

ENRICH in AFRICA: A new EU-Africa network, building capacity for European and African innovation actors, officially kicks-off activities

3 February 2021 | **ENRICH in Africa (EiA) – An online platform for supporting the EU-African Innovation Community officially kicked-off its activities in an online meeting in January. EiA, funded through the European Commission’s Horizon 2020 programme and coordinated by Steinbeis 2i in Germany, brings together many key stakeholders from the innovation landscape of Europe and Africa to address the needs for capacity development of incubators, accelerators, and entrepreneurs in both regions. The project aims to set-up a network of incubators and accelerators and build capacity for the delivery of quality services for European and African innovators as well as support the exchange of knowledge and co-creation activities between the two continents. The project will be extending the existing ENRICH network, also present in the USA, Brazil, and China, alongside the additional India network which also kicked off at the end of last year. In its initial phase, EiA activity will primarily connect European and African innovators to the high-quality services provided by the incubators and acceleration programmes engaged in the pilot phase.**

“We are thrilled to be able to work with such a strong group of partners to add additional value to the innovation ecosystem of Europe and Africa. There is such a great amount of work already taking place in this space, but we see a real value in being able to raise the capacity of such actors as well as connect the two regions to each other. There is much to be done but we have the right team in place to achieve great results.” Eduardo Herrmann, Member of Management Board at Steinbeis 2i GmbH-EiA Coordinating Partner.

Recent years have revealed an increased focus and interest with regards to the innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems across Africa. Such focus has covered the academic, political, and of course business environment, looking to enhance cultural, technological, and economic advantages. To best explore and engage with this environment, the European Union (EU), through the European Commission (EC) and alongside the African Union (AU) and individual European and African organisations, have been active in designing several initiatives to best explore the current situation and investment requirements needed to capitalise on opportunities that exist, for the mutual benefit of African and European countries.

This work has generated scientific cooperation topics that are now active within Horizon 2020 calls, aiming to further support the development of EU – Africa intercultural and research exchange for the benefit of both continents. The outcome has been to develop initiatives and projects that can build on this political momentum and drive the engagement of the innovation community. With this background in mind, the EiA project comes into play by engaging and working in partnership with a wide variety of successful players in both the EU and Africa community.

As part of the EU-Africa innovation cooperation efforts, with an initial €3,5M funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, EiA is in line with the Commissions’ goal to stimulate inter-continental cooperation and further develop the EU-African Innovation Community.

EiA will be delivering capacity-building services for its members, the incubators and accelerators across Europe and Africa, promoting networking opportunities, developing high-quality soft-landing services, and fostering incubation and acceleration support that strengthens innovators’ capacity to establish themselves in the other continent. EiA will also help innovators reach out to investors,

innovation centres, and partners in the European and African ecosystems to develop business creation coupled with market development, increasing chances for successful outcomes.

These actions aim to therefore increase productivity and generate inclusive employment across Europe and Africa. The EiA programme will work with current actors within the local economies of countries across the continents, including public institutions, academia, business support organisations, investors, and corporates. The activities aim to facilitate entrepreneurial solutions and innovations from all walks of life, enabling scaling by co-designing EU-Pan-African programmes that facilitate knowledge and technology transfers between Europe and Africa. EiA will generate a networking ecosystem where cross-fertilisation and best-practice exchanges among participants will occur naturally.

EiA Champions and EiA Centre

Utilising a co-creation philosophy, EiA is bringing together incubators and accelerators across the EU and Africa to act as Champions for EiA. The programmes being designed for these organisations will ensure quality standards and commercial opportunities that aim to support the local economies in which they reside.

A key element of the concept is the focus on capacity building and learning for incubators and accelerators for them to be able to offer high-quality services to innovators. Culminating in the set-up of the EiA centre, the project will provide an ever-present digital backbone, as the central point for all EiA activities, offering services for a wide range of stakeholders in the EU-Africa innovation ecosystem.

The EiA Centre will offer a wide range of valuable services, including:

For our Champion organisations:

- Bootcamp trainings
- Virtual academy
- Inter-continental twinning programme and staff exchanges
- Mentoring programme
- Access to best practice tools
- Promotional activities
- Support to access clients
- Shared revenue activities
- Annual Champions Gathering

For our entrepreneurs

- Open Innovation Challenges
- Acceleration programmes
- Scaling programmes
- Access to tools including the community platform
- Partner search
- Access to finance support
- E-pitching session
- Webinars
- Learning Expeditions

Alongside this, EiA will be organising a range of activities to support the wide range of innovations facilitators across this ecosystem, such as the Annual Congress which will highlight capacity building opportunities, fostering policy dialogue and recognise best practice, the Learning Expeditions to enable organisations to explore new local markets as well as offer local market development to the host cities, and the community platform to ensure connectivity across all EiA stakeholders.

EiA Consortium

The consortium is composed by **Steinbeis 21** (Germany), **Impact Hub** (Austria), **European Business and Innovation Centre Network** (EBN – Belgium), **Sociedade Portuguesa De Inovação** (SPI - Portugal) **Agorize** (France), **Bondy Innovation** (France), **Co-Creation Hub** (Nigeria), **I-Hub** (Kenya), **Methys** (South Africa), **Tech Accelerator** (South Africa), **Science Technology and Innovation Policy Research Organisation** (Tanzania), **BPI France** (France).

ENRICH Network

ENRICH is a global network of centres and hubs that promotes the internationalisation of European science, technology, and innovation. Promoted by the European Commission, the ENRICH network offers services to connect European research, technology, and business organisations with global frontrunner innovation markets like Brazil, China, the US, India and now, Africa. More information: <https://www.enrichcentres.eu/>

More information

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