

Austrian-African Research Network | Africa-UniNet

Statutes

Effective date: 28 June 2019

1. Principles and Goals

The Austrian-African Research Network, Africa-UniNet for short, is established in order to create a long-term secure structure for cooperation between Austrian and African higher education and research institutions. Experience shows that international networks and partnerships in the field of science are a promising approach for achieving long-term cooperation. Today, international engagement is a matter of course for universities. The integration of Austrian higher education and research institutions in Africa-UniNet strengthens cooperation with higher education and scientific institutions on the African continent and allows institutions that have so far cooperated little or not at all with African countries to easily establish contacts and institutional cooperation.

Africa-UniNet wants to promote new contacts and deepen scientific cooperation. This will provide a solid basis for sustainable research cooperation between Austrian and African institutions with the following objectives:

- Contributing to sustainable development in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Establishing an excellent network by promoting cooperation between academic institutions
- Initiating research projects and research education projects interesting for all parties
- Establishing contacts with governmental and non-governmental organisations
- Creating a platform for long-term scientific discourses
- Establishing a solid communication structure between Austrian and African higher education institutions and scientific institutions
- Providing expertise on the higher education and research landscape in Austria and Africa
- Raising donations and third-party funds
- Further cooperation, e. g. in the field of further education, etc.

The Africa-UniNet Statutes regulate the cooperation structure, the support provided by Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD-GmbH), the various procedures and tasks as well as the decision-making processes and the tasks of the committees.

2. Organisational structure and Network activities

2.1 Organisational structure

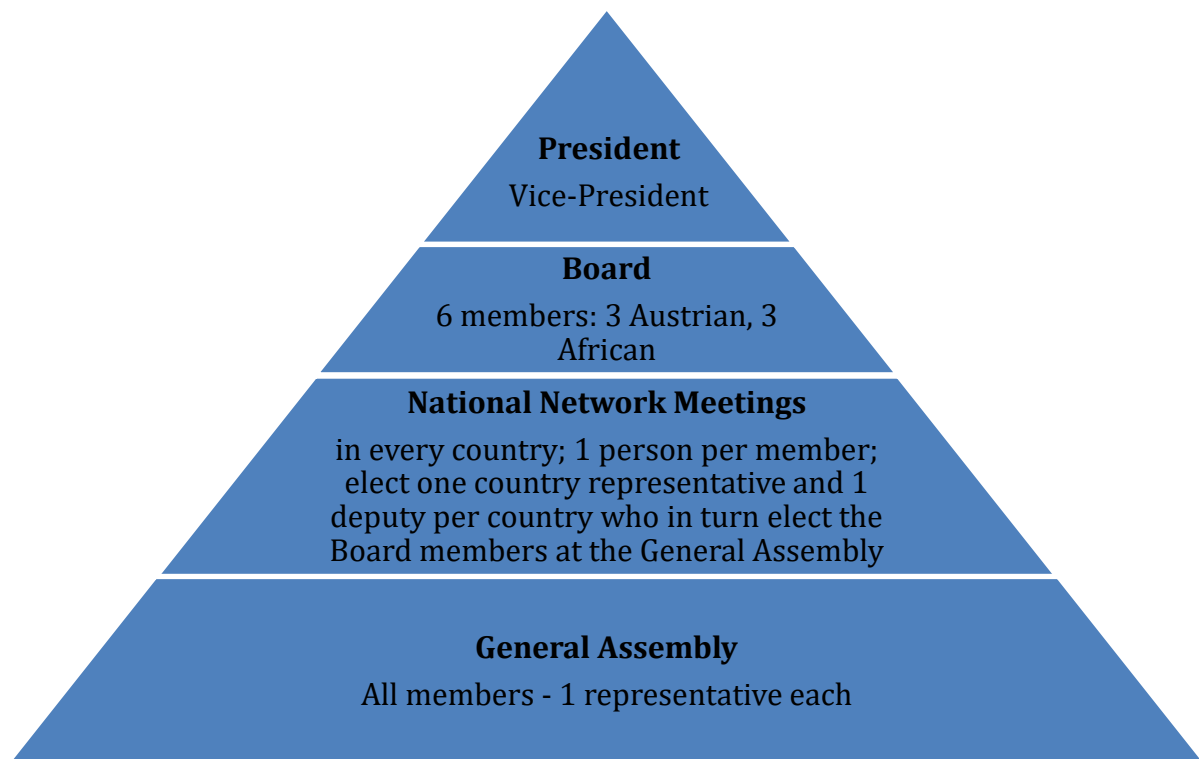
A balanced team composition in the Network's bodies and transparent decision-making processes are important for successful cooperation. To this end, the structure of Africa-UniNet will be established as follows:

- National Network Assemblies of members, who elect a country representative who in turn is entitled to vote at the General Assembly for the members of the Board.
- The General Assembly includes all members and has to take place at least once a year, alternating between Austria and African countries. In this General Assembly, the board is elected by the country representatives. All persons who represent a member institution are eligible for election.
- The Board consists of 3 Austrian and 3 African representatives.
- The members of the Board shall appoint the President from among their number and a Vice-President on the proposal of the President. The following should be noted: If the President comes from Austria, the Vice-President shall be elected from one of the African member of the Network and vice versa.
- To support the operational tasks within the Africa-UniNet activities, a Network office will be established at the OeAD-GmbH for an indefinite period of time. The office will be funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF).
- The Network's working language is English.
- The members of all Network bodies will be appointed for 3 years each. Re-elections are possible.
- A balanced diversity in the bodies must be ensured.

2.2 Network activities

- General Network activities (e. g. holding the annual General Assembly)
- Professor exchanges and short-term research stays of scientists at member institutions
- Meetings of the country representatives
- Alumni activities

- Training / Teaching Courses
- Workshops, seminars, conferences
- Project initiation: Preparation of joint project applications (e. g. for Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, FWF- and FFG projects, ADA as well as for other funding bodies)
- Other Network activities (to be determined by the annual General Assembly)
- As well as all other activities that comply with the general objectives within the framework of the budget and the funding guideline of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF).



The Africa-UniNet structure

3. Membership and terms of admission

3.1 Constituent phase

In the constituent phase (preparations until the first General Assembly or the first 3 years of the Network), a representative of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU), will be in charge of the Network's management (Presidency). The task will be to

convene the first General Assembly, to establish a functioning communication structure, to organise the cooperation with the OeAD-GmbH and to define the processes. The active search for Austrian and African partner institutions interested in an Africa-UniNet membership is to be highly promoted. The operational assistance or work will be realised by the OeAD Network Office.

3.2 Network Members

All higher education and research institutions in the field of basic research in Austria and in all countries of the African continent may become members. The decision on the admission before the first General Assembly will be taken by the President, and then, after formal consideration and on the proposal of the Board, by the General Assembly. The decision must be an ordinary resolution and be taken within a reasonable period of time. It is agreed that remain silent implies consent.

Admission criteria: Higher education institutions must offer at least one Master's level degree course which includes a research component (Master's thesis) (no “Taught-only” Master). The 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 send a written application for membership to the OeAD Network Office. In this application, they must commit themselves to the observance of these statutes, present their institution and agree to implement the Network strategy and to pay membership fees.

The application for membership must include:

- The nomination and contact details of the person who will represent the institution in the Network.
- A presentation of the planned activities in teaching, research and Third Mission

3.3 Membership fees

The annual Africa-UniNet membership fee amounts to 1,500 euros for Austrian and 500 euros for African Network members. The members undertake to pay the fixed annual membership fee in the first quarter of the (European calendar) year – otherwise, their membership in the General Assembly will be suspended. The member concerned may not submit any grant applications for the duration of the suspension.

If the membership fee is not paid retroactively for two consecutive years by the end of the second year, the membership will expire automatically.

The funds will be paid into an account managed by the OeAD-GmbH. The Board decides on the use of the membership fees.

3.4 Termination or suspension of membership

An Africa-UniNet membership can be terminated as follows:

- Via a written letter of resignation sent to the OeAD Network Office, to be addressed at the following General Assembly. Already paid membership fees of the current year will not be refunded.
- The General Assembly may suspend a membership (temporary suspension of membership) or terminate it if the conduct of a member is detrimental to the interests of the organisation or if it contradicts the Statutes. The member concerned must be informed in writing (by e-mail or registered letter) of the suspension or termination of membership and of the reasons which led to this decision of the General Assembly.
- Automatic termination due to outstanding membership fees according to 3.3

4. Tasks of the bodies

4.1 The National Network Assemblies and Country representatives

All Africa-UniNet members in a country form the respective National Network Assembly.

Members of the National Network Assemblies are those persons who also represent the institutions in the General Assembly. They are appointed by their home institutions for a period of 3 years. Reappointments are permissible.

The need for cooperation between the member institutions will be defined in the National Network Assemblies. The National Network Assemblies elect a Country representative and a deputy. The OeAD Network Office shall be notified of the result of the election in writing. The Country representatives are entitled to take part in the election of the Board members in the General Assembly. Should country representatives be unable to attend the election, the voting right may be transferred to the deputy in writing, and the OeAD Network Office must be informed in advance about the incident.

4.2 The General Assembly

In the General Assembly, each member is represented by one person who represents the member in the Network. Only the Country representatives are entitled to vote for the Board members. All members who are entitled to attend the General Assembly may be elected. The General Assembly takes place annually, alternating between Austria and Africa. The modalities of holding the General Assembly are regulated under 4.5.

The tasks of the General Assembly are:

- Monitoring the compliance with the Statutes and adapting them as necessary;
- Defining the Network's strategic direction and an annual work programme on the proposal of the Board in consultation with the President.
- Connection or coordination with other relevant networks;
- Preparing funding proposals for the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) on the basis of the submitted grant applications and on the suggestion of the evaluation group, considering the available funds.
- Nomination of the evaluation group from among the members of the Network or by consulting external experts;
- Deciding on the admission of new members and on the suspension / termination of memberships on the basis of formal reviews by the Board.
- Determining the venue for the next General Assembly/Assemblies;
- Taking cognizance of the annual budgets and the annual account;
- Taking cognizance of the annual report;
- Deciding on other matters or activities presented to the General Assembly in the agenda that is sent out;
- Resolution about the discontinuation of the Network;
- Deciding on the amount of membership fees on the proposal of the Board;
- For decisions with budgetary implications, the acting Austrian President or Vice-President has a veto right.

4.3 The Board

The Board consists of 6 members of the General Assembly who are elected for a period of 3 years by the country representatives in the General Assembly and who have the following duties:

- Election of the Africa-UniNet President and confirmation of the Africa-UniNet Vice-President from among the members of the Board;
- Advising the President
- Preparing the decisions of the General Assembly; e. g. on the admission of new Network members or the change in the amount of membership fees;
- Preparing proposals for the Network strategy and the annual work programme in consultation with the President;
- Submission of proposals for the Network's thematic orientation and for the tendering of special Network activities in consultation with the President and in accordance with the funding guideline of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF).

Diversity and geographical balance shall be ensured when electing the Board members. As the Network is funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), 3 Board members shall be elected from among the Austrian members. Board meetings can also be held online / as a video conference.

4.4 The President and the Vice-President

The Board shall elect the Africa-UniNet President from among the Board members. The President shall propose a Vice-President from among the Board members, who is to be confirmed by the Board. If the President comes from Austria, the Vice-President is to be elected from among the African members and vice versa.

In the event of a voting tie, the election shall be repeated until a majority is reached. The acting president shall remain in office until a successor has been found.

Tasks of the President:

- Official representative of Africa-UniNet;
- Overall coordination of the Network in technical and strategic terms;
- Chairmanship of the Board and the General Assembly;
- Representation of the Network towards institutional and other partners at home and abroad;

- Strategic planning and coordination of the public image;
- Preparing proposals for the Network strategy and for the annual work programme in consultation with the Board;
- Coordination with other relevant networks;
- Submission of proposals for the Network's thematic orientation and for the tendering of specific Network activities in consultation with the Board, within the limits of available resources and funding.

4.5 Holding the General Assembly

The General Assembly will take place once a year, alternating between Austria and in Africa. It shall be convened by the President and prepared by the OeAD Network Office on his behalf. The OeAD Network Office will announce the venue and time to all members at least 2 months in advance and send the agenda together with the associated documents and background information to all members no later than 14 days before the General Assembly. The agenda must include the item "Any other business".

Quorum: The General Assembly has a quorum if the President or the Vice-President and at least 50% of the members entitled to vote are present (physically or virtually via Internet or video conference). All members who have paid their membership fee in the respective year are entitled to participate and vote. A vote may be transferred to another member by sending a written announcement of the proxy to the OeAD Network Office, including statements of consent of the persons concerned. A person cannot accept more than 1 vote transfer. In the event of conflicts of interest (especially in the case of decisions on the allocation of granting funds to the member organisation itself), the member concerned will have no voting right in the General Assembly.

Resolutions in the General Assembly shall be passed by a simple majority of votes. Exceptions are the amendment of the Statutes and the discontinuation of the Network. For these cases, a two-thirds majority will be required. In the event of a tie, the President shall have the casting vote.

The minutes of the General Assembly are to be written by the OeAD Network Office. The draft minutes must be sent to all members for approval or amendment (further 3 weeks) within a period of 3 weeks. The formal adoption of the minutes will take place at the next General Assembly.

5. Discontinuation of the Network

The General Assembly may decide to discontinue the Network under the following formal conditions:

- Proposal by the Board
- Written statement from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF)
- Two-thirds majority at the General Assembly

In the event of a Network discontinuation, the Board, together with the OeAD-GmbH, will decide about the use of any financial resources still available to the Network from membership fees. Only the BMBWF itself shall decide on the use of unspent funds from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF).

6. The OeAD Network Office

An Africa-UniNet Network Office will be established for the operational Network organisation, the organisation of the General Assembly and the Board meetings, as well as for supporting the President. It will implement the funding measures commissioned by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) and carry out the Network's operational tasks within the limits of the available resources. The Network Office will be set up at the OeAD-GmbH in order to establish continuity within the Network.

The tasks of the OeAD Network Office are the following:

- Assisting the President in fulfilling the tasks
- Assisting the Board in fulfilling the tasks

- Preparing and organising the Network's General Assemblies and Board meetings, including the writing of minutes
- Preparing the draft Network work programme based on the strategic guidelines set by the Board and the President
- Network administration tasks (including collection of membership fees, travel expense reports, etc.)
- Preparing the annual budget and the annual statement
- Announcing and organising tenders for Network activities
- Organisational and financial management of Network activities
- Preparing and sending of invitations, press releases and e-newsletters of the Network
- Answering general Network queries
- Creation and continuous updating of the Network website
- Supervision of science communication
- communication interface between the President of the General Assembly and the OeAD-GmbH
- Monitoring and evaluation of Network activities
- Compiling statistics and annual reports on Network activities

7. Closing remarks

These statutes regulate the governance structure of the Network. The organisational processes between the OeAD Network Office and the President are to be regulated separately.

All activities described are based on the timely availability of the necessary resources.