

FOURTH INTERREGIONAL DIALOGUE

EDUCATION AND DEVELOPEMENT

LATIN AMERICA, THE CARIBBEAN, AFRICA,
EUROPE AND THE ARAB WORLD

CONCEPT NOTE

Jointly Organised by:



With the Support of:



Hosted by:



1. Background and rationale

The interregional [Dialogue on Education and Development process](#) was launched in [Barcelona \(2022\)](#)¹ to foster systematic cooperation between Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa, recognising that shared histories, cultures and common challenges provide a strong foundation for deeper ties and joint action. It has evolved since into a sustained political and institutional architecture increasingly linking other regions, grounded in a polycentric, multilingual and inclusive approach to cooperation. The first three editions, [Buenos Aires \(2023\)](#), [Addis Ababa \(2024\)](#) and [Bogotá \(2025\)](#), consolidated a shared conceptual, ethical and political framework for interregional cooperation in education, science and innovation, articulated in [A Map of Interregional Knowledge](#).

These previous events provided effective spaces to discuss, advance and connect key African Union policy frameworks, particularly [CESA](#) (Continental Education Strategy for Africa) and [STISA](#) (Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa), with Latin American and Caribbean priorities and European cooperation instruments, allowing regions to identify practical intersections rather than abstract complementarities. In parallel, the process has strengthened collaboration with multilateral organisations, including UNESCO, notably through the 2025 Bogotá edition held in cooperation with the OWDS (UNESCO-associated Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World), reinforcing the Dialogue's commitment to gender equality and evidence-informed policy. European cooperation instruments and development partners have accompanied the process, including institutions such as the DAAD, VLIROUS and other 'Team Europe' members, as well as subnational governments such as the Government of Catalonia, demonstrating sustained commitment to interregional collaboration. The Dialogue is also engaging additional partners, including UNESCO institutes and relevant organizations in China, as contributors to a more polycentric cooperation ecosystem. This broadening strengthens coalition-building, diversified cooperation modalities and mutual learning across regions and levels of government.

Hosted by the African Union Commission, the [4th Interregional Dialogue on Education and Development](#) is conceived as a key operational milestone within a long-term interregional process, and as a practical contribution to renewed multilateralism at a time when it is under strain.

Moreover, IRD 2026, which engages the Association of Arab Universities (ArRU) as well, complements the [Pact for the Mediterranean](#)—especially its People pillar—by translating priorities on higher education, skills/TVET, and research and innovation into co-created interregional initiatives linking the Mediterranean, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The IRD offers a strategic convening space at the crossroads of Africa, the Arab region, Europe and other regions of the South. Hosting the 4th Dialogue responds to the need for a more expanded and connected interregional architecture. IRD 2026 marks a pivotal moment to translate principles,

¹ Benefitting of the precedent of the [AECHE \(Arab European Conferences in Higher Education\) process](#) (2012-2018) on Higher Education.

priorities and commitments into concrete instruments, coordinated actions and implementation pathways, with a strong focus on delivery, ownership and measurable impact.

In an increasingly fragmented global context, the IRD is presented as a solution-oriented policy platform of equals to address shared development challenges through joint action, mutual accountability and measurable delivery. IRD 2026 therefore poses a practical and political question: *how can regions act jointly, as equals, to transform knowledge into public value and development outcomes?*

2. Co-organization and political articulation

The 4th Dialogue will be jointly co-organized by:

The African Union Commission, the Republic of Uruguay, OBREAL, the African Association of Universities (AAU), and the Association of Arab Universities

In partnership with DAAD, VLIRUOS (Belgium), UNESCO-INRULED, UNESCO, the Government of Catalonia, and IDRC Canada which form part of the programming committee.

Date: The dates for the Dialogue are *13-17 December 2026*

The dialogue will be hosted by the African Union Commission at the Addis Ababa Headquarters.

3. Strategic objectives

The Dialogue will pursue three interlinked objectives:

- a) From Commitments to Implementation: Advance interregional policy instruments for inclusive green, digital transitions.
- b) Governing Knowledge Transformation: Strengthen higher education and research systems through cooperation, coordination and accountability.
- c) A Polycentric Agenda for Sustainable Innovation: Align strategies, partnerships and financing across regions for measurable outcomes.

4. Focus areas for action

1) Track 1 — Green and digital transitions with territorial impact - Contributes to national priorities on green innovation financing and the governance/deployment of emerging technologies, including digital transformation and AI.

2) Track 2 — Interregional knowledge connectivity- Contributes to national directions on developing research & innovation human resources, sustainable academic networks and strengthening HEIs' innovation capabilities and technology transfer linkages

3) Track 3 — Inclusion, cohesion and an expanded interregional architecture - Contributes to national emphasis on HEIs' developmental role for inclusive growth and quality of life.

5. Methodological approach & expected outcomes

The 4th IRD will adopt a results-oriented and delivery-focused approach designed to translate political convergence into implementable cooperation. It will combine high-level ministerial sessions—aimed at endorsement, policy alignment and the confirmation of shared commitments—with structured operational working groups tasked with converting priorities into concrete actions, including timelines, responsible actors and indicative resource needs. Building on lessons and initiatives emerging from previous Dialogues, the programme will showcase pilot initiatives and cooperation instruments, assessed against scalability and transferability criteria, and producing concise outputs per track to enable structured follow-up and implementation.

Three types of tracks are expected:

- (i) 'Co-construction' workshops: Hands-on, developing new initiatives, with validated priority actions with defined leads and timelines.
- (ii) Inter-regional practice sharing sessions on concrete initiatives, projects, etc., with potential for scaling or spin-off.
- (iii) Longer pre-event workshops (half or full day) as a showcase activity, which can combine the above types of sessions.

International partners and funding agencies will be invited to propose and co-lead sessions and workshops, under the guidance of the organising committee and in line with the Dialogue's focus areas, ensuring that technical cooperation, knowledge partnerships and financing opportunities are connected to shared priorities and measurable delivery.

6. Participants

- (i) Regional and continental organisations
- (ii) Ministries responsible for education, science and innovation.
- (iii) University associations and higher education institutions.
- (iv) Research councils, funding agencies and international partners.
- (v) Representatives of students, women scientists and community-based actors.