

Cape Town - 23 June 2023

EU and AU representatives inaugurated the ENRICH in Africa Center in Cape Town to build and strengthen bridges between European and African innovation ecosystems

Building Networks Between Africa and Europe

Imagine a world without technology. Our ability to communicate and make timely, strategic connections, where time is of essence, would be severely hampered.

This is why building communication, networking and innovation bridges between nations and continents is critical, to keep the gateways open for business so economies continue to thrive and effectively tackle present and future challenges. While there are no physical bridges or submarine tunnels that connect Africa to Europe, there certainly are bridges of mutual understanding, respect, coordination and collaboration. These bridges don't emerge overnight, as it takes time to create, build, nurture and strengthen them.

This is exactly what the newly inaugurated [ENRICH in Africa Center](#) aims to do, building network nodes in the African and European innovation ecosystems, in ways that bring European and African changemakers and entrepreneurs together across different thematic areas: from green transition to health, from innovation and technology to education and training.

The EiA Center has been developed within the framework of the "ENRICH in Africa (EiA)" project funded by the EU's "Framework Programme" Horizon 2020, predecessor to the current "Horizon Europe" Framework Programme, the largest funding initiative for Research and Innovation in the world.

ENRICH in Africa Center Inauguration

The EiA Center was officially inaugurated on 14 June 2023 at an event attended by European Union and African Union dignitaries, innovation ecosystem builders, startups, corporations and policy makers. Hosted by ENRICH in Africa Center directors Eduardo Herrmann (Head of Department: Smart Manufacturing and Sustainability at Steinbeis Europa Zentrum, Germany), Christophe Viarnaud (CEO of Methys Group, South Africa) and Philip Kiracofe (CEO of Startupbootcamp AfriTech, South Africa); the inauguration ceremony took place at the French South African Tech Labs (FSAT Labs) in Century City in Cape Town. The event was officiated by (European Commission's Director for Global Approach and International Cooperation in Research & Innovation), Ms Maria Cristina Russo; South Africa's Department of Science and Innovation's Deputy Director-General for International Cooperation and Resources, Mr Daan Du Toit; the EU Ambassador to South Africa, H.E. Ms Sandra Kramer, and the Principal Scientific Officer at the African Union Commission's Department of



EiA is funded under H2020 Grant Agreement No 101004709.

Education, Science and Technology, Dr Monica Ebele Idinoba. Together, they unveiled the new ENRICH in Africa Center plaque and simultaneously cut a symbolic red ribbon in front of it and officially declared the Center open.

Building Bridges for African and European Collaboration

The Center's founding partners include key innovation players from both Africa and Europe, coordinated by the Germany company Steinbeis 2i, coordinator of the EiA project. Our key mission is to strengthen the EU-Africa tech and innovation ecosystems, supporting innovators collaboration, connecting incubators and accelerators, investors, corporates and policymakers, with the aim of enabling positive social impact and green business.

During the event, Christophe Viarnaud, welcomed the audience and said "together with 12 partners and the support of the EU Commission, we have worked relentlessly over the past two and a half years to scale the ENRICH in Africa project into a Center to increase collaboration and partnerships between key stakeholders in the European and African tech and innovation ecosystems."

The 12 partners who are part of the EiA Center are: Steinbeis Europa Zentrum (Germany); Methys;; Startupbootcamp AfriTech (South Africa); Bpifrance (France); Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação (SPI, Portugal); Bond'innov (France); iHub (Kenya); Impact Hub (Austria); Co-Creation Hub (Nigeria); Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Research Organization (Tanzania); European Business and Innovation Centre Network (Belgium) and Agorize (France).

Viarnaud also introduced Ms Zandile Ntuli, the newly appointed EiA Center manager, who has a Bachelor in Engineering and is currently a Masters in Business Administration candidate. A South African citizen with a passion for innovation and technology, Ntuli has extensive experience in the petroleum industry where she worked for different companies such as BP and Astron Energy before entering the venture capital landscape. Previously the Entrepreneur in Residence at Savant Venture Fund and Technology Incubator, Ntuli said her mission is to grow the EiA Center network in order to foster growth between African and European innovators.

In the opening address, European Commission Director for Global Approach and International Cooperation in Research & Innovation, Ms Maria Cristina Russo highlighted "how important it is for European and African innovators to collaborate to find new, common solutions to solve difficult challenges that the world is facing, which have no borders. The new-born EiA Center provides for an unprecedented, tangible opportunity to do so and majorly contribute to the upcoming implementation of the brand-new AU-EU Innovation Agenda".



Deputy Director-General for International Cooperation and Resources at the South African Department of Science and Innovation, Mr Daan Du Toit said “partnerships cannot be taken for granted as the right partnerships play a critical role in paving the way for people in different regions to come together and create solutions to different challenges.”

The EU Ambassador to South Africa, H.E. Ms Sandra Kramer spoke about the “importance of forging powerful connections between Europe and Africa that advances each region's ability to build bridges in mutually beneficial ways.”

Principal Scientific Officer at the African Union Commission's Department of Education, Science and Technology, Dr Monica Ebele Idinoba shared her insights on how European and African innovation stakeholders can together advance each region's fast growing tech ecosystems.

Philip Kiracofe spoke then about the incredible opportunity that tech poses to Africa's growth. “We have an incredible opportunity to change the world as Africa is experiencing a huge jump in population growth and is positioned to become the youngest continent with the world's largest workforce by 2030. That makes us the perfect place for new growth and innovations.”

Eduardo Herrmann spoke about the importance of building and maintaining both diplomatic and multi-stakeholder community relations between Africa and Europe. He said, “The ENRICH in Africa Center is a hub providing services to entrepreneurs and innovators. These services include access to the EiA community, access to investors, networking opportunities, innovation financing and advisory support services.”

Creating Networks for Women in Tech Innovators

The institutional inauguration of the Center was followed by a “Meet and Greet” session, featuring presentations of ten women-led and woman-owned Research & Innovation initiatives from South Africa. Women entrepreneurs and researchers engaging in the session were: Michelle Rachman (IQPay), Bronwyn Laird (Arable Grow), Serisha Barrat (Go Agro & Lawyered Up), Kelley Rowe (Brownie Points), Tebogo Mokwena (Akiba Digital), Nicky Swartz (Spoon Money), Chantelle ten Napel Wilson (Virtual Drive SA), Kirsten Laaks (Everflo), Dr Thilona Arumurgam (L'Oreal-UNESCO For Women in Science Laureate), and Boitumelo Mabakachaba (L'Oreal-UNESCO For Women in Science Laureate).

This “Meet and greet” session showcased the vibrancy of the South African innovation ecosystem and the EiA Center's ability to connect African and European tech innovators to one another and to key



role players through its innovative, strategic collaborative network-approach that build bridges between Africa and Europe and create real value.

For more information about the [ENRICH in Africa Center](#), please contact Zandile Ntuli, the ENRICH in Africa Center Manager at: z.ntuli@enrichinafrica.com

More Information about Enrich in Africa Center

The ENRICH in Africa Center is a network connecting European and African innovation ecosystems as an outcome of the ENRICH in Africa project, of which the Center itself has become a third party.


 ENRICH in Africa has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101004709.

Photo Attached:

File Name: ENRICH in Africa Center Inauguration Ceremony

Photo Credit: Ortus Brand Institute

Caption: (L-R) Principal Scientific Officer at the African Union Commission's Department of Education, Science and Technology, Dr Monica Ebele Idinoba; EU Ambassador to South Africa, H.E. Ms Sandra Kramer; Deputy Director-General for International Cooperation and Resources at the South African Department of Science and Innovation, Mr Daan Du Toit and European Commission Director for Global Approach and International Cooperation in Research & Innovation, Ms Maria Cristina Russo simultaneously cut the red ribbon at the ENRICH in Africa Center Inauguration Ceremony and declare the Center open.

Video Attached:

File Name: Gilitics Media EiA Center video

Video Credit: Gilitics Media

Caption: European Union and African Union dignitaries officially open ENRICH in Africa Center in a symbolic ribbon cutting ceremony.

