

Delegates from the European University Institute, created by several European Union countries, recently completed their first tour in Africa in Kampala, the capital of Uganda, where they met partners to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest. The Institute provides training to young Africans from across the continent.

A collaboration among equals

As I await departure at Uganda's Entebbe Airport I see a large group of veiled women in identical bright blue t-shirts. They inform me that they are headed for a Gulf state and a job Uganda does not have on offer. The story of these women is a story of opportunity and sacrifice, as they leave their homes for employment in another country's maid service industry and in search of a better future.

This is one of the many faces of labour migration; it is also a story of education, national policies and international agreements against the background of our global economy.

The airport encounter is a fitting end to a fascinating week of our discussions with African partners and international stakeholders in the Ugandan capital of Kampala. The main issue on the agenda was how to better manage migration across national borders in respect of people's rights and dreams of a better future.

Migration is a prime example of a transnational issue. While it is a global phenomenon, a large share of migration flows is regional. Around 21m documented Africans live in another African country, but the real figure is probably higher as reliable data from some countries is missing.

At the European University Institute (EUI), a teaching and research institution created by a number of EU countries and based in Florence,

Italy, we have decades of experience training young researchers and policymakers in the social sciences and the humanities.

They regularly interact with leading scholars and practitioners in a setting which is free from a dominant national perspective. The founding countries established the EUI in 1972 "to foster the advancement of learning in fields of particular interest for the development of Europe". But the defining challenges of our times, be it migration, climate change or global health, are no longer European issues only; they have global dimensions.

We must therefore build a common agenda spanning across continents. In this perspective, the partnership with Africa is of the utmost importance. The agenda is informed by the Africa-EU Partnership established by the African Union and the EU.

Our policymakers require sound evidence-based knowledge to find better solutions to the world's key challenges. To this end, the EUI is strengthening ties with universities and international organisations in Africa, including the African Union.

We seek collaboration among equals where Africa and Europe advance knowledge together, while

Guest Op-ed

By Professor
Renaud
Dehousse



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seeking to bridge the worlds of academia and policymaking.

These partnerships build on joint research and teaching by academics. For example, the work of our Migration Policy Centre with the Uganda Council on Foreign Relations and Makerere University on the governance of migration. Bringing together the brightest minds with diverse backgrounds and research experiences enriches our understanding of complex cross-border issues.

Life-changing experience

Africa has the world's youngest population, with 70% of people in sub-Saharan Africa under the age of 30. The EUI attaches particular importance to the training of the next generation of policy leaders. With the support of the EU, we run a dedicated training and skills development programme for young African policy experts.

During their stay in Florence, these Young African Leaders from across the African continent immerse themselves in discussions on climate change, peace and security, gender issues, migration, health, sustainable finance and much more. They visit Brussels and Berlin and participate in seminars with prominent African and European speakers and work on their leadership, writing and presentation skills. According to the first cohort who joined us in 2021, it is a life-changing experience which gives



Above: Prof Dehousse (r) speaking during the recent conference on migration in Kampala organised by the European University Institute and the Uganda Council on Foreign Relations

Returning to the issue of migration, one of the recommendations of a new report presented at our Kampala event with the Uganda Council on Foreign Relations is the development of inclusive collaborative platforms for African scholars and policymakers to engage with one another.

Countries can learn a lot from each other's migration experiences and strategies. And together, African states will develop better solutions to the cross-border dimensions of international challenges.

Our Institute is also proud to partner with African and international organisations in the recent creation of the African School of Regulation (ASR), based on the model of our Florence School of Regulation, specialised in energy regulation.

This new School will contribute to the regulation of, and better access to the African energy sector in support of the continent's socio-economic development and environmental sustainability. Thus, whilst in the start-up phase, know-how based on the European experience will inform the development of training programmes, it will be crucial too for the latter to be tailored to respond to the needs of an African public.

The Kampala trip marks the EUI's first institutional visit to Africa. I view it as the starting point of a long journey towards joint research and teaching initiatives on Africa co-developed with our partners.

In the process, we will get to know each other better, identify overlapping priorities and find common ground to interact with policymakers. Together we will discover what a stronger partnership will require. As of now, my colleagues and I are looking forward to welcome more African learners and scholars in Florence to develop a common body of knowledge on issues relevant to Africa. Likewise, more European scholars will travel to Africa. Let's connect academia and policymaking to ensure a sustainable future for Africa and for Europe. ■

Prof Renaud Dehousse is the president of the European University Institute

the fellows access to a broad network of experts across both continents.

One fellow joining us in Kampala for the training programme on migration said the time in Florence helped her to see issues in a broader African context, rather than from just the perspective of her own country. That is exactly the ambition of our School of Transnational Governance: broadening the horizon of the next generation of leaders who will have to tackle many policy challenges at pan-African and global level.

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