



BANCA D'ITALIA
EUROSISTEMA



WORLD BANK GROUP
INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Organized by the World Bank Group Institute for Economic Development, the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, and the Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR), in collaboration with the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), Banca d'Italia, and the African School of Economics.

Context

Africa's economic transformation is one of the defining challenges of the coming decades. As the continent pursues structural change, deeper regional integration, through trade, investment, infrastructure, and knowledge flow, has emerged as a critical lever for sustained and inclusive growth. Yet despite the scale of this challenge, rigorous academic research on African regional integration remains fragmented, and the dialogue between researchers and the policymakers responsible for implementation too often falls short.

The advancement of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has placed regional integration at the center of policy discussions, but integration goes well beyond trade liberalization. Regional value chains, the expansion of cross-border infrastructure, the deepening of intra-African investment and capital flows, labour mobility, and the political economy of regional institutions all shape how integration translates, or fails to translate, into development outcomes.

Aim of the Conference

To advance the research frontier on the role that regional integration can play for Africa's economic development, the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, the World Bank Group Institute for Economic Development, the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), Banca d'Italia, the African School of Economics, and the Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) are convening the third African Economic Development Conference (AEDC) in Rome, Italy. The conference will bring together leading economists working at the frontier of African development research alongside the policymakers responsible for translating evidence into action.

The conference will feature keynote addresses by **Arkebe Oqubay**, Former Senior Minister and Special Adviser to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia; British Academy Global Professor, SOAS University of London, and **Douglas Gollin**, Jason P. and Chloe Epstein Professor of Economics, Tufts University; Senior Research Fellow, University of Oxford; STEG Research Director, CEPR, whose work spans structural transformation, agricultural development, and the macroeconomics of African growth. Their participation reflects the conference's commitment to bringing together scholars and practitioners working at the highest level of African development research and policy.

The organizing committee invites submissions of full research papers on any issue pertaining to regional integration and economic development in Africa. The conference theme is intentionally broad. Topics of particular interest include:

- **Regional and Global Value Chains, including formal and informal cross-border trade:** The role of regional integration in building productive capacity; comparative advantages of regional versus global value chain participation; upgrading and structural transformation; regional agrifood value chains, agro-processing, and the development of competitive agribusiness ecosystems.
- **Cross-Border Infrastructure and Connectivity:** Economic returns to infrastructure investment; transport corridors and market integration; power pools; digital connectivity and regional trade.
- **Intra-African Investment and Capital Flows:** Drivers and barriers to intra-African foreign direct investment; the role of financial markets and capital account openness in regional integration.
- **Sustainability, Energy and the Green Transition:** Climate resilience and adaptation; sustainable management of land, water, and natural resources; renewable energy, regional electricity markets, energy access, and energy security; climate finance and carbon markets; green industrialization; the circular economy; and the role of sustainability in driving long-term productivity, competitiveness, and inclusive growth.
- **Labour Mobility and Migration:** Effects of labour mobility on sending and receiving economies: skills development, skills transfer, and brain drain; the political economy of migration policy in Africa.
- **Industrial Policy, Growth and Structural Transformation:** The role of coordinated industrial strategies in a national/regional context; special economic zones; linkages between integration, trade, and manufacturing development, agro-industrialization; industrial competitiveness, innovation, and productivity.
- **Political Economy of Regional Institutions:** Institutional design and effectiveness of regional economic communities; compliance, enforcement, and the dynamics of regional cooperation.
- **Digitalisation and AI:** The role of digital payments, access to web resources and digitalisation barrier or highway to development.

Papers that bring new data, credible identification strategies, or novel theoretical frameworks to bear on these questions are particularly welcome, regardless of which specific dimension of integration they address.

Submission Details

The submission deadline is **September 15th, 2026, 20:00 CEST**. Authors selected to present papers at the conference will be notified by October 30th, 2026. A subset of submitted papers

will additionally be selected for poster presentation, following the same rigorous review process as oral presentations. Poster presenters will have the opportunity to present their work during dedicated networking sessions. Each poster presenter will be assigned a discussant who engages with the paper beforehand to provide structured feedback. All paper presenters should be open to being assigned a paper as a discussant.

To submit your paper:

- visit <https://hub.cepr.org/event/5304>,
- Click on "Step 1: Apply"
- Under "Apply to Attend" click "Yes"
- Tick "Would you like to submit a paper?", upload your paper and fill the requested information
- Review and finalise your submission

All submissions **must** be made via the system.

If you have any difficulties submitting your paper please contact Despoina Chatzilari, Senior events Officer at dchatzilari@cepr.org.