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CALL FOR PAPERS – NEW DEADLINEⁱ

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL ONLINE CONFERENCE
ON REGIONAL INTEGRATION

"ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN THE POST-COVID-19 ERA, WHAT NEW CHALLENGES FOR AFRICAN COUNTRIES, THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE EUROPEAN UNION. GOVERNANCE, INSTITUTIONS AND POLICIES FOR THE ENERGY AND DIGITAL TRANSITIONS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT "

28 and 29, October 2021

The **AFRICA-MEDITERRANEAN-EUROPE (AMENET) JEAN MONNET NETWORK**, is pleased to invite you to participate in the Fourth International Conference on **REGIONAL INTEGRATION**.

**THE BEST CONTRIBUTIONS MAY BE PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH AS SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES
IN A SPECIAL ISSUE OF STUDIES OF APPLIED ECONOMICS**

RATIONALE

Context

African integration, under the African Union's proposal to form the African Economic Community (AEC) with the Free Trade Area as a first step, faces a series of challenges: small, relatively closed economies; inadequate infrastructure; lack of common rules and uncertainties in tariff rules; low levels of intra-regional trade; high levels of informal cross-border trade; disparities in income levels between countries; lack of compensation funds for less competitive economies; reduced mobility of labour and people; difficult negotiation of new partnership

agreements with the EU; and slow progress in monetary, financial, institutional and political integration.

In this context, the integration dynamics of African, Mediterranean and European countries are now legitimately challenged to reconsider, on the one hand, possible new orientations or visions and, on the other hand, to take up new challenges at international, national and local levels.

These challenges are more than ever exacerbated by the COVID-19 health crisis. Indeed, the latter, which is still shaking the whole world, has shaken up the models and systems in place in all areas, whether social, economic, political or environmental. It has generated new behaviours of the actors: States, Regions, populations, companies and even the flora and fauna of the entire planet.

However, the discovery of anti-Covid vaccines offers a glimmer of hope for a way out of the health crisis, revealing a kind of "vaccine war" but also an "instrument" of diplomacy.

This situation imposes, on the one hand, new perspectives on nations, constituted regions and international organisations and, on the other hand, dictates above all a necessary rethinking of the usual approaches to production, consumption, social life, the conduct of public and private affairs, etc.

As far as the African continent is concerned, per capita output is increasingly diverging from that of the rest of the world. Indeed, Africa's enormous demographic potential is not sufficiently exploited and there is a need for more investment in education, access to drinking water and health infrastructure. The reduced productive capacity of the agricultural sector is also part of the reason for this delay, not to mention the fact that it is also suffering very seriously from the impacts of climate change.

In addition to the low productivity of the agricultural sector, the continent has a manufacturing sector that is struggling to take off. On the contrary, one could even say that Africa is becoming de-industrialized. To this should be added that services, which are essentially subsistence and informal, only serve to escape the poverty trap, but are not able to contribute effectively to development.

Orientations

In this context, this Conference suggests that Africa should take advantage of the opportunities offered by the energy transition to renewable energies and the digital transition to new technologies to overcome its economic and social backwardness, supported by new governance structures.

The fight against climate change currently drives global dynamics. Electrification is the answer to this change. This means that the control of raw materials (lithium, platinum, copper, cobalt or rare earths) and renewable energy production chains have become the object of national security and geopolitical positioning to ensure energy supply.

The fight against climate change is also part of the fight against poverty and for development. The frequency of heat waves, floods and droughts is increasingly a reality for poor people who can find their salvation in sustainable development.

The post-COVID-19 economic recovery, which seems to be underway or at least expected, will be accompanied by multi-million dollar environmental and energy transition investment plans around the world. Europe, America and Asia - starting with China - are in this dynamic. It is worth noting that the costs of producing electricity from renewable energy (solar, wind, marine) have fallen dramatically, due to technical advances, economies of scale and efficient supply chains.

Renewable energy is a new source of wealth and influence for states. They are a major geopolitical weapon for exporting sustainable electricity and fuels, controlling raw materials and achieving technological advantages in the development of electric vehicles.

It is well known that the dynamics of a country like China lies in its performance in the value chains, in the processing of minerals used in wind turbines and other electronic mechanisms. China is investing in Africa to extract these raw materials. However, it is also investing because it knows that the future of mobility in Africa, which will grow exponentially in the coming years, will require electric transport.

The energy transition includes the development of solar, wind, geothermal, biomass and other energy storage. These energies allow a reduction in costs, a reduction in transmission losses and better access to electricity, particularly in the rural world. This is known to be a key factor in Africa's development. The digital transition in Africa is based on the spectacular leap to mobile telephony without going through the fixed line, the establishment of broadband networks and the internet in general, the expansion of information and communication technologies.

These technologies facilitate access to financial services ("mobile money"), electricity, health care and education; not to mention the possibility of transforming informal work into formal work, which is five times more productive while respecting data protection.

Africa needs international aid, migrant remittances and foreign direct investment (FDI) to supplement low domestic savings. In this respect, it is interesting to analyze the role of the main donors: the United States, the European Union and China, among other countries and agents, as well as the role and impact of different forms of aid.

The use of FDI is crucial for stimulating industrial growth and diversification, as it can promote technology transfer, endogenous creation of productive fabrics. The analysis of remittances as well as intra- and extra-African migration processes are other important aspects that need to be addressed at this Conference.

Furthermore, from a governance perspective, the congress should also address the regulation of markets - for example, Covid-19 vaccines as a public good. Thus, international health cooperation should be supported to enable rapid access to vaccines. In this perspective, the political unity of African countries to defend their autonomy from the geopolitics of the great powers and their areas of influence would be beneficial.

Finally, this congress could address the state of democracy in Africa in relation to the process of economic development, the relevance of peace/security/stability for the transformation of economies, the importance of conflict prevention, the role of neo-patrimonialism and the weight of civil society in the processes of social and political change.

Objective and focus

This conference aims to discuss opportunities to revive the economies of the Africa, Mediterranean and Europe (AME) in an environmentally sustainable manner, energy and digital transition, taking into account the context described above. At the same time, presenters, academics, experts and doctoral students are asked to discuss and assess, among other things, the impact of the pandemic on economic growth and development as well as options for ensuring inclusive growth, sustainable development and regional integration post COVID-19 on the African continent.

Expected papers may address, but are not limited to, the following indicative topics:

1. Governance, Institutions and Policies for Sustainable Development in the Post-Covid-19 era;
2. Efficient use of natural resources in the post-Covid-19 era;
3. Climate change adaptation and urban and rural resilience;
4. Energy consumption, environment and sustainable development; before and after COVID-19;
5. International trade and investment after COVID-19 in the context of the African economic integration process. What are the effects on the ongoing processes of economic globalisation and regionalisation?
6. Reforms in education, especially those affecting children in the context of COVID-19: challenges and prospects;
7. What are the new challenges for public health policy at different scales (global, regional, national and local)?
8. ICTs deployment in various fields such as education, work, health, etc. for structural growth after COVID-19;
9. Vulnerabilities: socio-cultural, health, poverty and inequality issues;
10. Resilience of small, medium and large enterprises and employment dynamics in the COVID-19 era and beyond;
11. Tourism, transport and the hospitality industry in the COVID-19 era;
12. Regional integration, subsidies and support programs for countries with competitive and developmental difficulties;
13. Which sectors have benefited or suffered losses from the Covid-19 health crisis; in what forms and in what ways? What new approaches to industrial policy in terms of economic integration of value chains and geopolitics in different sectors?
14. Monetary and fiscal policies in the post-Covid-19 era;
15. Internal and external migration. What changes in migration flows in the Post-Covid-19 era?

Publications :

The conference will only accept abstracts in **French and English**.

The abstracts should have a **word limit of 1000** and **must include 5 keywords**. It must necessarily include an **introduction, methodology, results and discussions and main conclusions**.

Oral communications will be in the form of a presentation supported by ppt slides and no longer than 15 minutes. It is strongly recommended to send the ppt presentation to the organization before the beginning of the Conference.

Abstracts will be selected and compiled into a book of abstracts. There is the option to send the abstract and not present it. These abstracts will be included in the book of abstracts in a special section, called "Free Documents".

It is not necessary to send the manuscript. The Scientific Committee, based on the quality of the abstracts received, may choose to request the complete manuscript from the authors for publication in a special issue of a journal indexed in Scopus.

The best contributions may be published in English as scientific articles in a special issue of Studies of Applied Economics Journal.

THIS CONFERENCE IS FREE OF CHARGE, as it is co-financed by the Jean Monnet Program of the European Union.

IMPORTANT DATES

Call for abstracts: 22 June, 2021.

NEW DEADLINE for abstracts submission: ~~6 September, 2021~~. **13 September, 2021**

Abstracts must be submitted online, in word format, through the Conference website, in the "documentation" section.

Acceptance of abstracts: ~~16 September 2021~~. **21 September, 2021**

Registration: 25 June – 27 October 2021

Dates of the Conference: 28 -29 October 2021

CONFERENCE WEBSITE:

<https://eventos.uam.es/67617/detail/fourth-amenet-international-conference-on-regional-integration-online.html>

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