

Annual Report 2020/2021
Africa-UniNet

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1. Preparations and 1st General Assembly 2020

The month of January 2020 was dedicated to the preparations for the first General Assembly, which was also the constituent meeting of the network. The programme was coordinated with the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU), the organizational preparations were made, the flight tickets were booked, the hotel reservations were prepared, etc. A lot of tasks were done in a short time and in good cooperation with the International Office of BOKU, so that the first General Assembly could take place at the end of January to everyone's satisfaction.

Figure 1: Photo of the first general assembly on the Africa-UniNet Website



The kick-off meeting and first General Assembly of the Austrian-African Research Network | Africa-UniNet took place from 30th to 31st of January 2020 at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU) in Vienna.

(Source: BOKU/Christoph Gruber)

On 30 and 31 January, representatives of 63 African and 19 Austrian universities and scientific institutions gathered at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU). On 29 January in the evening, before the official inauguration, at the request of Rector Hasenauer, a panel discussion on scientific cooperation with African countries was held, in which about half of the guests from Africa participated. During the following two days the representatives had the opportunity to get to know each other better, furthermore the work

programme was specified, the country representatives and the members of the Board were elected as well as the Vice-President. President Hubert Hasenauer, appointed by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), was confirmed in this function and in the constituent meeting the statutes were ratified and the network was officially founded. Membership means above all to be able to participate in the annual Africa-UniNet-Calls. The amount of membership fees was also confirmed at the constituent meeting and the representatives agreed that membership fees should be used for the payment of peer reviewers on the one hand and for flight CO2 offsets on the other hand.

The 63 African representatives at the inaugural meeting came from 20 African countries:

Figure 2: Number of participating representatives by country

Country	Number of institutions
Algeria	1
Botswana	1
Burkina Faso	6
Burundi	1
Cape Verde	1
DR Congo	3
Egypt	3
Ethiopia	10
Ghana	1
Kenya	8
Lesotho	1
Malawi	2
Mozambique	1
Namibia	1
Nigeria	11
Senegal	1
South Africa	2
Tanzania	1
Uganda	7
Zimbabwe	1
Total	63

The following 19 Austrian universities and scientific institutions participated in the network's inaugural meeting:

Figure 3: Participating Austrian institutions

Name of the institution
Carinthia University of Applied Sciences
Danube University Krems
FH Joanneum University of Applied Sciences
IMC University of Applied Sciences Krems
International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis
Johannes Kepler University Linz
MCI Management Center Innsbruck
Medical University of Innsbruck
Medical University of Vienna
Montanuniversität Leoben
Paris Lodron University of Salzburg
Salzburg University of Applied Sciences
University of Applied Arts Vienna
University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria
University of Innsbruck
University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna
University of Vienna
Vienna University of Economics and Business

On the evening of the first day of the General Assembly, on 30 January, a festive reception for the participants was held at the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) by Federal Minister Dr. Heinz Faßmann. In his speech, the minister referred to the important function of the newly founded network to establish and promote sustainable scientific cooperation between Austrian and African universities.

Figure 4: Group picture at the reception of Federal Minister Dr. Heinz Faßmann at the BMBWF



(Source: BMBWF, Achim Bieniek)

In order to become a full member of the network, payment of the annual membership fee is a prerequisite. Therefore, at the constituent meeting it was not yet foreseeable how many institutions would become de facto members of the network. A payment deadline until the end of April 2020 was agreed upon, which was extended until the end of the 1st call. After the deadline, the membership numbers were as follows: The network had 32 institutions from 12 African countries and 17 Austrian institutions. African founding institutions are from the following countries: Burkina Faso, Burundi, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe. By the end of 2021, the number of paying Africa-UniNet full members increased from 49 to a total of 56, including 35 African institutions from 15 different countries and 21 Austrian institutions.

Besides the follow-up of the first General Assembly, the ongoing maintenance of the website, the presentation of the member organizations, the intensive preparations for the 1st Call for Africa-UniNet Research Cooperation Projects started in April 2020. All formats and guidelines were prepared and coordinated with the OeAD Finance Department as well as with the BMBWF.

2. 1st Call 2020

The first call was open from 1 August to 30 September 2020. All full members of the network were eligible to participate. A total of 52 project proposals were submitted, 35 of them coordinated by African universities, 17 by Austrian ones. The total amount in terms of budget of all submitted projects was 936,638.80 euros, which results in an average value per project submission of 24,021.50 euros. Both the regional/national distribution and the disciplinary spectrum of the submitted project proposals can be described as satisfactory. Natural, cultural and social sciences were considered as well as medicine and art. 39 of 52 project proposals - that is 75% - were found to be formally correct after an initial check, 24 of them were submitted by African universities, 15 by Austrian universities. 14 of 17 Austrian and 22 of 32 African member institutions were therefore represented in formally correct applications. Only one of the 12 partner countries was not represented – namely Burundi.

The qualitative assessment of the formally correct applications followed a differentiated procedure. All applications were reviewed by six international experts divided into two groups, i.e., each application was evaluated three times. The evaluation was carried out according to the following criteria:

- Quality of the project design and the application, quality of the research partnerships, contribution to the establishment of the network (max. 50 points).
- Contribution to the achievement of the SDGs, integration of gender and diversity in the content dimensions of the cooperation (max. 20 points)
- Sustainability and applicability of the expected results (max. 20 points)
- Risk management and cost-effectiveness (max. 10 points).

Thus, the reviewers, who work at African universities and higher education institutions in the United States and Europe, were able to award a total of 100 points for each project application. In addition, a narrative assessment of the collaborative project was conducted. In order to familiarize the reviewers with the nature of the network and to support them in the evaluation process with regard to the criteria, a total of three webinars were held with them. Basically, it can be stated that this evaluation procedure is of course very time-consuming compared to the maximum project funding of 60,000 euros (max. 6 partner institutions at 5,000 euros per year for 2 years). However, this procedure was chosen deliberately in order to create broad confidence, especially in the 1st Call, and to create the greatest possible transparency in the selection procedure. This approach has also paid off in that there has been no criticism by member institutions of the evaluation or the results themselves.

27 out of 39 projects achieved a score between 76 and 100 points in the quantitative assessment – scoring matrix. Projects with a total score of 75 points and below were not declared eligible for funding. In order to ensure the broadest possible distribution, including regional and institutional, a ranking list was created according to the following principle: The best-evaluated project from each institution – some submitted more than one project – was ranked according to the score, provided it had more than 75 points; only then came second-best assessed projects from those institutions whose best-assessed project was already included in the list. This differentiated selection procedure ensured that institutions from all 11 partner countries from which applications were submitted were also included in the selection of the 20 projects to be funded. 20 projects were selected because their total funding volume amounts to approximately 500,000 euros, the funding amount available for the 1st Call. 12 of these 20 projects - finally confirmed by the Africa-UniNet General Assembly and approved by the BMBWF – are coordinated by African universities, 8 by Austrian ones.

Figure 5: Overview of approved projects by coordinating institution and countries

No.	Title	Coordinating institution	Countries
1	A Research of Doing Collaborative Monitoring for Sustainable Development of Lake Tana	University of Applied Arts Vienna	South Africa
2	UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (Ethiopia)	Carinthia University of Applied Sciences	Ethiopia
3	Decoloniality of Research and Learning Methods in the Global South: A Transdisciplinary Book Project	African Centre for Technology Studies	Kenya
4	Enhancing Quality of Sociology Postgraduate Teaching and Learning through Staff Exchange and Collaboration among Three Universities	Debre Markos University	Ethiopia, Nigeria
5	Gender-specific adaptive capacity on Climate Change and Food Security Status - A catchment approach on agro forestry systems	Bahir Dar University	Ethiopia, Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe
6	Health risk assessment of food borne mycotoxigenic fungi and mycotoxins in staple foods in rural northern Namibia	University of Namibia	Namibia
7	Identity Work of Black African Female Employees and Managers in White Western Private Organizations in South Africa and Austria – Aspects of Gender Equality and Decolonization	Vienna University of Economics and Business	South Africa
8	Indigenous fruit and nut trees (IFNT) as market opportunities for small-scale farmers in Namibia, Ethiopia and Uganda: cultivation, nutritional value and screening of secondary compounds for anti-diabetic properties	University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria	Namibia, Ethiopia, Uganda
9	Interfaces for integrated land/water resource management	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna	Ethiopia, Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Uganda
10	International Investment Agreements (IIAs) and the UNSDGs- Rethinking Approaches to Achieving Investment Protection and Sustainable Development in IIAs Deals in Nigeria	University of Lagos	Nigeria
11	Multiple-mycotoxin in Sorghum: Food Safety Prospective and Mitigation Strategies in Eastern Ethiopia	Haramaya University	Ethiopia
12	Nutrient management of paddy rice fields in South-Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo – Using UAV-imaging for a precision agricultural approach	Egerton University	Kenya, DR Congo
13	Promotion and Literature Awareness in Sustainable Fisheries and Water Management Transformation Pathways for Africa Fisheries and Water Management Transformation Pathways for Africa	University of Ouahigouya	Burkina Faso
14	Protecting Women in Tanzania: Prevention of Gender-based Violence through Indigenous Approaches	Carinthia University of Applied Sciences	Tanzania
15	Strengthening community-based research for river health and climate change mitigation in Eastern Africa	Kyambogo University	Uganda, Kenya
16	Teaching the Global Goals: Exploring synergies between teacher education programmes and the Sustainable Development Goals	University of Pretoria	South Africa
17	The epigenetics of the spermatozoa of HIV-1 infected men	Medical University of Vienna	Nigeria
18	The Phosphorus Negotiation Game – SDGs in Action	Danube University Krems	Namibia, Uganda
19	The PLUS-UP European-African university network for Sustainable innovation and Health	Paris Lodron University of Salzburg	South Africa
20	Transnational Action on Traditional Knowledge Ethos in Strategic Human Development	Nkumba University	Uganda

Figure 6: Network structure based on the approved projects of the 1st Call



(Source: Africa-UniNet, NaturalEarthData.com)

As of spring 2021, all contracts for the approved 20 projects were set up and the first installments transferred. Due to the ongoing difficult situation related to COVID-19 in some countries, some projects started later than planned. In order to be able to react flexibly to the still unpredictable situation, the BMBFW agreed that the projects can be extended by up to one year in a cost-neutral manner.

3. Board Meeting on 20 January 2021 and Online-Resolution

As travel was hardly possible in 2020-21 due to the COVID-19 situation, there was no physical General Assembly during this period. Decisions previously made by the Board at an online meeting were approved by the General Assembly by circulating email resolution. This concerned the admission of seven new member institutions (Centre de Recherches Médicales de Lambaréné, Gabon; University for Development Studies, Ghana; Redeemer's University, Nigeria; University of Abuja, Nigeria; Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa; Gulu University, Uganda; Graz University of Technology, Austria) the approval of the list of 20 selected projects of the first call (see above), as well as the approval of the work programme for 2021.

4. Board Meeting on 21 April 2021 and Online-Resolution

The following decisions were discussed at the Board Meeting, proposed to the General Assembly and approved by online resolution: Confirmation of a new member institution (Medical University of Graz, Austria); Confirmation that the same procedures will be followed for the second call as for the first call and that the schedule will also remain the same. It was unanimously confirmed that the selection process for the first call had worked well, and there was a lot of positive feedback overall. It was further agreed that the application documents for the second call would be slightly revised by the Africa-UniNet Office and sent to the Board for feedback and confirmation. It was also agreed that part of the membership fees can be used for the organization of the planned second General Assembly in 2022 (but not the travel expenses of the participating member institutions). President Hasenauer asked Egerton University in Kenya to officially host the 2022 General Assembly and propose a date.

5. 2nd Call 2021

The second call was open from August 1 to September 30, 2021. Prior to this, the application documents were revised and approved by the Board. All full members of the network were eligible to participate, a total of 55 member institutions at the end of the call. Six member institutions were given the status of inactive after they had not paid the membership fee. A total of 29 project applications were submitted to the Africa-UniNet office on time. 37 out of 55 Africa-UniNet member institutions are involved in the project proposals; 23 out of 34 African member institutions and 14 out of 21 Austrian member institutions. The African institutions come from 12 different African countries from all regions (Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Ethiopia, Egypt, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Namibia, DR Congo, Burkina Faso, Gabon).

The proposed projects cover a wide range of scientific disciplines, from education, biology, chemistry, renewable energy, medicine, law, to anthropology and gender studies.

In total, after thorough review, 25 project proposals were confirmed as formally correct, and only 4 proposals were formally incorrect. Of the 25 formally correct projects, the planned coordination is with African institutions for 14 projects and with Austrian institutions for 11 projects.

Figure 7: Application statistics 2nd Call

Applications	29
Formally incorrect	4
Formally correct	25
By countries (exc. Austria)	12
Coordination in Africa	14
Coordination in Austria	11
	25

The formally correct 25 applications were reviewed by a team of four international reviewers at the end of 2021. In contrast to the 1st call, only two reviews per project were prepared (max. 13 projects per reviewer) in order to balance cost-benefit (see section 2). Three of the four reviewers were taken over from the first call. Analogous to the 1st call, the review was based on the following criteria

- Quality of the project design and the application, quality of the research partnerships, contribution to the establishment of the network (max. 50 points)
- Contribution to the achievement of the SDGs, integration of gender and diversity in the content dimensions of the cooperation (max. 20 points)
- Sustainability and applicability of the expected results (max. 20 points)
- Risk management and cost-effectiveness (max. 10 points).

By the end of the reporting period (December 2021), no final result of the assessment was available.

6. Preparations 2nd General Assembly

At the April 2021 Board Meeting, Egerton University was asked to host the 2nd Africa-UniNet General Assembly. It volunteered to host, and the date was set for February 7-9, 2022. In order to plan the event well, preparatory working meetings between the Africa-UniNet Office and Egerton University took place in October 2021. In the course of this, an organizing committee was convened to discuss and cover all aspects of the event - e.g. venues, IT support, online broadcast, accommodation, catering, transportation, printed materials, registration, social programme, guests of honor, budget. The content of the programme was agreed upon and discussed and confirmed during the Africa-UniNet Board Meeting in November. Furthermore,

two ceremonial events were planned – an Ambassador's Dinner, hosted by the Austrian Ambassador in Kenya, and an evening hosted by BOKU on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of BOKU. The 2nd Africa-UniNet General Assembly was planned together with an Erasmus+ networking meeting to provide added value for participants. By the end of 2021, more than 90 participants from Austria and various countries in Africa had registered for the General Assembly. However, due to the volatile COVID-19 situation that came to a head around the turn of 2021/22, the event had to be postponed to October 2022.

7. Board Meeting on 3 November 2021

In the Board Meeting a new member was presented (University of São Tomé and Príncipe) and the application was unanimously approved by the Board. In addition, the Board was informed about the status of the 2nd Call and the planned programme and preparations for the 2nd General Assembly to be held at Egerton University in Kenya on February 7-9, 2022. The Board confirmed the date for the planned General Assembly and the programme.

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