

EU-Africa academic cooperation

SUMMARY

According to the 2019 Eurobarometer report, three in four Europeans (75 %) think that 'the EU should strengthen its partnership with Africa and increase financial investments to create jobs and ensure sustainable development on both continents'.

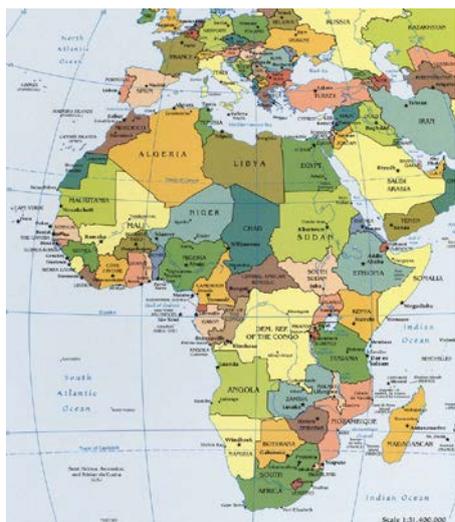
Investing in people, through education, science, technology and skills development, is one of the priorities of the EU-Africa strategic partnership. This priority was identified during the 5th African Union – European Union Summit, held in 2017, and should be one of the priorities in the new 'post-2020' EU-Africa strategy. The measures envisaged under the current strategy include academic cooperation and mobility of students, researchers and academic staff.

This briefing outlines the implementation of three elements of EU-Africa academic cooperation, namely the measures taken under the Erasmus+ programme, the Intra-Africa academic mobility scheme and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions of the Horizon 2020 programme, as well as other initiatives involving higher education and research institutions from both continents.

Introduction

The long-standing cooperation between the European Union (EU) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries is based on the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement ('[Cotonou Agreement](#)'). This agreement was signed on 23 June 2000 for a 20-year period ([revised](#) in 2010 and in 2014) at the 1st Africa-European Union Summit, to provide for a formal political channel of cooperation between the two continents. The agreement was preceded by the 1975 Lomé Convention.

Map 1 – Africa



Source: [Map of Africa](#)

Seventy-nine ACP countries (48 countries from sub-Saharan Africa, 16 from the Caribbean and 15 from the Pacific) are parties to the Cotonou Agreement. EU cooperation with five Northern African countries (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia) is, meanwhile, based on the Southern Neighbourhood policy. The Cotonou Agreement expires on 29 February 2020. To allow time to conclude [negotiations](#) on a new 'post-Cotonou' agreement, the validity of the current agreement may be prolonged until 31 December 2020. On 28 November 2019, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the ongoing negotiations.

After signing the Cotonou Agreement, cooperation was strengthened in 2002 with the launch of the [African Union](#) (AU) (as the successor to the Organisation of African Unity),

a continental body consisting of 55 African member states, one of its objectives being the encouragement of international cooperation.

AU-EU summits took place in 2007, 2010, 2014 and [2017](#) (see conclusions of the 2017 summit below). The 6th summit is scheduled for 2020. Ministerial summits and commission-to-commission meetings also take place on occasion.

The European Parliament has delegations for relations with: a) South Africa; b) the Pan-African Parliament; c) the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly; and d) the Maghreb countries and the Arab Maghreb Union (DMAG), including the EU-Morocco, EU-Tunisia and EU-Algeria Joint Parliamentary Committees.

There are also forums for thematic cooperation, e.g. the EU-Africa Business Forum and the Africa-EU Civil Society Forum.

In 2007, during the 2nd Africa-EU Summit, a [Joint Africa-EU Strategy](#) (JAES) was adopted, with a view

Graph 1 – Africa-EU partnership



Source: [Africa-EU partnership](#), European Commission.

to strengthening political dialogue and enhancing cooperation within the [Africa-EU Partnership](#).

In the academic field, more specifically, at the 2015 Valletta Summit on migration, in the political declaration and in the action plan, European and African leaders [expressed](#) in part the need to secure the mobility of students, researchers and entrepreneurs, and to substantially increase the number of Erasmus+ scholarships for African students and academic staff. The summit also launched the [Emergency Trust Fund for Africa](#).

In September 2018, the Commission launched a new [Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs](#) ([COM\(2018\) 643](#)), with 'investment in education and matching skills and jobs' as one of the key objectives. In the document, the Commission announced that it would support exchange projects

between higher education institutions (HEIs) through the Erasmus+ programme, and the mobility of students, staff and academics across the African continent through the Inter-Africa mobility scheme. According to the Commission's latest [data](#), the alliance has already delivered on advancing cooperation in education and skills, with a view to improving employability in Africa.

5th African Union – European Union Summit

In November 2017, the 5th African Union-European Union [Summit](#) defined four main areas of cooperation, one of them being (for the first time) 'Investing in people', covering education, science, technology and innovation (STI), and skills development.

Table 1 – Africa and the EU in brief statistics

	Africa	EU
Number of countries	55*	28
Surface	30.2 million km ²	4.3 million km ²
Population	1.3 billion (2017)	513.5 million (2019)
Share of 15-24 year-olds in total population	19 % (2015)	10.8 % (2018)
Share of population below 15 years old	41 % (2015)	16 % (2016)
Real GDP per capita	€1 849 (2017)	€28 000 (2016)
Tertiary education students	Around 15 million (2017)	19.6 million (2016)

Source: EPRS, based on a variety of data sources.

* With the exception of South Sudan, 54 out of 55 countries are [signatory](#) to the Cotonou agreement.

- In the area of higher education (HE), the priorities agreed for EU-Africa cooperation are to: a) promote the mobility of students, scholars, researchers and staff; b) harmonise higher education in Africa; c) enhance quality assurance and accreditation in African universities; and d) develop centres of excellence in Africa, in particular through the Pan-African University. The mobility of students, scholars, researchers and staff is to continue to be supported, not least by: a) the African Union Mwalimu Nyerere Scholarship Scheme; b) the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme; and c) the Erasmus+ programme and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions. Harmonisation is to be achieved through the Tuning Africa project and quality assurance via the Harmonisation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) programme.
- The EU-Africa cooperation priorities in the area of STI, as defined by the EU-Africa High-Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD) on STI, are to encourage cooperation between researchers as well as to develop a long-term innovation partnership. This led in September 2019 to the launch of the Africa-Europe Innovation Partnership. STI cooperation will be supported by various funding instruments, such as the EU's Horizon 2020 programme and the African Union Research Grants. The 7th framework programme for research (FP7) funded around 600 collaborative research projects involving around 1 400 participants from 45 African countries. The EU also supports the Kwame Nkrumah Scientific [Awards](#) for leading African scientists.

In the run-up to the summit, the Commission launched a survey of young students and alumni in Africa, asking them about how existing structures and initiatives can contribute to strengthening the informed voice of students in universities. The questionnaire looked at three dimensions: a) reinforcing students and alumni capacities in Africa; b) enhancing the role of students in educational processes; and c) strengthening innovation in higher education.

African Union's strategic documents on education and STI

In 2016, the African Union published the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 ([CESA 16-25](#)). The strategy states, not least, that 'harmonized education and training systems are essential for the realization of Intra-Africa mobility and academic integration through regional cooperation'.

In October 2019, the African Union published the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 ([STISA-2024](#)), with a mission to 'Accelerate Africa's transition to an innovation-led, Knowledge-based Economy'. The strategy sees education and human resource development as one of the elements needed to achieve wealth creation (one of the priorities). STISA-2024 is also geared towards strengthening international cooperation, not least by exploiting 'mutually beneficial structures for the inclusion of research and innovation calls under international research funding programmes such as the European Union Horizon 2020 that are not only open to African participation but also to specifically address Africa's research agenda'.

Eurobarometer report on development cooperation

The 2019 Eurobarometer report on EU citizens and development cooperation showed that the vast majority (86 %) of EU citizens are in favour of helping people in developing countries.

Seven out of ten respondents thought that tackling poverty in developing countries should be one of the main priorities of the EU. Seven in ten also thought that 'providing financial assistance to developing countries is an effective way to strengthen the EU's influence in the world', while for 75 % of respondents providing developing countries with financial assistance is a means of achieving 'a more peaceful and fairer world'.

Peace, security and education were indicated as the most pressing challenges for the future of developing countries. Thus, it is not a surprise that three in four respondents (75 %) thought that 'the EU should strengthen its partnership with Africa and increase financial investments to create jobs and ensure sustainable development on both continents'.

Source: Eurobarometer [report](#), 2019

European Parliament position

In November 2017, the European Parliament adopted a resolution – EU-Africa strategy: a boost for development ([2017/2083\(INI\)](#)) – in which it 'calls for the EU and the AU to promote exchanges between students, teachers, entrepreneurs and researchers between the two continents; welcomes the Commission's proposal to launch an African Youth Facility, expanding the scope of Erasmus+, and an EU vocational education and training facility; calls for a discussion on the recognition by the EU of certificates and diplomas issued by African schools and universities; notes that ensuring circular migration is essential for sustainable development; and for preventing a brain drain from Africa'.

More recently, in November 2019, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the on-going negotiations for a new partnership agreement between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States ([2019/2832\(RSP\)](#)).

High-level conference on higher education collaboration

In October 2019, aiming to contribute to the discussion on future EU-Africa academic cooperation, the European Commission [hosted](#) a high-level conference on 'investing in people, by investing in higher education and skills in Africa'. The conference was organised in partnership with the African Union Commission and four Member State organisations: the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the British Council, Campus France, and the Dutch Nuffic.

Before the event, the European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, declared that 'education lies at the heart of development. Investing in skills is crucial to provide people, especially the youth, with decent jobs and future perspectives. Reinforcing a mutually beneficial partnership between Africa and Europe in the field of higher education is key to sustainable economic growth and long-term prosperity'. In 2017, there were 15 million tertiary [students](#) in Africa and the number is set to double by 2030. Thus, the participants underlined that, with its economic growth and a growing demand for education among young people, Africa is a continent of great opportunities. The significance of the doctoral programmes were also mentioned. In his opening speech, Dr Narciso Matos, Vice-Chancellor of the Polytechnical University of Mozambique, pointed out that 'if you don't have a PhD programme you don't have a research'.

Erasmus+ programme

Since 2015, four possibilities have been open to African academic participants and higher education institutions (HEIs) under the current Erasmus+ (2014-2020) programme, to be implemented via partnerships between European and African HEIs:

- short time mobility exchanges;
- capacity building in higher education (CBHE);
- Erasmus Mundus joint master's degrees (EMJMDs); and
- Jean Monnet activities.

The first three fall under the international dimension of higher education strand of Erasmus+.

Support for the EU-Africa academic cooperation within the Erasmus+ programme continues and enhances the support offered in the previous edition of the programme (with its various structures and actions).

Cooperation with African universities is progressing, and the European Commission [expects](#) a significant increase in the number of students and researchers from Africa benefiting from the Erasmus+ programme: from 16 000 in 2018 and around 26 500 in 2019 to 35 000 by [2020](#). The

Commission also [expects](#) the number to increase to 105 000 by 2027, the end of the 2021-2027 Erasmus programme.

Table 2 – Involvement of African students, researchers and staff members and their HEIs in Erasmus+ actions

Action	Short description of the action	Results
Short stay mobility exchange	<p>These are offered to students, researchers and staff.</p> <p>Students and researchers can obtain 3-12 month grants to study in a foreign HEI.</p> <p>Staff can obtain 5- to 60-day grants for mobility.</p>	<p>In the 2015-2017 period, according to the Commission's data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 9 704 people from Africa visited the EU: 5 445 students and researchers and 4 259 staff members; ➤ almost 4 400 people from the EU visited Africa: 1314 students and researchers, and 3 067 staff members; ➤ students, researchers and staff members from Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria and South Africa were the most highly represented among African participants.
Capacity building in higher education (CBHE)	<p>This supports knowledge creation and innovation, and the quality and relevance of higher education, in particular relevance to labour market needs. It also helps to increase cooperation with the EU's HEIs. CBHE addresses both groups of ACP countries and individual countries, and can be cross-regional.</p>	<p>In the 2014-2019 period, according to the Commission's data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 146 projects involved African institutions, including 35 projects selected in 2019; ➤ the African countries with the highest number of participants involved were Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, South Africa and Libya; ➤ HEIs from six African countries played the role of coordinators in the selected projects. They were from Algeria, Egypt, Madagascar, Morocco, South Africa and Tunisia.
Erasmus Mundus joint master's degrees (EMJMDs)	<p>These are full-degree scholarships for master's students. Programmes last one to two years, during which students should study in at least two different European countries. Upon graduation, students are awarded a joint or double degree, or multiple degrees. Students can apply for scholarships even if their universities are not participating in the programme.</p>	<p>In 2014-2019, according to data from the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 1 197 Erasmus Mundus scholarships have been awarded to African students; ➤ the countries whose students received the largest numbers of scholarships were Ethiopia (275), Egypt (180), Ghana and Nigeria (125 each), South Africa (63), Kenya (53) and Cameroon (51).
Jean Monnet activities	<p>These are designed to develop EU studies worldwide, by supporting modules, chairs and centres of excellence. They promote excellence in teaching and research on the European integration process at higher education level. The programme also supports policy debate within the academic world and with several associations in the domain of EU studies.</p>	<p>In the 2014-2019 period, according to the Commission's data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ there were five Jean Monnet projects managed by African coordinators – institutions from South Africa and Morocco: one Jean Monnet module, one Jean Monnet chair, and three Jean Monnet projects.

Source: EPRS, based on European Commission and EACEA data.

Table 3 – Intra-ACP and Intra-Africa academic mobility scheme – planned budget and actions

Call		Planned budget	Number of projects expected to be financed	Number of mobility flows expected to be financed
INTRA-ACP ACADEMIC MOBILITY SCHEME				
<i>Lot 1: Africa</i>				
<i>Lot 2: Caribbean & Pacific</i>				
2011	Total	€9 million	4	300
	Lot 1	€7 million	3	
	Lot 2	€2 million	1	
2012	Total	€12 million	6	400
	Lot 1	€10 million	5	
	Lot 2	€2 million	1	
2013	Total	€23.45 million	9-10	800
	Lot 1	€17.85 million	7	
	Lot 2	€5.6 million	2-3	
INTRA-AFRICA ACADEMIC MOBILITY SCHEME				
2016		€9.9 million	7-8	350
2017		€9.9 million	7-8	350
2019		€9.8 million	7-8	350

Source: EPRS, based on European Commission data.

According to European Commission [data](#), around 8 500 African and 4 650 European university students and staff will benefit from exchanges in 53 African countries and in 34 European countries as part of the 2019 calls for proposals alone. In addition, 35 projects promoting capacity building in higher education have been chosen for support. The range of partner organisations in these projects is wider than ever before; for instance, it now encompasses Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritania and Guinea. Furthermore, 313 young students from 33 African countries have been awarded scholarships for Erasmus Mundus joint master's degree (EMJMDs) programmes, and 46 African institutions (universities and research institutions) were involved in the 44 EMJMD programmes selected in 2019. See Table 2 for more details concerning the involvement of African institutions, students, researchers and staff members in the Erasmus+ programme.

Examples of African countries' participation in Erasmus+

[Ghana](#) – In the 2016-2018 period, the Erasmus+ programme offered grants to 302 students and staff members from

Ghana moving to the EU, and to 175 students and staff members from the EU moving to Ghana. In the same period, six Erasmus Mundus Joint Master degrees projects and one capacity building in HE project involving Ghana were selected for financing through Erasmus+. There are no Jean Monnet projects running in Ghana, but partners from Ghana are involved in one of the networks.

One example of an Erasmus+ project involving Ghana, is the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master degrees project [DCLead](#) (MSc & MA in Digital Communication Leadership). The project runs from 2018 to 2024, with an EU grant of €3 397 860. It promotes a non-techno-deterministic, social and ethical reflection on digital communication for future leaders in the field. The project is managed by HEIs from Austria, Belgium and Denmark, in cooperation with HEIs from Australia, Brazil, China, Ghana and the US. There are also industrial partners involved in the project.

[Senegal](#) – In the 2016-2018 period, the Erasmus+ programme offered grants to 220 students and staff members from Senegal moving to the EU, and to 128 students and staff members from the EU moving to Senegal. In the same period, eight Erasmus Mundus joint master's degree projects and four capacity building in HE projects involving Senegal were selected for financing through Erasmus+. Senegal did not apply for Jean Monnet funding, but partners from Senegal are involved in one of the networks.

One example of an Erasmus+ project involving Senegal is the Erasmus Mundus [Dyclam+](#) project (Dynamics of Cultural Landscape, Heritage, Memory and Conflictualities) managed by France. The project runs from 2018 to 2024, with an EU grant of €3 424 000. It offers two-year master's degree

courses designed to train experts and managers in the conservation, sustainable exploitation, promotion and digitisation of heritage and cultural landscapes. The project is managed by HEIs from France, Portugal, Romania and Italy. The project also involves 14 academic institutions from 13 countries (Brazil, Canada, Cape Verde, China, Czechia, France, Germany, Haiti, Japan, the Netherlands, Senegal, Spain, the US) and 10 associated partners involved in territorial development and heritage protection (e.g. Edinburgh World Heritage and Boquilobo National Park).

Examples of the EU Trust Fund for Africa complementary support for Erasmus+

[Erasmus+ in West Africa and the Horn of Africa](#) – The action was launched in 2018 to increase the availability of trained and qualified high-level professional manpower in West Africa and the Horn of Africa. It covers Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali, Gambia, Guinea, Niger, Nigeria, Mauritania, Senegal, Chad, Ghana and Cameroon. With an estimated budget of €10 million it should involve 30 HEIs in Africa and support the mobility of 2 200 students and 200 young teachers and administrative staff between African and European countries. The action builds on existing practices and mechanisms under Erasmus+ and complements the [ongoing](#) support from the EUTF for the Sahel and Lake Chad in the wider area.

In 2018, the Commission decided to [invest](#) an additional amount of €17.6 million (from the Commission's external financial instruments and the [EU Trust Fund for Africa](#)), making it possible to support the mobility of 8 500 newly selected African students and staff members in 2019 (an increase of 40 %). The Commission [pointed out](#) that 'for countries in Western Africa and the Horn of Africa, the number of scholarships has more than doubled thanks to the additional money. It has also made it possible to include more countries in the programme, such as Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Congo and Burundi, and to increase the number of

Table 4 – Intra-ACP and Intra-Africa academic mobility scheme: results of the calls for proposals

Calls	Number of selected projects	Country of origin of the coordinator of the selected project	Total EU support	
INTRA-ACP ACADEMIC MOBILITY SCHEME				
<i>Lot 1: Africa</i>				
<i>Lot 2: Caribbean & Pacific</i>				
2011	<i>Lot 1</i>	3	Burkina Faso, Namibia, South Africa	€ 6 948 400
	<i>Lot 2</i>	1	Trinidad and Tobago	€ 1 998 900
2012	<i>Lot 1</i>	5	Cameroon, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda	€ 9 899 550
	<i>Lot 2</i>	1	Trinidad and Tobago	€ 1 999 025
2013	<i>Lot 1</i>	7	Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Madagascar, Nigeria, Uganda, South Africa	€ 17 342 625
	<i>Lot 2</i>	3	Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji (2 projects)	€ 5 600 000
Total 2011-2013	<i>Lot 1</i>	15	11 African countries	€ 34 190 575
	<i>Lot 2</i>	5	2 Caribbean and Pacific countries	€ 9 597 925
INTRA-AFRICA ACADEMIC MOBILITY SCHEME				
2016	7	Benin, Cameroon, Kenya (2 projects), Morocco (2 projects), South Africa	€ 9 947 350	
2017	7	Algeria, Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda	€ 9 594 775	
2019	7	Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Tunisia, South Africa,	€9 786 250	
Total 2016-2017	21	14 African countries	€29 328 375	

Source: EPRS, based on European Commission and EACEA data.

exchanges, in particular for Benin, Cape Verde, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Somalia'. At the same time, according to Commission [data](#), more than 4 000 Europeans (primarily academic staff) will visit African universities on the basis of the selection results.

The intra-Africa academic mobility scheme

[The 2014-2020 intra-Africa academic mobility scheme](#) (referred to as below as 'the scheme' and also known as the 'African Erasmus'), was established with the aim of promoting sustainable development and contributing to poverty reduction, by increasing the availability of trained and highly qualified professionals in Africa. The scheme is based on the experience of the 2011-2013 [Intra-ACP academic mobility scheme](#).

On the EU side, the scheme is financed via the [Pan-African programme](#) (more detailed description below) and is managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency ([EACEA](#)) in collaboration with the [African Union Commission \(AUC\)](#).

The scheme enhances student and staff mobility between African countries by means of cooperation between HEIs in Africa. It provides master's students, doctoral candidates and HEI staff (academic and administrative) with scholarships, lasting between one month (for staff) and four years (for doctoral candidates). Projects to be co-financed by the scheme must involve the African HEI coordinator and the African HEI partners as well as an HEI technical partner from one of the EU Member States (having been awarded an Erasmus Charter for Higher Education).

In the 2011-2013 period, three calls for proposals were launched. The calls were divided into two lots:

- Lot 1: Africa, which supported and expanded the Mwalimu Nyerere African Union scholarship [scheme](#) within the Africa-Europe cooperation framework; and
- Lot 2: Caribbean and Pacific which supported regional and/or inter-regional academic mobility in the Caribbean and Pacific.

The participation of a technical partner from the EU was not obligatory in the 2011-2013 period.

The 2011-2013 calls for proposals resulted in the selection of 20 projects. Some of the projects selected continued to offer scholarships until 2019.

The results of the 2016-2019 calls for proposals were as follows:

- [21 projects](#) were selected;
- they involved the participation (as coordinator or partner) of around 75 African institutions and 20 EU HEIs;
- among the most active participants are Makerere University (Uganda), University Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique), and the Université d'Abomey-Calavi (Benin);
- the countries whose HEIs were most represented as EU technical partners were Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Portugal (two HEIs from each country are involved in selected projects);
- total EU funding amounted to €29.33 million.

For more detailed information see also Tables 2 and 3.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions/Horizon 2020

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions ([MSCA](#)) within the Horizon 2020 ([H2020](#)) programme have provided for new joint doctoral programmes since 2014, with fellowships for non-European

researchers. It is the continuation of the fellowships offered within previous framework programmes, including the 7th framework programme (FP7) (2007-2014).

Table 5 – African researchers' and institutions' involvement in MSCA projects (2014-2018)

Country	Number and type of projects funded	Number of African country organisations involved	Number of African researchers who received MSCA funding	Number of EU researchers going to an African country	Main EU destinations for African fellows (number of fellows)	Main scientific areas covered by the projects selected (share)*
Algeria	Total: 6 IF: 1 RISE: 5	5	41	17	France (11) Greece (8)	ENV (50 %) LIF (33.3 %) SOC (16.7 %)
Burkina Faso	Total: 3 ITN: 1 RISE: 2	4	19	10	France (12) Belgium (4) Italy (3)	SOC (66.7 %) LIF (33.3 %)
Egypt	Total: 11 RISE: 11	9	134	13	Netherlands (19) Italy (18) United Kingdom (15)	ENG (27.3 %) ECO (18.2 %) ENV (18.2 %)
Malawi	Total: 1 ITN: 1	1	2	0	Spain (1)	SOC (100 %)
Morocco	Total: 27 COFUND: 1 RISE: 26	19	143	144	France (53) Spain (26) Greece (13)	ENV (34.6 %) SOC (19.2 %) ENG (15.4 %)
Rwanda	Total: 0	0	2	0	Greece (1) Malta (1) Netherlands (1)	---
South Africa	Total: 40 COFUND: 2 IF: 3 ITN: 4 RISE: 31	32	113	159	Germany (25) United Kingdom (25) Italy (23)	ENG (18.4 %) ENV (18.4 %) SOC (18.4 %)
Total:	88	70	454	343	---	---

Source: EPRS, based on the European Commission [data](#).

* ECO = economic sciences, ENG = information science and engineering, ENV = environment and geosciences, LIF = life sciences, SOC = social sciences and humanities

There are several [ways](#) in which African students and researchers can receive grants from the MSCA:

- [innovative training networks](#) (ITN), supporting doctoral networks involving PhD candidates;
- [individual \(postdoctoral\) fellowships](#) (IFs);
- [research and innovation staff exchanges](#) (RISE), supporting international collaborative projects enabling staff exchanges; and
- the [COFUND](#) scheme, which offers doctoral and fellowship programmes supporting PhD and post-doctoral candidates.

Between 2014 and 2018, six African countries implemented MSCA projects and seven African countries received funding for fellows. The two most active African countries were: Morocco and South Africa (the first had 27 projects and 143 fellows funded, while the second 40 projects and 113

fellows funded). Those two countries also received the greatest number of incoming EU researchers (144 EU fellows visited Morocco and 159 EU fellows visited South Africa). The most popular MSCA action was RISE. The main destinations for the African fellows were (in alphabetic order): France, Greece, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. The central and eastern European countries most attractive to African fellows were Romania (fourth main destination for Egyptian fellows (14) and Poland (fifth main destination for South African fellows (8). More detail on the involvement of African researchers and institutions in the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions is presented in Table 5.

Examples of African countries' participation in MSCA

The [Party](#) project (*Participatory Tools for Human Development with the Youth*) was funded by an EU grant of €945 000 under the [MSCA-RISE-2014](#) call for proposals and was implemented between February 2015 and January 2019. The project coordinator was from Finland and the project included partners from South Africa and Namibia. Its aim was to address issues relating to youth unemployment in developing countries, 'creating participatory tools for human development that enable transformational change for young people'. The project's target group were the San people in South Africa and Namibia, who face 'various social, cultural and political difficulties', and whose communities 'are among the poorest in their countries, which are among the most unequal societies in the world'. The project results included a digital platform handbook containing the collection of tools tested during the workshops.

The MSCA also funds individual fellowships on the African continent. One example of such a project was [Arab Parliaments](#) (The role of national parliaments in the Arab transformation processes), coordinated by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and focusing on the role of national parliaments in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia since 2011 and their contributions to political transformation processes. The implementation of the project (between February 2017 and April 2019) included workshops in academic institutions in Amman, Cairo, Rabat and Tunis. The project was funded with an EU grant of €160 800 under call for proposals MSCA-IF-2015-EF. The project results include a peer-reviewed article on the Egyptian parliament, and a chapter in the book *The Impact of Brexit on the European Parliament: The Role of British MEPs in Euro-Mediterranean Affairs*.

Joint EU-Africa higher education harmonisation initiatives

There are two interlinked joint EU-Africa higher education harmonisation initiatives (which are to be [continued](#)):

- The [Tuning Africa](#) initiative is a network of communities of academic experts who review the competences and skills required for a given discipline and revise study programmes in consultation with students, academics, graduates and the labour market. It was implemented in the framework of the joint Africa-EU strategy. The initiative has two phases. The first phase (2011-2013) covered 60 universities, representing the five sub-regions of Africa. They worked on developing curricula in five subject areas: medicine, teacher education, agricultural sciences, mechanical engineering, and civil engineering. The second phase (2015-2018) covered eight subject areas, as economics and applied geology had been added to the original five subject areas. One new transversal group covered higher education management. Tuning Africa involved 107 universities across 42 African countries. Additionally, more than 1 600 students and staff [participated](#) in online courses and workshops.
- The [harmonisation of African higher education quality assurance and accreditation](#) (HAQAA) initiative was established by the EU in partnership with the African Union, with the aim of supporting the development of a harmonised quality assurance and accreditation system at institutional, national, regional and pan-African continental levels. Between 2015 and 2018, the initiative was implemented by a consortium consisting of the University of Barcelona (coordinator), the Association of African Universities (AAU), the European University Association (EUA), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). One of the last events of the initiative

was the webinar organised by the University of Barcelona, during which partners of the consortium presented African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ([ASG-OA](#)) that had been developed in the course of the project.

Selected financial aspects of EU-Africa cooperation

EU financial instruments

In the 2014-2020 financial period, in addition to the above-mentioned programmes with their budgets, the EU has run a number of financial instruments and budgetary lines focused on supporting cooperation with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific:

- cooperation with five Maghreb countries is covered by the European Neighbourhood Instrument ([ENI](#));
- implementation of the strategic partnership between Africa and the EU is covered by the Development Cooperation Instrument ([DCI](#)) and the 11th European Development Fund ([EDF](#)) (managed by the Commission, but funded by selected Member States outside the EU budget), with a focus on reducing and, in the long-term, eradicating poverty in ACP countries;
- cooperation with [South Africa](#) is also supported by a separate line of the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). The cooperation focuses among other things on 'education, training and innovation: to improve overall economic performance and ensure the employability of people'.

For the 2021-2027 financial period, the Commission proposed a new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument ([NDICI](#)). The Commission has also proposed new Erasmus and Horizon Europe programmes.

Pan-African programme

The [Pan-African programme](#) (PanAf) was established in 2014 to support the EU-Africa partnership and the implementation of the joint Africa-EU strategy. PanAf covers Africa as a whole, with projects bringing trans-regional, continental or global added value. The PanAf complements EU actions. The programme has been implemented in two phases: [2014-2017](#) and [2018-2020](#). The PanAf programme budget amounts to €845 million for the 2014-2020 period, with €400 million earmarked for the 2018-2020 period.

In the 2018-2020 period, the three priority areas for cooperation between Africa and the EU have included 'Investing in people – education, science, technology, skills'. Here the focus has been on three elements: 1) skills for youth, 2) higher education, and 3) science, technology and innovation (STI). The budget for 'Investing in people...' totals €135 million. Of this, €63 million has been earmarked for supporting higher education, while the remaining sum supports 'skills in youth' (€27 million) and STI (€45 million). The budget for higher education increased from €45 million in the 2014-2017 period to €63 million in the 2018-2020 period, reaching €108 million in 2014-2020.

The priority actions for higher education are as follows: a) the continuation of the intra-Africa mobility scheme, b) expansion of the African Erasmus+ alumni network, and c) modernisation of African universities and research institutions through access to high speed broadband and e-services, connecting them with the rest of the world's education and scientific communities. In the area of STI action is aimed at promoting technological innovation, including through reinforced EU-Africa cooperation in the field of STI, and should complement the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions in Horizon 2020 for instance.

Concept of trilateral academic cooperation

In 2008, the Commission published a communication: The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation ([COM\(2008\) 654](#)). In 2019, the joint statement of the 21st EU-China summit included a declaration of EU and Chinese support for African solutions to African problems

to maintain peace and security in Africa. In 2017, a European Parliament resolution on the EU-Africa strategy: a boost for development (2017/2083(INI)), examined the need for new vision in the EU-Africa partnership and new players, such as China.

In 2016, the EU Institute for Security Studies ([EUISS](#)) pointed out that 'China has informally championed four domains for multilateral and bilateral development cooperation: healthcare, environment, education and infrastructure'.

It is [estimated](#) that in 2018 around 60 000 African students studied at Chinese universities (up from 2 000 students in 2003 and 50 000 in [2015](#)). China is the second main [destination](#) for African students after France, chosen by 75 000 African students.

There are also other potential international partners, such as Canada, India, Russia and the United States. They already offer various types of scholarship for African students and academic staff. There were for instance 37 735 students from sub-Saharan Africa studying in the [United States](#) during the 2016-2017 academic year, 11 290 students from Nigeria studying in [Canada](#) in 2018 and 15 000 African students in [Russia](#) in the 2017/2018 academic year (of which 2 100 were from Morocco and 1 500 from Nigeria).

Conclusions

EU-Africa cooperation is progressing, and a number of activities and sources of funding are on offer. However, the scale of this cooperation is still inadequate given the number of African students and researchers. It can be expected that with the booming of these numbers the appetite for cooperation with the EU will also grow.

If the development of intercontinental academic cooperation is to be enhanced, there are five elements to be considered. First, policy and international agreements in the 'post-Cotonou' phase must focus on human development and academic cooperation. Second, priority must be given to adequate funding, not least on the EU side, for instance through the (2021-2027) Erasmus and Horizon Europe programmes. Third, attention must be given to the future scope and budget of the intra-Africa academic mobility scheme. Fourth, issues, such as climate change and migration, must be addressed in the interest of both sides. Finally, further investigation is needed into the potential for multilateral academic cooperation involving partners other than from the EU and Africa.

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