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PRESS RELEASE

Ever-closer cooperation among European universities must not close the door on global partnerships

CIVIS Alliance and six leading African universities call for a European Universities Initiative which reinforces Africa-EU relations. Today we put our principles into practice with an ambitious partnership agreement for cross-Mediterranean collaboration in higher education.

The European Universities Initiative (EUI) is the EU's flagship policy in higher education. Hundreds of universities across the continent are joining alliances which push the limits of student mobility, integrated teaching, and research collaboration. But should such alliances be at the cost of partnerships with other universities, especially those outside Europe? The 10 members of the CIVIS Alliance do not think so, and we have a special focus on relationships with the Africa-Mediterranean region.

Today, meeting at Aix-Marseille Université, CIVIS and six leading African universities issued a clear call for a EUI which is open to global partnerships. A new position paper sets out our vision, making the case for an EUI which:

- Acts as a catalyst for challenge-based education, as seen in the CIVIS Hubs. Humanity now faces global problems, so our search for solutions must reach out to partners beyond Europe's borders.
- Broadens the definition of student mobility to include exchanges and study visits which take European students outside Europe or bring students from around the world to European universities.
- Supports equitable research partnerships, as foreseen in the agreement between the European Union (EU) and African Union (AU) on an EU-AU Innovation Agenda.

We have also signed a partnership agreement which sets out ambitious plans for common work in the years ahead. The six African partners all already have wide-reaching partnerships with several CIVIS member universities, but this new agreement will institutionalise cooperation with the whole Alliance and its members. Fundamental to our approach is the equality between African and European partners, and a framework which also opens up new channels for South-South cooperation.



African partners will be integrated into the CIVIS Hubs, where academics work together to develop educational and other activities responding to global challenges. Concretely, this could offer the chance for increased mobility (both physical and virtual) or create new opportunities to leverage our shared capacities to seek external funding. Together we can also build on our work with a positive social impact on our local communities.

The partnership agreement and position paper were signed on final day of the 3-day conference New Horizons for the European-African Partnership, co-hosted by CIVIS and its member university Aix-Marseille Université as part of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Council. A mix of public and closed sessions gathered academics and policymakers from both sides of the Mediterranean, including the French Minister of Higher Education Frédérique Vidal, speakers such as Achille Mbembe and Peter Maassen, and numerous representatives of the European Commission.

Notes to editors

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CIVIS, a European Civic University is an Alliance of the 10 following European Universities: Aix-Marseille Université (France), National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece), University of Bucharest (Romania), Université libre de Bruxelles (Belgium), Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Spain), Sapienza Università di Roma (Italia), Stockholm University (Sweden), Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen (Germany), Paris-Lodron University of Salzburg, University of Glasgow (UK). Selected by the European Commission as one of the first 17 European Universities pilots, it brings together almost 600 000 students and staff members.

CIVIS strategic partner universities

- Université Hassan II de Casablanca
- Université of Sfax
- Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar
- Makerere University
- University of the Witwatersrand
- Universidade Eduardo Mondlane



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