

The [African Integration Report](#), which focuses on the Status of Regional Integration on the continent is an important reference document for policymakers. The 2021 African Integration Report, published by the African Union this month, admits that the pace of regional integration has been generally slow in most Regional Economic Communities (RECs), with many of them that have not been able to achieve the objectives set out in their programmes. Therefore, still a lot remains to be done.

In particular, the report notes, few countries in Africa are willing to renounce to part of their sovereignty in favor of regional organisations, which is evidently an obstacle to the achievement of any regional integration scheme. Although the many Protocols that have been signed by such organisations, most of them still remain unimplemented due to the absence of effective sanctions against defaulting Member States and weak enforcement and implementation capacity. This conclusion seems to echo the [Kagame report](#) (2017) on the recommendations for the Institutional Reform of the African Union, which already 5 years ago noted that most of recommendations adopted by the African Union (but this situation is common to all RECs), have not been implemented in the practice. The report concluded that there is a chronic failure to implement decisions adopted by supranational organisations in Africa, which results in what it called “implementation crisis” of continental (and regional) regulation.

Indeed, an aspect that is not explicitly mentioned in the report, that is also important to note, is the fact that regional integration initiatives in Africa tend to follow a non-linear path. In fact, after they start with great enthusiasm (let's think to the AfCFTA for instance), national governments, with time, become somewhat cautious due to a lack of buy-in by those that should benefit from them, of robust data proving their effectiveness, or political will and commitment towards their implementation.

In 1991, the World Bank commissioned a [study](#) to the Kiel Institute, in Germany, to assess the main challenges on economic integration in the developing countries. The report, describing Africa, concludes that the typical sequence of regional integration efforts in Africa is characterized by a particularly dynamic initial phase, where the great enthusiasm translates into the adoption of numerous programs and the establishment of multiple institutions, followed by a period where a more or less large group of countries delays the implementation or ratification of agreements and the commitments taken, or simply loses interest, reverting back to the prioritization of their national interests over regional ones.

The African Integration Report concludes pointing out that the small size of African markets,

which represents a major constraint for them to participate in world trade, requires for the various nations in the continent to establish closer trade links among them, an objective that is hampered by the lack of complementarity among their production structures. Indeed, it is only in this way that they will be able to strengthen their productive capacity and efficiency, by creating economies of scale able to reduce costs for traders, consumers, and logistics operators.