**Regional Encounters: Explaining the Divergent Responses to the EU's Support for Regional Integration in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific**

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Abstract

In this article, we map and explain the unevenness of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) responses to the EU’s external promotion of regional integration in the context of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). Although the controversies associated with the EPAs are typically attributed to a common set of problems, what remains to be fully explained is why these manifested themselves to a greater or lesser extent in different national and regional contexts. We account for this variance as a product of the degree of congruence between the institutional trajectory of individual regional projects and the model of economic integration prescribed by the EU in its post-Lomé prospectus for the ACP. We describe this congruence as either ‘high’, ‘medium’ or ‘low’ and use this explanatory model to account for variances in ACP responses to the EPAs, which would otherwise provide an untidy fit with accounts preoccupied with the economic determinants of bargaining outcomes.

**Introduction**

In this article, we map and explain the unevenness of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) responses to the EU’s external promotion of regional integration in the context of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). Although the controversies associated with the EPAs are typically attributed to a common set of problems, what remains to be fully explained is why these were manifest to a greater or lesser extent in different national and regional contexts. The predominant explanation of this puzzle focuses on the unevenness of trade dependences - i.e. the greater or lesser degree of enthusiasm shown for the EPAs by individual states is a direct correlate of their reliance on EU trade preferences - but this is only part of the story and in fact leads to a rather misleading account. It is, for instance, among the countries and regions least sensitive to the removal of EU trade preferences - e.g. CARIFORUM, Papua New Guinea, Lesotho and Mozambique - that we find the most enthusiasm for the EPAs. States such as Namibia and Ghana, in contrast, were publicly critical of the EPAs and even refused to sign agreements, in spite of heavy dependence on EU preferences.[[1]](#endnote-1)

This anomaly, we suggest, exposes a crucial oversight in much of the critical commentary that the EPAs have generated.[[2]](#endnote-2) That is to say, this commentary is preoccupied with the *economic* dimension of the EPAs - i.e. the introduction of the principle of reciprocity to trade in goods and the extension of this to services, alongside the so-called ‘Singapore issues’.[[3]](#endnote-3) This preoccupation leads to an underestimation of the *political* dimension of the EPAs – i.e. the EU’s insistence on intraregional cooperation and the requirement that EPAs be concluded on a regional as opposed to bilateral basis – as a determinant of the outcome of the negotiations. This political dimension has its immediate origins in the Cotonou Partnership Agreement of 2000, which provided the blueprint for the EPAs and linked their successful conclusion to the creation, promotion and consolidation of regional institutions to be identified during the process of the negotiations. The general vagueness of Cotonou meant that, at the time, the precise means by which the economic and political dimensions of the agreements would be linked remained unspecified. But even at this early stage it was easy to detect a tension between the need to conclude the EPAs before the expiry of a World Trade Organisation (WTO) waiver on 31 December 2007 and the logically prior necessity of creating viable regional institutions on which to base the agreements. On the one hand, the impending expiry of the waiver, coupled with the EU’s implied threat to downgrade ACP countries to the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), provided the former with an obvious source of political leverage over the latter in its aim of securing reciprocal free trade. On the other hand, the desire to conclude these agreements on an interregional basis meant that in practice this leverage was immediately dissipated because of the vastly differing levels of trade dependence - in other words, sensitivity to the removal of unilateral preferences that the EPAs were designed to replace - within each ACP region. This was especially so in the case of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), which had little incentive to sign EPAs following the granting of one-way trade preferences under the separate Everything but Arms (EBA) initiative. In sum, from the outset the economic and political components of the EPAs appeared to be pulling in different directions.

In the article, we trace the interaction of the economic and political dimensions of the EPAs, and use this to explain the divergent responses within the ACP to the EU’s promotion of regional integration. We suggest that, while differences in trade dependence - and consequently the ability of the EU to use this as bargaining leverage - cannot be ignored, the uptake of the EPAs also depended on the congruence between the institutional trajectory of individual regional projects and the model of economic integration prescribed by the EU in its post-Lomé prospectus. We describe this congruence as either ‘high’, ‘moderate’ or ‘low’, which, we suggest, was determined by: (i) coherence of the EPA group with existing regional institutions; (ii) compatibility of the EPA regional configurations with pre-existing customs union obligations; (iii) delegation of supranational negotiating authority; and (iv) the presence/absence of regional leadership. We then use this explanatory model to account for variances in ACP responses to the EPAs, which would otherwise provide an untidy fit with accounts preoccupied with the economic determinants of bargaining outcomes. In particular, we show that the EU’s regional EPA prospectus was most fully realised in CARIFORUM, where there was a ‘high’ level of congruence between existing regional institutions and the model of economic integration on which the EPAs were premised. In cases of ‘moderate’ congruence, regions with a reasonable level of institutional coherence – but which had not fully internalised or implemented the model of neoliberal economic integration that underpinned the EPAs – were able to generate some collective bargaining leverage vis-à-vis the EU in order to eventually arrive at watered-down region-based EPAs. In contrast, regions with ‘low’ levels of congruity tended to fall back on narrow economic calculations to secure the best (bilateral) market access deal available.

**The EU’s promotion of regional integration in the context of the EPAs**

There is now an extensive literature chronicling the momentous changes in EU-ACP trade and development cooperation that followed the publication of the Commission’s *Green Paper on Relations between the European Union and the ACP Countries* in 1996.[[4]](#endnote-4) As we suggested in the introduction, there is a general preoccupation in the EU-ACP literature with the economic dimension of the EPAs - especially the shift to reciprocity - and underestimation of the importance of the political dimension in the form of intraregional trade liberalisation and cooperation. With the benefit of hindsight, we can now observe that it is the latter dimension that has done most to expose the problems and contradictions at the heart of the EPA prospectus.

The ostensible driver of the EU’s decision to reform its longstanding preferential trade relationship with the ACP under the 1975 Lomé Convention was a series of legal challenges under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and WTO in the 1990s. Making Lomé WTO-compatible, however, did not require a region-based solution; indeed, a single ACP free trade agreement or a series of bilateral agreements between the EU and individual ACP countries might have been both legally and politically more straightforward.[[5]](#endnote-5) There were, of course, practical reasons behind the Commission’s decision to opt for region-based EPAs, given the heterogeneity and complexity of the ACP group that, by this point, numbered more than 70 countries.[[6]](#endnote-6) It is difficult, however, to ignore the fact that this blueprint coincided with a growing enthusiasm among EU policymakers for the external promotion of regionalism. Following the completion of the Single Market in January 1993 the EU had begun to place more emphasis on interregional cooperation as a stepping stone to multilateral trade liberalization.[[7]](#endnote-7) For the first time, the EU adopted the external promotion of regional integration as an explicit policy aim in its relations with its Mediterranean neighbours, the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The EU’s enthusiasm for the promotion of regionalism rested on the belief that the EU’s own unique experience meant that it had an comparative advantage in offering this type of development assistance. The EU thus promised to ‘add value’ to the efforts of other donors,[[8]](#endnote-8) in cementing the idea that South-South regionalism would foster integration into the global economy, produce economies of scale, stimulate investment and lock in trade reforms.[[9]](#endnote-9) Where the 1996 Green Paper had asserted that a region-based approach would help to address the practical difficulties of uniform reciprocity, by the time the Cotonou Agreement had been signed and the EPA negotiations were under way, the EU had come to see collective negotiations as a way of developing the capacity of ACP regions. Further, the EPAs ultimately went beyond the modalities of the EU’s support for regional integration in other regions – which had relied on trade cooperation, political dialogue, technical support and financial assistance – by making free circulation within ACP regions an explicit condition of market access via a ‘regional preference clause’.[[10]](#endnote-10)

The Cotonou Agreement was vague about how the twin trade principles of reciprocity and special and differential treatment for least-developed countries (LDCs) – both of which the EU argued needed to be implemented in line with multilateral trade disciplines – would be causally linked to the promotion of regional integration through the EPAs. The EU’s implied threat to downgrade those ACP countries that failed to sign an EPA to the less generous GSP created a clear material incentive to accept the offer that the EU was proposing. This leverage was cemented by the existence of a clear deadline for the negotiations in the form of the expiry of the WTO waiver, which allowed the temporary continuation of Lomé preferences until 31 December 2007. What was unclear was how this leverage would be reconciled with the EU’s desire to conclude these agreements on an interregional basis – a plan that required the prior creation of viable regional institutions on which to base the agreements. Furthermore, the regional dynamics of the negotiations meant that the leverage created by the threat of downgrade to GSP was immediately dissipated as a result of significant national variations in preference dependence within regions. The EU’s unilateral offer of duty-free market access under EBA served only to heighten these intraregional tensions by creating very different sets of material incentives for states that would have to bargain for an EPA collectively.[[11]](#endnote-11)

The key problem for the EPAs, then, was created by the EU’s attempt to reconcile its drive for reciprocity and special and differential treatment (and its commitment to executing these in line with WTO rules) with its political agenda for the promotion of regional integration. In fact, the EPAs lacked any organising principle around which region-wide reciprocal agreements could incorporate these two competing principles. Although the EU originally depicted the Lomé Convention as a series of ‘free trade areas’ in accordance with Article XXIV of the GATT, there is little evidence (apart from a small proportion of European Development Fund (EDF) aid allocated to regional projects) that the promotion of regional integration was given much priority - certainly in comparison with the status it was accorded under the Cotonou Agreement and the EPAs. This is not to suggest that regionalism itself did not flourish under Lomé; indeed, it was during the ‘second wave’ of regionalism in the late 1960s and 1970s that many of the blocs that would eventually form the basis of the EPAs were first conceived.[[12]](#endnote-12) However, the prevailing orthodoxy of ‘ideological neutrality’ held by EU policy makers at this point in time meant that the promotion of regional integration was, like other things, largely a matter for the ACP to decide upon.

Most of the regional projects around which the EPAs are based have their origins in the state-led and inward-looking regional projects founded during this second wave of regionalism.[[13]](#endnote-13) While some regional initiatives targeted the integration of regional markets, others were focussed on political cooperation and solidarity while others promoted cooperation in a particular sector or issue.[[14]](#endnote-14) During the 1990s, many of these regional initiatives were relaunched with a new market integration agenda leading to the creation of free trade agreements with (in some cases) the ultimate aim of forming customs and even monetary unions. This model explicitly followed the EU example, albeit based on an understanding that was somewhat abstracted from the actual historical experience of European integration. What is striking about this conversion to market integration in the ACP - Africa especially - is the fact that regions made commitments to the formation of customs unions while continuing to allow overlapping memberships with other regions with similar market integration aims. This is problematic since, by definition, customs unions should have a common external tariff (CET) and therefore overlapping customs unions are a logical impossibility. Furthermore, despite public commitments to this market integration agenda, states proved unwilling to pool sovereignty while the implementation of economic liberalisation has been highly uneven.

During the EPA negotiations, the disconnection between the EU’s model of market integration and the (more or less independent) internal drivers of regional politics in the ACP was soon revealed. The EPA negotiations were scheduled to take place in two separate phases - the first between the EU and the ACP group as a whole and the second between the EU and the subregions that would form the basis of the final agreements - but the first phase lasted little more than a year and achieved little of substance. The main reason for this is that the European Commission was anxious to proceed to the second phase of the negotiations, even though the precise configuration of the subregions was still to be determined. Although the Cotonou Agreement stipulated that this would be a matter for the ACP, the evidence suggests that by this point the EU already had a firm idea of the final configurations it had in mind. In 2001, for example, the European Commission released a communication stating that the configurations were ‘not entirely at the discretion of the ACP’.[[15]](#endnote-15) In setting out the criteria by which groups would qualify to take part in the negotiations, the document went on to declare, among other things, that each region must be ‘effectively engaged in an economic integration process’, that negotiations must take place in a single setting, lead to a single agreement and that participating countries would be prohibited from belonging to more than one subregion.[[16]](#endnote-16) Further, the Commission considered existing customs unions – with an established CET – the most preferable basis for an EPA group.[[17]](#endnote-17)

Although the configuration of the Caribbean and Pacific regions was relatively straightforward given their geographical separation from the rest of the ACP (which is not to say that these cases were unproblematic), the situation was more complicated in Africa, because of the plethora of overlapping regional organizations with conflicting mandates. There were five regional economic communities in Africa that contained mostly ACP countries and had economic integration as a central aim and that were therefore potential bases for an EPA negotiating group. These groups were: The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), The Southern African Development Community (SADC), The East African Community (EAC), The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).[[18]](#endnote-18) While the eventual form of the negotiating regions was ostensibly a choice for the ACP countries, officials sought to persuade ACP countries to form configurations that were deemed viable in terms of their ability to negotiate and implement an EPA before the deadline at the end of 2007.[[19]](#endnote-19) This created numerous problems. For one, in no case other than the EAC – whose EPA group membership originally straddled the East and Southern and SADC-minus configurations before it broke away in 2007 to form a fifth African subregion - did the EPA configuration match the contours of an existing regional project. In some cases (e.g. Mauritania), ACP countries were not part of any eligible existing regional integration process and were therefore made to fit into the nearest regional negotiating configuration without being a part of the underlying regional institution. In other cases, existing regional groups contained non-ACP countries that were excluded from the EPA negotiations. These included Egypt and Libya, which are members of COMESA, and South Africa, which was only allowed to join the SADC EPA group at a late stage in the negotiations. In Eastern and Southern Africa, existing regions were split into as many as three (and later four) negotiating groups.[[20]](#endnote-20) The reality of the configurations, then, was far from the ideal set out by the EU that the EPA groups should all constitute regions ‘effectively engaged’ in economic integration.[[21]](#endnote-21)

**Divergent Responses to Regional EPAs**

By 2007, relatively little progress had been made towards regional agreements in the majority of the EPA regions. On the eve of the expiry of the WTO waiver, the European Commission decided to permit individual countries and subregions to initial ‘goods only’ interim EPAs with a view to the completion of ‘full’ region-wide EPAs at a later date. In order to facilitate this, a new trade regime – Market Access Regulation (MAR) 1528 - was introduced to provide temporary duty-free market access for those countries that initialled an interim EPA. The enforced rush to sign full or interim EPAs to preserve preferential access to the EU market at the end of 2007 proved to be the point at which regional responses to the EPAs began to diverge. The CARIFORUM group became the only region to sign a full EPA in early 2008. The only other group to sign a regional EPA at this point – in this case a goods-only deal – was the East African Community (EAC). In each of the other EPA regions – West Africa, the SADC EPA group, Central Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) and the Pacific – the deadline proved to be highly divisive, with some countries initialling interim agreements while others refused to do so.

After the rush provoked by the WTO deadline negotiations slowed considerably. CARIFORUM began implementation of its EPA in this period. Elsewhere, some countries that had initialled interim deals at the end of 2007 went on to sign these agreements in 2008 and 2009 and a very small number – Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles (ESA) and Papua New Guinea (Pacific) – ratified and began implementation of their interim deals. Otherwise, little progress was made towards the ratification of existing agreements, their extension to include countries that had not initialled an EPA in 2007, or their conversion into full comprehensive EPAs. In response, the EU attempted to recapture some of the leverage that had been created by the expiry of the WTO waiver by announcing that those countries that failed to ratify the interim agreements by 1 January 2014 (later extended 1 October 2014) would cease to benefit from duty-free access to the EU market.[[22]](#endnote-22)

Again, ACP responses to this new imperative diverged. The EAC, along with two regional groups previously divided over the interim EPAs – West Africa and the SADC EPA Group – came together to agree regional deals just before or (in the case of EAC) just after the October 2014 deadline.[[23]](#endnote-23) Elsewhere, regional agreements have not been reached and the situation remains much the same as it was after the 2007 interim EPAs. In Central Africa, Cameroon is implementing its interim EPA, while the rest of the region trades with the EU under EBA, GSP or the EU’s most-favoured nation tariff. In Eastern and Southern Africa, the EPA signed by Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zimbabwe is being provisionally applied while the rest of the region (composed entirely of LDCs) trades with the EU under EBA. Likewise in the Pacific, Fiji and Papua New Guinea began applying their interim EPAs while the region’s other members traded under EBA or GSP.

[Table 1 Here]

Table 1 presents data on ACP export dependence on the EU market and the proportion of exports to the EU that would face a tariff increase under GSP (applicable to non-LDCs only) against details of which countries concluded EPAs in 2007 and 2014. This data suggests that the market access incentives associated with the EPAs were important in shaping the outcome of the agreements. Yet this does not tell the full story. Of the two regions that signed or initialled full or interim EPAs in 2007/08 – CARIFORUM and EAC – in neither case were the constituent countries uniformly exposed to a loss of Lomé preferences. In the case of CARIFORUM, the region was almost entirely composed of non-LDCs (with the exception of Haiti) facing a downgrade to GSP, but the extent to which their exports would be affected by this downgrade varied considerably – from Guyana facing a tariff rise on 72.3 percent of its exports to the EU, to Antigua and Barbuda facing a rise on only 1.4 percent of exports to the EU. In EAC, Kenya faced a tariff rise on 56.5 percent of its exports to the EU, but the rest of the region (all LDCs) faced no such threat. The two groups to conclude new regional EPAs in 2014 – West Africa and the SADC EPA group – also contained a mixture of LDCs and non-LDCs and varying levels of export dependence on the EU. Outside of these regions, patterns of acceptance and rejection of the EPAs reflected market access incentives more closely. All non-LDCs that faced tariff increases on a moderate or large proportion of their exports initialled EPAs to preserve preferential market access in 2007 and had signed and begun application of these agreements by 2014. LDCs were significantly less likely to initial an EPA, although some – Lesotho, Mozambique, Madagascar, Zambia and Comoros – did.[[24]](#endnote-24)

**Explaining Regional EPA Outcomes: Institutional and Ideational Congruence**

In order to explain the divergent ACP responses to the EU’s attempts to promote regional integration through the EPAs we suggest that, while differences in preference dependence cannot be ignored, uptake of the agreements was also crucially dependent upon the political dimension of the negotiations – i.e. the congruence between individual ACP regions and the vision of liberal economic integration at the heart of the EU’s prospectus. Building on the EU’s own statements about the institutional prerequisites for a successful EPA,[[25]](#endnote-25) we identify three initial criteria for assessing this congruence: (i) geographic coherence of the EPA group with existing regional institutions; (ii) compatibility of the EPA regional configurations with pre-existing customs union obligations; and (iii) delegation of supranational negotiating authority. To these criteria, we add a fourth that was not raised by the EU in its discussion of the institutional prerequisites for an EPA – (iv) the presence/absence of regional leadership. Our analysis suggests that while the various dominant regional actors played different roles and took different attitudes towards the negotiations, they were nonetheless crucial in compensating for other institutional weaknesses in several of the ACP regions. Using this model, we describe the congruence between the EPA groups and the EU’s model of economic integration as ‘high’, ‘moderate’ or ‘low’ and argue that these differences account for the divergent regional outcomes in individual EPA negotiating groups (see Table 2).[[26]](#endnote-26) Specifically we suggest that the region with ‘high’ congruence – CARIFORUM – was the one in which the EU’s vision for regional economic integration was most fully realised.[[27]](#endnote-27) Those with ‘moderate’ congruence – West Africa, EAC and the SADC EPA group – displayed a reasonable level of institutional coherence but only partial uptake of the specific regional institutional forms – as well as the broader ideological prospectus – that underpinned the EPAs. This institutional coherence gave these regions a degree of collective leverage that enabled them to challenge (albeit in limited ways) key aspects of the EPA prospectus in order to reach compromise regional agreements that better reflected their own regional priorities. Finally, those regions with ‘low’ congruence – Central Africa, ESA and the Pacific – were unable to formulate coherent regional negotiating positions and were more likely to fall back on narrow economic calculations to secure access to the EU market on a bilateral or subregional basis.

[Table 2 here]

*High Congruence*

Only one region – CARIFORUM – possessed a high (although not entirely unproblematic) level of congruence with the institutional preconditions of the model of economic integration at the heart of the EPAs. All but one of the Caribbean ACP countries – the Dominican Republic – were members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), a region that has achieved an advanced level of economic integration and institutional capacity, having applied a CET since 1991 and established the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) in 2006. To include Dominican Republic, the EPA group was based on the broader Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM) region, which had been created in 1992 for the purpose of coordinating European Development Fund assistance to the region.[[28]](#endnote-28) Although less advanced than CARICOM, CARIFORUM had an active regional economic integration agenda, an FTA having been concluded between CARICOM and the Dominican Republic in 2001 with a CET being implemented simultaneously with the EPA negotiations.[[29]](#endnote-29) Furthermore, during their preparations for the EPA talks, the CARIFORUM members agreed a negotiating structure that granted supranational authority to a quasi-autonomous body – the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM)[[30]](#endnote-30) – the like of which did not exist in other ACP regions.[[31]](#endnote-31)

Although not a perfect fit, the institutional trajectory of the CARIFORUM region was, by far, the closest of any of the EPA groups to matching the conditions that the European Commission had originally stipulated would be necessary to negotiate a regional EPA. Furthermore, the region’s existing successes in implementing a process of economic integration modelled on the EU example reflected a measure of ideological convergence between Caribbean elites and their EU counterparts. Indeed, Bishop, Heron and Payne suggest that the CRNM – which was endowed with ‘a forceful personality of its own’ and ‘considerable intellectual capacity, drive and confidence’ – played an important role in stressing the claimed synergies between a full regional EPA and the Caribbean’s existing efforts to pursue a neoliberal model of regional economic development.[[32]](#endnote-32) Similarly, Elijah Nyaga Munyi presents survey evidence that Caribbean negotiators expressed a far stronger ‘neoliberal bias’ – in the sense that they were likely to believe that a reciprocal EPA would ‘generally promote exports, export diversification and competition […] better than the preferential Cotonou Agreement’ – than those of other ACP regions.[[33]](#endnote-33) CRNM officials also evidently subscribed to the EU narrative that the region would derive ‘dynamic benefits’ from the proposed inclusion of a services and investment component in a ‘comprehensive’ EPA.[[34]](#endnote-34) In other words, what was important in the early realisation of a comprehensive regional EPA in the Caribbean was both the region’s institutional capacity and the way in which this helped to foster a coherent ideological position compatible with that of the EU.

*Moderate Congruence*

Outside of the Caribbean, ACP regions demonstrated a poorer fit with the institutional prerequisites of the EPAs. This was not simply a technical question of institutional capacity. It also reflected a weaker political and ideological commitment to the model of regional economic development at the heart of both the European project in general, and the EU’s external promotion of regional integration through the EPAs more specifically.[[35]](#endnote-35) Yet some regions outside of the Caribbean approximated the institutional forms on which the EPAs were predicated better than others (see Table 2). In particular, the West Africa group mapped closely onto the membership of ECOWAS (with only the addition of Mauritania required), while the EAC EPA group matched the EAC organisation exactly. Both of these regions had economic integration as their original aim and had made progress towards the creation of a customs union (in West Africa this has been implemented in the West African Economic and Monetary Union sub-region while the EAC has been implementing a CET since 2004). Of all the African regions, ECOWAS is one of the more inclined towards supranationalism, as evidenced by the prominent role played by the ECOWAS Commission at the apex of the region’s EPA negotiating structure.[[36]](#endnote-36) Furthermore, the dominant regional actor, Nigeria, worked closely with the ECOWAS Commission to secure a unified regional approach to the negotiations – for example by placing pressure on Ghana and Côte D’Ivoire to refuse to go ahead with the implementation of interim EPAs without the agreement of the rest of the group.[[37]](#endnote-37) The EAC’s late conversion into an EPA negotiating group meant that its collective negotiating structures were less sophisticated that those of ECOWAS and the negotiations remained primarily in the hands of national ministries.[[38]](#endnote-38) Here Kenya played a key leadership role in fostering regional negotiating positions.

While the SADC EPA group is included in the ‘moderate’ congruence category, its case is different. Here, it was to all intents and purposes impossible to establish an EPA group that matched the contours of existing regional projects, given the plethora of overlapping regional institutions in southern and east Africa. The SADC EPA group included only eight (seven, once Tanzania had defected to EAC) of the SADC regional economic community’s members. The members of the SADC region were particularly suspicious of surrendering sovereignty to supranational institutions, which is why the EPA negotiations were led by national trade ministers on the basis intergovernmental consensus.[[39]](#endnote-39) South Africa, however, wielded the considerable leverage that it enjoyed through the smaller Southern African Customs Union to bring the negotiating positions of the other four members of this group – Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland – into line with its own preferences.[[40]](#endnote-40) In this way, South Africa’s dominance to some extent compensated for the institutional shortcomings of the SADC EPA group by (belatedly) fostering a unified regional negotiating position. It is worth noting, however, that this position was arrived at largely through regional power play as opposed to institutionalised dialogue and cooperation.[[41]](#endnote-41)

In each of these three regions, the formation and pursuit of a coherent regional agenda proved intensely challenging, as evidenced by the divisions within West Africa and the SADC EPA group in 2007 and the fact the EAC never signed the deal that it struck at this time. In the lead up to the later 2014 deadline, however, each of these groups was able (partially, at least) to pull together to negotiate collectively with the EU. Unlike in CARIFORUM, this did not mean accepting the EU’s political and economic model in its entirety. Indeed, each of these three regions was able to coalesce around key objections to the agreements proposed by the EU. A degree of institutional coherence, then, provided these groups with a source of leverage vis-a-vis the EU. In other words, these groups were able to invoke the sanctity of existing regional institutions - to which the EU repeatedly professed its commitment - to extract concessions on a range of negotiating issues, including the extent of reciprocal tariff liberalisation, the inclusion of services and the Singapore issues as well as various technical clauses.[[42]](#endnote-42) All told, these regions displayed sufficient institutional capacity to conclude agreements in 2014 – and thereby avoid the regional disruption that had been evident in other ACP groups – that subordinated the EPAs to local regional integration projects.

*Low Congruence*

A final set of EPA negotiating groups offered a particularly low level of congruence with the institutional parameters on which the EPAs were premised. In Central Africa and ESA, regional organisations with a reasonable degree of institutional capacity – CEMAC and COMESA respectively – existed. In both cases, however, the mismatch between the scope of these organisations and the geographic configuration of the negotiating group proved to be a significant stumbling block. For Central Africa, this problem emerged when the Democratic Republic of Congo – which was not a member of CEMAC but was a member of both SADC and COMESA – joined the group in 2005.[[43]](#endnote-43) For ESA, this was evident from the start, with the COMESA region divided between two and later three, and then four, EPA negotiating groups. Both CEMAC and COMESA had plans to introduce customs unions at the time of the EPA negotiations, but had encountered considerable implementation problems.[[44]](#endnote-44) This signalled just how difficult it would be to arrive at and implement a collective market access offer in relation to the EU. While both regions delegated some negotiating authority to regional bodies, the coherence of their negotiating structures was disrupted by their changing regional configurations – in particular after the EAC had formed a separate negotiating group in the case of the ESA configuration.[[45]](#endnote-45) It is worth noting that both of these regions lacked any individual country with the resources and leadership capabilities to overcome collective action problems by articulating a regional negotiating position – something that had been important to a greater or lesser extent in each of the regions with ‘moderate’ congruence. The final ‘low’ congruence EPA group was the Pacific.[[46]](#endnote-46) The only organisation on which the EPA could be built in this region was the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), which included 13 of the 14 Pacific ACP countries but also Australia and New Zealand, the latter of which were involved in their own process of trade reform in relation to the Pacific island states. While the PIF Secretariat played a coordinating role in the negotiations, its capacity and legitimacy to do so was frequently questioned by both of the main players in the region – Fiji and Papua New Guinea.[[47]](#endnote-47) Furthermore, there was little in the way of a record of successful economic integration in the Pacific – the only progress in this regard having been made by the Melanesian Spearhead Group (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu).[[48]](#endnote-48)

Each of these regions, then, was divided over whether to sign an interim EPA in 2007, and continued to be so in the face of the EU’s new EPA deadline in 2014. Furthermore, the outcomes in these regions tended to closely reflect the immediate and easily traceable effects of a possible loss of EU market access. In short, preference dependent non-LDCs signed EPAs while LDCs and those without significant preference-dependence did not (see Table 1). This was not because countries in these regions were motivated by straightforward material interests to any greater extent than countries in the ‘high’ and ‘moderate’ congruence regions. Rather, countries acting in regions with low institutional capacity had relatively little opportunity or leverage to seek concessions from the EU in line with their perception of the type of EPA that would suit their political and economic preferences. Whether or not they felt that the EPA as a whole was aligned with their national or regional economic and political trajectory, these countries tended to fall back on narrow economic calculations about how best to secure access to the EU market. Indeed, even where some countries in these regions were sympathetic to the ideological prospectus of the EPAs – as was the case, for example, in Mauritius[[49]](#endnote-49) – they were effectively prevented from concluding comprehensive EPAs because the EU wished only to pursue this more ambitious agenda on a regional basis. While the regions with ‘moderate’ congruence went on to negotiate compromise deals with the EU in 2014, the countries in ‘low’ congruence regions either signed and implemented the interim EPAs that they had concluded at the end of 2007 or reverted to one of the EU’s alternative preference schemes.

**Conclusion**

The aim of this article was to map and explain the divergent responses of ACP regions to the EU’s attempts to promote regional economic integration through the EPAs. In one region – CARIFORUM – the EPA resulted in the early and relatively complete adoption of the EU’s regional economic prospectus. Elsewhere, in Africa and the Pacific, this regional model was adopted late and partially or not at all. While existing accounts of the EPAs identify a common set of controversies and roadblocks that marred the negotiations, they do not systematically account for the uneven regional trajectories of the EPAs. We acknowledge the importance of varying levels of ACP trade dependence – and the way in which these were underscored by the EU’s efforts to secure both reciprocity and special and differential treatment through the EPAs – in explaining different countries’ enthusiasm or otherwise for the agreements. Yet we have shown that such an account cannot on its own explain why some regions were able to overcome these divergent national-level incentives, why some were able to do so only belatedly and while others still were not able to do so at all. We therefore turned our attention to the less discussed political dimension of the EPAs – i.e. the EU’s decision to place a particular model of liberal economic integration and cooperation at the heart of the EPAs and the congruence (or lack thereof) between this model and the regional integration projects that existed on the ground in ACP regions.

Our key finding is that the level of congruence between the institutional trajectories of individual regional projects mattered in determining the regional coherence of the ACP response to the EPA in each individual negotiating group. We measured this congruence in terms of geographic coherence between the EPA group and existing regional institutions, the compatibility of the EPA with existing customs union obligations, the delegation of supranational negotiating authority and regional leadership. The varying levels of congruence of the EPA groups maps onto their responses to the regional dimension of the EPAs. CARIFORUM – the only EPA group with a high level of institutional congruence according to our criteria, and a region in which there was considerable ideological sympathy for the EU’s favoured model of economic integration – was the region where the EPA model was most fully realised. Three regions in Africa displayed a ‘moderate’ level of congruence with the institutional requirements of the EPAs. Here, ideas also mattered in the sense that regions with reasonable institutional capacity and coherence – but which did not fully buy into the model of economic integration at the heart of the EU’s EPA model – were able to generate some leverage in order to negotiate concessions from the EU and ultimately (and belatedly) arrive at compromise regional solutions. Finally, three regions with ‘low’ institutional congruence were unable to formulate coherent regional negotiating positions and – in the absence of opportunities to challenge the EU’s approach to the negotiations – their constituent countries tended to make narrow strategic calculations about how best to maximise their access to the EU market at the lowest economic short term cost.

The divergent ACP responses to the promotion of regional integration through the EPAs clearly have consequences for longer-term governance and development in the ACP. In those groups where some countries have signed an EPA while others have not, the legacy of the agreements may serve to heighten intraregional barriers as non-signatories seek to avoid transhipment of EU goods that have entered the region on the basis of lower tariffs via an EPA member. This does not necessarily mean to say that the inverse is true and where an EPA group has signed a joint agreement, that this will support the aims of regional integration in that region. Here, much is dependent on questions such as whether the EPA region matches the contours of the underlying regional project; whether the terms of the EPA are compatible with the region’s integration plans; and whether a long and sometimes acrimonious negotiating process has strengthened or weakened regional institutions and political ties. Measuring the precise institutional legacies of the EPAs in ACP regions is therefore an important avenue for future research.

1. Heron, “Asymmetric Bargaining and Development”; Heron and Murray-Evans, “Limits to Market Power”; Murray-Evans, “Regionalism and African Agency”; Nyaga Munyi, “Beyond Asymmetry”. Namibia and Ghana both concluded interim EPAs at the end of 2007 but later refused to sign these agreements. Both countries concluded watered-down EPAs along with their respective regions in 2014. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Heron and Murray-Evans, “The EU and Africa”. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. The Singapore issues – government procurement, trade facilitation, investment and competition – were introduced onto the World Trade Organisation agenda at the Singapore Ministerial in 1996 and subsequently became part of the Doha Round negotiations. All except trade facilitation were dropped from the Doha agenda following disagreements between developed and developing countries that culminated in the collapse of the Cancun Ministerial in 2003. These issues were mentioned only briefly in the 2000 Cotonou Agreement between the EU and the ACP countries but the EU subsequently insisted that they should be an important part of any ‘comprehensive’ EPA. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. See, *inter alia*, Brown, “Restructuring North-South Relations”; Faber and Orbie, *Beyond Market Access*; Gibb, “Post-Lome”; Heron, *Pathways from Preferential Trade*; Heron and Murray-Evans, “Limits to Market Power”; Heron and Siles-Brügge, “Competitive Liberalisation and the ‘Global Europe’”; Siles-Brügge, *Constructing European Union Trade Policy*; Ravenhill, “Back to the Nest”. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Heron and Murray-Evans, “Limits to Market Power”. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Siles-Brügge, *Constructing European Union Trade Policy*, 142. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Solignac Lecomte, *Options for Future ACP-EU*, 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. European Commission, “Green Paper on Relations”, xii. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. European Commission, “European Community Support”, 2002. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Heron, *Pathways from Preferential Trade*. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. For a more detailed discussion of the central contradictions within the EU’s approach to the EPAs and their consequences, see Heron and Murray-Evans, “Limits to Market Power”; Heron, *Pathways from Preferential Trade*. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Hurrell, “Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective”; Breslin and Higgott, “Studying Regions: Learning from the Old”. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Akokpari, “Dilemmas of Regional Integration”; Østergaard, “Classical Models of Regional Integration”; Qualmann, “Political, Legal and Economic Perspective”; Tekere, “Challenges for the SADC EPA Group”; Payne, *The Politics of the Caribbean Community*. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Heron and Murray-Evans, “The EU and Africa”. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. European Commission, *Orientations on the Qualification*, 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid., 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. The other regional economic communities either contain a number of non-ACP countries (Community of Sahel-Saharan States [CEN-SAD] and Arab Maghreb Union [UMA]) or focus primarily on security and political dialogue (IGAD). While ECCAS was initially identified as the possible basis for an EPA, the eventual EPA group in Central Africa more closely reflected the smaller and more integrated Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC). [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. A confidential interview with a former DG Trade official revealed that the Commission argued the case for the Democratic Republic of Congo – a member of three separate RECs – to be part of the Central Africa EPA configuration to give this region more market potential. In 2007, the Commission also insisted that Tanzania leave the SADC-minus group and join the EAC group instead (a customs union of which it was a member). [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. The SADC REC members were initially divided between the SADC-minus, Central Africa, and Eastern and Southern Africa EPA groups. Tanzania later joined the EAC EPA, dividing the SADC REC into a fourth EPA group. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. European Commission, *Orientations of the Qualifications*, 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Bilal and Ramdoo, “EPA Negotiations: The Honeymoon”. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Signatures of the West Africa and EAC EPAs are still pending at the time of writing. This is in some doubt in both regions. In West African there has been opposition to the deal from Nigerian government and private sector actors since the terms were agreed in 2014. In the EAC, Tanzania indicated in advance of the scheduled signing of the region’s EPA on July 18 2016 that it no longer wished to be part of the agreement, citing the uncertainty created by the United Kingdom’s vote to leave the EU as a key reason for the decision. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Lesotho and Mozambique concluded sub-regional EPAs in 2007 before concluding a regional deal with the rest of the SADC EPA group in 2014. Zambia and Comoros initialled an EPA in 2007 but never signed or ratified this deal. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. European Commission, *Orientations on the Qualification*. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. These categorisations – low, moderate or high – are based on the authors’ judgement, with brief justifications offered in Table 2. They are intended to provide an indication of the comparative degree of institutional congruence between the individual ACP groups and the model of economic integration on which the EU’s approach to the EPAs was premised. The claim is not that the outcome of the negotiations could be read off solely on the basis of these categorisations, nor that each of the four variables carried the same weight in determining the negotiating outcome in each case. Rather, Table 2 offers a simplified picture of the institutional dynamics of each region, while the way in which these shaped the outcome of the negotiations is discussed in further detail and with greater nuance in the sections below. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Heron, “Asymmetric Bargaining and Development”; Nyaga Munyi, “Beyond Asymmetry”. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. South Centre, *EPA Negotiations in the Caribbean Region*, 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid., 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Heron, “Asymmetric Bargaining and Development”; ECDPM, *Implementing the Economic Partnership Agreement*. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. During the 30th Annual Conference of CARICOM Heads of Government, held in Guyana 2-4 July 2009, the decision was taken to rename the CRNM as the Office of Trade Negotiations (OTN) and to redefine its operational remit. Among other things, the OTN was re-incorporated into the CARICOM Secretariat. These changes are a direct result of the fallout from the EPA negotiations where the quasi-autonomous status of the CRNM was widely criticised in the region. The controversy surrounding the CRNM provides an interesting footnote to the issues explored in this article, not least the tension between the economic and political dimensions of the EPAs. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Bishop et al., “Caribbean Development Alternatives”, 94-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Nyaga Munyi, “Beyond Asymmetry”, 58-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Bishop et al., “Caribbean Development Alternatives”, 95-6. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. See Heron and Murray-Evans, “The EU and Africa”. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Hulse, “Actorness Beyond the European Union”, 556-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. *Ibid.*, 558. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Lorenz, *Transformation on Whose Terms?*, 14. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Hulse, “Actorness Beyond the European Union”, 556. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. See Murray-Evans, “Regionalism and African Agency”. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. *Ibid.* [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. *Ibid.* [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. South Centre, *EPA Negotiations in Central African Region*, 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Babarinde and Faber, “EPAs and Integration in SSA”. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Lorenz, *Transformation on Whose Terms*. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. For and extended discussion, see Heron, *Pathways from Preferential Trade*. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Julian et al., “EPA Update”; Roquefeul, “EPA Update”. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. South Centre, *EPA Negotiations in the Pacific Region*, 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Confidential interview, 9 September 2015.

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    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
    | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
    |  |  | **Members of EPA Group** | **Proportion of total exports to EU, 2004-2014 (%)\*** | **Proportion of exports to EU subject to tariff increase under GSP (%)** | **EPA Concluded, 2007** | **EPA Concluded, 2014** |
    | **CARIFORUM** | Non-LDCs | Belize | 30.2 | 75.1 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Guyana | 24 | 72.3 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Grenada | 23.1 | 9.1 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Jamaica | 22.9 | 47.6 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | St Lucia | 20.9 | 27.4 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Dominica | 20.6 | 42 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Suriname | 15.4 | 44.8 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Antigua and Barbuda | 15.1 | 1.4 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Bahamas | 13.1 | 3.4 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Saint Vincent | 12.7 | 3.9 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Barbados | 11.6 | 21.7 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Trinidad and Tobago | 11.4 | 17.4 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Dominican Republic | 8.8 | 30.9 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Saint Kitts and Nevis | 5.1 | 71.5 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | LDCs | Haiti | 4.4 | - | ✓ | ✓ |
    | **West Africa** | Non-LDCs | Côte D'Ivoire | 41.7 | 31.5 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Nigeria | 29.9 | 1.7 |  | ✓ |
    | Ghana | 28.3 | 16.3 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | LDCs | Cape Verde | 62.6 | - |  | ✓ |
    | Liberia | 52.1 | - |  | ✓ |
    | Niger | 37.7 | - |  | ✓ |
    | Mauritania | 33.1 | - |  | ✓ |
    | Senegal | 18.1 | - |  | ✓ |
    | Gambia | 16.8 | - |  | ✓ |
    | Togo | 11.1 | - |  | ✓ |
    | Burkina Faso | 9.5 | - |  | ✓ |
    | Benin | 9.2 | - |  | ✓ |
    | Mali | 5.2 | - |  | ✓ |
    | Sierra Leone (g) | 4.5 | - |  | ✓ |
    | Guinea-Bissau (f) | 0.5 | - |  | ✓ |
    | **EAC** | Non-LDCs | Kenya | 24.8 | 56.5 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | LDCs | Uganda | 22.4 | - | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Rwanda | 16.0 | - | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Tanzania | 15.7 | - | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Burundi | 14.3 | - | ✓ | ✓ |
    | **SADC EPA Group** | Non-LDCs | Botswana | 60.9 | 1.5 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Namibia | 30.9 | 30.5 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | South Africa | 24.8 | - |  | ✓ |
    | Swaziland | 8.7 | 86.6 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | LDCs | Mozambique | 42.9 | - | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Angola (e) | 25.1 | - |  |  |
    | Lesotho | 2.7 | - | ✓ | ✓ |
    | **Central Africa** | Non-LDCs | Cameroon | 59.0 | 14.0 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Congo (a) | 21.0 | 3.3 |  |  |
    | Gabon (b) | 14.8 | 4.1 |  |  |
    | LDCs | Sao Tome & Principe | 71.1 | - |  |  |
    | Central African Rep | 56.0 | - |  |  |
    | Equatorial Guinea | 34.9 | - |  |  |
    | DR Congo | 21.8 | - |  |  |
    | Chad | 4.4 | - |  |  |

    **Table 1.** ACP preference dependence and EPA signatories by region.

    \*In some cases, data is only available for a limited part of the 2004-14 period.

    Sources: International Trade Centre, *Trade Map*; Overseas Development Institute, *The Costs to the ACP*.

    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
    | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
    | **ESA** | Non-LDCs | Mauritius | 60.5 | 61.5 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Seychelles\* | 58.1 | 69.1 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Zimbabwe | 12.8 | 35.6 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | LDCs | Madagascar | 53.6 | - | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Comoros | 37.9 | - | ✓ |  |
    | Malawi | 34.9 | - |  |  |
    | Ethiopia | 28.6 | - |  |  |
    | Djibouti (d) | 20.6 | - |  |  |
    | Zambia | 5.6 | - | ✓ |  |
    | Sudan (N+S) | 1.9 | - |  |  |
    | Somalia | 1.3 | - |  |  |
    | Eritrea | no data | - |  |  |
    | **Pacific** | Non-LDCs | Marshall Islands | 60.9 | 0.01 |  |  |
    | Papua New Guinea | 17.4 | 28.1 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Timor Leste | 15.6 | 6.8 |  |  |
    | Fiji | 11.1 | 92.6 | ✓ | ✓ |
    | Cook Islands | 6.2 | 28 |  |  |
    | Nauru | 5.3 | 52.2 |  |  |
    | Niue | 1.7 | 8.1 |  |  |
    | Palau | 0.3 | 36 |  |  |
    | Tonga | 0.3 | 52.7 |  |  |
    | Micronesia | 0 | 29.5 |  |  |
    | LDCs | Solomon Islands | 13.6 | - |  |  |
    | Vanuatu | 9.3 | - |  |  |
    | Kiribati | 0.3 | - |  |  |
    | Samoa | 0.3 | - |  |  |
    | Tuvalu | No Data | - |  |  |

    **Table 1 (continued).** ACP preference dependence and EPA signatories by region.

    \*In some cases, data is only available for a limited part of the 2004-14 period.

    Sources: International Trade Centre, *Trade Map*; Overseas Development Institute, *The Costs to the ACP*.

    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
    | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
    |  |  | **(i) coherence of EPA group with existing regional institution** | **(ii) compatibility of EPA group with existing customs union obligations** | **(iii) delegation of supranational negotiating authority** | **(iv) presence of dominant regional actor** |
    | **‘High’ Congruence** | **CARIFORUM** | **High.** CARIFORUM existed since 1992 and had an FTA since 2001. | **High.** CARICOM CET applied from 2001; CARIFORUM CET implemented alongside EPA negotiation. | **High.** CRNM led negotiations. | **No.** |
    | **‘Moderate’ Congruence** | **West Africa** | **Moderate.** ECOWAS plus 1. | **Moderate.** West African Economic and Monetary Union has a CET that includes 8 of 16 EPA group members. | **Moderate.** ECOWAS Commission at apex of three-tiered negotiating structure. | **Yes.** Nigeria (77% of group GDP). |
    | **East African Community (EAC)** | **High.** EAC. | **High.** EAC CET launched 2004. | **Low.** Regional technical working groups establish regional positions but subject to approval by national ministries. | **Yes.** Kenya (43.5% of group GDP). |
    | **SADC EPA Group** | **Low.** SADC minus 8 /SACU plus two. | **Moderate.** SACU CET includes 5 of 7 members. | **Low.** Negotiations conducted by national ministries of trade, led by Botswana. | **Yes.** South Africa (67.7% of group GDP). |
    | **‘Low’ Congruence** | **Central Africa** | **Low.** CEMAC plus 2. | **Low.** Plans to introduce a CEMAC CET not yet implemented. | **Moderate.** Three tier negotiating structure with negotiations led by CEMAC Executive Secretary. | **No.** |
    | **Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA)** | **Low.** COMESA minus 8. | **Low.** COMESA customs union launched 2009 but not yet implemented. | **Moderate.** Regional Negotiating Forum shares competence with ministerial and ambassadorial staff. | **No.** |
    | **Pacific** | **Low.** Pacific Islands Forum minus 2, plus 1. | **Low.** No CET. | **Low.** Regional Negotiating Team led by national ministers; PIF provides administrative support. | **Yes.** Papua New Guinea (52% of group GDP). |

    **Table 2.** Congruence between ACP groups and institutional prerequisites for EPA negotiations. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)