



# Joint position paper

## Deepening African-European science cooperation by tapping the potentials of European University alliances

European University alliances (EUA), initiated within the framework of the European Union's European Universities Initiative (EUI), now involve almost 300 higher education (HE) institutions in Europe, soon more than 500. Alliance members engage in new and multi-layered forms of cooperation on education, research, innovation and service to society, develop inter-university campuses for the seamless mobility of students, staff, and researchers, and promote knowledge creation across countries and disciplines.

We, the member institutions of CIVIS – A European Civic University Alliance and six leading universities in Africa, share the widespread assessment of the EUI as the most significant political project currently underway in European HE and research. Furthermore, we see enormous potential for the EUA to reach out to partners beyond Europe, and especially to bring African and European universities into new, productive relationships – for the benefit of the institutions involved, the HE sectors of our home continents as well as our societies at large. This potential includes:

Fostering collaboration on global challenges: Engaging in the search for and implementation of solutions to the global challenges of our time is a key task for all our universities. We share a commitment to a socially engaged, embedded, and relevant academy. Global partnerships have contributed immensely to academic and scientific progress in Africa and Europe, including much research to solve health issues, environmental challenges and other problems affecting human life.

We thus welcome the role of the EUI as a catalyst for pursuing even more assiduously a challenge-based approach to education, research, and innovation in EUA. Furthermore, we believe that this challenge orientation, directed towards transcontinental issues, would benefit tremendously from the collaboration of African and European university partners. Such a partnership bears the potential to shape and activate further local expertise required for an effective analysis of global-local challenges and the search for solutions.

Creating inter- and intracontinental mobility formats: Our universities believe that international mobility for students, staff, and faculty advances academic excellence and intercultural learning, leading to personal and institutional benefits. Thus, we fully embrace the ambition of the EUI to widen European student mobility, making it more inclusive, flexible, and embedded in study programs. While inner-European mobility is certainly important for promoting European citizenship, we also see the potential including an African partnership dimension to these efforts, fostering intra- and intercontinental awareness. Providing space for multiple views, approaches and thinking, promoting the diversity of ideas, and deepening the understanding of the entanglement of our histories as well as our futures must be in the interest of the EUI.



Equitable research partnerships between Europe and Africa: We support the recent agreement between the European Union (EU) and African Union (AU) on the EU-AU Innovation Agenda, pledging to develop sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships in higher education, research and innovation. University partnerships have also become powerful vehicles for promoting civic and democratic engagement, cultivating international economic development and fostering teacher and school system improvement, among other aims.

In this context, we see two important roles for EUA and African universities. First, our long-standing and manifold international collaborations have taught us that equity, trust, transparency, and mutual respect for the needs and interests of partners are the key to their success and sustainability. EUA and African partners committed to these principles can inform HE policy debates within the EU by contributing this important perspective and related experiences.

Second, since the EUI is the flagship initiative of the European Education Area and European Research Area, partnerships between EUAs and African universities provide an excellent opportunity to include the development of African HE and policy-making in this process. Crucial aspects in this regard are, for instance, combining the EU's efforts to further increase its international attractiveness as an international study and research destination with investments in circulatory mobility and the strengthening of research capacities at African HE partners for promoting 'brain stay' instead of 'brain drain'. The objectives associated with a legal statute for HE institutions – e.g., pooling resources, collaborating on proposals for new sources of funding, forming deeper, long-term, and flexible transnational cooperation, more easily sharing capacities and access to specialized equipment, exchanging staff and implementing joint programmes – are not only shared by members of EUA but apply to international partnerships between African and European institutions as well.

Considering these potentials for multilateral collaboration between the members of an EUA and African universities:

- We affirm our initiative to adopt Strategic Partnership Agreements between CIVIS – A European Civic University Alliance and six distinguished African universities. These lay the groundwork for our close collaboration in research and education, focusing on societal challenges, inclusive mobility, and institutional development.
- We encourage other European University alliances not yet involved in global partnerships to explore the option of reaching out to partners beyond Europe and, if useful, to learn from the experiences of EUA such as CIVIS.
- We welcome other African universities to take note of the European University Initiative and explore potentials for collaboration with European University Alliances.
- We propose to EU funding and policy-making institutions to facilitate the collaboration between EUA and their global partners by making possible the inclusion of the latter in funding instruments, e.g., in Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe.

**Adopted in Marseille, 11 March 2022**

**By representatives of the CIVIS member universities and six strategic partner universities**



## Member universities of CIVIS, a European Civic University

Aix-Marseille Université, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, University of Bucharest, Université libre de Bruxelles, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Sapienza Università di Roma, Stockholm University, University of Tübingen, University of Glasgow, University of Salzburg

## CIVIS strategic partner universities

Université Hassan II de Casablanca, Université of Sfax, Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, Makerere University, University of the Witwatersrand, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane



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