

# PART 3: MEETING REGIONAL AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES: EUROPE-AFRICA HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

## 3.1. INTRODUCTION TO WORKSHOP LOGIC AND THEMES

While Part 2 of this publication provided a deeper glance at some of the contextual challenges facing higher education institutions in Africa and Europe, namely providing greater and wider access and ensuring completion, Part 3 searches for solutions. One of the main assertions of the Access to Success project is that mutually beneficial Partnership can be a strategic vehicle for addressing the many challenges that both institutions in the South and in the North are facing today. The workshop series organised by the project probed this topic from various angles, collecting donor and agency perspectives and institutional perspectives. Partnership can be developed at the level of institutions as a means to build capacity and produce globally and locally relevant knowledge. It can also entail broader partnerships of actors in the higher education and development sectors, including university associations, development agencies and government bodies, supporting higher education exchange within political frameworks and targeted funding programmes.

Part 2 already presented the outcomes of the workshop *Access and Retention: Comparing best practice between Europe and Africa* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 18-20 November 2009). The rest of the workshop series will now be featured in this section. Workshops were dialogue intensive and involved university leadership and faculty, donors and government agencies, students and regional government bodies from both regions. They entailed plenary and break-out sessions and balanced European and African speakers and chairs. One will find considerable overlap of themes and conclusions, which was not only intended but instrumental in fully analysing and digesting the

complexities of higher education in development cooperation.

Themes included the following:

- effective models of inter-institutional cooperation between Europe and Africa, in particular with regards to student and staff mobility schemes, capacity building partnerships and government/donor driven support
- coordination and collaboration between donors agencies
- the overlap between higher education and development agendas from both an institutional and a political perspective
- the role of partnership in mitigating academic brain drain
- S-S regional partnership and Africa higher education integration

This section will present outcomes reports from the following events:

- First Africa-Europe rectors' dialogue (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 17 November 2009), addressing common issues and cooperation priorities for university leadership;
- *Towards a coordinated vision of Europe-Africa Higher Education Partnerships: Supporting Institutional capacity building in Africa* (Oslo, Norway, 24-25 February 2010): This workshop explored programmes that structure institutional cooperation and capacity building between Europe and Africa. The workshop also examined the theme of better donor coordination in research and higher education capacity building.

- *Inter and intra regional academic mobility in Europe and Africa* (Accra, Ghana, 3-4 May 2010): the workshop examined intra-regional mobility (within Europe and within Africa) as a potential avenue for higher education integration and inter-regional mobility (between Europe and Africa), the realities of brain drain and drive for increased brain circulation.

The reports highlight the rich presentations and discussions of these events, which were utilised in formulating the project conclusion and White Paper described in Part 4. They can be taken separately, or read as a series.

## 3.2. FIRST DIALOGUE MEETING OF AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN RECTORS

*Summary report from the first workshop of the Access to Success project, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 17 November 2009*

The Association of African Universities (AAU) and the European University Association (EUA) organised their first dialogue meeting of African and European university leaders on 17 November 2009 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting lasted one half day and was attended by 24 rectors and vice-rectors from 18 countries, a representative from the Inter-University Council for East Africa and several observers that participated in the workshop following the dialogue meeting (a list of participants can be found in annex).

The dialogue meeting was followed by a visit to the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, where the participants were welcomed by State Minister for Higher Education Dr Adhane Haile. During a two-hour long discussion, participants were given the opportunity to learn more about higher education developments in Ethiopia.

On 18-20 November 2009, participants then took part in the workshop *Access and retention: Sharing best practice between Europe and Africa* Project, a visit to the African Union and an excursion to the Debre Zeit Campus of Addis Ababa University.

### 3.2.1. Summary

The dialogue meeting was opened by two overview presentations on higher education in Africa and Europe respectively. The presentation on Africa was developed by Prof. Olusola Oyewole, Association of African Universities. It outlined a number challenges that universities all over the continent encounter today:

- High internet costs
- Unreliable infrastructure
- Low number of researchers
- Low priority for research
- Massification, which challenges the quality of education
- The AIDS pandemic, affecting teachers, administrators, doctoral students
- Globalisation
- To address these challenges, Prof. Oyewole's presentation pointed to recent developments in intra-African cooperation and exchange:
  - Promotion for intra African mobility, which has magnified recently
  - Regional associations have grown in importance, such as SARUA in Southern Africa and IUCEA in East Africa; a similar approach for West Africa in under preparation
  - Concerns about the international rankings, which do not consider African universities. AAU is making efforts to establish an African higher education rating. The pilot is going to be launched this year.

Prof. Helena Nazaré, Vice-President of the European University Association, highlighted the many pressures that universities in Europe are exposed to, such as enhancing research excellence while being socially inclusive, and catering to local and national needs while competing at international level. Europe has responded to this through two European level reform processes, the EU Lisbon Agenda, with the goal to turn Europe into the most competitive knowledge economy and society, and the Bologna Process, aiming at modernising and

converging European higher education systems. While structural reforms have been completed at the national level in most countries, the real changes with regards to flexible learning paths and student centred learning are still in progress.

EUA, in cooperation with its members has an important role to play in the policy making process with European Ministers and other European partners. It also facilitates the development and dissemination of institutional best practices. Furthermore, EUA puts high emphasis on interregional dialogue as a means to explain the European reform developments to international partners, to keep abreast of developments in other parts of the world and to enhance cooperation and exchange of universities. In this regard, the present event and dialogue with the Association of African Universities is seen as an important opportunity. It offers the chance to address differences and demonstrate both the diversity and similarity within the regions of Africa and Europe .

### 3.2.2. Future priorities for Africa-Europe collaboration

The general introduction on African and European higher education developments was followed by four university presentations:

- Rein Raud, Rector, Tallinn University, Estonia
- Kaba Urgessa, President, Jimma University, Ethiopia
- Brian O’Connell, Rector, University of the Western Cape, South Africa
- Joan Viñas, Rector, Lleida University, Spain

The presented institutional case studies illustrated the national and regional environments in which these universities operate, and gave a very clear and lively picture of both the achievements and the challenges that institutions face, as well as their efforts to link to international partners.

The following summary aims at capturing the main points that were made in the presentations and the rich discussions which followed:

**Funding and partnership:** In some cases, scarceness of resources can be a catalyst for the development

of innovative and creative local solutions and an incentive for cooperation and resource pooling. However such solutions require external funding provisions that allow universities sufficient scope for developing actions in line with their institutional mission. Funding must also respond to their local and national environments, and encourage the establishment of long-term partnerships with mutual benefits. The need was stressed to do away with regulations and red tape, which is often attached to grant support, which prescribe project goals and activities, hinder the inclusion of other partners, and finally undermine sustainability. Examples of organisations and initiatives which have understood these challenges and provide flexible funding and support opportunities have been mentioned (VLIR-UOS, SANORD). However, there was concern for how to sustain the current partnerships. Long-term partnerships have been highlighted as a mean to contribute to sustainable institutional development, to foster research and build research capacity, and to ensure the international outlook of the university and its constituencies (presentations from Jimma University and the University of the Western Cape, and several others). Multilateral cooperation has been emphasised as a mode to enhance resource efficiency, to avoid doubling efforts, and to create a certain dynamic which can develop and nurture new initiatives, and thus underpin the sustainability of outphasing projects. Investment in infrastructure and ICT are crucial to ensure that universities can participate in research and cooperation within the country, the region and internationally.

**Universities contribution to development:** The fact that universities’ contribution to development cooperation is not sufficiently acknowledged and honoured has been highlighted. It has also been remarked that, unlike in other areas of university activity, there is no network for development cooperation intensive universities which could promote it and lobby governments. Universities in development cooperation should also be promoted as a mean to enhance research and research collaboration, as the case of the University of the Western Cape demonstrated. A good practice example has been delivered by the Lleida University which has a (development) cooperation and solidarity office in place.

**Quality:** The massification of higher education was discussed as a necessity from the point of view of

democratisation of society and provision of equal rights for all citizens, but also from an economic point of view. Universities in Africa and Europe are – at a different scale – challenged to increase and widen participation. This is as such not a problem, as there is proof that granting access to larger parts of the population can even have a positive impact on the quality of higher education in that it enhances its overall relevance (University of Glasgow, University of the Western Cape, Jimma University and many others). But given that the funding allocated to higher education has not increased accordingly through the recent decades, this is massive challenge for the quality of higher education. In particular in Africa, universities are confronted with the choice either to cater to a fraction of the able school graduates, or to put their research mission and the overall quality of teaching at risk. Inadequate infrastructure to deal with an increasing number of students was also highlighted.

**Changing role of universities:** A general need to revise curricula and to develop shorter and more skills oriented study courses which break from traditional classroom learning and offer applied learning have been stressed. Jimma University conducts community-based study programmes with community work built into the curricula. Tallinn University offers a student-centred approach, where students decide what they study. English tests are obligatory for all students and society links are part of the curriculum (visits to firms, state institutions). The case of the University Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique has been mentioned, which introduced the Bologna degree cycles to ultimately improve employability. A general question was whether the traditional “universal” university model, as it is known today, can still function as a benchmark, given the changing demands towards higher education.

**Contribution to social development:** While universities cannot drive the national political, social and economic reconstruction of their countries, their contribution through HR development, LLL and in the provision of expertise in knowledge-based consultancy has been highlighted (Tallinn University, University of the Western Cape). The need for the university to provide an organisational framework for cooperation with industry and society (e.g. provision of consultancy) has been stressed in order to prevent abuse (Osun State University, Nigeria;

K.U. Leuven, Belgium). The work with secondary education schools has been mentioned as a way to improve skills and competences of students entering HE.

**Research:** There was a discussion on whether universities should focus on their teaching or research missions, but general agreement was that the universities’ teaching and research missions feed each other. The potential for cooperation on local problems through multidisciplinary graduation colleges/courses has been highlighted, as has the need to build research elements into the curricula (Jimma). With regards to the critical resources of research and teaching staff, collaboration on doctoral and Masters’ education could be one of the priorities. Joint and sandwich programmes might be a good way to take this forward, in North-South or North-South-South, but also for the future in South-South cooperation.

**Institutional strategies:** The need to develop a strategic plan and to focus on feasible research goals and portfolios has been demonstrated by the University of the Western Cape and confirmed by other participants. The Institutional Evaluation Programme of EUA has been mentioned, which supports university leadership through a tailor made audit approach for assessing capacity for change.

**Staff development and retention:** Whatever universities do, well-trained and dedicated academic and administrative staff is a precondition for development. While European universities are challenged to ensure staff development and the recruitment of junior researchers and administrators, African universities require capacity building on all levels of management. Given the rapid expansion of higher education systems in some African countries, the urgent need of leadership training has been addressed, which could be provided in a North-South-South mode, by experienced African and European university leaders.

**Intra-African dialogue, exchange and cooperation:** The potential of intra-African dialogue, exchange and cooperation has been referred to as a way to enhance capacities and to contribute to political and social cohesion and understanding. The benefits of enhanced African academic and research cooperation have been a long-term

demand. While the Bologna Process is not necessarily a model for Africa, the European experience in HE reform and integration could be useful in further developing this process. This is another opportunity for North-South-South cooperation on the level of policy dialogue, but also with regards to the development of concrete measures and approaches.

**Europe-Africa higher education and research dialogue and cooperation:** The need was felt on both sides to lobby for enhanced dialogue, exchange and cooperation at the level of universities and university organisation of Europe and Africa in order to avoid that enhanced competitiveness and scarcer resources become an argument for decreasing the engagement of European universities in the global South. Beyond the human and political imperatives to continue to enhance relations, growing global interdependency is an important argument for this collaboration. All participants confirmed their interest in enhanced exchange and cooperation. Concretely, Lleida University, Tallinn University, and Glasgow University have offered hosting African students, and also to help in seeking financial support for this.

AAU and EUA will report back to their members on the Dialogue meeting and the outcomes, and discuss on this basis the potentials of further cooperation.

### 3.2.3. Annex - Participants' list

Last Name	First name	Position	Institution	Country
Akinrinade	Sola	Vice-Chancellor	Osun State University	Nigeria
Bauer	Hans	Local Senior Expert	VLIR-OUS	Ethiopia
Couto	Filipe	Rector	Universidade Eduardo Mondlane	Mozambique
de Aguilera	Miguel	Vice-Rector	Málaga University	Spain
Eshete	Anderias	President	Addis Ababa University	Ethiopia
Fragoso	Maggy	Vice-President	University of Cape Verde	Cape Verde
Franko	Mladen	Vice-President for Education	University of Nova Gorica	Slovenia
Gaebel	Michael	Head of Unit, Higher Education Policy Unit	EUA	Belgium
Gwamuhanya Birindwa	Joseph	Rector	Université Catholique de Bukavu	DR Congo
Hörig	Michael	Programme manager	European University Association	Belgium
Konkola	Riita	President	Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences	Finland
Lee	Mee Foong	Executive Secretary	European Access Network	United Kingdom
Mibey	Richard.K.	Vice Chancellor	Moi University	Kenya
Munck	Ronaldo	President's Office	Dublin City University	Ireland
Nazaré	Maria Helena	Rector	Aveiro University	Portugal
Nyagura	L.M.	Rector	University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
Nyaigotti-Chacha	Chacha	Executive Secretary	Inter-University Council of East Africa	Uganda
O'Connell	Brian	Rector	University of Western Cape	South Africa
Oluwafemi Olaiya	Balogun	Vice-Chancellor	University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria	Nigeria
Oyewole	Olusola	Coordinator, Regional Initiative Mobilizing Capacity	AAU	Ghana
Queiroz	João	Rector	University of Beira Interior - Covilhã	Portugal
Raud	Rein	Rector	Tallinn University	Estonia
Salling Olesen	Henning	Prorector	Roskilde University	Denmark
Simukanga	Stephen	Vice-Chancellor	University of Zambia	Zambia
Spurga	Saulius	Head of administration	Mykolas Romeris University	Lithuania
Suenkel	Hans	Rector	Graz University of Technology	Austria
Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza	Lillian	Acting Vice-Chancellor	Makerere University	Uganda
Torp	Tor Rynning	Senior Adviser	Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions	Norway
Tsegaye	Admasu	President	Hawassa University	Ethiopia
Tushune	Kora	Vice President	Jimma University	Ethiopia
Urgessa	Kaba	President	Jimma University	Ethiopia
Viñas Salas	Juan	Rector	Lleida University	Spain