Africa-UniNet | Austrian-African Research Network | Statutes

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Version 15.10.2026

These Statutes outline the fundamental principles, objectives, and activities of Africa-UniNet. Furthermore, the Statutes illustrate the network structure, determine the election of the governing bodies, define their respective tasks and responsibilities, and outline the decision-making processes. They also explain membership, including how to join, actively participate in, and leave the network.

1. Principles, Objectives and Activities

Africa-UniNet brings together African and Austrian higher education and research institutions with the aim of strengthening long-term, equitable scientific cooperation. It promotes joint research, dialogue, and knowledge exchange to address shared global challenges and to foster mutual understanding. The network seeks to contribute to human dignity, a healthy planet, just and resilient societies, and global prosperity. It aims to enhance institutional engagement and visibility and to promote the value of international partnerships.

The network pursues the following overarching and specific **objectives**:

(1) To foster long-term, equitable scientific cooperation between higher education and research institutions in Austria and in African countries.

- Establish a framework that enables institutions to initiate and deepen scientific partnerships.
- Encourage collaboration through joint research and academic initiatives of shared interest.
- Promote reciprocal learning and knowledge exchange across diverse academic and cultural settings.

(2) To work together towards human dignity for all, a healthy planet, just and resilient societies, and worldwide prosperity.

- Advance joint scientific contributions that address shared global challenges and promote fairness, resilience, and sustainability.
- Provide space for peaceful dialogue, mutual respect, and shared reflection in times of geopolitical change, conflict, and insecurity.
- Contribute to global efforts aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

(3) To enhance institutional engagement, visibility, and long-term cooperation between research communities in Austria and in African countries.

- Promote the significance of international partnerships for research excellence and societal benefit.
- Share expertise on the higher education and research landscapes in Africa and Austria.

- Deepen engagement with governmental and non-governmental organizations, policymakers, and funding initiatives.

In order to achieve its objectives, the network implements the following **activities**:

+ Maintaining a website as a platform for exchange, visibility, and contact-building
+ Implementing regular project calls to support international research cooperation.
+ Supporting and monitoring the international research cooperation projects
+ Organizing regular network meetings to facilitate dialogue and strategic exchange.
+ Facilitating joint scientific events to exchange knowledge, showcase results, and strengthen partnerships.
+ Promoting joint publications to disseminate shared research outcomes.
+ Sharing expertise on higher education and research systems in Austria and in African countries
+ Synthesizing lessons learned, reflecting at a meta level on international research cooperation, and sharing insights through networking, presentations, and publications.
+ Engaging in dialogue with governmental and non-governmental organizations, policymakers, stakeholders, and funding initiatives

Attempting to raise third-party funds for joint initiatives.

2. Network Structure, Governing Bodies and Decision-Making

Africa-UniNet is characterized by a participatory approach, transparent decision-making, and a balanced composition of its governing bodies.

2.1. An Overview of the Network's Key Actors

The **Africa-UniNet General Assembly** includes one representative of every Africa-UniNet member institution.

The **Africa-UniNet Board** is elected by and from the Africa-UniNet General Assembly and consists of four representatives from Austrian member institutions and four representatives from African member institutions.

The **Africa-UniNet President** and **Africa-UniNet Vice President** are appointed from within the Board. If one of them represents an Austrian member institution, the other must represent an African member institution, and vice versa.

The **Africa-UniNet Office** is responsible for the operational implementation of the network. It is based at OeAD, Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalization.

The **Austrian Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research (BMFWF)** provides the base funding for the network and defines the basic funding guidelines.

Other **funding sources** are welcome in supporting the network.

Available **Membership fees** are governed by the members as well as funds from network activities.

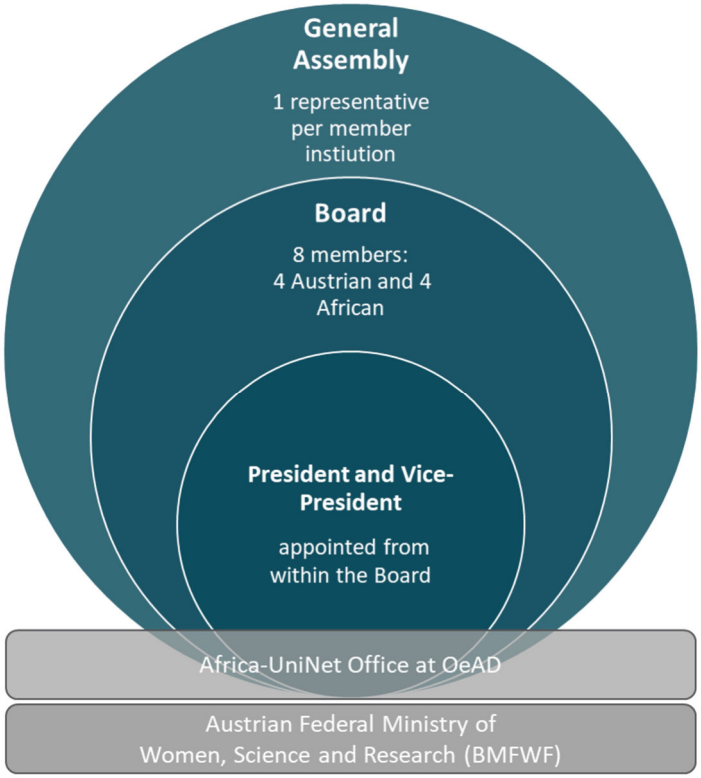

Figure 1: Illustration of the network structure and the key actors

2.2. The Africa-UniNet General Assembly

Each member institution appoints a representative to join the General Assembly on their behalf.

Tasks and Responsibilities

- Representing and promoting the network within the member's own institution
- Disseminating relevant information about the network among colleagues within the member's own institution
- Representing and promoting the network to other interested institutions
- Approving and amending the Africa-UniNet Statutes
- Confirming the admission of new members (upon proposal by the Board)
- Confirming the project funding proposals to be submitted to the Austrian Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research (BMFWF) for approval (upon proposal by the Board)
- Confirming the proposed location of the next General Assembly meeting (upon proposal by the Board)
- Contributing to the strategic direction of the network
- Deciding on the amount of membership fees
- Deciding on other matters or activities circulated to the General Assembly
- Deciding on the termination of membership if a member's conduct is detrimental to the interests of the network
- Resolving on the discontinuation of the network

Resolutions may be adopted online. For an in-person General Assembly meeting, a quorum is reached when at least half of the General Assembly members are present. In the event of absence, a General Assembly member may transfer their vote in writing to another General Assembly member.

Resolutions of the General Assembly shall be passed by a simple majority of votes, except for amendments to the Statutes and the discontinuation of the Network, which require a two-thirds majority of members present. In the case of online resolutions, the absence of a response shall be deemed as consent. In the event of a tie, the President shall have the casting vote.

The General Assembly meeting

A face-to-face General Assembly meeting shall be held every two years, alternating between Austria and a country in Africa. It shall be chaired by the President and organized by the Africa-UniNet Office on the President's behalf.

The Africa-UniNet Office shall notify all members of the venue and date at least six months in advance and circulate the agenda no later than 14 days before the General Assembly.

2.3. The Africa-UniNet Board

The Board comprises eight members of the General Assembly – four from Austria and four from Africa each representing the northern, southern, western and eastern African regions – who are elected for a four-year term. To ensure continuity, terms are staggered so that every two years four new Board members are elected – two from Austria and two from Africa.

In the transition phase, the period entering the new board selection system, 4 members (2 from Africa and 2 from Austria) will step down, at the next general assembly meeting in 2028.

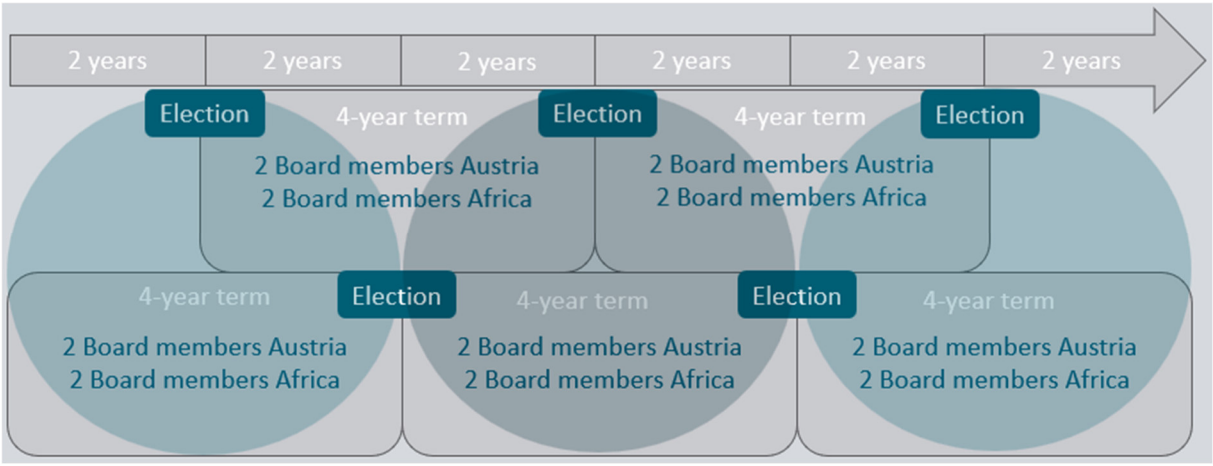

Figure 2: Illustration of the Board's electoral system, whereby Board members are appointed for four-year terms, with elections taking place every two years, so that half of the Board is renewed at each election.

All members of the General Assembly are eligible to stand for election. Member organizations elect a country representative, who in turn elects the board members: each country first appoints a *country representative*, who then casts the vote on behalf of that country. Gender, diversity and geographical balance shall be taken into account when electing Board members.

Tasks and Responsibilities of the Board

- Electing the Africa-UniNet President and confirming the Africa-UniNet Vice-President from among the Board members
- Recommending the admission of new network members to the General Assembly or rejecting applications from prospective member institutions
- Submitting the project funding proposals to the General Assembly for confirmation before they are sent to the Austrian Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research (BMFWF) for approval.
- Submitting the proposed location of the next General Assembly meeting to the General Assembly for confirmation
- Contributing to the strategic direction of the network
- Deciding on the use of membership fees
- Formulating recommendations and decision proposals for the General Assembly on other matters or activities presented for consideration.
- Recommending the discontinuation of the network to the General Assembly

Board meetings may be held online. A quorum is reached when at least half of the Board members are present. Decisions are taken by a simple majority; in the event of a tie, the President shall have the casting vote.

Online resolutions are also possible. In such cases, decisions are likewise taken by a majority vote, and non-response shall be deemed as consent.

2.4. The President and Vice-President

The Board shall elect the Africa-UniNet President from among its members. The President shall nominate a Vice-President from among the Board members, who must be confirmed by the Board. If the President is from Austria, the Vice-President shall be chosen from among the African Board members, and vice versa.

In the event of a tied vote, the election shall be repeated until a majority is obtained. The incumbent President shall remain in office until a successor has been elected.

Tasks and Responsibilities

- Acting as the official representative of Africa-UniNet
- Holding overall responsibility for the network's strategic development
- Coordinating with other relevant networks and stakeholders
- Chairing the Board
- Chairing the General Assembly

2.5. The Africa-UniNet Office at OeAD

An Africa-UniNet Office shall be established to manage the network's day-to-day operations, organise General Assembly and Board meetings, and support the President. It shall implement the project funding calls financed by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research (BMFWF) and carry out the network's operational activities within the limits of available resources. To ensure continuity within the network, the Africa-UniNet Office shall be hosted at OeAD.

Tasks and Responsibilities

- Member support and liaison, collection of membership fees, circulation of communications
- Implementing the project calls financed by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research (BMFWF), project support and monitoring.
- Planning and organizing Board meetings.
- Planning and organizing General Assembly meetings.
- Creating and continuously updating the network website
- Compiling statistics and producing annual reports
- Responding to general enquiries about the network
- Presenting the network to interested institutions and stakeholders.
- Preparation of information materials and communication activities
- Synthesizing lessons learned, reflecting on a meta-level and sharing insights.
- Representation of the network at national and international events

3. Member Institutions

All higher education and research institutions engaged in basic research in Austria and in any country on the African continent may become members. Admission is decided by the General Assembly, following a formal review and upon the Board's recommendation.

Admission criteria

Higher education institutions must offer at least one Master's-level degree program that includes a research component (a Master's thesis), i.e., not a taught-only Master's. Higher education or research institutions must be accredited in their home country or be able to provide evidence equivalent to accreditation.

Application for membership

Interested institutions shall submit a written application for membership to the Africa-UniNet Office. The application must include a commitment to comply with these statutes, a presentation of the institution, and confirmation of the institution's agreement to implement the network strategy and to pay membership fees.

The application must include:

- The nomination and contact details of the person who will represent the institution in the network (the Africa-UniNet representative).

- A presentation of the institution and the planned activities within the network.

Membership fee

The annual Africa-UniNet membership fee is EUR 1,500 for Austrian network members and EUR 500 for African network members. Membership fees shall be paid in advance for two years at a time and are due in the first quarter of the (European calendar) year. Upon request, an annual payment of the membership fee is possible. If the fee is not paid, the membership will be suspended. During the period of suspension, the member concerned may not submit any grant applications. If the membership fee for the two years concerned is not paid by the end of that two-year term, membership will automatically end. The fees shall be paid into an account managed by OeAD.

Termination of membership

Africa-UniNet membership may be terminated in the following ways:

- Automatic termination due to outstanding membership fees.
- Termination by notice, by submitting a written letter of termination to the Africa-UniNet Office. Any membership fees already paid for the current term will not be refunded.
- The General Assembly may terminate membership if a member's conduct is detrimental to the interests of the network.

4. Discontinuation of the Network

The General Assembly may decide to discontinue the network, subject to the following formal requirements:

- a proposal by the Board and
- a two-thirds majority vote of the General Assembly.

In the event that the network is discontinued, the Board, together with OeAD, shall decide on the use of any financial resources remaining from membership fees. The BMFWF alone shall decide on the use of any unspent funds provided by the BMFWF.