



UNIVERSITETS- OG HØGSKOLERÅDET
The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions



With the support of the Erasmus Mundus programme of the European Commission



First Dialogue Meeting of African and European Rectors Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 17 Nov. 2009 Summary report

I. Preamble

The Association of African Universities (AAU) and the European University Association (EUA) organised a **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).

This meeting was followed by a visit to the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, where the participants were welcomed by the Ethiopian 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.

All these activities were organised as part of the Erasmus Mundus Project **Access to Success – fostering trust and exchange between Europe and Africa**, which EUA is undertaking together with the AAU, the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR), the European Access Network (EAN), the European Student's Union (ESU), and the Flemish Interuniversity Council for Development Cooperation (VLIR-UOS).

The local representation of VLIR-UOS in Ethiopia together with Mekele University were the organising partners in Ethiopia and without their dedicated support the organisation of these meetings would not have been possible.

For further information on the Access to Success project and the events please refer to www.accesstosuccess-africa.eu.

II. 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



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- Regional associations have grown in importance, such as SARUA in Southern Africa; a similar approach for West Africa is under preparation
- Concerns about the international rankings, which do not consider African universities. AAU is making efforts to establish an African HE 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 within the regions of Africa and Europe and the similarity

III. 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 the achievements and challenges which 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 stimulated and 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 to 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 instil and sustain the current partnerships. Long-term partnerships have been highlighted as a mean to contribute in a sustainable manner to



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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 and the University of the Western Cape, experience shared by several other participants). 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. It 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). 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. The inadequateness of infrastructure to deal with an increasing number of students was also highlighted. This puts pressure on attrition.
- **Changing role of universities:** A general need to revise curricula and to develop shorter and more skills oriented study courses which break from traditional class room 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 and 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. The work with the secondary education schools has been mentioned as a way to improve skills and competences of students entering HE.



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- **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 mission 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). Which 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 highlighted by all other presentations 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 and a development goal. 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 European developments around the Bologna Process are not a model for Africa, the European experience 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 and enhance relations, the growing global interdependency and the need to ensure the large populations around the world are the important arguments. 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.

V. Annex – participants' list

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, Mobilizing Regional Capacity Initiative	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	Austria



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			Technology	
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