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Annual Report 2024

Africa-UniNet

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1.   1st Board Meeting on 28 February 2024 & Online-Resolution

The first Board Meeting in 2024 began with the introduction of two universities: *Bowen University (Nigeria)* and *FH Campus Wien University of Applied Sciences (Austria)* applied for membership of the network. The Board unanimously decided to recommend the admission of the new members to the General Assembly by circular resolution. In addition, the expenses of the 3rd General Assembly, which took place in Vienna in 2023, were analyzed at this meeting and the current membership landscape of the network was discussed. The Board members also agreed to send out an invitation to all Africa-UniNet members to apply to host the 4th General Assembly.

2.   2nd Board Meeting on 25 April 2024 & Online-Resolution

Following the 4th Africa-UniNet Call, the results of the project evaluation were presented at the second Board Meeting of the year. At the Board Meeting, it was decided to submit the 18 top-ranked projects to the General Assembly via circular resolution and to recommend approval. Following approval by the General Assembly, the projects were then to be confirmed by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research (BMFWF) *(formerly: Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research)*. 5 further projects that received a score above the minimum value in the evaluation were placed on the reserve list and also submitted to the General Assembly and the BMFWF for approval.

Two institutions from Ethiopia applied for membership of the network at this meeting: *Oda Bultum University* was accepted by the Board (subject to approval by the General Assembly) and the application of the *Ethiopian Academy of Sciences* was rejected.

3.   Results of the 4th Africa-UniNet Call

Following external review, an online resolution by the General Assembly and confirmation by the BMFWF, 23 out of 40 submitted project applications were selected at the end of May. The acceptance rate was therefore 57.5%. This brings the total number of projects since Africa-UniNet was founded in 2020 to over 80. The 23 selected projects in the 4th Call include partnerships with institutions in 12 different African countries: Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, South Africa and Uganda. 22 different Africa-UniNet member institutions coordinate the selected projects. More than half of the projects are coordinated by the African partner institution. In total, 28 of the 42 African member institutions and 13 of the 26 Austrian member institutions are involved (refers to the number of member institutions in 2023, as the 4th Call was issued in 2023).

The projects are funded by the BMFWF with a total funding amount of approx. € 600,000 for a project duration of up to two years. The topics of the projects cover a wide range of scientific

fields, from molecular biology, genetics, pharmacognosy, algebra, soil science, sustainable agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, educational science, marketing and innovation management to gender mainstreaming and climate change. What they all have in common is a cooperative and participatory approach and the goal of contributing to achieving the SDGs.

Figure 1: Overview of the 23 approved projects of the 4th Call

No.	Title	Coordinating Institution	Country
1	Assessment of the cardiovascular risk profile of infants exposed to pre-eclampsia in utero	Medical University of Graz	Nigeria
2	Uganda-Austria Collaboration in Algebra and Geometry	University of Vienna	Uganda
3	Exploring the Prevalence and Structural Analysis of Outer Membrane Proteins in Brucella Detected in Humans, Cattle, Cattle Products and Environment	Redeemer's University	Nigeria
4	Sustainable gender equality, diversity and social inclusion education through oral narratives in Mabia Cultures of Ghana	University of Ghana	Ghana
5	Partnership for Seed Systems Development for Resilient Food and Nutrition Security in East Africa	Haramaya University	Ethiopia, Kenya
6	Dextromethorphan (DM) Abuse and Male Infertility – A Pilot Exploration into Potential Epigenetic Modulation	University of Lagos	Nigeria
7	Fungal diversity of processed staple cereals from rural subsistence farming communities in Namibia	University of Namibia	Namibia
8	Strengthening research and training for development of a sustainable African Catfish Breeding Programme in Uganda	Busitema University	Uganda
9	Promoting climate-smart system of rice intensification (SRI) in Enugu State, Southeast Nigeria	Enugu State University of Science and Technology	Nigeria, Ethiopia
10	Participatory tools for assessing breeding objectives of crop farmers and livestock keepers in Ghana and Ethiopia	Mekelle University	Ethiopia, Ghana
11	Mabadiliko ni sasa (Change is now): Co-designing a science-based climate peer-to-peer training for Kenya	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis	Kenya
12	Discovery and Characterization of peptides from African plants	Medical University of Vienna	Gabon, Ethiopia, Sao Tome
13	CAMPUS SEXUAL HARASSMENT: EXPLORING ITS CAUSES, INTERVENTIONS AND BREAKING THE SILENCE OF VICTIMS	Igbinedion University	Nigeria, Ghana
14	Towards Positioning Lifelong Learning For Women Empowerment In Turkana County, Kenya: A feasibility study	Turkana University College	Kenya
15	Sustainable Tourism enhancement in the Lake Victoria region, East Africa	Maseno University	Kenya, Uganda
16	Regional climate change impact and mitigation strategies in East Africa	Paris Lodron University of Salzburg	Uganda
17	Assessing the Ecological Drivers for the Distribution of Argan forests in Morocco	Cadi Ayyad University	Morocco
18	Re-Use, Reduce and Re-Cycle Rice Residues for Climate Smart Agriculture and Soil health in Rice farming systems in East Africa	Egerton University	Kenya, Uganda

19	Climate Change Comparative Resilience Analysis with Integrated Machine Learning for Austrian and African Cities	Suez University	Egypt, South Africa
20	Community-based wetland ecosystem health assessment for the sustainability of Lake Tana UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Ethiopia	Carinthia University of Applied Sciences	Ethiopia
21	Research Management and Leadership for Enhanced Quality and Efficiency in African Research Institutions	Usmanu Danfodiyo University	Nigeria, Morocco, Gabon
22	Generative AI in Marketing	FH Kufstein Tirol University of Applied Sciences	Mozambique
23	Oromo People's Culture of Peace: The Gadaa System in Focus	Haramaya University	Ethiopia

4.   3rd Board Meeting on 15 May 2024 & Online-Resolution

At the third Board Meeting, three further institutions applied for membership of the network: *Vienna University of Technology (TU Wien)*, *University of Applied Sciences Technikum Wien* and *Damanhour University (Egypt)*. The Board decided to admit all three institutions to the Africa-UniNet network, subject to a circular resolution by the General Assembly.

In addition, the selection of the submitted applications for the Seasonal School was made at this Board Meeting: The approval of funding totaling € 40,000 was given to the Seasonal School entitled *"Decoloniality Pathways: Transformational Leadership by Curating Change across Sustainable Science Communication"* and to *"Exploring an Integrated Approach to disasters and Conflict Response through medical, sports and social perspectives"*. The Seasonal Schools were held in 2024, for details see point 5 in the annual report.

Finally, the Board Meeting decided on the venue for the General Assembly in 2025. The member institutions that applied to host the event introduced themselves at the Board Meeting and presented their proposals for the program and implementation of the event. Based on the information available, the decision was finally made in favor of the University of Saida in Algeria and a date in September 2025 was set. This decision was subsequently confirmed by the General Assembly by means of a circular resolution.

5.   Seasonal Schools

As decided at the General Assembly 2023, the Seasonal School was advertised for application in 2024, as there was no meeting of Africa-UniNet members at a General Assembly in 2024. The Seasonal School (Spring / Summer / Autumn / Winter School) brings together PhD students, early career researchers, researchers and teachers to work together on a specific research area and discuss it from different approaches and an interdisciplinary perspective. The event aims to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and build on Africa-UniNet's existing project work. Funding will be provided for travel and material costs in line with the conditions for funded projects.

The maximum funding amount for the Seasonal School 2024 was € 40,000 and the event had to take place in 2024. The call was open until 31 April 2024, there were a total of 5 submissions, 6 African countries were involved. Based on the decision of the Board and the approval of the General Assembly, two submissions were selected for funding:

1. *„Decoloniality Pathways: Transformational Leadership by Curating Change across Sustainable Science Communication"*: African Centre for Technology Studies (Kenya), University of Innsbruck (Austria), University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (Austria)
2. *„Exploring an Integrated Approach to disasters and Conflict Response through medical, sports and social perspectives":* University of Ghana, University of Ouahigouya (Burkina Faso), MCI Management Center Innsbruck (Austria)

Both Seasonal Schools were held successfully. The report on the Summer School in Kenya is already available on the Africa-UniNet website: Report Summer School 2024 – "Decolonizing Pathways"

6.   4th Board Meeting on 25 September 2024 & Online-Resolution

At the third Board Meeting, three further institutions presented themselves as candidates for membership of the network: *University of Botswana, Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources* and *Lead City University (Nigeria)*. The Board decided to admit all three institutions to the Africa-UniNet network, subject to a circular resolution by the General Assembly.

In addition, a personnel decision was made to extend the contract of an Africa-UniNet employee, originally limited until 31 March 2025. Based on budgetary circumstances, the contract for the 30-hour employee was extended by two years until 31 March 2027.

7.   Africa-UniNet 5th Call

The 5th Africa-UniNet Call was opened on 10 December 2024 for three months. The publication of this Call had to be postponed from September to December, as a new special directive of the BMFWF came into force in 2024. The changes associated with this special directive were incorporated into the application forms and funding documents, and the application process was switched to the online tool StipOnline. The technical changes to the application process resulted in a considerable time delay, which meant that the Call could not open until December. All 86 member institutions of Africa-UniNet that have paid the membership fee in 2024 are eligible to apply, whereby only Austrian member institutions can apply as coordinating institutions due to the change in the special directive. In addition, South-South trips are no longer possible. Project partners can therefore only travel to Austria / an African partner country and no longer within Africa.

No data on submissions in the 5th Call are available for this reporting period.

8.   5th Board Meeting on 18 December 2024 & Online-Resolution

This Meeting focused on the changes brought about by the BMFWF 's special directive for the Africa-UniNet network in 2024 and 2025. In particular, the Board members discussed the changes to the funding guideline that affect the network character of Africa-UniNet. On the one hand, the special directive had an impact on the funding requirements for the 5th Call, as discussed in section 7. On the other hand, the changes also affect the General Assembly Meeting, which was planned to be held in 2025. Since South-South travel is no longer covered, the question of financial viability for the travel of African partners arose. A proposal was therefore put forward at the Board Meeting to postpone the General Assembly by one year to 2026 and to cover the resulting costs with the membership fees from 2025 and 2026. This proposal was presented to the General Assembly for a decision and finally adopted via an online resolution. The next Africa-UniNet General Assembly Meeting will therefore take place in September 2026 in Algeria, hosted by the University of Saida.

Finally, it was also decided at this Board Meeting to comment on the special directive. This was prepared by the Board in 2024 and finally submitted to the Ministry in 2025.

This last Board meeting in the current reporting period was rounded off by the presentation of the Summer School, which was held at the University of Ghana in Accra in September. The member institutions University of Ghana, Management Center Innsbruck and University of Ouahigouya successfully held this event.

9.   Status Members & Projects

As of December 2024, 63 Africa-UniNet projects were active and 11 projects were completed in 2024. The network experienced a rapid increase in members in 2024. 86 members from Austria and 20 African countries were listed as active members of Africa-UniNet this year.

10.   Website

The OeAD switched to a new website in 2024. This also affected the website of Africa-UniNet: It was completely overhauled and published in a new format. The active members are listed with detailed (contact) information, and information is also available on all active and completed projects. On the website, the network provides information on current calls for proposals, events and information from its members. You can also read about the founding, structure and statutes of the network on the website. The organizational structure, the members of the Africa-UniNet Board and the office team based at the OeAD can also be found there.

The redesign of the website presented an opportunity to showcase the ever-expanding range of services offered by Africa-UniNet, as well as its network character.

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