

AU-EU YOUTH LAB UPDATES

ISSUE 2 - JANUARY 2025



IN THIS ISSUE:

→ Turn your ideas into action with the AU-EU Youth Action Lab!
Pg 1

→ YouthConnekt Africa Summit 2024 - A Gathering of Youth Visionaries
Pg 2

→ Pan-African Youth Forum 2024: A Discussion with Africa's Young Leaders
Pg 5



TURN YOUR IDEAS INTO ACTION WITH THE AU-EU YOUTH ACTION LAB!

The AU-EU Youth Action Lab invites young professionals and youth-led initiatives from Africa and Europe to apply for funding to implement impactful ideas addressing global challenges.

By participating, you'll have the opportunity to:

- Implement your own innovative solutions
- Collaborate with peers across continents
- Present your ideas to policy-makers at the African Union and European Union

If you're ready to drive change, connect with peers, and influence global policies, this is your opportunity.

The Youth Action Lab has 4 different grants types:

Each grant will last for a period of 12 or 15 months maximum depending on the grant type.

INNOVATION GRANTS

ENTREPRENEURSHIP GRANTS

REPRESENTATION GRANTS

COOPERATION GRANTS

Find out more and submit your application now!

Visit: <https://aueuyouth.com/grants/>

YOUTHCONNEKT AFRICA SUMMIT 2024 – A GATHERING OF YOUTH VISIONARIES

08-10 November 2024, Kigali, Rwanda

From 08-10 November 2024, Kigali, Rwanda, hosted the 7th YouthConnekt Africa Summit, a monumental event that brought together over 4,000 delegates. These included youth entrepreneurs, leaders, innovators, artists, students, Heads of State, Ministers of Youth, government officials, AU Commission leaders, heads of development partners, international organisations, business leaders, innovation and incubation labs, academia, sports and creative industry leaders, and media representatives from 33 African Member States.



Egumeni Hub at Youth Connekt Summit

The Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate (WGYD) and partners organised a series of youth engagement and empowerment sessions during the 7th edition Youth Connekt Africa Summit 2024, the theme, **“Jobs for Youth Through Innovative Skilling”**.

The Pavilion (Egumeni Hub), a dynamic and empowering space was designed to celebrate and harness the creative potential of African youth. Over the course of the event, participants engaged in a series of transformative activities, including workshops, masterclasses, intergenerational and Mentorship dialogue to advance AU’s Agenda 2063.

Connecting for Socio-Economic Transformation

YouthConnekt Africa is aimed at connecting African youth for socio-economic transformation and most recently, a vehicle to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. It is one of Africa’s largest conveners of youth-focused policy discussions and business initiatives, addressing critical development challenges through ecosystem-building, knowledge-sharing, and continental collaboration.

The summit underscored the necessity of entrepreneurship for many young Africans. With limited job opportunities and economies struggling to support a growing youth population, the entrepreneurial spirit was celebrated as a means to shape individual futures and reimagine the future of communities and the continent as a whole.



Overcoming Financial Barriers

During the summit, there were dynamic sessions including leadership roundtables, spotlight presentations, exchange lounges, and high-level plenaries. Youth engaged with policymakers, business leaders, and innovators, discussing, debating, and determining the future of Africa.

Discussions highlighted the challenges young entrepreneurs face in securing funding due to traditional financial systems demanding collateral, long credit histories, and connections. The summit showcased innovative solutions for inclusive finance, such as youth-friendly products like microloans, grants, and financial literacy programs, providing a glimpse into a more inclusive financial future.



Focus of the 2024 Summit: Jobs for Youth Through Innovative Skilling

Themed “Jobs for Youth Through Innovative Skilling,” the 2024 YouthConnekt Africa Summit focused on equipping young Africans with the skills needed to thrive in the future of work. This theme aligned perfectly with the African Union’s Theme of the Year 2024 – “Educate (and Skill) an African Fit for the 21st Century.”

The six thematic areas that were explored were:

- Skilling and education-to-employment transitions
- Digital and tech innovations in Africa
- Reimagining Africa’s creative industries and sports economy
- Youth innovating the agrifood systems
- Youth mental and sexual reproductive health
- Youth in trade, entrepreneurship and access to finance.

Policy Outcomes for a Brighter Future

Under the theme of jobs for youth through innovative skilling, the summit aimed to achieve several policy outcomes:

1. Comprehensive understanding of youth unemployment: Insights were shared on the root causes, regional disparities, and socio-economic implications of youth underemployment and unemployment in Africa.
2. Informed investments in skills development and job creation: There was emphasis on the support for global partnerships to design skills development programs that are market-relevant and tailored to the diverse needs and aspirations of African youth.
3. Enhanced collaboration and knowledge exchange: The summit fostered a multi-stakeholder approach, creating synergies and coherence in tackling youth unemployment.
4. Showcase successful initiatives: Strategic investments and collaborations in market-driven youth-skilling programs were inspired, with accelerated turnaround times.

AU-EU Youth Lab Programme

A notable feature of the summit was the AU-EU Youth Lab Programme, focusing on advancing youth participation, providing training and capacity building, and supporting youth-led initiatives through financial aid. This program promotes intercultural exchange, tackles poverty and corruption, and addresses climate change, contributing to overall development and peace in Africa and Europe.



Voices from the Summit

Ahunna Eziakonwa, UNDP AA & Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa, emphasised the importance of character building alongside skilling and education: “We have skills that have produced innovations that have been transformative but that has not necessarily led to an equal world.”

President Paul Kagame of Rwanda highlighted the ongoing challenges faced by young people: “Today, just as I experienced what happened when I was 4 years old...why should it be happening now? Why should it happen anywhere in our continent?”

Looking Ahead

The event fostered collaboration between governments, the private sector, and youth, building an ecosystem for developing relevant skills and promoting youth employment across the continent. The conversation continues as Africa’s youth and their supporters work towards ‘The Africa We Want.’

PAN-AFRICAN YOUTH FORUM 2024: A DISCUSSION WITH AFRICA'S YOUNG LEADERS

01-04 November 2024, Oran, Algeria



As the largest demographic group in Africa, the youth are pivotal in driving social, economic, and political change. The Pan-African Youth Forum 2024, held in Oran, Algeria from November 1-4, gathered over 600 young leaders from across the continent under the theme “1 Million Next Level is Knocking: Educate an African Fit for the 21st Century.”

The forum highlighted the need for greater youth participation in policy and decision-making processes in Africa, ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs addressed. The opportunity aimed to celebrate and recognise the contributions of young people to Africa’s development. The core discussions addressed current challenges and opportunities by revisiting the African Youth Charter adopted in July 02, 2006, guided by several agreements, along with it, The New Partnership for Africa’s Development Strategic Framework for Youth Programme of 2004 that works towards youth empowerment and development.

Participants engaged in discussions and activities designed to empower them in education, employment, and entrepreneurship, and to foster youth-led solutions and leadership across the continent.



Discussions and Declarations

The forum's discussions culminated in the draft Oran Declaration, a significant document with input from the youth representatives from different African countries, aimed at addressing key areas pertinent to the development of Africa's youth. These areas included:

- **Education and skills development:** The importance of innovation and digital literacy to prepare young Africans for the demands of the 21st century requires recognising the value of skills for both academic achievement and employment. The declaration calls for member states to adopt these criteria as a basis for merit. Moreover, it proposes that the decade from 2025 to 2035 be declared the African Union Decade of Education, underlining the critical role of education in transforming the lives of young people.
- **Employment and economic opportunities:** Advocating for robust support for youth-led businesses and fostering public-private partnerships to create more job opportunities underscores the promotion of youth volunteerism as a pathway to secure decent employment through volunteering to enhance employability. Additionally, the declaration calls for addressing the issue of brain drain by creating conducive environments for young talents to thrive within the continent and actively supporting youth participation in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to drive economic integration and growth.
- **Youth empowerment and participation:** The promotion and enforcement of the African Youth Charter to ensure the inclusion of young voices in shaping Africa's future. This calls for the acceleration of the ratification and implementation of youth policies across member states, ensuring that these policies are not only adopted but also effectively put into practice. Furthermore, the declaration advocates for the establishment of youth-led accountability mechanisms to oversee the progress of these initiatives. It also highlights the importance of inclusive policies that specifically address the needs of marginalised groups, ensuring that young women and other disadvantaged youth are fully included in development programs and decision-making processes.
- **Health and well-being:** Advocating for the establishment of youth-friendly health systems that are accessible and responsive to the specific needs of young people through universal access to reproductive health services, ensuring that all young people can obtain the care and information they need for their sexual and reproductive health. Encouraging investment in youth-led health research generates innovative solutions to health challenges facing the youth. The discussions highlighted the potential of digital health solutions to improve the accessibility and efficiency of healthcare services, particularly for young people in underserved areas, by leveraging technology to bridge gaps in the health sector.

- **Environmental sustainability:** Recognising the essential role of youth in environmental matters means the incorporation of youth perspectives into national climate policies, ensuring that young people’s voices and innovative ideas are included in the formulation and implementation of these policies. The declaration promotes green entrepreneurship and sustainable practices, encouraging young Africans to engage in environmentally-friendly business ventures and adopt practices that contribute to the long-term health of the planet.
- **Peace, security, and good governance:** The youth’s active inclusion in peacebuilding processes and governance reforms calls for comprehensive strategies to prevent terrorism and address the root causes of conflict, recognising that sustainable peace is closely linked to addressing underlying social, economic, and political issues. The declaration highlights the importance of engaging African youth abroad in the continent’s development agendas, encouraging the diaspora to contribute to peace and prosperity in their home countries. This fosters a more secure, stable, and well-governed Africa, where youth are empowered to lead and shape the future.
- **Digital transformation and innovation:** The need to bridge the digital divide through significant investments in digital infrastructure aims to ensure that all youth, especially those in rural areas, have access to affordable internet and digital resources. This means supporting youth-led startups and innovation hubs, fostering a culture of creativity and technological advancement that can address socio-economic challenges across the continent. Additionally, the integration of digital skills into education systems and the enhancement of cybersecurity measures protects young people from online threats, maximising the potential of the digital economy while ensuring a safe digital environment for the youth.



AU-EU Youth Lab Programme

A notable feature of the forum was the presence of the AU-EU Youth Lab Programme which supports the key areas addressed by young Africans. This programme builds on the success of previous youth cooperation efforts between Africa and Europe, focusing on advancing youth participation, providing training and capacity building, and supporting youth-led initiatives through financial aid.

The sessions by the AU-EU Youth Lab Programme offered the opportunity to share information, discuss and clarify how the programme promotes intercultural exchange, tackles poverty and corruption, and addresses climate change, contributing to the overall development and peace in Africa and Europe. The programme works through enhanced youth engagement, empowerment, and connection, alongside improved intergenerational partnerships at local, national, continental, and cross-continental levels.



Future Expectations

The draft Oran Declaration will be presented for adoption at the upcoming Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union. If adopted, it will mark a significant step towards addressing the issues that affect the youth, aligning with the vision of “the Africa we want.” The forum’s impact extends beyond policy, as it also aims to inspire and empower young Africans to take active roles in shaping their future.

“Giving spaces to young people to express themselves is not enough to engage them. Adults should mentor, share decision making with youth, and involve the marginalised and excluded.” – Rokhaya, Senegal – Voices of Youth.

“We celebrate not only the achievements of African youth, but also their diverse voices and perspectives that drive the Africa that we want.” – Ms Prudence Ngwenya – Director, Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (WGYD) – African Union Commission.

The Pan-African Youth Forum 2024 not only provided a platform for dialogue and collaboration but also laid the groundwork for actionable plans that aim to transform the lives of young Africans and the continent as a whole.



hello@aeuyouth.com
or visit aeuyouth.com

✕     @AUEUYouthLab



Funded by
the European Union



This newsletter has been prepared with the financial assistance of the European Commission. The views expressed herein are those of the consultants and therefore in no way reflects the official opinion of the European Commission.

#AUEUYouthLab