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UNITED NATIONS  
UNIVERSITY  
CRIS

Comparative Regional Integration Studies



## Strengthening Regional Integration Studies in the ACP Countries

### NETRIS



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 25 November 2011

## **TENTATIVE AGENDA**

### **Background and objectives**

**The specific purpose of NETRIS** is to establish and coordinate a network of ACP Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) working within the field of (comparative) regional integration. The overall objectives of the network are (i) to strengthen the research and training capacities of the partners in the field of regional integration studies, (ii) to stimulate mutual learning, shared practices and collective dissemination, and (iii) to encourage policy relevant research. The partner institutions of the network come from the six ACP sub-regions and represent leading institutes in the different regions: Addis Ababa University (AAU) (Ethiopia), Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD) (Senegal), Université de Yaoundé II (IRICUY) (Cameroun), University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), University of South Pacific (USP) (Fiji) and the University of West Indies (UWI) (Trinidad and Tobago). The associates include the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) and Southern Africa Political Economy Series (SAPES) Trust. The applicant is the Belgian based College of Europe in association with the United Nations University – Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS).

**Regional integration** is now widely recognised as a major instrument for development. There is evidence that regional integration processes can contribute to (i) bringing stability (peace and security); (ii) fostering economic sustainable growth and (iii) delivering regional public goods. The ACP countries are faced with regional integration in two ways: by their own regional integration schemes (sometimes even overlapping); and by their negotiations of the Economic Partnership Agreements with the European Commission. There is however a dual problem: the local research capacity in ACP countries with regard to regional integration is not sufficiently developed and the research results are not sufficiently disseminated to the local policy makers. For ACP countries to improve their socio-economic development and strengthen their security environment, the capacity of ACP-based researchers must be increased. Such an endeavour will help to produce quality policy-relevant research enable social scientists to communicate with policy-makers. Decision makers can thus become aware of the various implications of their policies on regional integration and cooperation with and within regional organisations.

**The target groups** of this project are researchers and research centres located in these HEIs while the final beneficiaries will be students on regional integration in partner HEIs as well as ACP's policy makers. The proposed project will serve the needs and constraints of ACP HEIs by enhancing their capacities to design, conduct and disseminate the outcomes of multidisciplinary research on regional integration.

#### **(I) Proposed activities:**

Activity Area 1: **Establishing and coordinating the network**

Activity Area 2: **Website and virtual platform**

Activity Area 3: **Strengthening research centres' management and administration**

Activity Area 4: **Facilitating joint research programmes on regional integration**

Activity Area 5: **Topic based seminars (3)**

Activity Area 6: **Exchange programmes and mobility**

Activity Area 7: **International conference and dissemination**

## **(II) Outputs and expected results**

**Developing courses on regional integration:** The network will use the existing courses from the various network members and the extensive training and teaching expertise of UNU-CRIS and the College of Europe to develop and facilitate the introduction of new courses relating to regional integration. The network will also make available to the various members course material, including the outcomes of the seminars that will be organised through the project.

**Exchange programme:** Exchanges between academics will be facilitated through the introduction of a scheme for visiting researchers and guest lecturers. This will allow participants to engage in longer contacts and benefit from mutual enrichment. Through the exchange scheme, researchers will benefit from the experience gained by other institutions and thus replicate best-practice in their own HEIs. The project will provide for a 24-month mobility fund. The subdivision of the mobility fund will be agreed between the partners.

**Joint projects:** To facilitate inter-institutional collaboration between the participating HEIs, the network will establish joint research programmes and possibly other projects, such as a study monitoring and assessing the impact of an HEI network on regional integration. As part of the network, a virtual database comprising various datasets relevant to the study of regional integration will also be set up.

**Research Dissemination:** The project will improve the dissemination practices of ACP-based researchers. A virtual platform (website) will make research results available to the network members and the general public; enabling researchers from ACP countries to reach a large array of people interested in regional integration. Research undertaken by the network members will be published on the website. The project will also improve the academic writing skills of the participating researchers so that they can be published in peer-reviewed academic journals. The researchers from the member HEIs will also be encouraged to produce policy briefs and that could be disseminated to policy-makers and practitioners. Eventually, the network will publish a book comprising research conducted under the network's framework. An international conference held towards the end of the project lifetime will also increase the visibility of the network, the dissemination of the research and the outreach of its endeavours. The conference will offer another opportunity to bring together policy makers, practitioners and academics.

**Bridging the academic-policy divide:** To facilitate contacts between academics, policy-makers and practitioners, the network will push for to introduce an internship program with key institutions, such as regional integration organizations, the ACP Secretariat, and the institutions of the European Union. Exposure to regional integration practice and policy-making will enable researchers to make their research more policy-relevant and more aware

of the problems and constraints of public bodies. Practitioners and policy-makers will benefit from academic insights and research results that address issues pertinent to the practice of regional integration and that are made digestible for these communities. Practitioners and policy-makers will also be invited to take part in the international conference.

## **Friday 25 November**

- 10.00** **Opening session of the evaluation meeting**
- Ms. Maria Cristina Macovei, NETRIS Project Coordinator and Mr. Eric Maertens, Senior Supervisor NETRIS, CoE/UNU-CRIS
- 10.30** **NETRIS Local Coordinators evaluations/presentations (I)**
- UWI – presentation by Prof. Tim Shaw
- UCAD – presentation by Prof. Saidou Tall
- UKZN – presentation by Ms. Vanessa Tang
- Chair Ms. Maria Cristina Macovei, CoE/UNU-CRIS
- 11.30** **Coffee Break**
- 12.00** **NETRIS Local Coordinators evaluations/presentations (II)**
- USP – presentation by Dr. Sunil Kumar
- AAU – presentation by Dr. Girma Estiphanos
- IRIC – presentation by Dr. Jean Kenfack
- Chair Mr. Eric Maertens, CoE/UNU-CRIS
- 13.00** **Lunch**
- 14.00** **NETRIS Associates representatives evaluations/presentations (III)**
- ECDPM – presentation by Ms. Kathleen Van Hove
- SAPES Trust – presentation by Dr. Ibbo Mandaza

Chair Ms. Maria Cristina Macovei, CoE/UNU-CRIS

**14.30**

**NETRIS Mobility evaluation/presentation**

UWI – presentation by Dr. Mark Kirton

UDSM – on behalf of Prof. John Tesha,  
presentation by Ms. M.C. Macovei

Chair Mr. Eric Maertens, CoE/UNU-CRIS

**15.00**

**Concluding remarks - the NETRIS project way forward**

All participants are welcome to present their opinion the lessons learned, best practices and way forward

Chair Ms. Maria Cristina Macovei and Mr. Eric Maertens, CoE/UNU-CRIS