

Questions* and answers on the CIVIS sub-project ‘African and Mediterranean partnerships’ (Work Package [WP] 5)

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For further questions, comments, feedback, suggestions etc., please contact the CIVIS WP5 Team at ‘civis-wp5@uni-tuebingen.de’, respectively the WP5 member(s) of your home university (see list in Q 8, p. 5).

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GENERAL ASPECTS: DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIS PARTNERSHIPS

Q 1: How will CIVIS make access to EU funding easier?

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We see three possible ways: First, the European Commission explicitly declared European University alliances as ‘testbeds’ for the development and integration of the European Higher Education Area, thereby also suggesting a focus of funding mechanisms on such alliances. Hence, we expect a strategic advantage for joint applications from alliance members. Second, CIVIS (will) facilitate(s) the exchange and collaboration between academics of its partner universities in various ways (e.g. through disciplinary meetings, the digital campus, the Hubs etc.). So, it might provide a convenient platform for looking for potential partners in Europe as well as Africa for joint third-party funding applications. Third, CIVIS implies the collaboration of the central support services for third-party/EU funding; which share expertise, information, and joint initiatives for the benefit of CIVIS members at each institution.

Q 2: "Financial support for travel and staff": What is the total annual budget of CIVIS available for this?

The CIVIS sub-project (Work Package) on African partnerships has received 40,000 Euro for directly supporting pilot projects with CIVIS partners until the end of the first CIVIS funding phase (Sep. 2022). The project team will try to top-up this amount further, but it will most likely not exceed a five-digit amount.

We plan to use this fund for supporting travel or staff costs of CIVIS members, who prepare a longer-term collaboration involving at least three CIVIS institutions and an African partner. Possible types of activities could be, e.g., an explorative workshop, visiting an African partner, writing a third-party funding application etc. We plan to invite ideas from the CIVIS community for the use of this money by a Call for Proposals. The direct support of African partners will not be possible due to EU funding restrictions.

Q 3: Supporting the inclusion of partners in CIVIS Digital Campus is great, but it would be important to make this compatible with differential access to the internet and internet connectivity, would it not?

Yes, ensuring and facilitating the access to CIVIS Digital Campus (DC) is an important, yet probably also a difficult task. The WP5 team is very aware of this issue, already in touch with the CIVIS Task Force “Digital Campus”, and it will work on the integration of our African partners in the DC together with them. The DC itself will only be launched in a couple of months, and many technical arrangements are still to be determined.

Q 4: It would be necessary to get to know participating partners and their scientific expertise from the European CIVIS universities, in order to find common research interests, would it not?

Yes, if there is a critical mass of interested participants, the CIVIS project team plans to organise Hub- and/or partner specific meetings for members of the CIVIS community collaborating or planning to collaborate with African partners. Apart from this offer, CIVIS actively promotes disciplinary meetings of academics working in the same field and wishing to explore joint interests. Please contact your local CIVIS coordinator for more information on the latter option.

Q 5: Is there already an existing CIVIS platform / interface (similar to Epale, Erasmus+) to make cooperation proposals or indicate in what areas we could intervene and what competencies we could offer?

The CIVIS Digital Campus, starting in late 2021, will include relevant functions sooner or later, i.e., for making cooperation proposals, looking for partners, developing joint projects etc.

The CIVIS project management team, involving local CIVIS coordinators at each member university, actively supports the dissemination of cooperation proposals across the alliance already now. Please contact your local CIVIS coordinator if you would like to receive support in this regard. S/he would also be the contact person for inquiring more specifically about the ways in which you could contribute to/intervene in CIVIS activities. (The CIVIS website also provides detailed information on the ‘standard ways’ to do this, e.g., Calls for



Participation/Proposals/Applications, CIVIS events, etc.)

When it comes to African partnerships, the WP5 project team plans to organise Hub- and/or partner specific meetings for members of the CIVIS community collaborating or planning to collaborate with African partners (see Q 4 above). Relevant information will also be shared at the CIVIS website. If you would like to receive important information and news from the WP5 project team from time to time, just send a short email to your local WP5 contact person (see list of team members in the answer to Q 8) or write the WP5 coordinator (civis-wp5@uni-tuebingen.de).

Q 6: Apart from the aspect “what can CIVIS do for us”, how do you make sure that it does not impede or render impossibly bureaucratic what we are already doing or planning to do?

To the extent that the development of CIVIS partnerships indeed relates to existing or planned activities at all, it targets at the exact opposite. When it comes to strategic partnerships with the invited partner universities (see list in Q 9), CIVIS seeks to complement, support, and build on existing partnerships whenever possible for the benefit of both, and only if project partners welcome the role of CIVIS in their existing collaborations. In case CIVIS partnerships impede existing or planned partnerships or render them more complicated/bureaucratic, this should be reported to the WP5 team immediately (see contact list, Q 8).

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Q 7: What do you think is currently the most productive level to focus on? Research activities and PhD training seem administratively simpler, but student exchanges on undergrad level might have a broader impact.

Indeed, the approach adopted in CIVIS WP5 follows this logic, i.e., starting with rather low-level / low-threshold collaborations in education (e.g. the joint development of courses/modules, probably involving online elements), research, or transfer on which more demanding programmes and interactions between partner institutions could build. Whereas easier interactions could start relatively soon, more complex aims as enabling student exchanges could become part of and be prepared by the strategic partnership agreements CIVIS intends to develop together with its partners in 2022.

Q 8: Where can I get more information? Who are the members of the CIVIS project team on ‘African and Mediterranean partnerships’?

For more information and feedback, please contact the CIVIS project team (‘Work Package’) in charge of initiating African/Mediterranean partnerships at ‘civis-wp5@uni-tuebingen.de’.

The following members of the project team (Task Force members) can also be contacted:

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Apart from the Task Force members listed above, further WP5 members are:

- Prof. Giovanna Chimini (AMU)
- Prof. Serge Jaumain (ULB)
- Prof. Silvia Arias (UAM)
- Prof. Itziar Ruiz-Giménez (UAM)
- Prof. Liliana Suárez (UAM)
- Prof. Bruno Botta (SUR)
- Prof. Stefan Helgesson (SU)
- Dr. Christine Rubas (UT)

PARTNER UNIVERSITIES

Q 9: Because of inequalities between universities within Mediterranean and Africa, would it be a good idea to spread the chosen university between large regions (Southern Africa, central Africa, Western Africa, ...)?

Yes, CIVIS has invited partner universities also according to their regional distribution within Africa, thereby making sure that we also include the Mediterranean dimension. The currently invited partner universities are:

- Université Hassan II de Casablanca (Morocco)
- University of Sfax (Tunisia)
- Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (Senegal)
- Makerere University (Uganda)
- Eduardo Mondlane University (Mozambique)
- University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa)

Q 10: What about Middle Eastern countries?

The focus region of CIVIS partnerships involves Africa and the following countries in the Mediterranean region outside Africa and the EU: Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel (incl. Palestine), Jordan. This mirrors a common EU definition of “Mediterranean region” (see e.g. Union of the Mediterranean, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/who-we-are/member-states/> [accessed: 19 Oct 2020]). Due to the necessarily small set of invited partner universities, partners outside the African continent were finally not included therein, but institutions in the countries mentioned above could play a role also in other ways (see answer to Q 11).

Q 11: Would it be good to ensure a collaboration with at least one Central African university?

The project team as well as the CIVIS governing committees (Steering Committee, Board of Rectors) had to make some difficult decisions in its search for strategic partner universities and applied several selection criteria, regional distribution being an important, but not the only one. The necessarily limited number of strategic partners invited in CIVIS’ ‘fabric phase’ (2019-22) also constraints the perfectly equal representation of regions in the current set of strategic partners. Yet, other institutions could become significant for CIVIS in three ways (see also CIVIS WP5 Briefing Paper, p. 13):

- 1.) as additional partners in joint projects with CIVIS’ core partners;
- 2.) as institutions to be invited in a possible second round of invitations;
- 3.) as partners in any other CIVIS project (i.e., a collaboration between at least three CIVIS members, contributing to CIVIS aims, broadly defined).

Q 12: We are building a collaboration with a particular university, which does not belong to the group of currently invited core partners and has links with only one CIVIS member. How can we join some of your ongoing activities?

Formally speaking, a ‘CIVIS activity’ is constituted by the collaboration of partners from at least three different CIVIS member institutions. In the context of CIVIS’ African partnerships, at least one partner from an African/Mediterranean institution would participate. Hence, one could either involve two more partners from CIVIS in your existing collaboration, thereby turning it into a ‘CIVIS activity’ itself. Alternatively, you could explore a collaboration with the partners of an existing CIVIS activity already fulfilling these criteria (see also the

overview of possible activities in the briefing paper on CIVIS partnerships, p. 15).

The formal definition of a partnership will be significant for the eligibility for CIVIS funding or other forms of direct support, and the project team will concentrate its efforts and resources on the promotion of such 'CIVIS activities' in light of its restricted capacities.

However, this should not and probably will not prevent potential project partners to explore ways to collaborate outside this framework if this seems beneficial for them, thus making use of our alliance with its numerous potentials and strong partnership profile in Africa/the Mediterranean region in new and creative ways. If CIVIS staff can help in this process, it will certainly be willing to do so within the limits of its capacities. Moreover, although the major aim of CIVIS is now to build strong and long-term relationships with strategic partner universities, African/Mediterranean partnerships will certainly develop further and – subject to strategic considerations and CIVIS governance decisions – be open to new formats, contents, and partners also in the future (see also Q 13).

Q 13: I am already collaborating with a university, which does not belong to the currently invited core partner universities. Is it possible to invite it as a CIVIS partner, too?

See also the answer to Q 12 above: Currently this appears rather unrealistic. Our alliance focuses on laying the foundation for strong and long-term partnerships with the invited and promising partner universities now. This will guide CIVIS action in this field until 2022 and beyond. Yet, CIVIS will remain open to activities with other than those partner universities, too (see above, Q 11). Widening the network of African/Mediterranean strategic partners might be an option for the next funding phase of CIVIS (after 2022), which will certainly depend on the success and development of the currently initiated partnerships. In short, whether, when, and how (i.e. according to which criteria) new partners will be invited, remains to be seen.

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HUBS

Q 14: Could you explain a bit more detailed what you mean by "hubs". Can these universities invite other African partners for their exchange in the frame of this program or would that be through additionally acquired funds?

The term "hub" is used in the context of CIVIS' partnerships in two ways, each with different implications for the development of African partnerships:

First, it refers to the CIVIS Hubs, i.e. CIVIS programmes for developing joint education pathways (courses, modules, study programmes) involving at least three CIVIS member universities, related to research and civic engagement action, and thematically addressing one of CIVIS' five key challenge areas: 1. Environment, Climate, Energy; 2. Society, Culture,

Heritage; 3. Health; 4. Cities, Territories, Mobilities; 5. Digital and Technological Change. CIVIS has launched Hubs on themes 1-4 so far. One central aim in developing strategic partnerships with African universities is to collaborate with them in the development of such joint educational pathways, i.e., include them in existing Hub initiatives or initiate new ones jointly with them. In terms of CIVIS internal funding, the funding of Hub initiatives would primarily cover the inclusion of African partners. In principle, some further internal funding could be made available, but the exact criteria will have to be elaborated still. Of course, Hub initiatives are free to collaborate with other than the potential core partners of CIVIS in Africa/the Mediterranean region (see list in Q 9). Yet, given the aim to develop strategic partnerships with our core partners as well limited resources, CIVIS funding and active support will concentrate on initiatives including those. Second, sometimes we refer to the invited partner universities themselves as potential “hubs”, respectively “hub for [CIVIS] hubs”. Hereby we mean their possible and desirable role to involve further African partners (in their region) in joint projects with CIVIS. In fact, we were deliberately looking for partners which could fulfil this role due to their strategic position in certain regions of Africa and existing regional networks. If such collaborations involve the criteria for a CIVIS project, they would indeed be eligible for CIVIS funding.

Q 15: What are Hub activities?

In the wider sense of the term, it refers to all projects and measures conducted in the framework of the CIVIS Hubs, i.e., those planned, implemented, or approved by the Hub Council (the committee coordinating all CIVIS activities on the development of ‘joint educational pathways’ on one of the five key challenges).

In a narrow sense, it refers to initiatives from the CIVIS community for a joint course, module or study programme, which successfully applied for recognition and funding by a CIVIS Hub (Council). The development of ‘joint educational pathways’ by Hubs is based on such Calls for initiatives.

Q 16: Where can I find a list of the current Hubs?

After its relaunch, the CIVIS website will probably be the primary resource for information on CIVIS Hubs; currently the website shows some basic information (<https://civis.eu/en/activities/civis-hubs>). The calls for initiatives, launched by each Hub, provide more in-depth information on the Hubs as well as the type of activities supported in this framework (<https://civis.eu/en/activities/civis-calls>).

Q 17: Would it be possible to have an excel of all on-going collaborations of various CIVIS universities with the six partner universities, presented by Hubs?

Thanks! This is a good idea. We will make this available, but probably by way of an online map. The WP5 project team has a dataset with most of the existing collaborations of CIVIS

members in Africa and the Mediterranean region, but for data protection reasons it cannot be published as such. However, some basic, non-personal information on existing collaborations can be found at the following online maps:

Click [here](#) for a map of existing partnerships according to CIVIS member universities (last edit: Sep. 2020).

Click [here](#) for a map of existing partnerships according to CIVIS hub themes (last edit: Sep. 2020).