



The first Trans-continental Networking Academy for African and European Digital Innovation Hubs.

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AfriConEU Project kicks off!

AfriConEU is a project funded by the **European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation** programme under Grant Agreement [No. 101016687](#). It is the first Trans-continental Networking Academy for African and European **Digital Innovation Hubs** to support African and European DIHs in capacity building, knowledge sharing, networking, collaboration, joint projects, and venture development. The Consortium launched the project on the **1st of February 2021**, and it will last for 36 months until the **31st of January 2024**.

AfriConEU is being implemented by eleven partners representing Digital Innovation Hubs, Universities, Consultancies, and Civil Society Organizations from five European and four African countries. The project is coordinated by [INOVA+](#), Portugal and the partners are [Emerging Communities Africa \(ECA\)](#), Nigeria; [Youthmakers Hub \(YMH\)](#), Greece; [ASSOCIAÇÃO PORTO BUSINESS SCHOOL \(PBS\)](#), Portugal; [OUTBOX \(U\) LIMITED](#), Uganda; [DPIXEL SRL \(dpixel\)](#), Italy; [STIMMULI FOR SOCIAL CHANGE \(Stimmuli\)](#), Greece; [INOVACIJSKO TEHNOLOSKI GROZD MURSKASOBOTA \(ITC\)](#), Slovenia; [Buni Innovation Hub](#), Tanzania; [Africa Technology Business Network \(ATBN\)](#), the United Kingdom, and [Hapa Space](#), Ghana.

The project essentially strengthens the digital innovation ecosystems in Africa by targeting existing Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) and supporting them through capacity building and networking activities. African DIHs are playing a central role in the development of digital entrepreneurship. By raising their capacities to tackle the challenges, they will be more effective in driving digital innovation forward. The project will develop, test, and validate the **AfriConEU Networking Academy**, an innovative mechanism for connecting and sharing best practices, experiences, and resources between DIHs in Africa and between DIHs in Africa and the EU, in a comprehensive, replicable, and self-sustaining way. In perfect alignment with the [Africa-Europe Alliance](#) goals, the AfriConEU project aims to enhance the capacity of African DIHs to accelerate the digital transformation of the African economy and society. The AfriConEU project adopts a **Community of Practice** approach. It combines it with **Collaborative Design Techniques** to bring together key stakeholders from both continents and engage them in the co-creation of the flagship programmes and the sub-programs of the **AfriConEU Networking Academy**. Through two flagship programmes, the AfriConEU Networking Academy will empower and enable African DIHs to best serve their local industry, boost their Startup ecosystem and empower the youth population with the necessary skills to thrive in a digitalized world. The main objective of the project is to **develop the first Networking Academy between African and European DIHs** with the aim to:

1. **facilitate knowledge and experience sharing,**
2. **drive the development of mutually beneficial partnerships, and**
3. **support the creation of collective projects to boost the digital economy, empowering youth and women and fostering innovation and growth.**

To start with, AfriConEU's kick-off meeting took place on the **9th of February**, digitally, due to the COVID-19 restrictions. The Project partners exchanged details regarding the Work Packages assigned to each of them and they discussed the future steps of the project. Moreover, the Consortium interacted with the European Commission's representatives and discussed the future steps. The EU Representatives from **DG DEVCO, DG Growth, and DG Research** provided insights on ongoing initiatives. The partners attended presentations on current EU initiatives in Africa to create synergies



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and use the results developed in these projects' framework. The [Policy and Regulation Initiative for Digital Africa \(PRIDA\)](#), the [Africa Europe Innovation Partnership \(AEIP\)](#), the [African Continental Free Trade Area \(AfCFTA\)](#), the [Enterprise Europe Network](#), and the EU policy initiative on Innovation Hubs have been presented and discussed.

It has been decided that a meeting will take place once a month to monitor the project's progress with the active participation of all team members of the Consortium. Moreover, AfriConEU's partners organized online meetings with initiatives funded under the same call of Horizon 2020 to expand the project's network and discuss future synergies. More specifically, a call with the [DIGILOGIC](#) project took place virtually on the 30th of March 2021 and a call with the [HUBiquitous](#) project took place on the 15th of April 2021. One of AfriConEU's milestones so far was the successful participation in the [Emerging Valley Online Edition](#) on the 7th and 8th of April 2021. The partners interacted with the event's speakers, Start-ups, Tech Hubs, and Investors from Africa and Europe. The event has been of great importance, as it allowed the project to more efficiently be communicated, solidify its position in a dynamic network, and, more importantly, become part of a new, innovative business ecosystem.

AfriConEU will launch research, coordinated by ATBN, to map and analyze the digital innovation ecosystems in Nigeria, Uganda, Ghana, and Tanzania to get a deep understanding of the different stakeholders, challenges, and opportunities on the ground. Roundtables discussions have already been planned in Ghana and Uganda in April and May 2021, accordingly.

You can follow the future developments of AfriConEU on its [Website](#), or simply by subscribing to the [Newsletter](#). Very interesting content and events will follow. Suppose you are a Digital Innovation Hub, an Entrepreneur, an Investor, an Institution in the field of digital skills, or any other Stakeholder interested in taking part at some stage of the project. In that case, you can [contact](#) our team at africoneu@inova.business.



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