

# Romania and Sub-Saharan Africa. How to re-boost our traditional relations?



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# Structure of the presentation

- The Presence of Romania in Sub-Saharan Africa before 1989
- The 'Desert' of the 1990s-2000s
- A difficult reinstatement - 2010s
- What is to be done?

# The Presence of Romania in Sub-Saharan Africa before 1989

- Before 1945 – some trade relations with various regions and with South-Africa (esp. 1920s)

*e.g.* trade offices in various cities like Gao, Cape Town, Fort Lamy

- 1960s-1980s – consolidation of the relations with Africa as a benchmark of the distancing from Moscow

Creation of numerous embassies, development of complex agreements (education, infrastructure projects, health etc.)

*Collaboration among dictators, not a natural rapprochement*

# The 'Desert' of the 1990s-2000s

- 1990s – Romania confronted with heavy structural problems
- It turned towards the 'West' and slowly abandoned Sub-Saharan Africa
- The African states 'naturalized' this distancing as a part of their fight against their local dictators

*e.g.* Kerekou in Benin, Moboutou in Zaire, Sassou N'guesso in Congo-Brazzaville – all friends of Ceausescu and trying to hold their power

Early 2000s – Dismantlement of some common structures and cuts in the number of diplomatic missions

# A difficult reinstatement - 2010s

- After the EU accessions, Romania needed to diversify its partnerships
- Small steps to reconsolidate the relations with Africa: chambers of trade and industry, some investments in agriculture and energy
- But still: no overall strategy, no integrated decision to invest and to (re)create an institutional infrastructure to back the investments
- Moreover, scandals of corruption with some Romanian investors in Africa (Senegal, Nigeria) –

Death of the idea of being the first to exploit natural resources in competition with France, the US, China, Brazil...

# What is to be done?

- Two ways seem to work:
  - Accessing development funds – coalitions of NGOs in partnership with the governmental institutions.

Strong points: commitment of the civil society, an increasing number of experts fluent in Eng., Fr., Ar.

Weak points: Romania still not being able to assume the status of a state of the 'North'; lack of a coherent long-term national strategy

# What is to be done?

- Developing academic relations-education:

Strong points:

- common interests (demography – low in Ro, high in Sub-Saharan Africa)
- Ro univ. offer programs in En. and Fr., Afr. Students being educated in En. and/or Fr.
- Because of Europeanization under colonialism, communication and understanding related issues are more surmountable.

# What is to be done?

- Developing academic relations-education:

Weak points:

- Changing educational policies of Ro and of the diff. Afr. states
- Scarcity of resources limiting the possibilities of the Afr. students to study abroad
- Numerous rejections of visa demands – the spectre of terrorism and immigration

*Universities having to face almost alone the recruitment and entrenchment related challenges*



# The example of the Centre for African Studies CESTAF – UBB Cluj

- Created in 2013 to develop academic relations with Africa
- Two pillars – Francophone (Senegal, Morocco, Benin, Cameroon) + Anglophone (South Africa, Kenya, Botswana)
- Two tracks – Teaching and Research + Culture
- T&R: multi-degree MA progr. in Comparative Political Studies (SN-RO-FR), double-degree progr. in law & pol. science (RO-CN), Research Group on Literature and Politics (RO-ALG-FR)
- Publications: ‘Societies and Perspectives’ (BN), special issues, books
- The sole African female DHC in Romania (Penda Mbow)
- Opportunities for development via the Erasmus+ progr. (1<sup>st</sup> y. for Sub-Sah. Afr – 6 maj. agreements)