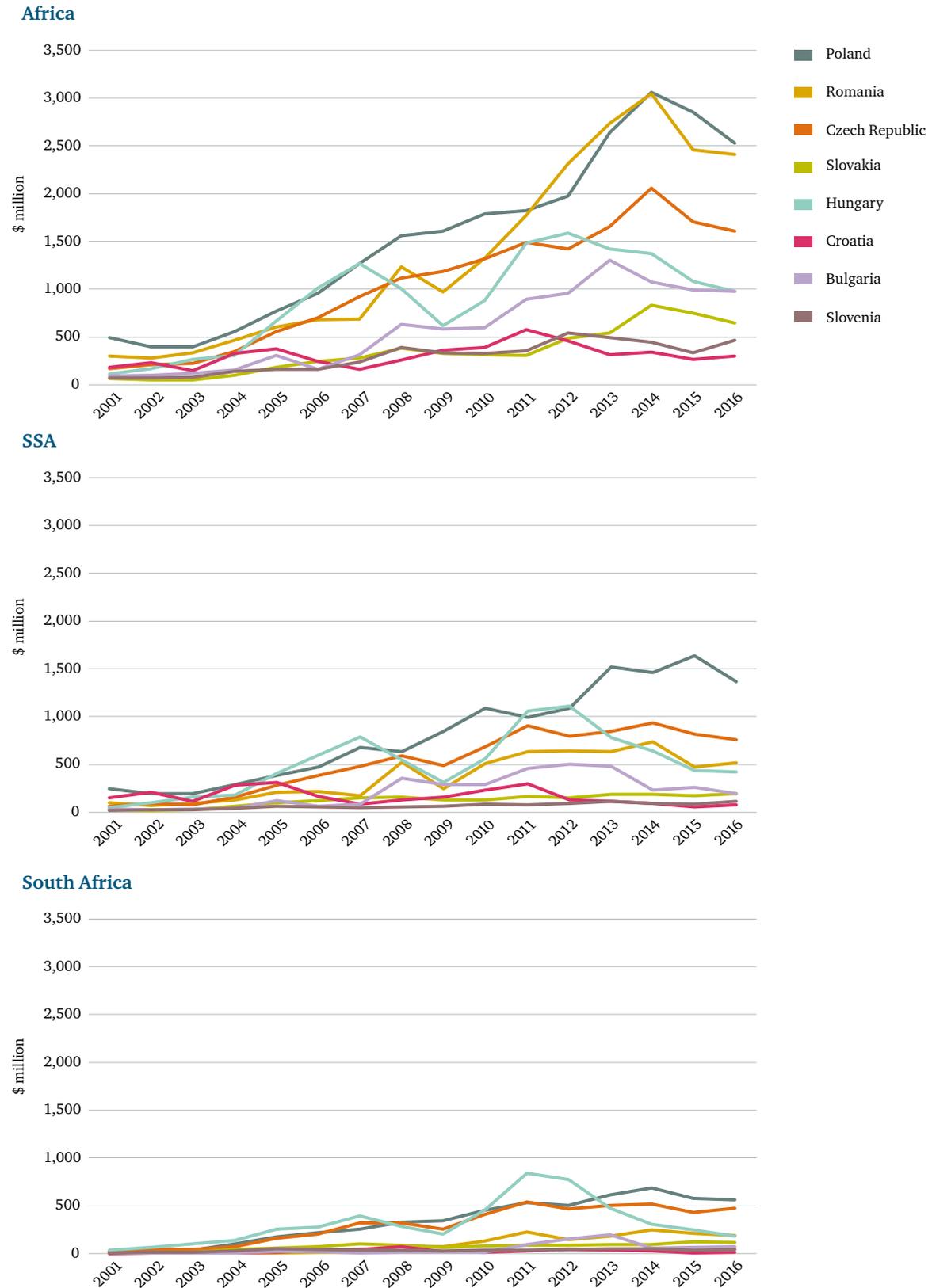
⁵⁰ Schetyna, G. (2014), *Report by the Council of Ministers on the goals of Polish foreign policy in 2014-2015*, www.msz.gov.pl/en/ministry/polish_diplomacy_archive/former_ministers/remarks_mgs/report_by_the_council_of_ministers_on_the_goals_of_polish_foreign_policy_in_2014__2015.jsessionid=24E9E089164F28DF595E725FA63D09BC.cmsap5p (accessed 21 Jan. 2017).

⁵¹ Research interviews, 2016.

⁵² According to one report, ‘[m]ore than \$28 million in public funds was spent on opening new Hungarian National Trading House offices abroad [...]. Yet these offices have only managed to generate \$13 million in business’. Adam, C. (2016), ‘Controversial Hungarian National Trading House to open office in Canada’, *Hungarian Free Press*, 19 September, <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2016/09/19/controversial-hungarian-national-trading-house-to-open-office-in-canada/> (accessed 21 Jan. 2017).

⁵³ Data from Lewandowski, B. (2015), ‘Poland’s economy and support of Polish companies – Go Africa example’, presentation by the Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency, <http://capechamber.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Prezentacja-PAiIZ.pdf> (accessed 21 Jan. 2017).

Figure 7: CEE country exports to Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa



Source: Compiled from data available from the International Trade Centre www.trademap.org.

In the long term, however, it is likely that an institutional approach like that of Hungary will deliver benefits, depending on how the relevant institutions are managed and on their ability to successfully connect to local markets.

Table 4 offers an overview of the top 10 products that CEE countries imported from and exported to Africa in 2013 and 2016.

Table 4: CEE imports from, and exports to, sub-Saharan Africa, top 10 product categories

Year	CEE imports from sub-Saharan Africa	CEE exports to sub-Saharan Africa
2016	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ships, boats and floating structures 2. Cocoa and cocoa preparations 3. Tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes 4. Aluminium and articles thereof 5. Sugars and sugar confectionery 6. Rubber and articles thereof 7. Ores, slag and ash 8. Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof 9. Coffee, tea, maté and spices 10. Edible fruit and nuts, peel of citrus fruit or melons 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Machinery, mechanical appliances, nuclear reactors, boilers, parts thereof 2. Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof 3. Cereals 4. Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof, sound recorders and reproducers, television image and sound recorders and reproducers, and parts and accessories of such articles 5. Ships, boats and floating structures 6. Other made-up textile articles, sets, worn clothing and worn textile articles, rags 7. Articles of iron or steel 8. Miscellaneous manufactured articles 9. Meat and edible meat offal 10. Rubber and articles thereof
2013	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ships, boats and floating structures 2. Ores, slag and ash 3. Machinery, mechanical appliances, nuclear reactors, boilers, parts thereof 4. Cocoa and cocoa preparations 5. Rubber and articles thereof 6. Aluminium and articles thereof 7. Tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes 8. Edible fruit and nuts, peel of citrus fruit or melons 9. Sugars and sugar confectionery 10. Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof, sound recorders and reproducers, television image and sound recorders and reproducers, and parts and accessories of such articles 2. Machinery, mechanical appliances, nuclear reactors, boilers, parts thereof 3. Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof 4. Ships, boats and floating structures 5. Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes 6. Ores, slag and ash 7. Other made-up textile articles, sets, worn clothing and worn textile articles, rags 8. Cotton 9. Rubber and articles thereof 10. Pharmaceutical products

Source: International Trade Centre, www.trademap.org/Bilateral_TS.aspx?nvpm=1 | 29002 | 29003 | TOTAL | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1.

In cases where trade policy is incorporated within a CEE country’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (e.g. Hungary), there is a stronger perceived mandate related to trade and investment compared to cases where it is the responsibility of a different ministry, such as the Ministry of Trade or others (e.g. Romania). CEE representations are perceived to be rather shy to promote business interests in Africa,⁵⁴ although it is the core stated goal in bilateral relations. This may derive from limited staff, a lack of robust institutions supporting trade and investment abroad with capital and in-depth knowledge about local markets, as well as from a lack of confidence in approaching new markets and representations assuming a limited role as proactive enablers of business relations. Overall, the existence of a trade agency strengthens engagements, as in the case of Czech Republic or Poland. Additionally, national chambers of commerce are also important in determining the level of bilateral

⁵⁴ Research interviews, 2016–17.

relations. As interest in CEE–Africa trade and investment relations mounts, several bilateral chambers of commerce or associations have been formed.⁵⁵

There are also signs of growing interest among African governments in facilitating CEE investments. African countries are putting a strong emphasis on the transfer of know-how and technology as well as the provision of jobs. Several of the traditional and current CEE partner countries in Africa – such as Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania – are well positioned to provide CEE investors access to regional markets and benefits in terms of natural resources, land, labour force and increasingly infrastructure. Examples of CEE investment projects are increasing, such as the Polish Ursus assembly lines for tractors in Ethiopia – soon to be replicated in Tanzania⁵⁶ and Zambia⁵⁷ – and fertilizer production plants in Senegal.⁵⁸ In terms of African investments, South Africa is at the forefront with a multi-billion-euro presence in CEE countries, in areas such as real estate (New Europe Property Investment, Tower Property Fund, Redefine Properties and Rockcastle Global Real Estate), e-commerce (Naspers) and, until recently, beer (SABMiller). In addition, the industrial profiles of CEE and African countries are compatible.⁵⁹ Table 5 shows the economic sectors perceived as relevant in bilateral trade and investment by the interviewed officials.

Table 5: Economic sectors perceived to be relevant for CEE and Africa

Areas/sectors where CEE countries can contribute	Sub-Saharan Africa areas/sectors where contributions are needed
<p>Hungary Agriculture, water, infrastructure, transport, city transport systems, IT, securitized printing, mining, street lighting systems, renewable energy, geothermal energy.</p> <p>Romania IT, agriculture, water, energy, green energy, oil and gas, infrastructure, construction, mining, commodities, cement and petrochemicals, aviation, defence.</p> <p>Slovenia Renewable energy, water management, securitized printing, IT and technology.</p>	<p>Ethiopia Agriculture, textiles, technology, clean energy, water, gas, mining, tourism, medical equipment, oil exploration, infrastructure, beer, horticulture, geothermal energy, electronics, pharmaceuticals, steel, armaments, food processing, ICT, leather, financial services.</p> <p>Mozambique Agriculture, agro-processing, energy, tourism, mining, oil and gas.</p> <p>Tanzania Tourism, infrastructure, IT, industry, energy, electricity, gas, manufacturing, construction, telecom, agriculture, horticulture, irrigation systems, footwear industry, textiles.</p>

Source: Research interviews, 2016–17.

Advancing trade and investment

A strategic, long-term approach to trade and investment is needed

Trade and investment relations between Central and Eastern Europe and Africa are advancing through increased interaction and new institutions. However, CEE businesses cannot enter African markets overnight. Different business and contracting practices, the importance of building relationships, challenges in accessing capital and lack of experience with mitigating risk are important factors that

⁵⁵ These include the following: Bulgaria–South Africa, Czech Republic–sub-Saharan Africa (Mali, Guinea, Senegal and Gabon), Czech Republic–Ghana, Nigeria–Czech Republic Business Council, Hungary–South Africa, Nigeria–Hungary, Poland–Africa, Poland–South Africa, Nigeria–Poland, Romania–Angola, Romania–DR Congo, Romania–Mozambique, Romanian–South African Business Association, Nigeria–Romania, Slovenia–Nigeria.

⁵⁶ Harper, J. (2016), ‘Polish tractors plowing a furrow to Africa’, Deutsche Welle, 16 June, www.dw.com/en/polish-tractors-plowing-a-furrow-to-africa/a-19336751 (accessed 21 Jan. 2017).

⁵⁷ Research interviews, 2017.

⁵⁸ AgroNews (2014), ‘Poland’s ZChP to build phosphoric acid plant in Senegal’, 17 December, <http://news.agropages.com/News/NewsDetail---13802.htm> (accessed 21 Jan. 2017).

⁵⁹ South Africa has a different investment relationship to CEE countries, with South African companies present with significant investments in several of the region’s markets.

limit the presence of CEE companies in Africa. This indicates the need for long-term strategies and appropriate resources on both sides.

Poor mutual understanding also undermines trade and investment relations. More trade offices, bilateral chambers of commerce, trade attachés, trade forums, business visits, scholarships and better curricula in schools are all necessary for reversing negative perceptions or lack of knowledge of the other region among government and business leaders from the two regions.

Certain African markets – given their size, sophistication and openness to competition – represent a good opportunity for CEE companies to grow. However, interest from the CEE business community alone is not sufficient reason for strengthening bilateral trade and investment. For this to happen, interested business people need the chance to meet credible and compatible partners. Facilitating such encounters is difficult for CEE representations as good local contacts come from being embedded locally and understanding how the business environment works. Establishing connections that lead to trusted partnerships is essential. National, regional and bilateral chambers of commerce can play an important role in achieving this, but in order to do so their capacity needs to be strengthened in many of the countries in both regions.

An important issue that countries in the two regions could consider is identifying mechanisms to ensure continuity and sustainability in growing trade and investment relations. Such mechanisms could include strengthening the institutional set-up for doing business in CEE and African countries, ensuring adequate capital and human resources, examining the frequency and level of meetings, providing tools to reduce the risks associated with investing (primarily in the early years until companies become acquainted with local business environments), and more targeted and resourced instruments for fostering investments in Africa.

The Polish experience with offering lines of credit and preferential grants to Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia in the case of Ursus tractors is a good example of a step in the right direction.⁶⁰ Czech Republic's approach to supporting investments abroad provides another, as does the formation of the Polish Agency for Investment and Trade, announced this year. According to the adviser to the board for Polish Investments Abroad, Aleksander Libera, '[t]he aim of the agency is to support Polish expansion abroad, both in the form of export as well as in investment. [...] we are focusing on the agri-food sector, including agricultural machinery. Polish companies [can also] target contracts for infrastructure, construction or energy projects.'⁶¹

Make good use of EU mechanisms and resources

Being part of the EU can bring significant added value for CEE countries if they are ready to use its leverage and instruments in trade, development and investment promotion. The EU has strong trade and investment relations with Africa and EU delegations have a good understanding of the local economic, business and investment contexts. The EU is also preparing more instruments for facilitating the presence of European companies in Africa. In several African countries, business groups, clubs and chambers are being established, bringing together EU companies. But CEE companies and representations are not always taking part in EU efforts, for example, while they are involved in the EU Chamber of Commerce and Industry in South Africa, none of the four CEE honorary consulates are part of the EU Business Club initiative in Mozambique.

⁶⁰ Research interviews, 2016–17.

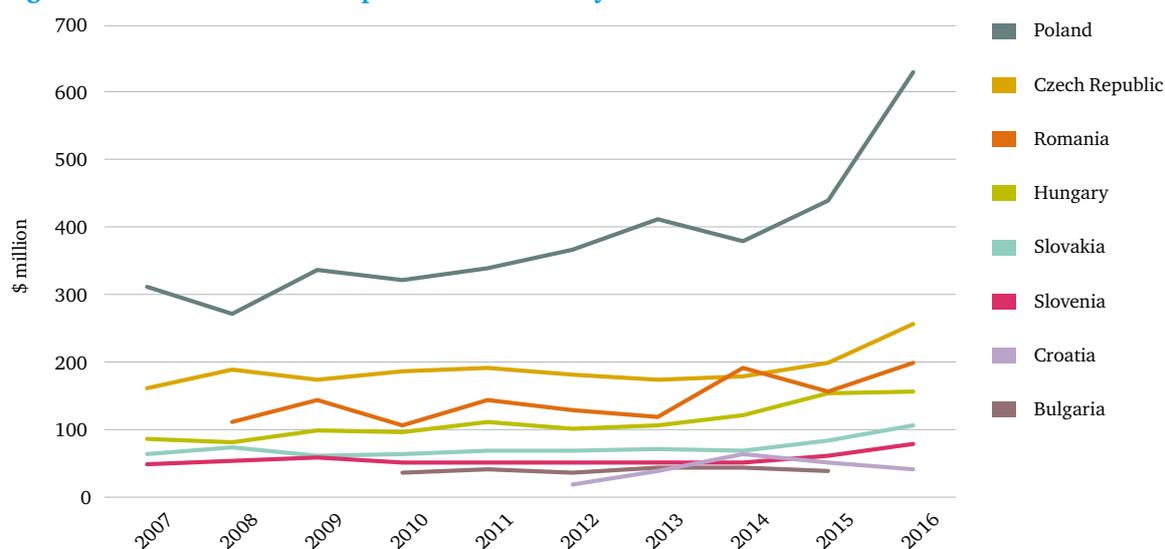
⁶¹ Global Trade Review (2017), 'Poland targets Asia and Africa with new trade agency', 16 January, www.gtreview.com/news/europe/poland-targets-asia-and-africa-with-new-trade-agency/ (accessed 21 Jan. 2017).

The Development Assistance Dimension

Development relations, then called technical assistance, were an area of CEE–African partnership during the Cold War, beginning with the technical assistance partnership agreed between Czechoslovakia and Ethiopia in 1958. In the communist period, CEE countries made significant contributions of technical assistance to the development of African partners. These were mainly in the form of credits and grants, and did not have a significant ideological underpinning.⁶² Between 1954 and 1981, CEE countries provided aid at levels of more than 50 per cent of the Soviet aid volume.⁶³

When joining the EU, all CEE countries agreed to contribute to the EU aid budgets such as the European Development Fund and to run bilateral aid programmes. The EU agreements on development led CEE to commit to allocating 0.33 per cent of GNI in overseas development assistance (ODA) by 2030. As of 2016, the contributions range from 0.07 per cent of GNI provided by Croatia to 0.18 per cent of GNI provided by Slovenia, with an average for the region of 0.12 per cent of GNI.⁶⁴ Figure 8 shows the evolution of CEE donors' total ODA budgets from 2007 to 2016.

Figure 8: Total official development assistance by donor



Source: OECD statistics, <http://stats.oecd.org/viewhtml.aspx?datasetcode=TABLE1&lang=en#>.
 Note: preliminary data for 2016.

The development approaches and strategies of CEE countries are underpinned by debates about sharing transition experience, national interests with regard to security in Europe's neighbourhood, strengthening commercial relations, and providing support to least-developed countries. All CEE countries assigned the development portfolio to their foreign ministries. Some also established development agencies – Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and recently Romania. CEE countries have started – rather timidly – to re-engage in development cooperation activities, in terms of aid budgets as well as geographical and thematic coverage. In their first decade as EU donors, their policies focused primarily on their own neighbourhood: the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Black Sea region, and marginally on North Africa and the Middle East.

⁶² Brzezinski, Z. (1963), *Africa and the Communist World*, p. 95.

⁶³ Aspaturian, V. V. (1984), 'Eastern Europe in World Perspective', p. 34.

⁶⁴ OECD.Stat, <http://stats.oecd.org/viewhtml.aspx?datasetcode=TABLE1&lang=en#> (accessed 3 May 2017).

More recently, some of the CEE aid donors have begun considering other countries further from home, identifying priorities in Africa but also funding projects in the region beyond these countries. As Table 6 indicates, countries such as Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia have identified African partners as priority countries for their current development strategies. Slovenia has adopted a focus on Africa as a third priority of their development strategy. While Romania has no priority country from Africa, it has, however, funded projects in previous years.

Table 6: Priority and aid recipient sub-Saharan African countries for CEE donors⁶⁵

Country	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Romania	Slovakia	Slovenia
Priority countries	Ethiopia <i>Previously Angola and Zambia</i>	Kenya Nigeria	Angola Ethiopia Kenya Senegal Tanzania	N/A	South Sudan Kenya <i>Considering Ethiopia</i>	Third priority – sub-Saharan Africa
Other countries where aid has been disbursed	Mozambique	Ethiopia South Africa	N/A	Angola Cameroon Ethiopia Kenya Mali Mauritius Nigeria	N/A	Cabo Verde

Source: Compiled from information available on the websites of CEE foreign ministries and agencies and EuropeAid; as well as from research interviews (2016–17). Leiszen, M. (2013), ‘Aid for Trade’ or ‘Aid to Trade’: Hungarian Trade Relations in International Development’, Budapest Center for Policy Studies http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00006812/01/ODA_aid-for-trade_2013.pdf (accessed 23 Jan. 2017); Note: Czech Republic is considering re-including Zambia as a priority country.

The development policies of CEE countries, whether collectively or individually, have received more attention than their foreign policies.⁶⁶ Their budgets and capacity to disburse aid and implement development projects are limited, but this is starting to improve. Some are opening offices in partner countries, for example Czech Republic in Ethiopia and Zambia.⁶⁷ The number of CEE development NGOs is increasing. There is some long-term experience on the ground, as in the case of Czech NGOs in Ethiopia, Slovakian NGOs in Kenya, and Polish missionaries and NGOs in Cameroon and the Central African Republic. There are also small but active diaspora communities in both regions.

Many challenges remain, however. CEE countries are far from meeting their commitment of 0.33 per cent of GNI in ODA. The capacity on development policies and practice in their foreign ministries is rather limited and the rotation of diplomatic personnel hinders building a strong body of experienced staff. Their presence on the ground is limited. CEE governments have missed the opportunity to transform domestic implementing organizations, which were recipients of aid during the transition period, into implementing partners for external goals. This results in a more difficult

⁶⁵ No information on Bulgarian and Croatian aid towards Africa was identified.

⁶⁶ Horký-Hluchán, O. and Lightfoot, S. (eds) (2013), *Development Policies of Central and Eastern European States: From Aid Recipients to Aid Donors*, New York, NY: Routledge, and Dinu, D. et al. (2013), *New donors on the CEE block: A comparative approach of Visegrad countries, Romania and Bulgaria*, Romanian Center for European Policies and Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, www.crpe.ro/en/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Policy-Memo-nr.-50-Comparativ-ODA-Md-Georgia-Ucr.pdf (accessed 21 Jan. 2017); Ashoff, G. (2015), ‘Institutional Frameworks and Organizational Structures of International Development Cooperation: Approaches and Lessons Learnt by OECD Donors’, in Sidiropoulos, E. et al (eds), *Institutional Architecture & Development: Responses from Emerging Powers*, Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs; Oprk, Z., Harmacek, J. and Szrovátka, M. (2016), ‘The Allocation of Czech Foreign Aid in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Influence of Historical Relationships’, *International Journal of Economic Policy Emerging Economies*, 9:4; and Horký-Hluchán, O. (2015), ‘The Development Dimension of Czech Foreign Policy’, in Koan, M. et al (2015), *Czech Foreign Policy in 2013: Analysis*, Prague: Institute of International Relations; Oprea, M. (2009), *Development Discourse in Romania*; Oprea, M. (2012), ‘Development Discourse in Romania: From Socialism to EU Membership’, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 13:1.

⁶⁷ Research interviews, 2016.

and time-consuming process of building up ODA implementation capacity. The development NGOs' platforms in CEE countries encounter significant sustainability challenges, while research and educational capacity in development is limited.

In re-engaging with African partners on development, the CEE countries sometimes highlight their own transition experiences.⁶⁸ They underwent fundamental transformations in their political, economic and social systems, including the change from centralized to market economies, building democratic and independent institutions, and strengthening state capacity. CEE donors already have experience in sharing transition lessons in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa. Most of these lessons may also prove useful in development relations with Africa.⁶⁹ In Africa, experiences of such sharing to date include cooperation between Slovakia and Kenya on police reform and partnership between Czech Republic and Ethiopia in strengthening vocational education.⁷⁰ At the same time, given the similar African transformations and challenges, CEE countries can also explore the utility of the African experience for their own development. Such an approach would provide an element of equality in development relations between them. It would also enable CEE donors to move past their unease with traditional donor-recipient approaches.

Strengthening development relations

Be strategic and innovative donors

Imitating the approach of established donors would be a strategic mistake for CEE governments. The CEE transition experiences are a unique advantage in building new development partnerships, but only if potential partners know about CEE experiences with building market economies, state capacity and democratic and independent institutions. CEE countries benefit from having a different perspective – having been recipient countries themselves and having experienced transition – and therefore they have an opportunity to develop equal partnerships and innovate in their practices of development assistance. This opportunity is enhanced by the new context created by the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, which enables CEE governments and respective partner countries to analyse jointly their development successes and challenges.

Being innovative, however, is a challenge for CEE bureaucracies. Many institutions, while having achieved remarkable progress in terms of capacity and reform, remain strongly influenced by their totalitarian predecessors and their political leadership, maintaining an organizational culture that has, at times, resurgent authoritarian undertones. Bureaucracies in CEE countries have very little independence, operating mostly at the discretion of political leaders.⁷¹ This leads to challenges in placing policy issues on governments' agendas. The space for creativity and innovation is minimal in the absence of a suitable political and institutional leadership. Innovation, in this context, is much

⁶⁸ Lightfoot, S., Szent-Ivány, B. and Wolczuk, K. (2016), 'Mesmerized by Enlargement: The EU's Eastern Neighbourhood Policy and New Member State Transition Experience', *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 30:3; Horký-Hluchán, O. (2014), *Transition Experience 2.0: A new way to close the gap between the Central European human rights and development policies*, Prague: Institute of International Relations; and Anonymous, (2012), 'Sharing Knowledge and transition experience for development: the view of New European Donors', summary note from a technical workshop organized by the World Bank Institute, UN Development Programme and European Commission in partnership with the Czech Republic government.

⁶⁹ Areas amenable to sharing lessons learnt are: strengthening the independence of the justice sector, setting and strengthening anti-corruption institutions, prison management, security-sector reform, establishing stock markets, introducing population registrars, strengthening e-government, educational and tertiary education, local decentralization and fiscal management, strengthening budget management, electoral-system reform and elections management, party financing, strengthening parliaments, and developing aid and other agencies.

⁷⁰ Research interviews, 2016–17.

⁷¹ Drechler, W. and Randma-Liiv, T. (2014), *The New Public Management Then and Now: Lessons from the Transition in Central and Eastern Europe*, The Other Canon Foundation and Tallinn University of Technology, <http://ncpag.upd.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Drechler-Randma-NPM-CEE-2014-WP.pdf> (accessed 27 Mar. 2017).

more likely to come from civil society organizations and businesses, especially if they are adequately supported by the institutions in charge of development policy and implementation.

Strengthen relevant institutions, civil society and the private sector

For articulating and implementing development strategies, a donor country needs capacity at the level of relevant public institutions, civil society, research institutions and universities, media and the business sector. CEE donors are building their capacity in all these sectors while at the same time having a development strategy and implementing it. The focus falls, however, on the latter, leading to limited capacities and potential consequent challenges in the mid and long term.

Joining the EU had a negative impact on the sustainability of the civil society sector in some CEE countries, despite EU structural funds. As international donors left, no resources remained available for most organizations, with many experiencing bankruptcy or significantly downscaling their activities as EU funds are designed for large organizations and continue to be out of touch with the reality on the ground in the poorest EU regions from CEE. Moreover, the existing capacity of NGOs relates mostly to their experience of the transition process in CEE, not that of Africa. CEE donors, if they wish to be successful, need to invest significantly in growing local capacity in development and building bridges between innovative initiatives from CEE and potential partners from Africa.

Equally important, CEE donors can stimulate development NGOs to engage in mobilizing private aid. In Czech Republic, for example, People in Need is mobilizing resources in cooperation with the Czech Scouts for building schools in Ethiopia, with impressive results.⁷²

Make good use of EU development instruments and resources

The EU has wide-ranging and long-standing experience of development assistance in Africa. This positions the European Commission as an important partner in the opening of CEE development offices in partner countries and in assisting CEE stakeholders with establishing stronger connections on the ground. While accessing EU development instruments has proven to be challenging, a fruitful path may be exploring additional strategies, such as joining forces and building consortia for relevant tenders.

That said, CEE countries are still in the early days of civil society and business engagement in development efforts. The lack of institutional resources and the novelty of crafting development policies require concerted EU action in order to ensure that the capacity built to date is not lost. For example, the development NGOs platforms in several CEE countries are experiencing major survival challenges.

⁷² Research interviews, 2016.

4. Conclusion

Central and Eastern Europe and Africa have begun to rebuild their relations. While still in the early phases of re-engagement, both sides have taken important steps in increasing their presence on the ground and the number of bilateral visits, in increasing trade volumes, in laying the ground for institutions that may further enhance trade and investment, and in establishing development partnerships.

Although relations are re-emerging, they lack strategic depth in all reviewed areas – political, trade and investment, and development cooperation. The still low number of top-level visits, volatile trends in trade, limited number of significant investment projects, and limited focus put on the learning potential from sharing CEE's and Africa's transformation experiences are major indicators of the lack of strategic depth.

While there are challenges with every step of rebuilding relations, there is increasing interest on both sides, positive experiences are consolidating bilateral commitments, and a slow institutionalization of relations is emerging and may lead to better long-term engagement. Core challenges relate to the broader regional dynamics for CEE and African countries – growing instability in both regions may diminish the appetite and possibility of maintaining engagement.

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Stefan Cibian became an Academy fellow at Chatham House in September 2016. Before joining Chatham House, he was visiting professor in International Development at Babeş-Bolyai University and director of Cibian Consulting SRL. He serves on the board of several organizations: The Romanian Association for International Cooperation and Development, FOND – The Romanian NGDO Platform, Tara Fagarasului Community Foundation, and the Foundation for Youth Involvement.

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