

ARUA and The Guild in full support of the proposed joint AU-EU Innovation Agenda

Ahead of the European Union (EU) – African Union (AU) summit of 17-18 February 2022, the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) and The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities welcome the proposed joint AU-EU Innovation Agenda's [Working Document](#).

We fully share the Innovation Agenda's key concerns, that we need to reverse the brain-drain of young, talented African researchers into a brain-gain. To achieve this, the Agenda rightly points to the need to strengthen existing R&I funding programmes, and the establishment of new programmes to strengthen higher education and research, in support of societal and economic development throughout Africa. Moreover, we strongly welcome the Agenda's goal to foster the mobility of and training for students, staff and researchers. The Agenda is clear: we must strengthen the research capacity of African universities comprehensively and with a focus on the long-term.

We therefore welcome the concrete proposals made in the AU-EU Innovation Agenda as essential in order to further the development of an African knowledge society. In particular, we support:

- The development and strengthening of Clusters of Excellence, which can strengthen South-South as well as South-North science collaboration, and foster research excellence by supporting highly talented young researchers, as well as more senior researchers through the establishment of “advanced study institutes” (collegium).
- The strengthening of inclusive and accessible world-class research and innovation infrastructures in the EU and AU.
- The promotion of joint African-European Master and Doctoral degree programmes.

We also welcome the call to strengthen collaborations between European and African universities through existing instruments, including Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, the European University Alliances, and the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme. It is also extremely important to see an explicit support of the ARISE pilot to foster world-class fundamental science in Africa.

Through the proposed AU-EU Innovation Agenda, universities are assuming a central place in the development of AU-EU relations. Through their scientific capacities, their students, and their impact on societal and economic development, universities are in fact effective gateways between Africa and Europe, and we need to promote and develop further sustainable EU-AU partnerships through university collaboration. We call upon the European Union and the African Union leaders who are meeting this week in Brussels to fully support this proposed joint Innovation Agenda. We look forward to working with the African Union and the European Union to ensure that these proposals will be

implemented effectively. And we call on the university sector in Europe and Africa to engage with the [public consultation](#) about the Agenda.

Ernest Aryeetey, Secretary-General of ARUA, said: “ARUA is excited about this new positive development in the AU-EU innovation agenda. The fact that universities are being placed at the center of the relationship between the European and African Unions is important for the opportunities it will create for the development of knowledge economies throughout Africa for sustainable development and transformation. Stronger, well-resourced and well-run universities in Africa can only be good for the region’s progress”.

Jan Palmowski, Secretary-General of The Guild, said: “Following the EU’s proposal for a European Strategy for Universities, this is real evidence that the European Commission fully recognises the importance of universities at the heart of society. Through its emphasis on inclusiveness and (real) partnership, the proposed Agenda articulates a genuinely distinctive European strategy to research and innovation (R&I) collaboration envisaged in the Global Approach to R&I. These proposals are significant not for universities in themselves, but for what they will enable universities to achieve for the transformation of African societies, for our joint capacities to address societal challenges in Europe and Africa, and for relations between the AU and the EU.”

About The African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA)

Composed of sixteen leading universities in Africa, ARUA aims to enhance research and graduate training in member universities through a number of channels, including the setting up of Centres of Excellence (CoEs) at its member universities. Addressing key challenges of Africa’s sustainable development, ARUA CoEs are intended to be focal points for aggregating world-class researchers from member universities and elsewhere to undertake collaborative research in priority thematic areas while providing opportunities for graduate students from the region and elsewhere to work with the researchers.

About The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities

Founded in 2016, The Guild comprises twenty-one of Europe’s most distinguished research-intensive universities in sixteen countries and is dedicated to enhancing the voice of academic institutions, their researchers, and their students. The Guild is committed to the pursuit of excellence, the importance of truth-seeking and trust-building as the foundation of public life, and the creation of new knowledge for the benefit of society, culture, and economic growth.

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