



Erasmus+

Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) action

Regional Report South Africa



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**Regional Report
South Africa**



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1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

This report is based on the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency's evaluation of the final project reports of the first CBHE projects selected for funding in 2015 and 2016¹. A total of 138 projects received funding and 88 projects submitted their final reports during 2019. The conclusions of this report are based on 6 final reports that have been submitted in the region South Africa. These results are therefore based on a small sample of completed CBHE projects² and should be considered preliminary, for final review at a later stage.

The report analyses the role of the CBHE action as regards **the impact and sustainability of the funded projects** together with their **inclusiveness** (participants with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers). More specifically, it will look into the institutional development of higher education institutions (HEIs), their modernisation of study programmes and teaching and learning methodologies, structural reforms and the strengthening of HEIs' technical capacities. It will then focus on **opportunities created for individuals** (students, academic and administrative staff) and third parties like enterprises, chambers of commerce, etc.

The report will also examine how the EU projects have influenced **national policy developments in the education sector**, mainly but not exclusively through 'Structural Projects'. Special attention is given to the strengthening of **regional cooperation** through CBHE projects that include two or more countries from the same Region.

Finally, the analyses will be used to identify **challenges** and provide a **set of recommendations** for future reference.

1 CBHE projects are funded between EUR 500,000 and 1 million and normally last three years, although a small number of projects have a duration of two years. A high percentage of projects asked for a contract extension to catch up with implementation delays and will last between 3-4 years.
2 There are about 700 active projects following five annual calls, starting from 2014

2. INTRODUCTION

The CBHE action of the Erasmus+ Programme supports the modernisation and development of HEIs and the educational systems in the Partner Countries. Capacity Building projects are expected to have a long-term structural impact and their direct influence is on institutions and educational systems rather than on individuals.

European HEIs have a key role to play in supporting the modernisation efforts of emerging and developing parts of the world. Via the development of the educational systems of Partner Countries, they contribute to a sustainable development of the economies and societies as a whole and they allow addressing challenges at national, regional or even global level (e.g. climate change). In this context, the involvement of national authorities (Ministries of Education) plays a critical role.

International consortia of HEIs (including private businesses) strengthen the quality of Higher Education in the Partner Countries by providing to students new and upgraded skills needed in the labour market, introduce innovative approaches in teaching and learning and provide entrepreneurial skills.

The CBHE action is implemented through two types of projects, which aim to have an impact on HEIs or on the educational system as a whole. While **'Joint Projects'** aim at the development of HEIs (e.g. curriculum development, governance of institutions, etc.), **'Structural Projects'** address important challenges for the educational systems of the Partner Countries (accreditation, quality assurance in Education, PhD education, etc.).

Both project types address one of the following **three pillars**

1. Curricula Reform
2. Modernising university governance and management
3. Strengthening of relations between HEIs and the wider economic and social environment

based on pre-established national³ and/or regional priorities.

South Africa has been involved since the inception of the CBHE action in 2014. Overall, 60 applications were received and 23 CBHE projects involving South Africa have been funded across the five Calls for Proposals. For the five Calls for Proposals (2015-2019), South Africa has been allocated a total grant amount of approximately €18 million.



³ For the ex-Tempus countries defined by the Ministries of Educations of the Partner Countries.

3. CBHE IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Higher education systems in South Africa are facing several challenges. Growing levels of student enrolment throughout the Region are straining the limited resources of public universities. At the same time, the number of private institutions has increased rapidly. This development needs to be matched by investments in physical and technological infrastructure while also guaranteeing teaching quality. It must also be accompanied by improving access to higher education, equity, and affordability, especially for marginalized communities and women. Also, despite the relative increase in enrolment in higher education and efforts carried out by institutions, international organisations and countries to support mobility of students and staff, the rate of mobility within South Africa remains comparatively low. The poor performance of the labour market is reflected in very low employment rates and high levels of unemployment, leading to a brain drain among graduates and a lack of regional university cooperation.

The Erasmus+ Capacity-Building action is aligned with the South African Government's educational strategy as defined in the South African National Development Plan 2030, which aims to ensure the availability of quality education and skills development, professional teacher training, and to further support innovation as a source of sustainable growth and competitiveness. Moreover, through employment creation, the CBHE action aims to contribute to South Africa's intervention against high unemployment (27%) especially among young people (53%).

The effective and strategic management of research portfolios also poses another challenge, and the CBHE action will ensure the sustainability and growth in an increasingly complex, competitive and changing global environment. Funding programmes are increasingly competitive, with a greater focus on excellence and the need to do more in partnerships with other institutions and companies. There is also a need to demonstrate research impact, efficiency, and innovation. Skilled research managers are key resources in institutional efforts to sustain and increase research and are critical enablers in helping research projects achieve maximum deliverables and impact.

The CBHE action targets the above-mentioned challenges through the implementation of **international cooperation projects**. The results accomplished have affected the modernisation

and reform of higher education in the South Africa. HEIs and individuals (staff and students) have benefited from institutional and study programme reforms by using and mainstreaming results of CBHE projects, primarily related to creating new curricula, modernisation of university structures and updating educational processes. In some cases, the CBHE project



outputs have also triggered changes at a national level through directly or indirectly influencing the structure and legislative framework of higher education.

The CBHE action applies both a bottom-up and a top-down strategy to align national decision-making with priorities of **university development and internationalisation**. However, effective impact on the normative and hence structural level often remains disconnected from legislative and administrative reforms. Attainments directly traceable to CBHE projects are visible mainly in curriculum development: creating new student-centred study programmes at bachelor and master level and their national accreditation.

The achievements obtained through CBHE projects, in particular the introduction of **quality assurance procedures and new and updated degree programmes**, have provided students in the Region with possibilities that could not have been realised without the input of the European partner institutions. Tangible results become highly visible through the establishment/improvement of laboratories, library systems and other student-oriented structures and services at university level. This has had an effect on the educational excellence and distinction of the participating HEIs in the Partner Countries and hence the training quality offered to their students. Supporting HEI management and national authorities is pivotal in this context and vital for the sustainability of the achieved project results.

The CBHE action has considerably enhanced the capacities of universities in the Region to manage international cooperation projects:

- ▶ The South African institutions and staff involved in CBHE projects have increased their awareness on the importance of internationalisation strategies.
- ▶ Although none of the first projects targeting South Africa was coordinated by a South African higher education institution, the projects have provided valuable experience for the participating higher education institutions on the management of the international cooperation projects, which will pave way to them coordinating future CBHE projects.
- ▶ In some cases, however such as the IMPALA project (561917-EPP-1-2015-1-BE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP), the coordination has been shared between a European and a South African local institution. The Cape Peninsula University of Technology co-coordinated the project to facilitate project management and implementation it on the South Africa side.

It also worth mentioning that - as a result of CBHE projects involving South African Higher education institutions - bridges have been built for interdisciplinary collaboration. The collaboration between the South African Higher education institutions has helped to overcome 'silo mentality'⁴ which is caused by academic disconnection.

⁴ Silo mentality - a reluctance to share information with employees of different departments in the same university.

3.1. Institutional Development

3.1.1. Curricula Reform

One of the main objectives of the CBHE action is curricula reform. Partner Country HEIs work together in high quality international consortia to revise study programmes or to develop new ones, to engage in new learning and teaching methods and to prepare students with new and better skills for a changing job market and a developing economy. The modernisation and launching of new study programmes and the introduction of innovative learning and teaching methods can significantly change the landscape of the university sector. Curricula reform projects are often highly sustainable, since all newly created study programmes at graduate and postgraduate level have become an integral part of regular degree programs taught at the HEIs:

CASO Caring Society: Building Communities, Social Inclusion and Health Development (CASO) (573518-EPP-1-2016-1-NL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The CASO project was set up to design learning modules for current and future professionals in health education at bachelor, master and doctoral level in South Africa. This is achieved by approaching health and wellbeing from different perspectives with a view to face health challenges in South Africa and enhance the health education in general.

The project has maintained its relevance bringing academic content to partner universities. The project developed the **Patient Partner Programme** (empowering patients) that has a focus on patient-centred communication training. **The Health and Lifestyle Programme** (healthy lifestyle) focuses on enhancing physical activity aiming to change the mind set from cure to care. The **Care for the Caregiver programme** (empowered caregivers) provides social and health care professionals in the rehabilitation of discharged hospital patients in their homes.

For many Partner Country HEIs, the collaboration with European universities on curricula development has implied exposure to the Bologna Process methodology even though this process does not directly concern the Region. Hence, when developing new curricula and considering student mobility opportunities, the ‘European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)’ was introduced and the student-centred learning approaches (learning outcomes). Many HEIs have embraced the Bologna Process as a means of supporting mobility with European HEIs.

It is worth pointing out that there are two contradicting views at play regarding the arrival of the Bologna Process in Africa: as a significant reform model opportunity and as a return to ‘colonialism’. Also, due to internal and external factors, the extension and impact of the Bologna Process in African higher education are limited. Consequently, Africa has its initiative called ‘Harmonisation, quality and Accreditation (HAQAA)’, which supports a Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework. This is implemented through the development of continent standards and guidelines for quality assurance in higher education, capacity building in the regional and national bodies in charge of higher education by cultivating expertise in the field of institutional evaluation and quality (<https://haqaa/aaau/org>).

Not all study programmes started during the CBHE project's implementation period or immediately after project completion. This is because of the long time required for study programme accreditation and the reform of the education system. Therefore, some study programmes could only be launched after the end of the project (i.e. once the eligibility period has elapsed).

3.1.2. Technological Upgrade

The provision of funds to improve the technical structure of Partner Country HEIs is an important element of CBHE and the provision of **equipment** plays an important role (often almost one third of the total grant). It is an attractive offer to universities, which often lack modern and labour market orientated training facilities.

- ▶ Around 1 million Euro was invested in equipment for the four projects implemented in South Africa.

Adequate provision of equipment in laboratories and centres is vital for supporting practical coursework, especially in the natural and hard sciences. Provision of equipment allows the establishment of facilities like career advice centres, innovation and start-up centres. The new facilities are frequently used to train private or public employees, who otherwise would not have access to such important support structures. Sometimes this even happens on a fee-paying basis, thus contributing to the project's impact and financial sustainability:

Caring Society: Building Communities, Social Inclusion and Health Development (CASO) (573518-EPP-1-2016-1-NL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The funding allowed the project to purchase equipment in order to reinforce use of recording studios for the Patient Partner Programme. This has allowed for example remote communication via live streaming to teaching venues, allowing groups to learn from sensitive consultations without intrusion (e.g. interviewing cancer patients). In addition, laptops and sports equipment for course implementation was purchased.

The strengthening of HEI technical capacities by opening new laboratories for teaching is an obvious measure for CBHE projects. Additionally, these labs are often used to conduct research and thus they create a vital bridge between teaching and research. CBHE projects have also strengthened the digitalisation of education by using various IT tools in the teaching process and by creating online learning platforms:

Common Good First – digital storytelling for Social Innovation (CGF) (574065-EPP-1-2016-1-UK-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The CGF project has acquired audio-visual equipment for digital storytelling laboratories. The teaching participants have been trained to use various mobile devices, social media platforms, digital software and internet. The participants have learned to compile audio-visual clips and to share these stories through a digital storytelling platform. This has led to broadcasting social innovation ideas and solutions and consequently community involvement has been enhanced.

Specific remarks

Given that the possibility of buying project specific equipment is important, the equipment purchased is revised after the start of the project to adapt to the actual needs of the institutions and furthermore to the implementation of a specific type of curricula. With this practice, it is possible to avoid that there will be a number of projects in which equipment is used for general purposes like the provision of laptops to students and teachers. Such purchases are not always indispensable for the implementation of a CBHE project and it is not sure if this kind of equipment remains with the universities after the projects' end.

In certain cases, the required equipment maintenance and follow-up financing is not ensured. Moreover, many HEIs reported challenges in the handling of the tendering procedures when equipment was not available in their country but had to be imported. Since different tendering rules had to be followed, the universities faced a multilayer bureaucracy. These administrative hurdles are exacerbated also sometimes due to the fluctuating exchange rates.

3.1.3. Governance and Management Reform

Some South African universities' governance/management bodies still require institutional strengthening to be able to compete with European and worldwide universities. HEIs in South Africa need to improve the efficiency of their governance processes and their structures to make them grow internationally and offer study programmes of high quality, which attract the interest of academics, students and the society at large. This implies among other things, sustainable strategies and regulations, efficient international relations offices, quality assurance units endorsing international and European standards, financial autonomy, structures for collaborating with the labour market and strong alumni associations. CBHE projects have contributed to the creation or reinforcement of university bodies and changes at institutional level as shown by the example below:

Internationalization and Modernisation Programme for Academics, Leaders and Administrators (IMPALA) (561917-EPP-1-2015-1-BE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project aimed to improve internationalization structures in the areas of policy development and implementation. This has been done through (re)writing and discussing internationalization strategy papers for the participating South African Universities while reserving an active and leading role for the international relations offices' staff. These IMPALA communities of practice have transferred the gained knowledge throughout their institutions and as well as externally. The former trainees have become trainers – a model guaranteeing long-term impact.

However, much remains to be done in the area of governance and management reform. New CBHE projects could potentially support the efficiency of the structures in place (e.g. approaches to involve stakeholders in governance, especially employers and alumni), digitised procedures, optimised processes, and mechanisms to trace graduate employability, etc.

3.1.4. HEI International strategies

The internationalisation of higher education in South Africa is high on the political agenda of the government and the HEIs. Many higher education institutions in the South Africa cannot compete with the more established and highly internationalised educational systems in Europe and elsewhere. However, internationalisation offers a chance to gradually get involved and to improve and develop through cooperation with strong European partner institutions.

Individual academics remain the most important driver of international cooperation in South Africa. It is through bottom-up initiatives by academics that short-term mobility, research cooperation, development of joint-study programmes, and other activities are being developed. While there is a high level of commitment to internationalisation almost everywhere, these academics often do not receive sufficient support to enact their cooperative ventures. University practices and support services are not sufficiently adapted to serve this goal. Internationalisation efforts are hampered by certain shortcomings, such as weak international relations offices (IROs) and weak support for finding and managing research funding. However, the extent of these shortcomings varies significantly across the country.

Numerous strategic and procedural documents have been created and adopted which aim to support the internationalisation and modernisation at the institutional level. These include: guidelines for learning outcomes at HEIs, strategies for university internationalisation, systems for monitoring the quality of the education process and newly adopted protocols and procedures, which help improve the service provided by the international relations offices. Moreover, the CBHE projects have **increased the visibility** of the HEIs involved, through their strong outward orientation and focus on international cooperation. This change significantly improves the support provided to students and staff interested in mobility at the university/faculty level.

Internationalization and Modernisation Programme for Academics, Leaders and Administrators (IMPALA) (561917-EPP-1-2015-1-BE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project developed four mobility toolkits to support the management and organization of international mobility and equipped conference rooms to facilitate virtual collaboration and online learning. Through the use of Internet-based tools and innovative online pedagogies, COIL - Collaborative Online International Learning - fosters meaningful exchanges between university-level teachers and students with peers in geographically distant locations and from different linguacultural backgrounds.

3.2. Broadening Horizons for Individuals

3.2.1. Academic staff

The CBHE action has given professors from Partner Countries the opportunity to meet their peers in different countries. By working together in international consortia, professors have become aware of different perspectives, gained new insights into their academic field and have been exposed to international quality standards in education. The CBHE projects have allowed them to collaborate with experts in their area leading to a direct peer-to-peer knowledge transfer from Europe to the Partner Countries. They have also gained valuable work experience through the teaching of students in a different country and from different countries (sometimes in a foreign language).

CASO Caring Society: Building Communities, Social Inclusion and Health Development (CASO) (573518-EPP-1-2016-1-NL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

Concerning the impact of this project on the individual level, the knowledge base of the staff and students has increased. In total, 57 students have participated in international mobility and contributed to course piloting, reporting and content development. Through the Health and Lifestyle Programme, as many as 6000 children and educators were targeted at local underprivileged South African schools. In addition, the 'Empowered Caregiver Programme'⁵ has reached more than 150 professionals. The approach was to update and to change the teaching methods and mind set of university staff to be more patient-centred and shift from care to cure. Other mentioned project impacts include improvement of soft skills and intercultural competences.

Two different categories of academics can be distinguished, namely a) experienced academics and b) young academics at the start of their career:

- a) These academics were advanced in their career, but limited as regards further vertical growth at their home universities. By bringing an international dimension to their work, CBHE projects have offered these staff members a new lease of life, allowing them to broaden their perspectives. However, for the same reason this also means that not always, it is a field's leading academics that are participating in the CBHE projects.
- b) Young academics are given the possibility to occupy leadership roles for project packages and are exposed to an international working level. They get access to EU funding which prevents a further brain drain in South Africa.

In general, trainings and workshops organised within the CBHE projects have allowed academics to acquire new skills and knowledge in various disciplines:

⁵ Empowered Caregivers Programme provides social and health care professionals in rehabilitation of discharged hospital patients in their home.

Enhancing Postgraduate Environments (EPE) (561914-EPP-1-2015-1-NL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project used a series of institutional visits to ensure that the materials developed within the project were institutionalised in various ways. Through regional workshops, training of trainers and the materials developed there is now a cadre of research practitioners and professionals within the partner universities who can contribute to further improvements within the postgraduate environment. The project has yielded sustainable strategic benefits, in the sense that it has resulted in more structural multi-stakeholder collaboration within South African institutions to enhance postgraduate environments. Whereas previously, initiatives often came from just one or a few entities within the institution and were not always well organised or coordinated, more systematic and comprehensive forms of collaborations now occur (operating within significant variations in systems and practices between the South African partner institution, both before and after the project). Overall, this is more effective for sustained improvements, e.g. in the supervision practices of postgraduate students.

In the four South African projects, more than 600 instances of training of academic staff were reported, which mostly took place at Programme Country institutions. The new skills and knowledge also strengthen the home HEIs and improve education standards. The CBHE action allowed academics to overcome national boundaries and also to link with other disciplines within their HEI. EU countries have been experimenting with **multidisciplinary courses** for some time and most academics recognise the benefits. Therefore, this concept was also introduced in certain Partner Countries and has helped to promote innovation and cooperation between departments, and broaden academic and institutional ways of thinking. Working with the **private sector** within a CBHE project has been a new experience for many professors. They have gained greater insights into business realities and could make the study programmes more relevant to business needs:

The International Learning Network of Networks on Sustainability (LENSIN) (561927-EPP-1-2015-1-IT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

Public and private organisations such as local institutions, industrial design associations, business and industrial councils, NGOs and international organisations (intermediate beneficiaries) have been involved and have benefited from dissemination activities.

In some cases, they have been involved in the curriculum design and implementation of pilot courses, and in briefing and coaching students. This assured support for high quality higher education that is efficient and relevant to the needs of the labor market and consistent with the Partner Countries' sustainable development priorities. Furthermore, this fostered university-enterprise cooperation, entrepreneurship and graduate employability. Beneficiaries and local communities are taking and will benefit from local design consultancies and companies capable of designing and developing locally-based, renewable, resilient, economically viable and environmentally and socio-ethically sustainable product-service systems (S.PSS) and distributed economies (DE),

Furthermore, CBHE projects have opened the door for academics to **university management**. The CBHE action gave staff from the Region the opportunity to **develop their intercultural** skills, by working together with colleagues in a multi-country consortium. Academic and administrative staff gained intercultural experience from working with EU countries.

3.2.2. Students

One of the main drivers of internationalisation has been the need for universities to attract excellent students and professors to raise the level of education offered and to become more competitive in the global education market. The CBHE action has helped HEIs to set up high-level study programmes, which has increased the visibility and appeal of the HEI in the national context. Within the four South Africa CBHE projects, around 600 students have been trained by the projects. The impact of the CBHE projects on students has been manifold. They have been beneficiaries of modernised or new study programmes and have been exposed to innovative teaching and learning methods and motivational approaches. The work done with new or improved equipment and infrastructure, exchanges with foreign academics, and use of new methodologies and short and long-term mobility (available to all three cycles) has enhanced both the academic and practical competences of students.

There are numerous examples of **joint research projects and joint publications** initiated after successful cooperation within CBHE projects. In fact, this research work takes place in parallel to the CBHE project. The mobility of staff and students has allowed the **supervision of doctoral candidates by staff from international partners**, improving the quality of research and enhancing the reputation of the associated HEI. Graduate entry to the labour market in South Africa is often precarious and graduates experience periods of unemployment of various duration before they find stable a employment. This transition from the academic world to the labour market is hampered by a relatively low level of cooperation between HEIs and employers in relation to curriculum design and recruitment. Few employers are involved in the discussions of new curricula.

The CBHE action **strongly encourages cooperation of HEIs with the labour market** The private sector representatives are often involved in designing new curricula that are more appealing and relevant for the business world. Professors who internalise this entrepreneurial and long-term perspective have been the main exponents of this cooperation, which has translated into internships for students and, in some cases, job offers after graduation. Evidence shows that curriculum development projects working closely with private sector partners and including internships within university education have a higher graduate employability rate and are therefore much more appealing to national and international students.

Entrepreneurship, Modernization and Innovation in South Africa (EMISHA) (561906-EPP-1-2015-1-SE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The EMISHA project in South Africa aimed to increase innovation and entrepreneurship in South Africa while increasing graduate employment and research collaborations with the industry and strengthening all sides of the knowledge triangle. The project has put together a set of models, which would positively impact graduate employment, operation of innovation centers as well as the implementation of structured meetings between universities and the industry.

Although students are the main end beneficiaries of the CBHE projects, they are also involved in project activities. The development and modernisation of curricula and therefore the identification of student needs for their future, is seen as the domain of the HEI and their academic staff. In South Africa, projects include students in the implementation of the project activities and mobilities.

Enhancing Postgraduate Environments (EPE) (561914-EPP-1-2015-1-NL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

Postgraduate students have been actively involved throughout this project. They have been part of institutional visits and have been participants at workshops held at each of the South African universities. Furthermore, a number of the online materials feature students and some have actually been made by the students themselves.

3.2.3. Administrative staff

CBHE projects also have an impact on administrative staff. This relates particularly to staff from the **offices for international affairs and staff responsible for project financial management**, who have to be well acquainted with the regulations and procedures relating to project implementation.

Although administrative and financial staff are key people in international cooperation, their role is not always very visible in the project activities. Moreover, given the nature of their work, they are rarely the first to participate in mobility opportunities. However, regular interaction via email and skype with their counterparts in other countries has brought learning opportunities and given them insights into best practice in financial and grant management. Sometimes, they have been able to **introduce new practices within their own HEI systems**. The equipment budget has allowed administrative staff to purchase new technology and to use their newly acquired skills for the benefit of their home HEI.

Internationalization and Modernisation Programme for Academics, Leaders and Administrators – (IMPALA) (561917-EPP-1-2015-1-BE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project has created a strong pool of talented staff through trainings. The international relations offices have evolved into the strategic offices and became less isolated, as well as the project staff has emerged as leaders in their different fields and currently are initiating projects within various departments. The project has produced materials that are useful for the consortia staff as well and openly available beyond project partnership such as a Handbook for Academics and Administrators on internationalization and the Handbook on Students on mobility.

3.2.4. Entrepreneurs/Employers

Most of the South Africa **companies** that participate as partners in CBHE projects are **SMEs**. CBHE projects have given them access to experts in specific fields, as well as to research laboratories and specialised equipment. Businesses have benefitted from this partnership to develop new products and to find students for working on new processes and working tools.

HEIs are a rich recruitment ground for businesses, which would like to test potential future staff during internships. In a number of CBHE projects, businesses are part of review panels and participate directly in the curriculum design process.

However, this is not always the case and curriculum development projects carried out industry surveys to establish the precise needs of the labour market. It is important to note that the labour market includes not only the private sector, but also NGOs and the public sector.

The International Learning Network of Networks on Sustainability (LENSIN) (561927-EPP-1-2015-1-IT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The LENSIN project aimed at broadening the accessibility of higher education by strengthening a global network called the 'Learning Network on Sustainability' involving four Regions and five countries – China, India, South Africa, Brazil and Mexico. The project developed on curriculum in the field of design for sustainability (DFS). The focus was in particular on sustainable product-service systems (SPSS) and distributed economies (DE), both known as promising models to couple environmental protection with social equity/cohesion and economic prosperity. The development of 10 curricular courses, designed and implemented by the Partner countries' institutions and European HEIs, was done in in close collaboration and **involving local companies/NGOs/Institutions**.

In addition, the CBHE projects have the possibility to develop training courses for practitioners, sometimes on a fee-paying basis, which can further contribute to the financial sustainability of the activities.



4. REGIONAL COOPERATION AND NATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT

4.1. Regional Cooperation

It is at this stage too early to draw far-reaching conclusions on regional cooperation, in particular as 5 of 6 projects finalized a country specific to South Africa/ clearly reflect What These conferences have been strategically organized in important locations allowed for extended regional and global participation and integration. Finally the findings from the project can in future be adopted for the broader Sub-Saharan African (SSA) region, and hence lead to a much wider adoption of good practices leading to enhanced Capacity Building in higher education.

There are concrete examples - from new project ideas to various initiatives to regional cooperation -that clearly reflect that these projects have contributed, through their activities and networking, to regional integration within South Africa and cooperation between different regions in the world.

There is significant potential for internationalisation through intra-regional cooperation. Several important initiatives already exist to foster such cooperation in both teaching and research. The academics in South Africa are eager to seek cooperation with institutions from the same region. The sharing of resources within the CBHE projects led to greater interaction between professors and more intensive sharing of ideas.

In certain countries, relations between HEIs - before they started their collaboration in the frame of the CBHE projects -were quite competitive. However, after having worked together, HEIs often discover **hidden benefits** of this collaboration. For example, some HEIs realised that **sharing resources**, such as research databases, open learning platforms and scientific laboratories, is quite feasible and even saves costs. The sharing of resources within the CBHE projects has led to greater interaction between professors and more active sharing of ideas.

The CBHE action has contributed significantly to the strengthening of the cooperation in the region. It provides a means by which HEIs can work together on themes of mutual interest across national boundaries. It also promotes people-to-people contact, which helps to change mentalities and reduce prejudices. A number of academic subject areas lend themselves to a regional dimension such as agriculture, engineering and environmental studies. These therefore tend to promote regional cooperation. In working together, exchanging processes, results and best practices,, each country has learned from its neighbours. It is also interesting to note that thanks to cross-regional projects there has been cooperation with several countries in various other world regions:

**The international Learning Network of networks on Sustainability (LENSIN)
(561927-EPP-1-2015-1-IT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)**

This project is an ambitious cooperation effort uniting four regions and five countries - China, India, South Africa, Brazil, and Mexico.

4.2. National Education Reforms

Structural projects are of particular importance for triggering and supporting developments and reforms of the national education systems in the Partner Countries.

In the first call of 2014, there was no CBHE structural projects in SA. The projects require the participation of the Ministry of Education in projects. However, successful CBHE projects can spark national debates and highlight policy gaps, which may lead to policy transformation and pave way to more concrete **policy and legislative reforms**. The participation of Ministry of Education in project events often lay the basis for cooperation between HEIs and national authorities.

Enhancing Postgraduate Environments (EPE) (561914-EPP-1-2015-1-NL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project contributed to the national transformation agenda in South Africa by challenging supervision practice and supporting new material development and curricula developers. It has created an innovative approach to learning for research practitioners (training-of-trainers in a technology-enhanced context). A number of policy papers have been prepared for the ministry on the basis of project results.



5. INCLUSIVENESS

5.1. People with Fewer Opportunities

At the end of the year, 2015 student protests erupted across universities in South Africa. The 'Rhodes Must Fall' movement highlighted the challenges that university education faces in Africa. The movement exposed institutional racism in universities, which has been characterised as the resurrection of a 'colonial' order. 'Decolonization' of university curricula was one of the demands. HEI systems are largely based on western traditions and history, whereas more indigenous (African) knowledge is required. The demand is that if universities are claiming to be inclusive and diverse then their courses and curriculums should reflect this.

Common Good First - Digital Storytelling for Social Innovation (CGF) (574065-EPP-1-2016-1-UK-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The Common Good First (CGF) project was set up to establish a digital network (online directory) to display social projects through means of digital storytelling in South Africa. Consequently, the project aims to address the 'digital divide', as identified by the country's National Development Plan 2030 (2013), by supporting the growth of e-skills among community groups. In order to achieve this the project would create two modules of digital storytelling and developing digital labs three South African provinces, focusing on rural, peri-urban⁶ and urban locations.

The online directory 'Common Good First platform' currently includes 116 profiles of community projects and 50 digital stories in the fields of health and wellbeing, housing and environment and youth and education and is increasing because of the work of the labs in South Africa. The social innovators are thus addressing inequalities and societal challenges identified in South Africa.

5.2. Institutions Located in less developed regions

South Africa's historically disadvantaged universities such as the Western Cape, Fort Hare, Zululand, Walter Sisulu, Limpopo and Venda lag behind the historically strong 'white' universities regarding funding, student numbers and the capacity to deliver quality education.

The CBHE projects create partnerships between the historically advantaged and disadvantaged universities in South Africa have been created and consequently increased a broad spectrum of experience and capacity in the consortium.

⁶ The term is used especially in Africa to describe an area immediately adjacent to a city or urban area.

**Enhancing Postgraduate Environments (EPE)
(561914-EPP-1-2015-1-NL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)**

This project includes a mixed partnership between the historically advantaged and disadvantaged universities. This has created forms of co-supervision which contribute to learning and quality for all.

Internationalization and Modernisation Programme for Academics, Leaders and Administrators (IMPALA) (561917-EPP-1-2015-1-BE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project rationale based on the importance of strengthening the **internationalisation strategies** and tools at the four historically disadvantaged South African Universities. The target universities were the University of Limpopo, the University of Fort Hare, the University of Venda and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (the last one being highly operational but having a student body of black students in difficult socio-economic situations).



6. CONCLUSIONS

A first analysis of a small sample of 2015 and 2016 final project reports has shown that CBHE projects have played an important role in the support and the development of the education system in South Africa. The higher education sector is a driving force for the economy and society as a whole and the role of the CBHE action is important as it has a long-term structural effect on the country. Several best practice examples show in an impressive way the benefits that CBHE projects can have on the educational system, HEIs and individuals (academics, administrative university staff, and students).

However, the impact of the CBHE action can be further improved by looking at the challenges that were identified via the sample of final project reports and the monitoring activities (desk monitoring, monitoring missions, cluster meetings) conducted by the Agency. Some of the challenges refer to the CBHE action as a whole, others specifically to South Africa.

6.1. Challenges

- The CBHE action has a large number of **recurrent beneficiaries**, both institutions and individuals. Long term, this leads to a **lack of innovative and creative project ideas** (and few new collaborations) and diminishes the impact of the CBHE action in the Region.
- **Internationalisation strategies** in HEIs are often absent or insufficiently developed. The creation of project consortia often lack a long-term strategic vision for HEI development, and proposals are developed because of existing or recurrent collaborations.
- The participation of **non-academic partners** in CBHE projects is limited and the involvement of private business remains a challenge. Finding mechanisms for the integration of more non-academic partners is vital given their importance for ensuring the relevance of new and updated study programmes for the labour market.
- **Accreditation** is sometimes problematic because it takes a long time and does not allow the running of degree programmes within the eligibility period of the CBHE project.
- **Regional and cross-regional projects** face various administrative and management challenges due to different rules and regulations applicable in different countries. This is particularly true for tendering procedures. On average, one third of the CBHE grant is reserved for the purchase of equipment. Complications and delays in the tendering procedures generate significant implementation problems for the projects and sometimes equipment will only be available at the very end of the project duration.
- The ability to **reach out beyond the initial partnership** needs to be further developed and should become a key priority for the projects. Intensive dissemination of project outcomes and results during and after the project funding period plays an important role. Excellent results should be more highly valued and shared with other HEIs working in the same field and facing the same challenges.

- Proper **involvement of decision-makers and national authorities** (especially for Structural Projects) is lacking for many projects. This is concomitant with a lack of commitment by the national authorities to follow-up and incorporate the CBHE projects and results into their national educational strategies.
- The **sustainability of project results** is often not sufficiently addressed by the consortia, particularly, in public universities. Conversely, for private universities, the sustainability of project results appears to be more effective as private HEIs have managed to attract students with their new study programmes based on a ‘business plan’.

6.2. Recommendations

The analysis of the 2015 CBHE projects, together with the challenges identified, gives rise to the following recommendations for changes and improvements:

- The action should focus more on **targeted structural change** in the Partner Country. The number of applications for **Structural Projects** should be increased in South Africa and have the activities integrated and brought in line with the national priorities of South Africa for the development of their educational systems. The Ministries of Education play a critical role in the upscaling and mainstreaming of CBHE project results and adequate measures should be established to make them aware of the potential of Structural Projects in a national context.
- More HEIs must adopt a **strategic approach** and focus their participation in the CBHE action on projects that are in line with their medium and long-term priorities and development goals. This ‘strategic interest’ orientation will then lead to better support of the CBHE projects (e.g. on the part of the international office and finance department), the encouragement of dialogue between projects implemented at the same HEI and above all to better project sustainability following the end of their funding period.
- The **institutional capacity of Partner Country HEIs** to manage international projects needs to be further developed. Although there has been a positive evolution of institutions taking charge of CBHE project coordination, the Partner Country HEIs need more training and support to develop innovative project ideas, to submit competitive proposals and to ensure high quality in the implementation and management of international projects.
- The **diversity of HEIs** and individuals in the CBHE action needs to increase. The CBHE action focuses on high value projects and this favours experienced (often recurrent) and large HEIs. The ‘entry barriers’ for smaller institutions and newcomers are high. One way to counterbalance this challenge would be to dedicate a share of the budget to smaller projects covering certain types of activities only (i.e. staff training activities, university professor exchanges, module updates, summer schools, etc.). However, such an approach is more labour-intensive to manage from EACEA, and could require the introduction of simplified funding modalities (e.g. lump sums) and a simplified or external monitoring of project activities.
- The **involvement of private business and relevant stakeholders** (e.g. Chambers of Commerce, professional associations, etc.) in CBHE projects needs to be increased when the connection to the world of work is important and students need relevant labour market skills. New approaches should be developed to ensure significant participation, both quantitatively

and qualitatively, of companies active in the Region. Mandatory involvement of non-academic partners could be envisaged, where appropriate.

- **Students, and student associations** should take part in CBHE projects (were relevant) from the very beginning. This would enrich project development and implementation and allow a better match between project outcomes and student expectations and interests. This would also contribute to guaranteeing project sustainability, particularly for curriculum development projects.
- The **inclusion of more young academics** in CBHE projects would provide them with opportunities for continuous professional development and career options, and contribute to the fight against the brain drain.
- **More academics from Programme Countries** should visit the Partner Country HEIs to teach as **guest lecturers** in graduate and postgraduate courses (BA, MA and doctoral programmes) within the curriculum projects. This would improve knowledge transfer and enforce ties and networks between institutions, as well as provide more visibility and credibility vis-à-vis the student body.





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Erasmus+

Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) action

Regional Report South Africa

Resume

This report is based on the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency's evaluation of the final project reports of the first CBHE projects selected for funding in 2015 and 2016 . A total of 138 projects received funding and 88 projects submitted their final reports during 2019, The conclusions of this report are based on 6 final reports that have been submitted in the region South Africa. . These results are therefore based on a small sample of completed CBHE projects and should be considered preliminary, for final review at a later stage.