

# AFRICA-EUROPE HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT: MEETING REGIONAL AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES

WHITE PAPER

Outcomes and recommendations of the project:  
“Access to Success: Fostering Trust and Exchange  
between Europe and Africa”  
(2008-2010)



UNIVERSITETS- OG HØGSKOLERÅDET  
The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions



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## FOREWORD



The white paper resulting from the project *Access to Success: Fostering Trust and Exchange between Europe and Africa* comes at a particularly critical moment in various regards: first, it arrives at a time when universities are increasingly prioritising global partnership as a strategic response to the demands that societies and economies are placing on them; secondly, it examines the evolving and increasingly important overlap between the ‘internationalisation’ agenda of universities, and their role as actors in development cooperation; thirdly, it comes at a time of reflection on the next steps with the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, a relatively new political framework with great potential. Moreover, while African and European universities have had academic partnerships for several decades, the project’s focus on a holistic institutional development perspective makes it both unique and timely given the role universities are currently asked to play in responding to the broad challenges identified.

From the Access to Success project we have learned that traditional development actors and universities have common interests, and that there is tremendous potential for strengthening the role and visibility of universities as development actors. ‘Partnership’ has been the key word throughout the project and is central to the resulting white paper: Partnerships of institutions to address common challenges, build capacity and produce globally and locally relevant knowledge, Partnership of university associations to guide more regionally oriented discussions and projects, and Partnerships of government bodies in supporting higher education exchange within political frameworks.

We hope the following project recommendations will prove useful to the work of the many actors that have benefitted from this project and the wider academic and development communities. It is intended as both a reflection and a call for concrete actions in taking the Africa-Europe partnership forward.

We would like to thank the many participants of the project activities that have contributed considerably with their experience and enthusiasm. In addition, we would recognise the Erasmus Mundus programme of the European Commission for its support, through which it has been possible to demonstrate that the attractiveness of European higher education lies not merely in being a study destination, but in being a global partner, committed to reciprocal exchange for mutual benefit. On behalf of EUA, I would personally like to thank the other project partners – the Association of African Universities, the Flemish Inter-University Council for Development Cooperation, the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions, the European Access Network, and the European Students’ Union – for the expertise and insight that they brought to the project. I would also express considerable gratitude to the individual colleagues that turned this partnership into a particularly vibrant and successful one. For EUA, this has been the first concrete initiative to promote university cooperation between Africa and Europe, and we are looking forward to building upon its momentum.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Lesley Wilson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Lesley Wilson**  
EUA Secretary General  
on behalf of the project consortium

## ACCESS TO SUCCESS: FOSTERING TRUST AND EXCHANGE BETWEEN EUROPE AND AFRICA – PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Access to Success project (2008-2010), funded by the Erasmus Mundus programme of the European Union, aimed at raising awareness of access and retention issues in higher education in Africa and Europe, and at exploring how higher education institutions in both regions are coping with the changing demands of their specific socio-economic environments. By doing so, the project also intended to contribute to a wider discussion on effective inter-institutional cooperation between Africa and Europe, in particular with regards to student and staff mobility schemes, capacity building partnerships and government/donor support. The messages of the project have been captured in the present 'white paper' that contains multi-actor recommendations for taking forward the Africa-Europe higher education cooperation agenda.

The project included:

- Parallel institutional surveys on access and retention in higher education conducted in 2009 across a sample of 16 African and 19 European countries. The surveys were supplemented with three student focus groups on the issue, one in Europe led by the European Students' Union and two in Africa led by the All-Africa Students' Union and the Erasmus Mundus Alumni Association.
- A first Europe-Africa rectors' dialogue in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 17 November 2009 that examined issues of common interest amongst university leadership.
- Three dialogue intensive workshops involving university leadership and faculty, students as well as donors and government agencies, and regional government bodies:
  - *Access and retention: Comparing best practice between Europe and Africa* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 18-20 November, 2009): Sharing university good practices in confronting problems of access and retention in both Africa and Europe, based on the project survey results.
  - *Towards a coordinated vision of Europe-Africa higher education partnerships: Supporting institutional capacity building in Africa* (Oslo, Norway, 25-26 February 2010): this explored programmes that structure institutional cooperation and capacity building between Africa and Europe. 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 Africa and Europe), the realities of brain drain and drive for increased brain circulation.
  - *Final dissemination conference* (Brussels, Belgium, 28 September 2010) which presented the project outcomes in a white paper to policy makers, cooperation agencies and the university community.

Implementing partners:

The Access to Success project was implemented by a consortium consisting of:

**The European University Association (EUA), the Association of African Universities (AAU), the Flemish Inter-University Council for Development Cooperation (VLIR-OUS), the European Students' Union (ESU), the Association of Norwegian Higher Education Institutions (UHR), and the European Access Network (EAN)**

Project website: [www.accessstosuccess-africa.eu](http://www.accessstosuccess-africa.eu)

## A. INTRODUCTION

1. The present paper is the outcome of the project *Access to Success: Fostering Trust and Exchange between Europe and Africa* (2008-2010), which was funded by the European Union's Erasmus Mundus programme and implemented by an international consortium consisting of African and European higher education organisations. The conclusions and recommendations are intended to address different but inter-linked actors: universities and university associations, policy makers in Africa and Europe, development cooperation agencies and regional political bodies such as the European and the African Unions.
2. The project specifically addressed the need to strengthen higher education cooperation between Africa and Europe, both as a response to global challenges and to contribute to African development. As a starting point, the project conducted bi-regional surveys on access to higher education and retention of students and staff<sup>1</sup>, as this topic is central for universities in both continents albeit in different ways. Through a series of workshops and focus groups, the project then examined the underlying need for increased capacity in higher education and considered inter- and intra-regional university cooperation and academic mobility as a means to address this. In this regard, it also discussed the cross-cutting issue of enhanced donor coordination for higher education partnerships.
3. The project was unique in that it took the following strategic approach:
  - It brought together policy makers, donor agencies and universities to address institutional development and to transcend the boundaries between research, education, development policies and programmes. This provided a forum to discuss a wide range of existing initiatives in the field of African higher education and Africa-Europe higher education dialogue and cooperation.
  - It focused on universities as actors in development cooperation, employing a holistic institutional perspective to the topics at hand. The project involved institutional leaders from both continents with overall responsibility for the development of their universities. This complements a commonly selected approach to development cooperation whereby collaboration and capacity building in certain fields, disciplines or sectors is targeted.

*The project brought together policy makers, donor agencies and university leaders to address institutional development and to transcend the boundaries between research, education, development policies and programmes.*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.accesstosuccess-africa.eu/web/studies.html>



- The fact that the project was led by regional university associations (AAU and EUA) meant that it was able to take a broad “bi-regional institutional approach”, orienting discussions toward the wider framework of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and the role that the higher education communities of both regions should play. This allowed for a macro-level strategic analysis, which identified the need for better communication and information-sharing on ongoing bilateral initiatives in order to improve their impact.
- Finally, the project embedded the topics of cooperation and development within a wider discussion on higher education modernisation. The ongoing European experience in regional higher education harmonisation through the Bologna Process served as a basis for considering closer pan-African regional cooperation.

*The project embedded the topics of cooperation and development within a wider discussion on higher education modernisation.*

#### 4. The project sought to:

- strengthen working relationships between regional university organisations in both regions
- establish stronger relationships between regional university associations and other development cooperation actors and stakeholders
- propose means for improving cooperation between universities in the two continents
- contribute to policy development in the context of the evolving Africa-EU Strategic Partnership.

5. On the basis of the project outcomes, which are also inspired by the considerable work of complementary projects and initiatives, the intention of this paper<sup>2</sup> is to inform the current policy debates, and to inspire concrete actions across policy makers, donors and the university community. The Association of African Universities and the European University Association,



*Networking at Workshop 1 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

two of the project partners, will draw upon it for further collaboration with their respective membership, and specifically table recommendations for consideration at the next Africa-EU Summit and the various higher education related initiatives launched under the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership. Furthermore, the paper aims to contribute to the discussion on the future of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the Education for All Agenda.

*The 2007 Joint Africa-EU Strategy, which launched the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, defines the long-term policy orientations between the two continents, based on a shared vision and common principles. The main objectives include: improving the Africa-EU political partnership, ensuring that all the Millennium Development Goals are met in all African countries by 2015, and enhancing the effectiveness of multilateralism. The Strategy consists of 8 sub-‘Partnerships’ ranging from energy to climate change to migration, mobility and employment. Each of these ‘Partnerships’ are open for a wide range of actors, which can include the European and AU Commissions, EU and AU Ministerial Councils, the EU Council Secretariat, EU Member States and African States, EU and African Parliaments, local and decentralised authorities, EU and African civil society actors, African sub-regional organisations, research institutions, international organisations or institutions and the private sector.*

<sup>2</sup> This paper was prepared by the project consortium partners, and reviewed by a group of experts and project participants. It has thus collected the views of a range of important actors in the field and seeks to both complement and bring visibility to projects with similar objectives.

## B. THE CONTRIBUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO DEVELOPMENT AND THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN AFRICA

*It must be ensured that all countries have the higher education capacity to respond to the domestic and global challenges of the future.*

6. Higher education is of critical importance to the long-term development of knowledge societies. Higher education institutions are needed to train the teachers required to obtain primary and secondary enrolment objectives and more generally to educate future professionals, including the managers and leaders that will drive a country's development trajectory. Furthermore, universities in particular are vital for conducting research and researcher training, and therefore are important for knowledge generation and innovation to meet both local and global societal and economic needs.
7. The development and modernisation of higher education is therefore a critical issue for governments and stakeholders around the world. It must be ensured that all countries have the higher education capacity to respond to domestic and global challenges in the decades to come. Achieving this aim is particularly challenging where the development of tertiary education has been deliberately neglected, as has been the case in most parts of Africa. Urgent action is needed to ensure that African countries have the necessary tertiary education capacity to respond to the local and global challenges of the future. For Africa, the target is an ambitious one, as it requires major investment in capacity building. The current enrolment rate for Sub-Saharan Africa in tertiary education is estimated at around 6%, compared to a global average of 26%. There is no time to lose.
8. The project discussions have once more confirmed the considerable challenges that African universities face, starting with the growing demand for access and insufficient public investment. With more young people graduating from primary and secondary education, the pressure on universities and other higher education providers is tremendous. In addition to attracting and retaining students and ensuring the successful completion of their studies, African universities also face difficulties in retaining staff and in ensuring appropriate working environments, conditions and career prospects. The quality and relevance of learning and research are further concerns, particularly given the rapid expansion of higher education in this region.



*Visit to African Union Commission  
Left to right:  
HE Commissioner Jean Pierre Ezin,  
Helena Nazaré, EUA Vice President  
and Olusola Oyewole, AAU*

9. While the situation is critical, there are also new opportunities emerging. The project discussions have confirmed an increasing overlap of interest between the traditionally separate “development” and “academic” agendas. Thus governments, donors and universities in both regions have to reconsider their role as development actors in view of the changing relationship between higher education, research, development cooperation and capacity building. For universities, there is a clear message: there should be a reflection on the ways in which development cooperation is carried out across the institution and how this could be better aligned with internationalisation objectives. Institutional leaders should strive to integrate development cooperation into the overall institutional internationalisation strategy and to identify possible barriers that might impede university staff from fully engaging in these activities. The question remains whether universities are currently in a good position to respond to these new international challenges and whether they are perceived by governments and development agencies as the versatile and flexible actors they are or could be. This is an area where regional university organisations will play a crucial role in the years to come as they can bring together different actors and agendas from the policy, donor and higher education community.

*Governments, donors and universities in both regions have to reconsider their role as development actors in view of the changing relationship between higher education, research, development cooperation and capacity building.*

## C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AFRICA-EUROPE UNIVERSITY COOPERATION

*University partnerships are a strategic means to contribute to the overall capacity development of African universities.*

### **Mutually beneficial partnership**

- 10.** Europe needs Africa and Africa needs Europe. In an increasingly interdependent and interconnected world, Africa and Europe need to work together to address global challenges such as sustainable development, energy, climate change, security and migration. One strategic way to address these challenges is through higher education. Growing global demand for education, a more competitive environment, and the realisation that the 'grand challenges' of our time cannot be tackled alone, mean that international cooperation has become an imperative for both higher education systems and institutions. Furthermore, international higher education cooperation is critical for all countries and regions; given the importance of tertiary education to long-term sustainable development, no part of the world should be excluded.
  
- 11.** In this regard, increased cooperation between universities in Africa and Europe can be seen as a way to support capacity building and development activities, as well as to enhance academic performance. Through instructive examples, the project confirmed that university partnerships are a strategic means to contribute to the overall capacity development of African universities. If they are structured efficiently and sustainably, partnerships can generate research and teaching capacity, empowering universities as economic drivers and agents of knowledge transfer. To obtain successful and sustainable partnerships, governments and development cooperation agencies should develop partnership programmes in close cooperation with stakeholders, both in Africa and in Europe. This would help to ensure that these programmes provide the flexible means to accommodate and advance the diverse activities undertaken by universities. The fact that such partnerships tend to cross the boundaries between development cooperation, institutional capacity building, research and education should not be an obstacle, but rather a reason for funding allocation.

### Improving access and retention through collaboration

**12.** The project study on access and retention in Europe and Africa demonstrated that, while widening participation (providing access to different types of student groups) is increasingly challenging for European universities, meeting general demand (increasing access) is a key concern to African universities, specifically in terms of increasing overall student numbers and improving completion rates. In Africa, socio-economically disadvantaged, physically remote and female students were identified as the student populations experiencing the most barriers to access. Most African institutions surveyed cited lack of both governmental and institutional policy, lack of financial support and lack of infrastructure as the main obstacles to addressing this issue. Generally, international exchange and cooperation has been identified as a way to inform policy at institutional, national and regional level on this complex issue. The project collected good practice on improving access and retention through joint projects between African and European partners: many positive cases of staff capacity building through partnership – one example of how to address the access dilemma – were shared.

### Strengthening research collaboration and capacity building in doctoral education

**13.** Research collaboration is clearly a priority of mutual interest for both Africa and Europe in terms of generating innovative capacity for social and economic development. Africa-Europe university cooperation should be based on existing good practices, and European and international funding instruments should build upon and expand such practices. A stronger emphasis should be placed on developing research collaboration in its two-fold function – as a contribution to knowledge generation and exchange, and as a capacity building measure to support institutional development. Research and training programmes should be built upon “open” proposals from the respective universities reflecting their strengths and motivations to collaborate. Such collaborations should also contribute to attracting, training and retraining research and teaching staff and strengthening the institution’s capacity to conduct research, while producing tangible outcomes for the benefit of society. The project discussions also underlined the current need to grant open access to curricula and



*Student focus group on access and retention, 17 November 2009; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

research publications, and referred to good practice in this area.

**14.** Training talented young researchers is a major challenge for many African institutions and requires building capacity especially at doctoral level. This is crucial for the development of institutional and national research capacity. There is a huge demand for master and PhD graduates to provide tertiary education teaching, in particular at undergraduate level. Universities do not only need to produce PhDs for their own purposes, but for societies and economies that require research-trained labour in a growing number of professional fields. In this regard, universities also have to deal with the challenge to retain talent; the migration of successful young researchers is particularly salient, given that high teaching loads and insufficient research infrastructures hinder their domestic careers. Some African universities have developed successful approaches based on incentives to tackle this, for example by offering appropriate lab facilities, improved pension schemes, and career development programmes for university staff. Building transparent human resources policies and governance structures, with a goal to retain staff, is also important in this respect.

Joint research programmes can also be a strategic way to address these issues: For example, collaborative research projects with master and doctoral programmes between European and African universities can address both academic/research capacity development and support the retention of staff in home institutions.

*A stronger emphasis should be placed on developing research collaboration in its two-fold function – as a contribution to knowledge generation and exchange, and as a capacity building measure to support institutional development.*

## Academic mobility

**15.** Mobility is both the foundation of many institutional internationalisation strategies and also a policy tool at governmental level to connect higher education systems globally, promote flows of talent and develop a highly qualified labour force. It is not only important for academic purposes, but is also crucial for the education of global, socially conscious citizens. Strong testimonies on the value of mobility were provided throughout the project by African and European student representatives. While the experience of physical mobility is invaluable, its relatively high costs and efforts require strategic choices regarding its structure and envisaged purpose; for example, some institutions prioritise graduate mobility.

Established partnership programmes have been identified as a reliable framework for the organisation of meaningful inter-university mobility, with clear benefits for individuals and institutions. Regarding the latter, good practice was cited in joint curricula development, the development of joint research plans and other projects. Finally, mobility of European students and staff to Africa has been identified as an under-explored possibility, which deserves more attention in the discussion on internationalisation and the need for higher education to meet global challenges. This type of academic exchange would further promote reciprocity between the two regions, and render considerable academic and societal benefits.

*Mobility of European students and staff to Africa has been identified as an under-explored possibility, which deserves more attention in the discussion on internationalisation and the need for higher education to meet global challenges.*

**16.** Presently, brain drain represents both a concern and a reality and must be considered when discussing higher education capacity development. Reducing brain drain from African to OECD countries is paramount. In addition, internal African brain drain should also be identified and mitigated. Discussions during this project showed that both in Africa and Europe there still seems to be a lack of awareness of the extent of brain drain and its impact at all levels, from academic to societal and

economic. The reality of brain drain should be examined in more detail, considering professional sectors and gender, and in view of its long-term economic and human resource impact. While some types of academic mobility may be conducive to brain drain, restricting mobility does not necessarily prevent it. Therefore it is clear that both governments and institutions should address this issue. Governments, for their part, both in Africa and in Europe, have a responsibility to develop concrete measures to mitigate brain drain. Incentives to encourage return such as an appropriate research infrastructure and improved employment prospects are more useful than regulations, which potentially limit the individual freedom of students and academics.

**17.** Beyond government intervention, universities in Africa and Europe should consider institutional strategies to limit brain drain. The design and implementation of academic mobility programmes should aim at minimising the risks and effects of brain drain. One way to do this is by embedding mobility in collaborative frameworks in the form of joint degree delivery (such as ‘sandwich programmes’ at graduate level) and mobility periods for thesis writing and internships. This can also include re-connecting to alumni and the Diaspora, and developing long-term sustainable cooperation with them.

*Beyond government intervention, universities should consider institutional strategies to limit brain drain.*



*Professor Sola Akinrinade, Vice-Chancellor of Osun State University, Nigeria speaking on the theme of academic mobility.*

### Building capacity to implement change

**18.** Institutional good governance and management are crucial given the rapid expansion of higher education systems in some African countries, and thus capacity building and staff development are required at all levels. More leadership training should be provided, for example, in a North-South-South mode, by experienced African and European university leaders. The international project management capacity of institutions also needs to be strengthened to ensure the successful and timely implementation of the activities undertaken in partnership. This is an area in which development agencies and governments could enhance coordination and collaboration, as it is of mutual interest to all types of programmes and institutions.

**19.** Improvement and sharing of information: there is a need to collect and publicise statistical data to inform higher education planning and policy at system and institutional level. This requires that governments make concerted efforts to collect statistics on higher education systematically. Universities should also consider strategies for institutional data collection, which can help manage the institution, and to track and potentially reconnect to their alumni.

**20.** Overall, reliable ICT and other infrastructures are scarce and expensive, which prevent or limit the interconnectivity of African scholars and students compared with their peers in other parts of the world.

Improved ICT infrastructure would also facilitate online collaboration tools that could support inter- and intraregional cooperation. Furthermore, this would allow universities to reach out to a larger audience through distance and e-learning, provided that it is combined with the necessary investments in human resources.

### Improving communication and coordination

**21.** More information and better communication regarding the rich variety of Africa-Europe higher education and research cooperation activities are needed to enable synergies, better coordination and exchange of best practice. Under the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action, the principles of better coordination, simplified procedures and information sharing to avoid duplication have been agreed among donor countries. While comprehensive coordination among donor countries and agencies at European level may be overly ambitious, due to different priorities and programme approaches, more information flow across agencies and institutions, and general encouragement of coordination and cooperation among the “responsible actors on the ground” could improve the situation considerably. It should also be considered that donor coordination, where feasible, should by no means reduce the creative and diverse range of programmes addressing the different needs of the sector.

The time is ripe for joint projects of different national agencies, identifying common priorities and designing



*Plenary discussion at workshop 'Towards a coordinated vision of Europe-Africa higher education partnerships: Supporting institutional capacity building in Africa', 25-26 February 2010; Oslo, Norway*

joint evaluation procedures. Cooperative programmes on management training have already been referred to as one avenue. As there are many actors that are critical to the overall university cooperation process – universities, national and regional university associations, multilateral donors and foundations – a dialogue platform should be established that would facilitate communication, sharing of practice and identification of synergies. A bi-regional portal for programmes and opportunities could be one of its features. While fora do exist for donors to share priorities and projects, there is no platform yet to engage together donors and the higher education community. The Access to Success project was a first attempt at this endeavour.

*As there are many actors that are critical to the overall university cooperation process – universities, national and regional university associations, multilateral donors and foundations – a dialogue platform should be established that would facilitate communication, sharing of practice and identification of synergies.*



*Professor John Ssebewufu, Association of African Universities greeting Prof. Tagoe, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana, and Narciso Matos of the Foundation for Community Development, Mozambique*



## D. STRENGTHENING INTRA-AFRICAN COOPERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE AFRICA-EU STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

### Intra-African cooperation in higher education

22. There is a growing interest in strengthening intra-African higher education cooperation, which is reflected in the agenda of higher education organisations such as the Association of African Universities, the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) and the Southern African Regional University Association (SARUA). This is also featured in governmental initiatives: In its 2nd Decade of Education Plan of Action, the African Union calls for revitalisation of higher education in Africa and better cooperation and exchange between African institutions, and the European Commission launched a feasibility study for a curricula alignment project in Africa.

The Access to Success project thus also paid due attention to intra-African cooperation in higher education, and to an exchange of experiences with regards to similar processes in Europe. The project's discussions demonstrated the readiness of African universities and their representative bodies to contribute to the harmonisation process in Africa through systematic and structured cooperation with governments. There was a keen interest in further exchanges on this issue with European colleagues.

23. Intra-regional higher education mobility would be an important element of the regional harmonisation agenda in Africa, however it is limited at present. Though there are some successful programmes for student and staff exchange between African institutions, their visibility is low. There is a strong indication that low activity in intra-African mobility is not due to a lack of interest but rather a lack of funding opportunities. However, political and academic awareness of the necessity to improve on this front is growing. Future programmes for undergraduate and graduate mobility, staff exchanges, sabbaticals, as well as researcher and PhD mobility should consider the inclusion of intra-African mobility aspects. The proposed Mwalimu Nyerere programme (funding intra-African academic mobility) of the European Union and African Union is an important step in this direction. However, in order to embrace the programme, and actively contribute to its implementation, the university community has to be informed and consulted.

*Future programmes for undergraduate and graduate mobility, staff exchanges, sabbaticals, as well as researcher and PhD mobility should consider the inclusion of intra-African mobility aspects.*



*Professor Brian O'Connell, Vice-Chancellor of University of the Western Cape, South Africa, discussing with Professor Tagoe, Vice-Chancellor of University of Ghana*

**24.** Mutual recognition of degrees and study periods abroad is a critical element in bringing regional integration and academic mobility forward. A wider discussion involving all stakeholders, including the academic community, on the long-term implementation of the Arusha Convention, its promotion, and maintenance is necessary. The Convention's implementation should also include the development of national structures that would be in charge of its follow-up and promotion as well as awareness building within institutions of the importance of recognition and discussions on how it relates to other stakeholders. While recognition processes benefit from a well-functioning quality assurance system, quality assurance should be developed in a separate but parallel process. Project participants strongly agreed on the need to develop quality assurance mechanisms at institutional, national and regional levels to strengthen education provision and institutional management; both sub-regional and regional higher education associations and the African Union have expressed their commitment to this in their respective strategies.

**25.** The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, a policy vehicle for bi-regional collaboration across sectors, emphasises the involvement of civil society. In the 2007-2010 Action Plan, the role of higher education is not explicitly mentioned and was only indirectly addressed through

two of the eight sub-partnerships of the Strategy: the 'Partnership for Science, Information Society and Space' and the 'Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment (MME)'. The Science, Information Society and Space Partnership benefits universities considerably: the GEANT network, the Virtual Campus, and the FP7 call for Africa are laudable programmes through which universities can advance science cooperation. Yet the role of universities in shaping this partnership is not yet explicit. Furthermore, the Nyerere mobility scheme is listed as one of the accomplishments of the MME Partnership, given that it will contribute to academic mobility in Africa. But until now this partnership has failed to underline its important role in enhancing the development and interconnectivity of higher education institutions. The specific focus on higher education policy dialogue in the MME 2011-2013 Action Plan, which will stress student mobility in Africa and the African higher education harmonisation process, is a welcome advancement that needs to be promoted to the wider higher education community

**26.** Universities link education and research through their activities, driving teaching and learning as well as the science and innovation agenda. This important fact should be recognised under the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and strengthened. Given its strategic importance, higher education deserves a clear place

within the different partnerships of the Strategy. There is an emerging opportunity for the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership to connect the science and innovation, teaching and learning and development agendas. Support for regional higher education integration in Africa and bi-regional university cooperation could consequently become a tangible output of this political framework.

*There is an emerging opportunity for the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership to connect the science and innovation, teaching and learning and development agendas.*

- 27.** Therefore, the role of universities in advancing and shaping the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership should also be made more explicit. They should not only be seen as beneficiaries, but should be consulted in the development of new programmes, in order to ensure

a proactive commitment to and awareness of the Partnership. Throughout the Access to Success project, it was evident that the development of regional higher education and research policies and initiatives such as the Pan-African University and the recent feasibility study on 'Tuning' curricula in Africa would benefit from a systematic consultation of African universities through their national, sub-regional and regional university organisations. A policy framework for bi-regional cooperation should thus explicitly support regional higher education integration in Africa and bi-regional university cooperation.

*The role of universities in advancing and shaping the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership should be made more explicit. They should not only be seen as beneficiaries, but should be consulted in the development of new programmes, in order to ensure a proactive commitment to and awareness of the Partnership.*

## E. THE WAY AHEAD: AN AGENDA FOR FUTURE ACTION BY ACTORS RESPONSIBLE IN BOTH AFRICA AND EUROPE

*Considering the outcomes of the Access to Success project, the overall question remains how best to follow up the results and ensure impact. The following section outlines concrete recommendations and actions that are critical to taking forward higher education cooperation between Africa and Europe. While each recommendation appears linked to a specific type of actor, it is of course assumed that they would have to be taken up simultaneously, and in coordination.*

### 1. Governments

**Consider the importance of higher education for social and economic development:** Education has to be approached from a holistic perspective, emphasising the interrelation between different education levels and sectors. In particular, a dynamic national higher education system can contribute significantly to the knowledge base of any nation and enhance its ability to connect regionally and globally. Governments need to prioritise higher education as a part of their development strategies, and invest in it accordingly, with a view to increase access and success of students.

**Support the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership as an important policy instrument and strengthen the role of higher education within it:** Cooperation and exchange between European and African universities should be one of the priorities of the Africa-Europe agenda, as it contributes to essentially all priorities of the current Partnership, to which governments of both regions are committed. Higher education cooperation is of mutual interest in that it builds institutional capacity to address global challenges and foster knowledge societies. What is more, national higher education systems could benefit from the added regional dimension of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership.

**Develop concrete measures to mitigate brain drain:** Governments both in Africa and in Europe should analyse brain drain and its impact on higher education systems. Measures to mitigate it should be developed in close cooperation with representatives of the higher education community, and aim to improve the situation of students, academics and institutions rather than simply regulate academic movement, which can potentially limit personal freedom. This can include a) incentives such as improvement of research infrastructure and employment conditions for individual scholars and students, b) mobility and cooperation programmes that reduce the risk of brain drain and c) approaches that enable an active contribution

of the Diaspora to higher education, such as incentives for expatriated scholars.

**Collect and publicise data on higher education:** Data is required in order to enhance evidence-based decision making in higher education policy and planning. Collection of relevant data is a particular priority in order to underpin the design of efficient, need-based partnership programmes, to assess the contribution of the Diaspora and to mitigate brain drain.

## 2. Universities in Africa and Europe

**Integrate development cooperation into the overall institutional internationalisation strategy:** Institutional leaders should reflect on the ways in which development cooperation is carried out across their institutions, and seek to align this better to the current discussion on internationalisation. The concept of internationalisation should thus be broadened at the institution to include development cooperation activities. If formulated as part of internationalisation strategies and portfolios, development cooperation would be better integrated and resourced within the institution.

**Consider innovative partnerships models as a means to strengthen both North-South and South-South collaboration.** Joint programmes and degrees are one type of partnership that can generate a multitude of benefits: curricula innovation, staff and student mobility, capacity building and research cooperation. There is a growing wealth of experience in Europe on joint degree models, an approach that is also utilised by some bi-lateral development cooperation programmes. All partnership models have to be approached in a very strategic manner, with strong consideration of their sustainability. Governments and donor organisations have to be aware of all the financial implications and commitments that such programmes entail, as joint degrees in particular are resource intensive.

**Develop institutional strategies to mitigate the risks and impacts of academic brain drain.** The university's capability to attract and retain qualified staff can be strengthened through many measures: Good governance and in particular transparent human resources policies are of key importance, but improved working conditions, career development programmes and social benefits for university staff are also important. Mobility programmes implemented in partnership and engaging with the Diaspora are further

approaches for universities to explore.



*Willy Aastrup, Aarhus University, Denmark, discussing with Samuel Darkwah, Mendel University, Czech Republic and Juliet Ezekannagha Oluchi, University of Ibadan, Nigeria*

## 3. Development cooperation agencies

**Enhance coordination, collaboration and exchange with other agencies:** Development cooperation agencies should seek ways to ensure complementarities, share practice and ensure better visibility and understanding of programmes and initiatives beyond the national context. The time is ripe for joint, European level projects in development, supported by European Union and national funding sources.

**Explore specifically joint projects to build higher education staff capacity:** As higher education leadership training and staff capacity building is funded by several agencies, this is an area where development agencies and governments should enhance coordination and collaboration. In addition to avoiding duplication and competition, a European level project addressing several African countries would draw upon a variety of leadership approaches. This would help to generate international good practice and enhance the quality of such endeavours.

**Prioritise long-term university partnerships that are needs-based and flexible enough to accommodate and advance the diverse activities undertaken by universities.** These activities may crosscut research, education, development cooperation, and institutional development, which should be embraced by funding mechanisms:

- Consider that **partnership programmes should explicitly benefit both institutions in the South and North**, including cost coverage.
- Consider **reciprocity in student and staff exchange:** Outgoing European mobility to Africa should be

encouraged, to enable a larger number of European students and researchers to get firsthand experience and consider African perspectives for their research and in their future careers.

- **Embed mobility in collaborative frameworks**, in order to prevent brain drain, and ensure benefits to both individuals and institutions.
- **Promote and fund mobility within Africa.**



*Dr Pascal Hoba,  
Association of  
African Universities*

#### 4. Regional and national university associations

**Establish inter-regional dialogue between university associations and universities in order to contribute as active stakeholders to the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership.** This dialogue should comprise policy and institutional development issues that are of mutual interest to the universities in both regions, including governance, quality assurance and research cooperation. The dialogue would be a means to promote cooperation and funding opportunities, to provide substantiated feedback to donors and the Africa-EU the Strategic Partnership, and to contribute to the strengthening of regional regulatory frameworks (e.g. the Arusha Convention).

**Enhance understanding and exchange in the area of graduate and specifically doctoral education:** University associations of both regions need to develop collaborative projects and dialogue on graduate education, as this is of crucial importance for building research capacity and promoting social-economic development. University associations are well placed to promote the development of joint masters and PhD programmes that is sensitive to brain drain. Existing good practice in such programme design

should be further shared across university associations, their membership and the donor community.

**Support the internationalisation of universities and promote the integration of internationalisation and development cooperation strategies.** University organisations should take up the discussion with their members on their involvement in development cooperation, and how this relates to the internationalisation of higher education. There should be possibilities to facilitate exchange and enhanced collaboration on this issue, similar to those measures undertaken in other areas relevant to universities.

#### 5. African Union Commission and European Union Commission

**Include a framework for Africa-Europe higher education exchange and collaboration within the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership:** Higher education deserves a clearer place within the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership that would enable it to make a stronger contribution to the different sub-partnerships. Furthermore, the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership could provide a visible framework for Africa-Europe higher education exchange and cooperation and by doing so connect the science and innovation, teaching and learning and development agendas. This would generate multiple benefits for the university community and society at large, and would also send a strong signal towards member states and donor organisations. Under this framework, the academic community, including university associations, students and alumni, should be considered not just as beneficiaries, but consulted systematically in the needs identification and programming processes. It is suggested that the framework include the following elements, which should ideally be developed in relation to one another:

- **Support regional higher education integration in Africa through bi-regional university cooperation.** The exchange of practice at regional level between the higher education communities of Africa and Europe can contribute significantly to the regional higher education harmonisation process in Africa. The European Union and African Union should facilitate further exchanges between institutional leaders and practitioners of both regions through meetings and projects, for the sharing of experiences. Bi-regional project funding mechanisms such as or similar to EDU-LINK should be both expanded and sustained, and incorporate accompanying measures



*From left:  
Hon Dr Mamadou Tangara,  
Minister of Higher Education  
Research, Science and  
Technology, The Gambia;  
Ivy de-Souza, National Union  
of Ghana Students;  
Goolam Mohamedbhai,  
former Secretary General  
of Association of African  
Universities;  
Elizabeth Colucci, European  
University Association*

that would target the wider higher education community and enable synergies between initiatives. The programme should also benefit all African countries and European member states.

- **Establish a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform that would facilitate communication, sharing of practice, identification of synergies and promotion of initiatives:** While fora do exist for donors to share priorities and projects, there is no platform yet to engage together donors and the higher education community. Regional university organisations could be of support in establishing such a platform.
- **University exchange and cooperation should be based on mutual benefits:** University exchange and cooperation can only be successful if beneficial for both Northern and Southern institutions. This includes the facilitation of two-way academic mobility and general cost coverage under partnership programmes. This should be accounted for in European Union and African Union funding programmes.

**Support the development of national structures that would be in charge of follow-up and promotion of the Arusha Convention:** The Convention can only be successful if it is supported at national level. It would also require information and promotion measures targeting the university community.

## PARTNERS



**The Association of African Universities (AAU)** is an international non-governmental organisation set up by the universities in Africa to promote cooperation among themselves and with the international academic community. The AAU is a forum for consultation, exchange of information, and cooperation among universities in Africa. In addition to fostering contact and cooperation among universities and other institutions of higher education in Africa, the Association is charged with collecting, classifying, and disseminating information on higher education and research, particularly in Africa. It also promotes cooperation among African higher education institutions in curriculum development, post graduate training, research, quality assurance, and other matters of special policy or practical interest to African higher education. The Association endeavours to empower member universities to address developmental challenges and become an effective voice in national, regional and global institutions. As of July 2010, AAU has 225 members from 44 African countries.  
[www.aau.org](http://www.aau.org)



**The European University Association (EUA)** represents and supports higher education institutions in 46 countries, providing them with a unique forum to cooperate and keep abreast of the latest trends in higher education and research policies. Members of the Association are European universities involved in teaching and research, national associations of rectors and other organisations active in higher education and research. EUA plays an essential role in shaping tomorrow's European higher education and research landscape thanks to its unique knowledge of the sector and the diversity of its members. The Association's mandate in the Bologna Process, contribution to EU research policy-making and relations with intergovernmental organisations, European institutions and international associations, ensure its capacity to debate issues which are crucial for universities in relation to higher education, research and innovation.  
[www.eua.be](http://www.eua.be)



**The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR)** is a co-operative body for higher education institutions in Norway. Founded in 2000, following the merger of the Norwegian Council of Universities and the Norwegian Council of University Colleges, UHR aims to promote the development of Norway as a knowledge-based society of high international standard. UHR facilitates co-operation and co-ordination among Norwegian higher education institutions. Furthermore, UHR advocates shared positions on central issues concerning higher education and research policy towards the Norwegian government, parliament and the wider society.  
[www.uhr.no](http://www.uhr.no)





**The Flemish Interuniversity Council, Department for University Cooperation for Development (VLIR-UOS)** funds and facilitates academic cooperation and exchange between higher education institutions in Flanders (Belgium) and those in developing countries, which aims at building capacity, knowledge and experience for a sustainable development. As part of the Flemish Interuniversity Council, VLIR-UOS is responsible for managing and making policy on the university development cooperation funds of Belgium's minister of Development Cooperation.  
[www.vliruos.be](http://www.vliruos.be)



**The European Access Network (EAN)** is the only European-based independent not-for-profit organisation with a mission to widen access and participation in higher education for groups who are under-represented whether because of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic status, geographical location, or earlier educational disadvantage. Access, equity, diversity and inclusion are the four pillars of the EAN.  
[www.ean-edu.org](http://www.ean-edu.org)



**The European Students' Union (ESU)** is an umbrella organisation of 45 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 37 countries. The NUS are open to all students in their respective country regardless of political persuasion, religion, ethnic or cultural origin, sexual orientation or social standing. Members are also student-run, autonomous, representative and operate according to democratic principles. The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at a European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow-Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO.  
[www.esu-online.org](http://www.esu-online.org)

## TESTIMONIALS

“ This white paper is a correct and complete reflection of the outcomes of the project. I want to thank the partners especially for emphasising the issues of intra-Africa networking and mobility and also noting the need to promote quality assurance, harmonisation and the Arusha Convention. The document has also captured the issue of leadership, research and the training of future researchers. ”

**Olusola Oyewole,**  
Senior Expert Higher Education,  
African Union Commission

“ This workshop provided the best introduction to my new position that I could have got. ”

**Hon Dr. Mamadou Tangara,**  
incoming Minister of Higher  
Education Research, Science  
and Technology, The Gambia

“ The opportunity to engage with fellow Africans about critical matters relating to universities and their role in building our nations’ competencies has been timely. The variety of perspectives was illuminating and humbling yet hopeful. The chance to connect and work towards network building was also very important and the student-professor exchanges were particularly helpful. ”

**Professor Brian O’Connell,**  
Vice-Chancellor,  
University of the Western Cape

“ This series of events was pivotal in re-energising debate and practical initiatives around European/African partnerships in higher education. There was a vibrant atmosphere with meticulous organisation which greatly facilitated the exchange of ideas across disciplines and positions in the higher education systems. ”

**Professor Ronnie Munk,**  
Dublin City University,  
Irish-African Partnership

“ Participating in the Access to Success Workshops represented a good opportunity for the Catalan universities to meet and discuss with representatives working in higher education and development all over Europe and Africa. Sharing experiences showed us that we all face similar problems and difficulties, but at the same time made us understand that in a coordinated and collaborative manner we can all improve our work and create strong universities in Europe and Africa which contribute to fostering development. ”

**Nadja Gmelch,**  
Project Manager,  
Catalan Association of Public  
Universities



*Workshop 1  
'Access and retention:  
Comparing best practice between  
Europe and Africa',  
18-20 November, 2009;  
Addis Ababa,  
Ethiopia*



*Workshop 2  
'Towards a  
coordinated vision  
of Europe-Africa  
higher education  
partnerships:  
Supporting  
institutional  
capacity building  
in Africa',  
25-26 February  
2010;  
Oslo, Norway*



*Workshop 3  
'Intra and Inter  
Regional Mobility  
in Europe and  
Africa',  
3-4 May 2010;  
Accra, Ghana*