



REPORT

De-risking and Reconnecting: Europe, China and Africa in the Green Transition

ECDPM

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On 15 December 2025, ECDPM convened a hybrid event in Brussels and online titled *“De-risking and Reconnecting: Europe, China and Africa in the Green Transition”*. The meeting brought together policymakers, analysts, and private-sector representatives to examine how the EU’s evolving de-risking agenda vis-à-vis China intersects with Africa’s green transition, and to explore whether more pragmatic and complementary forms of cooperation between Europe, China, and African partners remain possible amid growing geopolitical tensions.

Session 1 – Europe’s green transition and external interdependencies

- Moderator: Alfonso Medinilla, Head of climate and green transition, ECDPM
- Cecilia Trasi, Senior Policy Advisor, Industry and Trade, ECCO climate
- Kudakwashe Manjonjo, Just Transition Advisor, Power Shift Africa
- Jesper Friis, Head of Development Policy and Partnerships, Confederation of Danish Industry
- Dr. Ceren Ergenc, Research Fellow, CEPS

Session 2 – Partner countries’ green transitions and cooperation with the EU and China

- Moderator: Poorva Karkare, Senior Policy Analyst, African Economic Integration, ECDPM
- Dr. Wei Shen, Resource Politics and Environmental Change Cluster Lead and Research Fellow, IDS
- Carita Tissari da Costa, Manager International Business Innovations, Business Finland
- Chema Triki, Managing Director, Growth Teams
- Pauline Veron, Policy Analyst, European Foreign and Development policy, ECDPM

The discussion was framed by the recognition that clean technologies and green energy sit at the core of Europe’s industrial and climate ambitions, while also shaping Africa’s development pathways. As the EU seeks to strengthen its strategic autonomy, diversify sources of critical raw materials, and reinforce the resilience of green supply chains, partnerships with African countries have become increasingly central. At the same time, China’s dominant position in key green technologies—ranging from batteries and solar panels to wind power and emerging sectors such as hydrogen—has intensified European concerns about dependency and competitiveness. Participants noted that recent EU measures, including tariffs on electric vehicles and the use of foreign subsidy regulations, reflect a broader attempt to manage risk rather than pursue full decoupling, even as the path toward technological resilience remains long and uncertain.

Speakers also highlighted how China’s own policy direction is evolving. Export controls on critical minerals and rare earths, alongside the priorities outlined in China’s 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030), point to a stronger emphasis on national security, high-quality industrial development, and technological self-reliance. These shifts, combined with Europe’s de-risking agenda, were seen as contributing to an increasingly fragmented global landscape in which national interests and geostrategic considerations are becoming more pronounced. However, panellists cautioned against viewing Africa primarily through the lens of EU–China competition. African countries, they argued, are pursuing their own socioeconomic development and green transition objectives and are engaging with multiple partners—including both the EU and



China—to advance these goals, rather than aligning with any single external agenda. The speakers also highlighted that international competition can indeed benefit African countries in securing better terms; however, Europe needs to articulate more clearly the value it brings to the partnerships. China typically adopts a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) approach in its engagements, refining and adjusting the initial arrangements as needed to ensure they become acceptable to all parties involved.

The sessions devoted particular attention to **Africa's position** within global green value chains. China's role as a major development partner was acknowledged, especially in transforming Africa's energy systems and investing in mineral processing and green mobility, which can create opportunities for local value addition. At the same time, the EU was described as a long-standing partner seeking to promote sustainable development through investment, policy cooperation, and support across sectors such as education, infrastructure, and renewable energy. Despite political friction between Brussels and Beijing, speakers observed that European and Chinese firms often operate side by side in African countries, sometimes through joint ventures and sometimes through looser arrangements such as subcontracting, parallel financing, or the provision of environmental, social, and governance services. In this way, the EU and China have managed to become complementary on both the issues of bankability and buildability of large-scale infrastructure projects in Africa.