

Press Release



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European Union pledges support for academic mobility programmes

12th May, 2015



Head of Cooperation at the EU, Mr. Theo Hoorntje (Right) at the RUFORUM tent during the exhibition attended to by Mrs. Uwituze Solange and Mrs. Mkandawire Sylvia (left) from the RUFORUM Secretariat.

The European Union recognizes knowledge and innovations as key ingredients for economic and social development. At a recent visibility event held at Makerere University in Uganda, Mr. Theo Hoorntje, Head of Cooperation at the European Union delegation to Uganda, pledged support to higher education through academic mobility between countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific regions including exchange programmes with academic institutions in Europe.

This event, reinforced the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM)'s role as a dynamic regional platform fostering collaboration, coordination and learning amongst its member universities. Through the exhibition, various European Union funded projects showcased their interventions in the areas of institutional capacity building, innovative and collaborative graduate mentorships programs, enhanced research linked to farmer needs and universities working with communities to address development issues.

“International mobility of students is the most widespread and powerful vehicle for internationalisation for higher education, and more and more students are willing to gain international experiences” said Mr. Hoorntje while addressing the audience. In its strategy, the European Union recognises the importance of people – to – people contact.

“Students and staff mobility is at the heart of the European Union higher education programmes, which help universities set up partnerships to manage mobility, and provide scholarships such as under the Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme¹ and the Erasmus+²”.
Mr. Hoorntje.

Since 2004, more than 100 Ugandan students and staff have benefited from the Erasmus Mundus program to undertake masters and PhD studies or to teach, benefiting from full scholarships. The scholarships help to develop a highly-trained academic pool with international experience benefiting from the high quality courses and professional skills. At the event, Ms. Lorenza Gambacorta, the Programme Manager Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission from Brussels made a public presentation about the Erasmus+ opportunities available for Africa.

During his speech Dr. Moses Osiru, the Deputy Executive Secretary of RUFORUM thanked the European Union for the support to higher education in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific region, and also with Europe. Through this support over the last seven years, RUFORUM has participated in several initiatives, representing an investment of over 20 million Euros. Support has been from Higher Education Linkages Program (EDULINK-5 projects), the ACP Science and Technology (3 projects) and more recently, the Intra ACP Nyerere academic mobility program (6).

Dr. Osiru highlighted in particular the Intra-ACP Mobility program that has facilitated RUFORUM to support mobility of close to 100 PhD and 200 MSc students within the RUFORUM Network, moving African students from all ends of the continent. He emphasized the important role Academic mobility for staff and students plays in meeting Uganda’s vision and at the continental level, African Union Agenda 2063. “This is the future of higher education” he said.

At the event, Dr. Osiru also presented recommendations by European institutions led by Agrinatura and African Institutions led by RUFORUM on the Intra-ACP Academic Mobility programme to the Head of Cooperation, European Union.

¹ The Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme offer scholarships for students and academics from Uganda to carry out studies, research or teaching in another African country.

² Erasmus+ offer scholarships to carry out studies at a range of academic levels in European universities. One can study for a part of their degree in Europe or follow an entire degree in Europe (http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/discover/index_en.htm).

Notes to editors

*Higher education for Africa**

- Africa needs to produce future leaders who will promote better governance and management in all sectors, and facilitate innovative solutions to society's problems.
- Universities are best placed to provide the trained labour force needed as the drive for knowledge-based economies takes hold on the continent through producing more PhDs and more 'industry-ready' graduates
- Postgraduate enrolment both in master's and PhD programmes in Africa rose from 6.9 per cent of the total enrolment in 1997 to 9.3 per cent by 2014 as a result of educational reforms.

* Source: Sci Dev Net. Article: *Making higher education work for Africa: Facts and figures* by Irene Friesenhahn.

RUFORUM

Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is a dynamic regional network of 46 member universities operating in 22 countries that fosters collaboration, coordination, training and research amongst member universities. Its vision is to help build a vibrant agricultural sector. We help African universities produce high-performing graduates and high-quality research, responsive to the demands of African farmers for innovation to generate sustainable livelihoods and national economic development. To share our work, call +256-417-713-300, email j.apio@ruforum.org, or visit us online at www.ruforum.org or on our blog at <http://blog.ruforum.org/>

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