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**Infopoint hybrid conference: Advancing African Continental Integration in Higher education:
building trust through better quality**



On March 20, the DG for International Partnership and the DG for Education and Culture convened with the African interested parties to provide an overview of the HAQAA (Harmonisation, Accreditation and Quality Assurance in African Higher Education) initiative's development.

The initiative, launched in 2014 as an Africa based project, was created to enhance citizenship, democratic values and technical skills in "Higher Education" (HE) in order to foster sustainable development and stimulate trade in the African continent.

During the conference, the implementing team presented the main accomplishments achieved in the second phase of the HAQAA initiative (2019-2022), while a direct experience concerning the impact of the HAQAA project at country level was introduced. Finally, the perspective of African universities on African HE's priorities and HAQAA 2 goals and achievements were addressed.

In the first part of the meeting, both Directorates stressed the important role played by human capital and higher education to accelerate Africa's transition to an innovation-led, scientific knowledge-based economy. The DGs highlighted EU's direct involvement to achieve such a result. As a matter of fact, the EU is committed to allocate 756M€ to "Youth Mobility for Africa", whose main objective is to promote inclusive learning opportunities for young Africans through exchanges and targeted scholarships, along with other programs, such as the Erasmus+ in its international dimension (figure 1). Moreover, it was underlined how the path for higher education systems convergence in Europe, the so-called Bologna process, paved the way to a similar process taking place in Africa through important reforms, i.e., the adoption on the Addis Convention in 2014. The latter will easier the recognition of HE's academic qualifications.

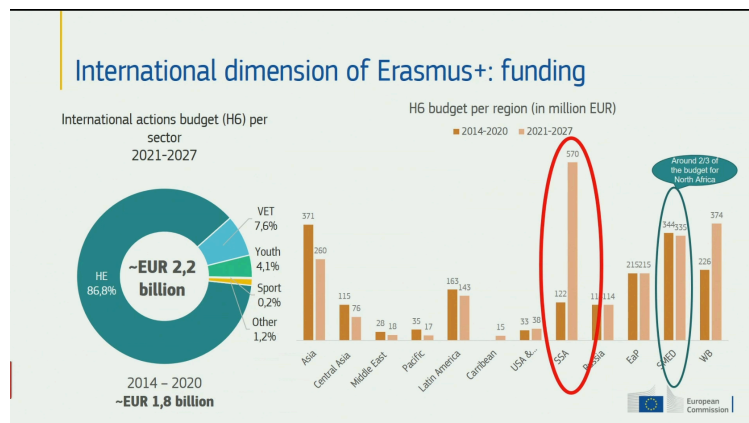


Figure 1.

Following, the African universities' perspective on HE has been brought up by the Secretary-General of the Association of African Universities, Olusola Oyewole. The secretary stressed African today priorities in HE and quality assurance, which can be summarized in: i) research, ii) global engagement and collaboration, iii) enhancing employability skills, iv) digitalization and v) improving education quality. Meanwhile, the need for re-defining Education in Africa was emphasized. The same led to the creation of new policies, most notably the Continental Strategy for education, the Pan-Africa Quality Assurance Agency and the African Quality Rating Mechanisms (AQRM).

Later on, the Director of Global Projects and HAQAA2 Coordinator, Elizabeth Colucci, pointed out the main goals set in HAQAA2, i.e., culture's quality assurance in HE, the implementation of the African Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance and the strengthening of African Union capacity in implementing the PAQAF. In this regard, a document was issued by the HAQAA Development Team in August 2022 to respond to the need for robust, reliable and comparative data collection in HE for policy making at different levels. In addition, the major successes of the HAQAA2 initiatives were displayed by the Director through a map (figure 2) that presents HAQAA's projects at country level. Some other important goals achieved by the team concerned the implementation of the project through stakeholders at regional level, the inter-regional/inter-linguistic African collaboration and the identification of potential female leaders in the sector.

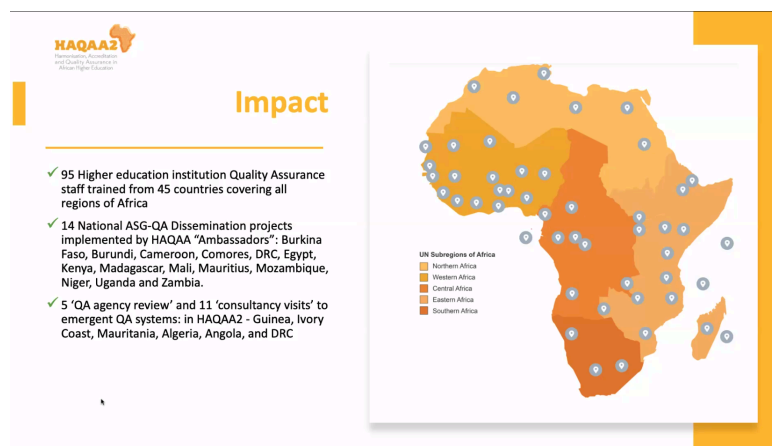


Figure 2.

Subsequently, a successfully implemented project within the HAQAA2 was displayed.

The case, presented by Jorge Jaime Fringe, concerned the partnership between the National Council for Quality Evaluation of Higher Education and HAQAA2 in Mozambique to foster higher education. According to the speaker, through the HAQAA project, Mozambique could benefit of a national network of specialists in QA of higher education, international recognition of the accreditation made by CNAQ, integration in international networks, strengthening of CNAQ's integration into international networks for QA in higher education and training of Mozambican teaching staff (increased HEIs involvement in self-assessment and institutional assessment and increased society awareness).

In conclusion, all the participants agreed on some future targets that HAQAA projects should tackle in order to expand the implementation of this EU initiative. These goals comprehend supporting intra and inter regional collaboration projects between HE institutions, extending the capacity-building training on HAQAA2 in Higher Education and supporting collaborations between African and European HEIs.