

African politically exposed persons: a typology

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The category of politically exposed persons covers, in Africa as elsewhere, a variety of situations, which institutions must assess with discernment.

The head of state, ministers and their close associates form the most sensitive category. Their wealth, where it is considerable, calls for a thorough clarification of its origin. Holding it in Switzerland exposes the institution to a freeze in the event of a change of regime. Relationships with this category remain possible, but they require the utmost vigilance and a decision at the highest level of the institution.

The executives of state-owned enterprises — oil and mining companies, marketing boards — form a particularly exposed category in commodity-producing countries, as the cases described in Part H have shown. Their position gives them access to the contracts and flows that are the object of corrupt practices.

Senior civil servants, judges, senior military officers and party officials form an intermediate category, whose official incomes are known and whose wealth should not exceed what those incomes allow, unless a separate origin is documented.

Private entrepreneurs linked to those in power — through family ties, joint shareholdings or public contracts — form the category that is hardest to assess. Their business may be legitimate, but their prosperity often depends on relationships whose nature must be clarified.

Politically exposed persons within international organisations, of whom there are many in Geneva, finally form a category of their own, whose incomes are known and whose risks are of a different kind.

Category	Points of vigilance
Heads of state, ministers, close associates	origin of the wealth, risk of a freeze, decision at the highest level

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Category	Points of vigilance
Executives of state-owned enterprises	access to contracts and flows, corruption cases
Senior civil servants, judges, officers	consistency between official income and wealth
Entrepreneurs linked to those in power	nature of the links, public contracts, concessions
Exposed persons in international organisations	known incomes, specific risks

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