Regional Policy Review 2024 from Third Countries not Associated to the Programme

Sub-Saharan Africa

REGIONAL REPORT

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Erasmus+

Enriching lives, opening minds.

ENFP National Focal Points

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Introduction

The Erasmus+ regional policy review acts as a bridge between the Erasmus+ programme and third countries not associated with it, shedding light on the policy landscape that shapes educational exchange and collaboration. By examining the interplay between local policies and Erasmus+ objectives, the document aims to foster a more cohesive and effective approach to international education, enhancing the programme's reach and impact across diverse educational systems.

Regional Report

The main approach of the report is the aggregation of the policy frameworks of the third countries within a specific region, offering a macroscopic view of how regional policies support, complement, or diverge from the goals and practices of the Erasmus+ programme. It aims to identify common themes, challenges, and opportunities for collaboration across the region, providing insights into the broader regional stance towards international educational cooperation and mobility.

These reports offer an analysis of the region's specific educational policies as they relate to the Erasmus+ programme. They examine the extent to which national policies facilitate or hinder participation in Erasmus+ activities through a regional lens, highlight successful alignments, and pinpoint areas where policy adjustments could enhance cooperation.

Individual Country Reports

National reports from individual countries within the region are embedded into the regional report. However, data and statistics relating to the state of play of education in individual countries will also be available in the annex. These country reports have been submitted by the Erasmus+ National Focal Points, and are important in understanding the nuances of each country's engagement with Erasmus+ and identifying tailored strategies to improve integration and outcomes.

Erasmus+ Priorities and Features

The Regional Policy Review of the Erasmus+ programme in third countries will be underpinned by the priorities that align with the overarching goals of the European Union, particularly focusing on digitalisation, the European Green Deal, inclusion and diversity, and active participation in democratic life. These priorities reflect the EU's commitment to addressing current global challenges through education and training, ensuring that the Erasmus+ programme contributes to building a more sustainable, inclusive, and digitally advanced future. It will also look at the important features, most notably internationalisation, and how this is implemented in the regions.

Digitalisation: This priority focuses on integrating digital technologies into education and training. The goal is to enhance digital literacy and skills among learners and educators, promote access to digital learning resources, and improve the quality of education through innovative teaching methods. Digitalisation in the Erasmus+ context aims to prepare participants for a rapidly evolving digital world, ensuring they are equipped with the necessary competencies to thrive in the digital economy.

The European Green Deal: Underpinning the Erasmus+ programme with the European Green Deal emphasises the transition towards a climate-neutral, green, and sustainable Europe. This priority includes projects and initiatives that raise awareness about environmental challenges, promote sustainable development, and encourage the adoption of green practices within education and community engagement. The focus is on fostering an understanding of ecological issues and inspiring action towards environmental stewardship among participants.

Inclusion and Diversity: This priority aims to ensure equitable access to Erasmus+ opportunities for all, regardless of individuals' backgrounds, abilities, or socio-economic status. The programme seeks to remove barriers to participation and promote diversity within its projects and activities. By fostering an inclusive environment, Erasmus+ strives to enrich the educational experience for participants, enabling them to gain a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and cultures.

Active Participation in Democratic Life: Encouraging active citizenship and participation in democratic life is a key priority of the Erasmus+ programme. This includes initiatives that engage young people in civic activities, promote democratic values, and foster a sense of European identity and solidarity. Through these efforts, Erasmus+ aims to equip participants with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to contribute to society and to address the challenges facing democracies today.

The Regional Policy Review will critically examine how these priorities and important features are being addressed and integrated into Erasmus+ projects and initiatives in third countries. By juxtaposing the review on these thematic areas, the Erasmus+ pro-

gramme reaffirms its commitment to contributing to the EU's broader objectives and making a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals and communities around the world.

Internationalisation: As a fundamental feature of Erasmus+, internationalisation involves promoting cross-border collaboration and cultural exchange. This facet of the programme is designed to broaden participants' horizons by fostering mutual under-standing and respect among diverse cultures. Through international partnerships and mobility opportunities, Erasmus+ aims to create a global learning community that values diversity and global interconnectedness. This document examines how this important feature is implemented in the countries not associated to the programme.

There will be six regional reports: Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America, Caribbean, the Middle East, and the Pacific, along with annexed country reports.

Contents

Great Hall at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa

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1. Overview of Educational Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa

Kofi Annan, the first African UN Secretary-General and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, once said, "Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy, and sustainable human development." These words resonate deeply in the context of Africa, a continent whose future rests on the shoulders of its young population.

Africa is experiencing a demographic shift that will shape its destiny. Currently home to over 1.4 billion people, the continent's population is set to reach approximately 2.5 billion by 2050. What makes this growth particularly significant is its youthful character: over 40% of Africans are under the age of 15, and 77% are younger than 35. This makes Africa the youngest region in the world—a vibrant, dynamic, and rapidly expanding segment of the global population.

As Africa's youth population grows, so does the urgency of addressing their needs and aspirations. By 2035, around 375 million young people will enter the labour market. This surge presents both a tremendous opportunity and a daunting challenge. If provided with quality education and opportunities, these young Africans could drive innovation, economic growth, and social progress across the continent. Indeed, education is the key that can unlock this potential, as Kofi Annan emphasised.

The future of Africa's youth is intertwined with the continent's ability to deliver on the promise of education. Investment in education is not merely a moral imperative but a strategic necessity. Quality education equips young people with the skills they need to compete in a globalised economy, fosters creativity, and enables them to contribute meaningfully to their communities. Education is the bedrock on which Africa can build a more prosperous and equitable society.

However, the path forward is not without obstacles. Despite the potential of its youth, Africa faces significant challenges in creating jobs and opportunities for its rapidly growing labour force. High unemployment rates, particularly among young people, threaten to undermine the benefits of this demographic dividend. The overall unemployment rate across the continent is projected at around 6.3%. However, youth unemployment is particularly concerning, with rates estimated at approximately 11%, highlighting the difficulties young people face in securing employment. The situation varies across countries, with South Africa experiencing the highest unemployment rate on the continent at 32.1%, followed by Djibouti at 27.9%, and Eswatini at 24.65%. Other countries such as Gabon, Congo, and Namibia also face substantial unemployment rates, ranging from 20% to 21%. Without adequate opportunities, the continent risks economic stagnation and social unrest.

Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa significantly impacts education and TVET systems, leading to disrupted schooling, damaged infrastructure, and reduced access to educational resources. The region has experienced a rise in conflicts, with 90 recorded incidents

in 2022. In several countries, education systems are severely strained by violence and displacement. In conflict zones, schools are often closed and the environment makes it challenging for students to continue their education.

Moreover, as Africa urbanises rapidly, with more than half of its population expected to live in cities by 2050, the pressure on infrastructure and services will intensify. Urban centres must evolve to provide not only basic necessities but also environments that nurture entrepreneurship and innovation.

Agenda 2063

The African Union's Agenda 2063 serves as a comprehensive blueprint for transforming Africa into a global economic powerhouse through sustainable development, regional integration, and socio-economic growth. This ambitious vision has profound implications for both higher education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) across the region, as these sectors are pivotal in equipping Africa's youth with the skills and knowledge needed to drive this transformation.

Agenda 2063 positions **higher education** as a cornerstone for achieving its vision of a prosperous and integrated Africa. The strategy emphasises the importance of developing world-class universities that can produce the intellectual capital necessary to tackle the continent's most pressing challenges. This includes fostering innovation, research, and development in areas critical to Africa's growth, such as agriculture, energy, and technology.

Similarly, **TVET** is recognised within Agenda 2063 as a critical tool for empowering Africa's youth and driving economic development. The strategy highlights the need to expand and modernise TVET systems to align them with the demands of rapidly changing labour markets. By focusing on skills development that is relevant to both formal and informal sectors, TVET programmes are seen as essential to reducing unemployment, promoting entrepreneurship, and fostering industrialisation across the continent.

The relationship between Africa and the EU

The relationship between Africa and the European Union (EU) has a long history rooted in cooperation and mutual benefit. Over the decades, the partnership has evolved from a focus on development aid to a more strategic engagement, encompassing trade, investment, and shared priorities such as peace, security, and education. As both regions face new global challenges, the EU and Africa are increasingly working together to build a more sustainable and prosperous future.

In its 2020 Joint Communication "Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa," the EU outlined an ambitious plan to deepen its engagement with the continent, particularly in the areas of education and skills development. Recognising the transformative potential of education, the EU proposed scaling up academic cooperation with Africa, with a strong emphasis on technical and vocational education and training (TVET). This initiative aims to better align education with the needs of Africa's fast-growing labour market, helping to equip young people with the skills required for the jobs of the future.

The strategy also includes measures to facilitate the mobility of students, teachers, and trainers between Europe and Africa, fostering cross-cultural exchange and mutual learning. Additionally, the EU is committed to supporting capacity building for improved learning outcomes, as well as intensifying educational and research partnerships that can drive innovation and development across both continents.

Digital transformation is another key focus of the EU-Africa partnership. As highlighted in the European Council Conclusions of October 2020, the EU recognises the importance of harnessing the potential of digital and knowledge economies in its engagement with Africa. By investing in digital infrastructure, promoting digital literacy, and supporting initiatives that bridge the digital divide, the EU aims to empower African youth and businesses to thrive in an increasingly connected world.

The EU's support in these areas is designed to address several critical issues affecting education and skills development in Africa, such as inadequate access to quality education, insufficient training opportunities, and the mismatch between skills and labour market needs. By intensifying educational networks and dialogue, the EU seeks to build a more resilient and interconnected future for both Europe and Africa. Moreover, this partnership aligns with broader global goals, including the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to education, decent work, and economic growth.

This policy review aims to provide a comprehensive examination of the education and training landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa, with a particular focus on the underlying policies that shape these sectors in the region. The document will explore the various frameworks, initiatives, and strategies that have been implemented across Sub-Saharan Africa to address edu-

cational challenges, including the efforts to improve access, quality, and equity in education.

A key component of this review will be the examination of the EU-Africa partnership, highlighting collaborative efforts between the European Union and African nations in education and training policies. To provide a more granular understanding of how these policies and partnerships are being implemented at the national level, the document will include country-specific policy reviews in the appendices. These detailed reviews will offer insights into the unique challenges and progress within individual countries, allowing for a deeper exploration of how regional and international policies are being adapted to local contexts. This structure ensures that while the main document offers a broad overview, readers can refer to the appendices for in-depth analysis and specific case studies from various countries within the region.

2. Overarching Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa

2.1. Higher Education

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the governance of higher education is shaped by a range of laws, rules, and guidelines designed to enhance the quality, accessibility, and relevance of tertiary education. The legal frameworks for higher education in this region vary significantly from country to country, reflecting the diverse socio-political contexts. These frameworks often encompass aspects like university autonomy, quality assurance, accreditation, and public-private partnerships. For instance, countries like Namibia, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zambia have developed mechanisms such as licensing requirements, academic audits, and performance-based budgeting to regulate their higher education systems effectively.

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on regional and continental strategies to address common challenges. The African Union's Agenda 2063 places higher education at the centre of its development agenda, recognising its role in fostering innovation, economic growth, and social cohesion. In line with this, the Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications, adopted in 2019, aims to facilitate academic mobility across Africa by establishing clear guidelines for the recognition of degrees and qualifications.

Moreover, the impact of COVID-19 has prompted

a reevaluation of higher education policies across the region, highlighting the need for stronger digital infrastructure and distance learning solutions. Governments and institutions are now focusing on integrating technology into education to expand access, especially in remote and underserved areas. This shift is expected to play a crucial role in bridging the educational gap and ensuring that higher education systems contribute to sustainable development.

These evolving frameworks underscore the importance of collaboration between governments, the private sector, and international organisations to build resilient higher education systems capable of meeting the needs of Africa's rapidly growing youth population.

As mentioned earlier, Agenda 2063 is the African Union's (AU) strategic framework for transforming Africa into a global powerhouse of the future. Launched in 2015, it represents a vision for inclusive growth, sustainable development, and integration across the continent. The motivation behind Agenda 2063 stems from the need to address the historical challenges of underdevelopment, poverty, and conflict while capitalising on Africa's vast resources and youthful population. The initiative is anchored in the vision of "an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena."

Agenda 2063 has its roots in the Pan-African movement, which sought unity and self-determination for African nations in the post-colonial era. The AU, building on the legacy of its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), envisioned Agenda 2063 as a concrete manifestation of this long-standing quest for continental unity and progress. The framework is organised around seven "Aspirations" that cover areas such as inclusive development, democracy, good governance, and cultural renaissance.

The African Union Commission (AUC) has been a key driver of Agenda 2063. Additionally, African leaders, regional economic communities (RECs), and various international partners have supported its implementation. The agenda's implementation also relies heavily on active participation from civil society, the private sector, and the African diaspora.

2.1.1. African Higher Education and Research Space (AHERS)

A key aspect of Agenda 2063 is the drive towards creating an **African Higher Education and Research Space (AHERS)**, which would integrate universities and research institutions across the continent. This

integration would allow for the sharing of resources, the standardisation of qualifications, and the enhancement of research output to meet global standards.

Through initiatives like the **Pan-African University (PAU)** and the **African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM)**, the African Union aims to elevate the quality of higher education, ensuring that African universities can compete on the global stage while addressing local needs. **PAU** is a continental initiative established by the African Union to enhance the quality of higher education in Africa and promote research that addresses the continent's socio-economic challenges. Launched in 2011, PAU is a network of university hubs spread across Africa, each specialising in specific areas of study that are crucial for the continent's development. Countries hosting PAU institutes, such as **Nigeria and Algeria**, have successfully integrated PAU into their national education systems, providing infrastructure, faculty, and support for students from across Africa. PAU has become a model for fostering regional academic collaboration and producing graduates who are well-equipped to tackle Africa's pressing challenges, such as climate change, governance, and technological innovation.

Meanwhile, AQRM provides a framework for self-assessment and peer review, helping institutions to identify areas for improvement and align with continental and global quality standards. AQRM uses a set of criteria to evaluate the quality of teaching, research, and community engagement in African universities. Institutions undergo a rigorous self-assessment process, followed by external peer reviews that validate their findings. The results of these assessments help universities to enhance their programmes, governance, and management systems. AQRM also promotes the sharing of best practices and fosters a culture of continuous improvement among HEIs.

AQRM has been implemented in several countries across Africa, with universities in **South Africa and Ghana** leading the way in adopting AQRM standards. These institutions have leveraged the mechanism to improve their quality assurance processes, achieve international accreditation, and enhance their reputations as centres of excellence in education and research. The AU continues to encourage more universities across the continent to participate in AQRM, with the goal of raising the overall standard of higher education in Africa.

AHERS works by encouraging member states to align their higher education policies and frameworks with continental standards. It facilitates the mutual recognition of degrees and qualifications, enabling students and academics to move freely across the continent for study and research. The creation of regional centres of excellence, collaboration on research projects addressing pan-African issues, and the promotion of open access to educational resources are key components of AHERS. While still in its early stages, AHERS is gradually being implemented across the continent, with regional economic communities (RECs) like the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) playing a critical role in promoting cross-border educational initiatives. Countries such as **South Africa and Kenya** are leading by example, leveraging their robust higher education systems to support AHERS goals.

African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES) and the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA)

At the sub-regional level, two quality assurance agencies play vital roles: the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES) and the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA).

CAMES, established in 1968, focuses on harmonising academic programmes and standardising policies for staff recruitment and promotion across its 19 member states. Since 2005, CAMES has been implementing the Licence-Master-Doctorat (LMD) reform, which aims to align the seven traditional higher education degrees in Francophone countries—ranging from Diplôme d'études Générales to Doctorat d'Etat—with the three-tier Anglophone system of bachelor's, master's, and PhD degrees. This reform is a crucial step toward standardising higher education qualifications across Francophone and Anglophone regions.

Meanwhile, the IUCEA is responsible for ensuring that higher education institutions in the five East African Community (EAC) member states—Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda—maintain internationally comparable standards. IUCEA plays a pivotal role in fostering quality assurance and academic collaboration within the region.

By fostering collaboration, standardising quality, and promoting innovation, these initiatives are helping to create a more integrated and competitive African education system that can meet the needs of its rapidly growing population and contribute to sustainable development.

2.1.2. Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (2019)

The Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications was adopted by UNESCO in

November 2019. This landmark agreement is the first legally binding international treaty on the recognition of higher education qualifications, aiming to enhance academic mobility and cooperation across borders. The convention is particularly significant for Africa, where it aligns with the goals of Agenda 2063 to improve access to quality higher education and facilitate the mobility of students and professionals across the continent.

The convention's motivation is rooted in the growing need for global cooperation in higher education. In an increasingly interconnected world, the recognition of qualifications across borders is essential for fostering international academic collaboration and addressing global challenges, such as skills shortages and unemployment. For Africa, the convention offers a framework to harmonise qualifications and ensure that African students and professionals can compete and collaborate on the global stage.

The convention was championed by UNESCO, with strong support from African countries and higher education institutions. It builds on earlier regional conventions, such as the Addis Ababa Convention on the recognition of qualifications in Africa, which laid the groundwork for continent-wide cooperation in higher education. African leaders and education ministers have been vocal advocates for the convention, seeing it as a tool to enhance the quality and relevance of education systems in Africa.

2.1.3. Policy Implications and International Cooperation

Both Agenda 2063 and the Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications are pivotal for policy and international cooperation in Africa. They highlight the need for a coordinated approach to education and development, where national policies are aligned with regional and global frameworks. For policymakers, this means prioritising investments in education infrastructure, digital learning platforms, and quality assurance mechanisms to meet the standards set by these initiatives.

International cooperation is crucial for the success of these frameworks. The implementation of Agenda 2063 requires partnerships between African nations and global stakeholders, including development agencies, international financial institutions, and the private sector. Similarly, the success of the Global Convention hinges on the willingness of countries to adopt and implement its provisions, ensuring that qualifications are recognised and respected across borders.

2.1.4. Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-2025)

The African Union (AU), in collaboration with its Member States and key stakeholders, has developed and adopted the **Continental Education Strategy for Africa** (CESA 2016–2025). This strategy is a central component of the African Union's broader vision, aligning with both the AU Agenda 2063 and the Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. CESA is designed to transform Africa's education systems into dynamic and inclusive engines of growth that will drive the continent's development over the next decade.

CESA capitalises on a wide array of committed and active partners, mobilising financial, human, and technical resources through national, regional, and continental coalitions dedicated to advancing education, science, and technology. By leveraging these resources, CESA ensures that each stakeholder—whether at the grassroots, national, or international level—can contribute meaningfully to the continent's educational and training objectives. This collective approach is essential for fostering innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability within Africa's education sector.

The African Union's influence on regional educational policies is particularly notable through Agenda 2063, the continent's strategic framework for inclusive and sustainable development. Within this framework, CESA serves as a critical policy document, positioning education and training as key enablers of success across the various pillars of Agenda 2063. By emphasising access, relevance, and quality, CESA aims to ensure that Africa's education systems are well-equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

In line with its strategic priorities, the AU has designated education as the "Theme of the Year" for 2024, under the slogan "Educate and Skill Africa for the 21st Century." This theme underscores the urgency of addressing global educational challenges and reflects a commitment to aligning Africa's education systems with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly SDG 4, which advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education for all. By focusing on education as a core priority, the AU aims to prepare Africa's youth for a rapidly changing global landscape and ensure that they are equipped with the skills needed to drive the continent's future growth.

Furthermore, CESA promotes the use of digital technologies in education to bridge the digital divide and enhance learning outcomes. This includes investing in digital infrastructure, expanding access to online

learning resources, and integrating ICT into curricula. By doing so, CESA seeks to ensure that African students are not only consumers of technology but also creators and innovators, positioning the continent as a leader in the digital age.

Another key element of CESA is its focus on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), recognising the importance of equipping young Africans with practical skills that align with labour market demands. By promoting TVET, CESA aims to reduce youth unemployment and create a skilled workforce capable of driving Africa's industrialisation and economic transformation. The strategy also emphasises the role of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, which is essential for fostering innovation and competitiveness in the global economy.

2.1.5. African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) and The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities

Partnerships between regional organisations of universities are crucial for addressing complex global challenges that no single institution or country can tackle alone. These collaborations leverage the strengths, resources, and expertise of diverse academic communities, enabling them to work together on shared goals. For regions like Africa and Europe, such partnerships are especially important as they promote mutual learning, innovation, and capacity building. By joining forces, universities can better contribute to sustainable development, foster economic growth, and create solutions to pressing issues like climate change, public health, and social inequality.

In this context, the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) and the Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities have launched the Africa–Europe Clusters of Research Excellence (CoRE) initiative. Launched in the summer of 2023, CoRE seeks to address societal and scientific challenges framed by the African Union-European Union (AU-EU) Innovation Agenda. This initiative brings together some of the best researchers from both continents to form equitable partnerships that emphasise excellent research, education, capacity building, and innovation. These collaborations are designed to contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are open to institutions beyond the ARUA and Guild networks, involving partners from 120 institutions across 42 countries. By strengthening the capacity of African universities and promoting knowledge exchange, ARUA and the Guild aim to tackle global challenges through enhanced academic cooperation and innovation.

3. Strengthening EU-Africa Collaboration: Partnerships in Digital Innovation and Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

3.1. Erasmus+ and the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme

The EU and AU maintain a strong partnership focused on various developmental areas, including education and vocational training. One of the key initiatives is the **Africa-EU Partnership**, which has been in place since 2000. This partnership has evolved to address current challenges and set political priorities through regular summits and ministerial meetings. The **Erasmus+ programme** is a central element of this partnership, providing opportunities for student and staff exchanges, joint degree programmes, and capacity building in higher education institutions across Africa.

Erasmus+ has been the European Union's flagship programme for education, training, youth, and sport, fostering international partnerships and mobility across the globe. Within Africa, Erasmus+ has played a pivotal role in establishing and strengthening ties between European and African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Initially focused on exchanges between European universities, Erasmus+ has progressively expanded its reach to include Africa, promoting academic collaboration, capacity building, and knowledge exchange. Over the years, Erasmus+ has become the primary vehicle through which the EU supports educational initiatives in Africa, aiming to enhance skills development, improve educational quality, and promote cultural understanding between the two regions.

Building on the successes of Erasmus+, the **Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme** emerged as a specialised initiative under the EU's broader efforts to bolster education and mobility within the African continent. This programme, part of the Youth Mobility for Africa flagship initiative, is a key component of the EU-Africa Global Gateway Investment Package. Managed by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), the scheme aims to enhance international learning opportunities by providing scholarships and facilitating partnerships between African HEIs. Its overarching goal is to position Africa as a vibrant study destination while contributing to the continent's broader economic, social, and human development.

The Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme places a strong emphasis on inclusivity, targeting increased participation from women and individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. Additionally, the scheme aligns with Africa's pressing educational needs by prioritising

climate change and the green transition. By improving the quality, relevance, and internationalisation of higher education, the programme equips students and staff with the skills required for emerging green jobs, thus enhancing employability and fostering entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the scheme encourages collaboration between HEIs and businesses, particularly in sectors critical for climate adaptation and mitigation. This initiative is poised to make a lasting impact on Africa, reinforcing the role of higher education in sustainable development.

3.2. Regional Teachers' Initiative for Africa

The **Regional Teachers' Initiative for Africa** is a flagship project under the EU-Africa Global Gateway Investment Package, designed to address the urgent need for qualified teachers across Sub-Saharan Africa. The initiative, which represents a €100 million investment, aims to support African countries in improving the quality of teacher education and ensuring that schools have enough qualified educators. It seeks to fill the significant gap of 15 million new qualified teachers needed by 2030.

This initiative is part of a broader effort to enhance educational outcomes across the continent. It focuses on several key areas: offering technical assistance for teacher policy development, scaling up successful teacher training programmes, and strengthening regional capacities. Additionally, it emphasises the development of digital and green skills, gender-responsive pedagogy, and crisis-sensitive teaching approaches. The programme also aims to implement a Continental Teacher Qualifications Framework and establish a digital competency framework for teachers.

Managed through a "Team Europe" approach, the initiative brings together the EU, some of its Member States (Belgium, France, Finland), UNESCO, and the African Union, ensuring that the efforts align with both the Continental Education Strategy for Africa and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Strengthening the Europe-Africa Digital Ecosystem Through Increased R&I Cooperation (SEADE)

The SEADE project, short for "Strengthening the Europe-Africa Digital Ecosystem Through Increased R&I Cooperation," is a noteworthy example of an EU-funded initiative that directly engages with higher education institutions (HEIs) across Africa. Funded by Horizon Europe, the European Union's key research and innovation programme, SEADE aims to foster deeper cooperation between the EU and African nations, specifically in the areas of digital transformation and research and innovation (R&I).

Running from 2024 to 2025, SEADE focuses on providing essential support services and route-to-market programmes for research and innovation actors across Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. The project operates in four target countries: Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, and Senegal. These regions are pivotal for the pilot actions of the project, which include activities like bootcamp training, R&I to industry matchmaking, and learning expeditions. These efforts are underpinned by a human-centred approach, ensuring that the services offered are aligned with the needs and aspirations of the local populations.

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in this ecosystem, with the Association of African Universities (AAU) being a key partner in the consortium of 10 African and European organisations. The AAU leverages its broad network across the continent to raise awareness of SEADE's objectives and foster collaboration between European and African researchers. By connecting these institutions, SEADE helps bridge the gap between research and practical implementation, facilitating the transfer of knowledge into market success.

SEADE also builds on previous EU-Africa cooperation projects, such as ENRICH in Africa, by extending networks to include research sectors and integrating digital tools and technologies. The project's digital platform, hosted by the ENRICH in Africa Center, offers resources and best practices to stakeholders, reinforcing the EU's commitment to supporting Africa's digital economy. With a budget of over €2.29 million, SEADE is a significant investment in the future of EU-Africa cooperation, aiming to create lasting impacts on both continents through strategic collaboration and innovation.

3.3. AfricaConnect3

AfricaConnect3 is a collaborative project co-funded by the European Union and African partners, building on the success of its predecessors, AfricaConnect and AfricaConnect2. The project aims to enhance digital infrastructures across Africa, specifically focusing on research and education networks (RENs). By improving high-capacity data communication networks, AfricaConnect3 facilitates access to advanced internet services for educational and research institutions across the continent. The initiative seeks to address the digital divide, enabling African universities, colleges, and research centres to connect seamlessly with global networks like the pan-European GÉANT network. This connection allows for the rapid exchange of data and

collaboration on research projects between Africa and Europe, ultimately boosting the continent's capacity for innovation and education.

With a total budget of €37.5 million over four years, AfricaConnect3 aims to unlock the potential of education and research through digital transformation. The project not only focuses on establishing robust network infrastructures but also prioritises human capital development. By providing capacity-building programmes, AfricaConnect3 empowers local institutions and professionals to manage and expand these networks independently. Additionally, the project emphasises the inclusion of women and underserved communities, ensuring that digital benefits reach all segments of society. The initiative plays a crucial role in advancing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa by supporting quality education, fostering innovation, and creating new employment opportunities in the digital economy.

3.4. TVET in Sub-Saharan Africa

The Continental Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a key component of the African Union's Agenda 2063, which envisions a prosperous and inclusive Africa driven by its own citizens. The strategy emerged from the recognition that youth unemployment remains one of the continent's most pressing challenges, despite Africa's rich natural and human resources. By improving the quality and accessibility of vocational training, the strategy seeks to equip young Africans with the skills necessary to participate effectively in both formal and informal economies, thus driving economic transformation.

The origins of the Continental TVET Strategy can be traced back to the broader objectives of Agenda 2063, which was adopted in 2015 as a long-term plan for the continent's development. Recognising the pivotal role of education and skills development in achieving sustainable economic growth, the African Union and its member states prioritised TVET as a critical pillar for addressing youth unemployment and fostering innovation. The strategy emphasises that traditional education systems alone are insufficient for meeting the diverse needs of Africa's economies and that a robust TVET system is essential for creating a workforce capable of adapting to rapidly changing industries.

Several champions within the African Union and its partner organisations have been instrumental in advancing the TVET agenda. The African Union Commission (AUC), alongside the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), has been a key driver in the development and implementation of the TVET

strategy. Their efforts have been supported by international organisations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), which provides technical assistance and policy guidance to ensure that TVET systems are aligned with global best practices. The support of these organisations has been critical in mobilising resources, facilitating policy dialogues, and ensuring that TVET reforms are integrated into national development plans across the continent.

The Continental TVET Strategy also promotes the harmonisation of TVET policies across African countries, encouraging member states to adopt standards that are consistent with continental goals. This includes the development of qualifications frameworks that allow for the recognition of skills and competencies across borders, thus enabling greater mobility of skilled workers within Africa. Furthermore, the strategy calls for the involvement of the private sector in TVET programmes, recognising that collaboration between governments, industries, and educational institutions is essential for creating demand-driven training programmes that respond to the needs of the labourlabour market.

3.5. TVET and EU-Africa Partnerships

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) plays a crucial role in addressing Africa's growing need for skilled labour. As the continent's economies continue to expand and diversify, the demand for a workforce that is well-equipped with practical and technical skills becomes increasingly important. TVET is essential in bridging the gap between education and employment, offering young people opportunities to acquire the competencies required in various industries, from manufacturing to services. By focusing on practical skills and hands-on training, TVET enhances employability, supports economic development, and reduces poverty, making it a key pillar for sustainable development in Africa.

TVET Practices and Projects

The VET Toolbox is a significant EU-funded initiative that supports vocational education and training (VET) systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, aiming to maximise the local benefits from European investments in the region. Co-financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the programme's primary objective is to create flexible, responsive skills development systems that align with the labour market's needs. By enhancing the capacity of VET systems to deliver competent local workforces, the initiative seeks to generate sustainable social and economic benefits, such as decent jobs and income

generation. The programme specifically targets value and supply chain development by ensuring that VET stakeholders can deliver demand-driven training that meets the needs of investment projects.

3.6. Vocational Education and Training (VET) Toolbox

Another critical initiative is the **Vocational Education and Training (VET) Toolbox 2**, a project co-financed by the EU and the German government. This project aims to develop job-relevant skills among young Africans, particularly in sectors that benefit from European investment, by mapping skill needs, supporting local VET institutions, and influencing policy to make vocational training more effective. It aims to address the skills mismatch in Sub-Saharan Africa by enhancing the quality and relevance of vocational education and training (VET) systems across the region. It is part of the broader strategy to ensure that the workforce in these countries can meet the demands of both local and international markets. These countries include Congo-Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda.

By the end of 2023, the initiative trained 2,842 individuals, with 1,420 securing employment—66% of all graduates from GIZ projects. Notably, 39% of the employed graduates were women, surpassing the target in male-dominated sectors. The programme also fostered public-private dialogue (PPD) platforms in all partner countries, facilitating collaboration between companies, VET providers, and authorities to co-invest in skills development. The lessons learned from these efforts have been shared with policymakers, ensuring that the programme's impact extends beyond immediate results, influencing VET reforms and policies in the region.

4. Summary and Recommendations

The regional policy review has sought to provide an understanding of the current landscape of education and training in Sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting both the progress and the challenges that persist across the region. Through an exploration of regional frameworks and various EU-Africa partnerships, it is evident that significant strides are being made toward improving educational access, quality, and equity. However, as the detailed country-specific policy reviews in the appendices illustrate, the implementation and impact of these policies vary greatly across different national contexts.

As Africa continues to face rapid demographic changes and the evolving demands of the global economy, the importance of investing in education and training cannot be overstated. The EU-Africa partnership, through initiatives such as Erasmus+, plays a crucial role in supporting these efforts, but sustained commitment from all stakeholders will be essential to ensure that these initiatives translate into tangible improvements on the ground. By continuing to foster collaboration, innovation, and investment in education, Sub-Saharan Africa can build a more inclusive and prosperous future for all its citizens.

To address the diverse challenges faced across different countries in the region, there needs to be a stronger emphasis on regional collaboration and knowledge sharing. Platforms that facilitate the exchange of best practices, policy innovations, and successful educational models should be expanded. This includes enhancing partnerships between African nations and the European Union through initiatives like Erasmus+, ensuring that lessons learned in one country can be adapted and implemented in others. Additionally, regional organisations should continue to play a pivotal role in coordinating efforts and providing support for policy implementation at the national level.