Session Outcome Document - The Role of Universities

Summary of Session: The Role of Universities in Shaping the Future of the Society

University of Oslo

16Mar2023, 1100-1145 h CET

https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2023/Agenda/Session/369

Key Issues discussed (5-8 bullet points)

- The Role of Universities in contributing to equity, collective knowledge, identification of problems and implementations of societal needs
- Digital- and Energy-Equity, visibly especially in the rural-/urban-, as well as the gender divide in access to basic services
- The needs in rural Africa, with underserved rural schools, requirements for low cost servers and contextualized content
- The cost aspects of the digital transformation, especially the operational expenditures (OPEX) as costs of airtime for connecting schools and communities
- Community contribution as key for contextualized knowledge on health, education, and rights
- Local knowledge to address the global challenges and identify solutions for the communities

Towards WSIS+20 and WSIS beyond 2025, please share your views on the emerging trends, challenges, achievements, and opportunities in the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines to date (5-8 bullets)

- The Global Challenges such as Climate Crisis, Digital Divide, Resource Depletion and Economic crisis needs Universities to create the long-term perspective, identify the problems and contribute with an independent contribution to implementation (WSIS Action lines ....)
- The honorable activities of GIGA by ITU & UNICEF in school connectivity is an excellent starting point to establish Community Learning & Living Labs (CL3), to reach out to those being left aside in formal education systems, have an entry point to governmental services, and achieve digital competency (WSIS Action lines ...)
- WSIS beyond 2025 needs Universities as independent institutions to identity problems and create the long term perspective in answering the societal needs and create impact (WSIS Action lines ...)
- From Policy to Action: WSIS beyond 2025 needs to foster the change through best praxis policies, actions and implementations besides the amazing work on networking and high-level policy agreements (WSIS Action lines ....)
“Connect the Future”: The building blocks for societal empowerment, energy, information and access to information need to be made available for every single human being. Focus needs to be on the LDCs, identifying the specific challenges and contributing with solutions for the disadvantaged people (WSIS Action lines ...)

Tangible outcomes (such as key achievements, announcements, launches, agreements, and commitments (3-5 bullet points)

- The University Alliance between The Guild, 21 research intensive universities in Europe, and ARUA, the African Research Universities Alliance encompassing 16 African Universities, committed to the knowledge exchange to achieve equity, by implementing cross-continental clusters on digital, energy, anti-microbiological resistance (AMR) and other topics
- Universities are continuing Regional Competence Centres (RCCs) for connectivity and digital empowerment. An example is the School Connectivity of 300 schools through the RCCs at University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), Dar es Salaam Technology Institute (DIT) and Arusha Technical College, contributing to the University- and Multi-Stakeholder alliance for School Connectivity: https://www.udsm.ac.tz/web/index.php/news/udsm-coict-to-connect-300-secondary-schools-to-the-internet
- Universities contribute to contextualized and local content to support the decentralized knowledge hubs at regional schools and Community Learning & Living Labs (CL3). Schools and CL3s are the entry point for access to information and local knowledge, preservation of cultural heritage, and involvement centres for community health and digital transformation.

Actionable plan (2-5 points)

- Through the Regional Competence Centres (RCCs), Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are the drivers for connectivity and knowledge transfer, connecting 300 schools in Tanzania by end of 2023, achieving a total of more than 400 connected schools in rural Africa.
- On 13Jun2023 Universities of Europe and Africa will join in Addis to establish the cross-continental clusters on digital, energy, anti-microbiological resistance (AMR) and other topics.
- Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) are committed to the knowledge exchange including Master- and PhD-topics, exchange of researchers and identification of topics for long-term research addressing the societal- and global challenges.

Suggestions for thematic aspects that might be included in the WSIS Forum 2024 (WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event) (one paragraph)

Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) are committed to the “Public Responsibility for and of Higher Education”. The independence, addressed through institutional autonomy, and academic freedom & integrity, is fostered by high-quality and scientifically proven data, methods and algorithms. HEIs suggest that WSIS Forum 2024
  - Fosters the availability on reliable data-sets for high-quality research on digital-, energy- and health-equity;
• Address the Roles of Universities in the Multi-Stakeholder approach to address the long-term problems and achieve the SDGs; and
• Prepares the path from policies and recommendations to actions, including (i) the inter-continental knowledge exchange, (ii) clusters for inter-continental research, and (iii) Regional Competence Centres (RCCs) for actionable activities