



European Union and African Union join forces to empower a new generation of African research talents

Brussels, 8 December 2020

Today, the European Union has announced the launch of the “African Research Initiative for Scientific Excellence” (ARISE) Pilot Programme with a contribution of €25 million. ARISE will enable early career African scientists in delivering cutting-edge research across Africa. The programme will be implemented by the African Academy of Sciences with the strategic direction of the European Union and the African Union.

Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta **Urpilainen**, said: *“The potential of research excellence in Africa is significant, and will be a key driver of development and growth. The ARISE pilot programme is a catalytic milestone for talented early-career scientists, aiming to strengthen Africa’s science and innovation base. It is also a major step for the EU-Africa academic and scientific cooperation to create a knowledge society and economy.”*

Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, stressed: *“This initiative is in line with other ongoing efforts, for example under the EU-AU High-Level Policy Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation with its investments reaching more than €1.8 billion. It will support African scientists and their capacity to contribute with cutting-edge research, reinforce their potential to benefit from EU research and innovation instruments, as well as enhance collaboration on equal footing with the European continent.”*

Through the programme, 40 young and emerging African research talents, early career scientists and their ideas, will have the opportunity to be recognised and offered further development opportunities with grants. Beneficiaries will be selected on the basis of scientific excellence in a continent-wide open competition.

The main features of this programme include:

- A call for proposals open to African researchers in different areas of scientific endeavour to deliver cutting-edge research. The call for proposals will be launched by the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) in early 2021.
- A rigorous grant and award process for researchers with two to seven years of experience after obtaining their PhD. The ARISE grantees will be awarded up to €500,000 in grants over a period of up to five years to start their own independent research teams and projects.
- The ARISE grantees and their research teams will be hosted in African higher education or research institutions in 40 African countries.
- A Scientific Advisory Council, composed of eminent African and European scientists, will guarantee scientific independence while the European Union and the African Union Commission will ensure the strategic oversight of the initiative.

ARISE is inspired by the successful approach of the European Research Council (ERC). Since 2007, the ERC has been encouraging the highest quality research through competitive funding and supporting investigator-driven frontier research across all fields, on the basis of scientific excellence.

The programme is in line with the long-standing EU cooperation with the African Union under the High-Level Policy Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation. Since 2010, the Dialogue is the platform for regular exchanges on research and innovation policy, with the aim to formulate and implement jointly long-term priorities to strengthen Africa-Europe cooperation. Following the Research&Innovation (R&I) Ministerial held on 16 July 2020 between the EU and the AU, and in line with the draft EU communication on the comprehensive Strategy with Africa, renewed focus of collaborative R&I actions will be on the four priority areas of public health, green transition, innovation & technology, and capacities for science. The common thread of the collaborative activities is to speed-up the translation of scientific advances into tangible impact.

Background

In the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), the role of science, technology and innovation is a vital driver of sustainability. The EU and the AU equally recognise that a sustainable transition to knowledge-based economies needs to rely on science, research and innovation. Investments in research and innovation ensure a sustainable and inclusive future. Specifically in times of the coronavirus pandemic, research and innovation are best placed to accelerate the green and digital transitions, strengthen resilience and crisis preparedness, and support global competitiveness.

In addition to collaborative research under Horizon 2020 and its successor programme Horizon Europe, which are driven by societal challenges, like climate change and the search for renewable energy sources, both, the EU and the AU recognise and support 'investigator-driven', or 'bottom-up' research activities, allowing researchers to identify new opportunities and directions in their field of research. These 'bottom-up' research activities will be supported by the ARISE initiative, covering the African continent.

The ARISE initiative will be implemented by the African Academy of Sciences (AAS), which is a non-aligned, non-political, not-for-profit pan African organisation whose vision is to see transformed lives on the African continent through science. The Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESA) is a platform of the AAS and the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD. AESA's mission is to shift the centre of gravity for African science to Africa through agenda setting, mobilising Research & Development (R&D) funding, and managing continent-wide Science, Technology & Innovation (STI) programmes.

The ARISE Pilot Programme announced above is funded by the Pan-African Programme Annual Action Programme 2019.

For More Information

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IP/20/2324

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