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Comparative Regional Integration Studies

Regional integration in ACP countries: challenges and prospects

NETRIS Final Conference – Addis Ababa University

Addis Ababa, 22 - 24 November 2011



NETRIS is funded by **EDULINK - the ACP-EU Partnership in Higher Education**. EDULINK is a programme financed by the **European Union** and implemented by the **ACP Secretariat**.

NETRIS is coordinated by the **College of Europe/UNU-CRIS** and involves 7 partners and 2 associated institutes.

Call for papers

Deadline for sending the title and abstract (1/2 page): October 10 2011

Deadline for full papers: 11 November, 2011

Background and objectives

The NETRIS Final Conference will be held in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) with the support and full involvement of the School of Economics, Addis Ababa University. This Conference will serve a double purpose. Taking stock of the most relevant contributions made by HEI partners and associates, the conference will open, during three days, 22-24 November 2011, a space for debate on real and pragmatic prospects for regional integration in ACP countries.

In simplified terms, beyond similarities with regional integration processes in other Regions, lessons learned from NETRIS have revealed a number of fairly distinct approaches and toolboxes which explain the specificity of regional integration processes in ACP countries: from a more "holistic, institution-building" approach marked by whether regionalism and regional integration provide a realistic, appropriate window of opportunity for more effective governance and, on the other hand, an "incremental approach" resting on action taken and progress made step-by-step, by consensus.

The different NETRIS activities have reflected these differences, especially under activity area 5 focusing on capacity building and training. It was the case for the three seminars on "*Researching and Advancing the Good Governance Dimension of Regional Integration*" (IIR/UWI, Port of Spain, March 2010), on "*Prospects for Trade and Economic Integration in ACP countries. Challenges facing Regionalism and Regional Integration Arrangements*" (UKZN, Durban, September 2010) and on "*Regional Integration and Migration Policies in ACP Countries*" (UCAD, Dakar, March 2011).

In addition, the Conference of Addis Ababa is also seen as a way to further on engage the HEI network and other stakeholders, including policy makers, on key issues of regional integration,



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forming part of the research programs of the network members. In that sense, the conference will not only be an important space for intellectual debate but also increase the visibility of the network.

In preparing the agenda and gathering the contributions of the HEI stakeholders and selected resources persons, particular attention will be paid to key challenges and possible responses to the different factors explaining the specificity of Regionalism and regional integration processes in ACP countries. Recognizing that each regional integration process involves its own history, backgrounds and dynamics, and cannot be designed in the same way, the focus will rest on what can realistically be done? What is really needed, from different perspectives?

- (a) **Governance and Political leadership forces as determinants to regional integration processes**; constraints deriving from continental and sub-continental/regional initiatives, as well as constraints and obstacles to provide the regional level an effective “legitimation” process;
- (b) Fixing objectives, priorities and a sequence based on the feasibility of each step to be taken **in economic and trade integration**, such as: improvement of data and information, infrastructure, trade facilitation, integration of services markets and related obstacles; mobility of factors of production, effective dispute settlement mechanisms, community financing of solidarity mechanisms; rationalisation and financing of regional institutions;
- (c) **Overlapping and duplication of regional structures in ACP**, proliferation of Institutions between the continental and regional levels; coordination and coherence between national and regional levels: what efforts are needed to rationalize the structures?
- (d) **Involvement of civil society, political parties, social actors in regional integration process in ACP**; obstacles to remove from a top-down approach, seeking a collective support and involvement to regional integration processes.



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