



Memorandum

Nexus²⁵ – ECDPM – ETTG training module

Nexus²⁵ Strategic Foresight Workshop:

Mapping Future Risks for the EU-Africa Partnership

January 20, 2026

Background

On 20 January 2026, the Nexus²⁵ project convened a training module, co-organized with ECDPM and ETTG. The session brought together representatives from African embassies and missions in Brussels, European institutions and EU bodies, as well as experts from think tanks and research organizations for a scenario-based exercise exploring the future of EU–Africa relations in the context of accelerating climate change, energy transition, and global governance.

Set in the year 2035, the exercise tested how key international actors might respond to a proposed BRICS-led reset of the global climate regime, against a backdrop of accelerating climate risks, geopolitical fragmentation, and mounting pressure on multilateral institutions. The scenario underscored the importance of applying nexus thinking and adopting cross-silo policy approaches to address complex global challenges.

Workshop Summary

The training module opened with an introduction to the Nexus²⁵ project and its focus on future-proofing multilateralism in an increasingly volatile global environment. Participants were immersed in a 2035 scenario in which accelerating climate change, resource competition, and geopolitical instability have brought the international system close to a climate “breaking point”.

During a horizon-scanning exercise, participants identified key long-term trends and risks across four domains: technological, demographic, geopolitical, and military. Participants were then divided into teams representing major actors (EU, African Union, UK, US, and Russia) and tasked with negotiating their positions on a proposed BRICS-led global climate reset. The proposal centred on five pillars: incentives over regulation, burden-sharing, shared prosperity, streamlined global processes, and strengthened regional partnerships.

Through horizon scanning, team negotiations, and policy discussions, the training examined the feasibility of cooperation, the limits of current governance models, and the trade-offs shaping future climate and energy partnerships.

Building on the negotiations developed within the scenario, the participants were involved in a successive concluding discussion focused on policy interventions needed to improve EU–Africa cooperation by 2035. The lively debate among the participants produced remarkable insights on the potential path towards the development of EU-Africa relations in the next decade, and on how to implement an effective nexus approach to face the challenges ahead.

Key Takeaways

- *Climate governance can no longer be treated in isolation:* climate change is structurally intertwined with migration, demography, security, defense, and industrial policy, significantly complicating institutional responses.
- *Current multilateral frameworks are widely perceived as underprepared* to manage systemic climate risks, prompting growing calls for streamlined, incentive-based, and regionally tailored governance models.
- *EU–Africa relations remain marked by gaps in perceptions and priorities*, particularly between EU-driven regulatory approaches and African demands for investment, adaptation finance, and policy co-creation.
- *Coordination failures within EU policy instruments* (including trade, development and investment) risk undermining resilience and trust with partners, reinforcing perceptions of top-down and siloed engagement.
- *Adaptation remains chronically underfunded*, despite being a top priority for African partners, exposing a structural imbalance in global climate finance.
- *Integrated institutional approaches* should be promoted to improve coordination among EU policy tools, develop differentiated energy transition pathways, and reform global energy governance structures that no longer reflect political and economic realities.

The Nexus²⁵ project will continue this work throughout 2026. Key takeaways will be incorporated into a final report to be released at the end of the project.



Nexus²⁵ is a joint project of the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) in Rome and the Center for Climate and Security (CCS) in Washington, DC. The project, led by Dr. Nathalie Tocci at IAI, Erin Sikorsky at CCS and Dr. Michael Werz at the Center for American Progress (CAP), is funded by Stiftung Mercator in Germany.

For additional information please visit <https://www.nexus25.org> or contact the Nexus²⁵ team at info@nexus25.org.