

# Optimising Europe's efforts to support Africa' electrification

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## Abstract

Electrification is one of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) most dramatic socio-economic challenges. Less than a third of the regional population has access to electricity, and around 600,000 premature deaths are annually registered as a consequence of household air pollution resulting from the utilization of polluting fuels for cooking and lighting.

SOLVING this ISSUE is a fundamental prerequisite to unleash SSA economic potential. Given the order of magnitude of the challenge, only a joint effort of SSA countries and of international public and private players could contribute to its solution.

SSA countries should be the first to move. They should reform the governance of their energy sectors, in particular by reforming the generally-inefficient state-owned electricity utilities, and by phasing-out market-distorting energy subsidies schemes. Without such reforms, international investments will never scale-up across SSA.

international PUBLIC AND PRIVATE players have a key role in facilitating SSA energy transformation, particularly as far as the electrification of rural areas – where three-fifth of SSA population lives – is concerned. International public support is particularly key for crowding-in international private investors, most notably via innovative public-private partnership schemes.

China and the U.S. are already widely engaged on SSA electrification. China has substantially invested into SSA's large-scale electricity projects, while the U.S. have put in place a comprehensive initiative – Power Africa – aimed at scaling-up electrification, particularly in rural areas, through public-private partnership projects.

Europe has, instead, created a myriad of fragmented initiatives on SSA electrification, limiting potential leverage in crowding-in private investments and in stimulating SSA countries' energy sector reforms. This sub-optimal situation should be reversed, by coordinating European institutions' and Member States' initiatives for SSA electrification through a unique platform, such the 'EU Electrify Africa Hotspot' proposed by this paper.