



# ACTIVITY REPORT

## 2024

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

OBREAL is an interregional association which unites members and partners across continents with a shared **vision**, to build sustainable South-South-North cooperation based upon reciprocity, mutual knowledge transfer, and a commitment to common global challenges. This vision is one that has evolved since the association's creation in 2006, where it first concentrated on Latin America – Europe relations. Primarily uniting in its membership of higher education institutions and associations as well as research organizations, the vision of OBREAL has grown and been shaped, responding to global trends and the need for more dynamic interregional partnerships.

This year – 2024 - has been both rich and rewarding in terms of OBREAL's position in the policy landscape, as well as the robust project portfolio that has been generated. In addition, OBREAL has tested and grown its new Training Platform for short-online courses and professional development. OBREAL's targeted communications actions, such as podcasts, interviews with leaders and innovators and social media presence has been amplified in the interest of reaching a wider and more diverse audience.

The OBREAL Secretariat, advised and supported by a newly expanded Board of Directors and 'Interregional Board', continued to implement the 2022-2025 strategic plan and its main focus areas: **1) Sustainability and the SDGs, 2) Tertiary Education institutional and policy development, and 3) 'Innovating innovation'**.

The following is the fourth Annual Activity Report that OBREAL has published, which takes stock of actions that OBREAL has taken with members and partners, notably in three principles areas: **Knowledge Production, Capacity Building/Training and Inter-regional Policy Dialogue**. The report also provides an overview of new members which have joined the association, strategic events, new programs and a brief summaries of statistics on how projects meet established priority areas.

### 1.1 MISSION & VISION

OBREAL is an association that unites members and partners in the tertiary education and research sectors across continents with a shared vision, to build sustainable interregional South – South – North(s)<sup>1</sup> political dialogue and cooperation based upon mutual respect and knowledge transfer, and commitment to innovative solutions to global development challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> OBREAL explicitly refers to diverse 'Souths' and 'Norths', hence why the plural form is used.

This vision is one that has evolved since the association's creation in 2004, when it first concentrated on Latin America – Europe relations. Primarily uniting higher education institutions, associations and research organizations, OBREAL's vision has grown and been shaped, responding to global trends and sectoral disruptors. The COVID pandemic, for example, sharpened the need to inspire, construct and resource true interregional approaches.

**OBREAL's current mission** is to

1. Promote dialogue and synergies between governmental, academic, and social sectors, considering the specificities and heterogeneity of each region around the world.
2. Create *interregional bridges* for enhanced development in the higher education and research sectors specifically, via **inter-regional policy dialogue, knowledge production** and collaborative multi-regional and multilevel projects, as well as training and capacity building.

### **1.3 STRATEGIC AREAS OF ACTION**

In 2023, OBREAL defined its strategic priorities into three broad categories. These categories respond to the needs and interests of partners, policy makers and members, particularly as it relates to South-South interregional cooperation. They are transversal topics as opposed to disciplinary topics, which accommodate the wide project portfolio that OBREAL continues to have and inspire policy dialogue and knowledge production.

#### **Innovating Innovation**

Innovation can and must be promoted by all Higher Education Institutions (HEI), even if they lack the resources to conduct ambitious research. By emphasizing the role of 'contextualized' and 'locally relevant' innovation, HEIs can become development agents, opening a door to their greater participation in internationally funded cooperation projects. OBREAL has decided to place a special focus not just on the role of HEI in innovation ecosystems, but on the importance of 'innovating' more traditional constructs related to innovation, and to understand it better in a development cooperation and educational context.

#### **Tertiary education, institutional and policy development**

This broad category embraces several themes that are essential to shaping the development cooperation agenda. Specifically, it pertains to the flexibilization and digitalization of learning, quality assessment and quality standards, flexibilization of learning, and employability and entrepreneurship. From a broader perspective, it tackles the role of HEIs in regional integration processes, which is precisely OBREAL's specialty.

OBREAL believes in the articulation of policy and practice, and in the role of representative associations in the definition of policy. In this sense, university associations are a critical section of the OBREAL membership and largely compose the Inter-Chapter Board that launched in 2021 (now called the Interregional Board).

### **Sustainable development**

The contribution of the higher education sector to the achievement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals requires HEIs to target present and future goals related to employability, economic development, inclusion and citizenship. OBREAL has launched specific initiatives, dialogues and projects in this field, capitalizing on members and partners with complementary initiatives.

## **1.2 WORK AREAS**

In meeting OBREAL's defined priority areas, three types of intervention/actions are pursued by the organization:

### **a) Interregional policy dialogue**

OBREAL works closely with the governmental, academic, and social sectors to generate interregional policy dialogue on Higher Education for Development. It also leads interregional policy dialogue series on topical key issues of common interest, bringing together different actors, perspectives, and practices from the different Souths and Norths. Policy dialogue is informed by and defines priorities for projects and knowledge production.

### **b) Knowledge production**

To generate new and innovative approaches for education and development, OBREAL produces policy papers and briefs, periodic opinion/think-pieces for the academic world and civil society, and research papers and articles that offer diverse perspectives on South-South-North cooperation. The knowledge production pillar has started to grow in 2023, notably with the publication of an important "White paper" on modularization and flexibilization of learning/curricula in higher education, as well the important work that the association has published on comparable regional integration and the HE sector. This action area will continue to grow in the future, as OBREAL expands its network of experts and collaborators.

### **c) Capacity building and trainings**

OBREAL supports institutional development and contributes to the enhancement of the quality and relevance of graduate student and young researcher training through building institutional, academic, and administrative staff capacities. OBREAL also contributes to strengthening research and innovation capacities through the

consolidation of innovation ecosystems, productive synergies, entrepreneurship, and digital and innovation policies for sustainable development. This is primarily done through capacity building projects that link members and partners, but also through virtual and hybrid trainings that OBREAL has started to deliver on its new Training Platform.

## 1.4 OFFICES AND STAFF

In addition to the Barcelona Secretariat, powered by 11 staff members at the end of 2024, OBREAL has strengthened its presence by establishing representation in other parts of the world:

- OBREAL has projects officers and senior advisors in Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Bogota, Buenos Aires, Cuyo (Argentina) and Rabat.
- OBREAL launched its Latin America Office located in the Universidad Nacional de San Martín (UNSAM) in Argentina, staffed by a full-time office coordinator.
- In December 2024, OBREAL celebrated a staff training week and a hybrid General Assembly in Bogota, Colombia, hosted by the Association of Colombian Universities (ASCUN), a long-term member and partner. The president of ASCUN (Dr. Oscar Dominguez) has assumed the vice-presidency of OBREAL.

## 2. CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING

### 2.1 PROJECTS

#### 2.2.1 Introduction and trends

In 2024, OBREAL, with members and partners, launched 5 new projects funded by the Erasmus+ program of the European Union. In addition, OBREAL continued to implement and 2 EU service contracts, both of which OBREAL leads (HAQAA3 and SPHERE2) as well as 9 ongoing international projects.

The projects launched this year have a broad geographic scope. They cover the regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, the Western Balkans and the Caucuses. Projects targeting Sub-Saharan Africa, which OBREAL places at the center of the global South, have grown steadily in number. This can also be attributed to the fact that many funding sources have been more concentrated in Africa recently, notably those targeting higher education and research in development cooperation (see the example of the European Union's Global Gateway package). At the economic level, the project funds come from the EU's Erasmus+: Capacity Building for Higher Education (CBHE) program, Erasmus+ Alliances for Innovation, Erasmus+ European Youth Together, The ACP Innovation Fund, The Catalan Government and the IDRC Canada.

In terms of the main themes, new projects cover topics such as international cooperation impact assessment, entrepreneurship, curricula co-creation with industry, sustainable tourism and youth health and well-being. Countries targeted/ benefiting from new projects are South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, Eswatini, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Georgia, Serbia, Cyprus, Spain, Germany, Belgium, France, Finland, Portugal, Czech Republic.

*\*Insert map of project coverage (new projects and total project coverage) + second map with service contract coverage/beneficiaries\**

Through these new projects and ongoing ones, OBREAL addresses all three of its strategic areas: sustainable development, tertiary education, institutional and policy development and innovating innovation.

*Insert graphic showing which projects contribute to which strategic areas*

As in the past, the approach to projects has several principles:

- Work collaboratively with members and partners on joint priority areas
- Empower members and partner in developing country contexts to lead projects
- Pool resources with members and partners to enhance competitiveness in winning international projects
- Use projects to inspire policy dialogue and to implement priorities established by policy dialogue processes

### 2.1.2 New Service Contract projects

#### Services for IDRC researchers and grant holders

**In conjunction with the 2024 Interregional Dialogue Conference on Education for Development which took place in Addis Ababa in July, OBREAL was contracted by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to support an inter-regional workshop for projects and grant holders, focusing on strategic transversal issues like gender mainstreaming in science. IDRC is a major part of Canada's foreign affairs and development efforts, championing and funding research and innovation to drive global change. It invests in high-quality research in developing countries, as well as knowledge-sharing with researchers and policymakers for greater uptake and use. Coherent with OBREAL's mission, IDRC mobilizes global alliances to build a more sustainable and inclusive world.**

### 2.1.3 New grant projects

#### *UNIICo-Create*

UNIICo-Create, a follow-up and extension of the project HERE SA which concluded in 2023, is a structural project coordinated by OBREAL member and partner THENSA (Association of Technical Universities South Africa) which targets four countries in SADC, including both universities and ministries of education. The project responds to the

needs and demands of the HERE SA project, notably that of deepening university-industry alliances for curricula development, regional integration in higher education and research sectors in Africa and entrepreneurial universities. It further extends a network of higher education reform experts in partner universities, as a means to bridge university practice and policy.

- **Geographical scope:** Southern Africa Development Community (SADC)
- **Funding Stream:** Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education (CBHE)
- **OBREAL's role:** OBREAL is a strategic partner and member of the Executive Committee, with the coordinator THENSA
- **Consortium members:** OBREAL, THENSA, SARUA, South Africa Qualifications Authority (SAQA), Department of Higher Education and Technology South Africa (DHET), Université de Montpellier (FR), Tampere University Applied Sciences (FI), Trinity College Dublin (IR) , Venda University (SA), Cape Peninsula University of Technology (SA), Stellenbosch University (SA), Namibia University of Science and Technology, University of Namibia, National University of Lesotho, Lerotholi Polytechnic (Lesotho), Limkokwing University of Creative Technology(Eswatini), University of Eswatini (Eswatini)
- **Main topics covered by the project:** University industry-partnerships, curricula co-creation, entrepreneurship education, regional economic integration, higher education change agents
- **Duration of the project:** 36 months
- **Activities in 2024:** The project grant agreement was signed in November 2024 and a 'Virtual Launch' meeting organized where partners discussed the project objectives, workplan and grant management. Workpackage teams were activated to prepare the first activities related to the set-up of 'co-creation units' in each partner university and training to empower those units.

#### *GastoTour*

The general objective of the GastroTour project is to develop and implement innovative digital educational solutions and tools to promote and stimulate the transformation of regional wine / cuisine tourism industries, contributing to sustainable economic and social development, by creating and sustaining platforms for training, up-skilling, business innovation and marketing. GastroTour uses interregional approaches to promote regional sectoral economic and human capacity development while also strongly focusing on the improvement of the level of the competences and skills of students, entrepreneurs and professionals. In this aspect, the innovative and focused use of digital educational tools, like the virtual Learning Packages, will provide essential learning experiences to grow competences and skills for successful participation in the local and global wine/cuisine market.

- **Geographical scope:** Europe, Georgia, South Africa
- **Funding Stream:** Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education



- **OBREAL's role:** OBREAL is co-coordinator of the project with Telavi State University, Georgia
- **Consortium members:** OBREAL, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, IPVC - Portugal, Mendel University -Czech Republic, Caucasus University (GE), IAKOB GOGEBASHVILI Telavi State University (GE), Akaki Tsereteli State University (ATSU) (GE), Cape Peninsula University of Technology (SA), Stellenbosch University (SA), Creation Wine (SA), Schuchmann Wine (GE).
- **Main topics covered by the project:** Gastronomy tourism, wine tourism, skilling for local development
- **Duration of the project:** 36 months.
- **Activities in 2024:** The project grant agreement was signed in November 2024 and a 'Virtual Launch' meeting organized where partners discussed the project objectives, workplan and grant management. OBREAL supported Telavi State University is the grant management of its first CBHE project in a coordination role.

#### IMPACT HE

The General Objective of IMPACT HE is to enable diverse African universities as strong local development agents, enhancing their capacity to contribute to sustainable development, drive development cooperation agendas, shape policy and partner with EU universities in pursuit of common development goals. The project will enhance the capacities of African universities in Kenya and Ethiopia - two pilot countries - to manage international development cooperation funds and projects, ensuring deeper institutional and societal impacts. It will also provide African policy makers a means to assess and articulate Africa-EU higher education partnerships, and work with the university sector so as to generate relevant policies for better articulated development cooperation.

- **Geographical scope:** Europe, Kenya, Ethiopia
- **Funding Stream:** Erasmus + Capacity Building for Higher Education – Strand 3 (Structural)
- **OBREAL's role:** Coordinator
- **Consortium members:** OBREAL, Maastricht University (NL), HWST (DE), Complutense de Madrid (ES), Hawassa University (ET), Jimma University (ET), Haromaya University (ET), Addis Ababa University of Science and Technology – AASTU (ET), Jomo Kenyatta University (KE), Moi University (KE), African Association for the Internationalization of Higher Education – ANIE, Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOUST) (KE), Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Kenya, Ministry of Education Ethiopia, *German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)*, *EDUFI – Finland*, *VLIR-UOS Belgium (associated)*
- **Main topics covered by the project:** Project management capacity, higher education impact assessment

- **Duration of the project:** 48 months.
- **Activities in 2024:** The project grant agreement was signed in November 2024 and a 'Virtual Launch' meeting organized where partners discussed the project objectives, workplan and grant management. OBREAL organized a poster session in the context of the annual S-DHG Forum which took place in Brussels in November, to showcase the project as a distinct cooperation between S-DHG members, notably OBREAL and the IMPACT HE associated partners.

### *FOCUS*

"Fostering employability through occupational health and safety education in Sub-Saharan Africa" is a project coordinated by OBREAL member University of Novi Sad, Serbia. The general objective of the FOCUS project is to increase the quality and relevance of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) curricula and teaching and educational activities in higher education institutions (HEIs) from third countries not associated to the program (Sub-Saharan Africa region, SSA) as well as to foster their ability to deliver and perform high quality modern OHS professional development programs (PDPs) to Master and PhD students, governments, industry and civil society.

- **Geographical scope:** Europe, Kenya, Tanzania
- **Funding Stream:** Erasmus + Capacity Building for Higher Education
- **OBREAL's role:**
- **Consortium members:** University of Novi Sad (Coordinator), OBREAL, STUBA, MIKE..... JOOUST and MUST, KYU and MUCE, MKSU, MAK,
- **Main topics covered by the project:** Occupational Health and Safety, Professional Development, Employability
- **Duration of the project:** 36 months.
- **Activities in 2024:** The project grant agreement was signed in November 2024.

## 2.1.4 ERASMUS + PROJECTS FINALISED IN 2024

### *Start Circular*

Start Circular refers to "Integrated Entrepreneurship Management Model for Circular Economy", the project aims to promote sustainable entrepreneurship through the development and implementation of an integrated model for circular economy management. The project seeks to equip entrepreneurs with the knowledge and tools necessary to transition from traditional linear business models to more sustainable, circular practices.

- **Geographical scope:** Europe.
- **Funding Stream:** Erasmus + Strategic Partnerships
- **OBREAL's role:** OBREAL is co-coordinator of the project with the Université de Montpellier.

- **Consortium members:** OBREAL, Université de Montpellier, Universidade Beira Interior, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, University of Latvia, Nova Univerza, Green Berry Solutions, ELUM Solutions, ASSEC Consultores, RENTEH, Red de Economía Circular de las Islas.
- **Main topics covered by the project:** Environment and Climate Change, Local economic development
- **Duration of the project:** 36 months.
- **Activities in 2024**

In 2024, the START Circular project further promoted a comprehensive ‘Model’ for entrepreneurship within the circular economy, providing a framework for university teaching, learning and research. Partner universities enhanced existing labs and incubators to enhance the support for circular economy ventures, targeting students. In addition, online training was offered to university and SME staff regarding circular economy innovation. The project close-out event was organized in Barcelona in collaboration with local regional partners in Catalunya, where the project’s messages and lessons were debated at a local level.

#### MYCOMM

The acronym MyComm refers to “Migrant and Refugee Youth COMMunication and advocacy for equity and inclusion”. The project aims to improve their ability to advocate for migrant and refugee issues, particularly through communication, audiovisual training, and public policy engagement. This initiative empowers these organizations to promote intercultural dialogue, raise awareness, and foster social inclusion, while also improving their visibility and advocacy at local, national, and EU levels

- **Geographical scope:** Europe (Spain, Cyprus, France, Romania, Belgium)
- **Funding stream:** Erasmus +: European Youth Together
- **OBREAL’s role:** OBREAL is the coordinator of the project.
- **Consortium members:** OBREAL, CARDET, Young European Federalists (JEF), Cyprus Youth Clubs Organization (KOKEN), The Rural Hub, Regarddons, Voices of Young Refugees in Europe (VYRE), GIE.
- **Main topics covered by the project:** Civic Engagement and Inclusion, Common values, Youth.
- **Duration of the project:** 24 months (starting 1/01/2023)
- **Activities in 2024**

In 2024, the MYCOMM continued to offer training for youth organization works, designed to enhance the communication skills, focusing on audiovisual techniques, social media strategies, and public advocacy. An exchange/international mobility program was offered to select youth organization workers, and the partners developed three policy briefs as major project outputs. A policy work group was organized in

Brussels and a final webinar, as well as additional webinars targeting the youth sector in the partner countries.

#### *CONSOLIDATION OF THE SOUTH-SOUTH-NORTH DIALOGUE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND RELATED MATTERS*

- **Funding stream:** Grants to support the internationalization of Catalan entities in the field of foreign action of the Generalitat of Catalonia 2022-2023.
- The purpose of these subsidies is to finance the expenses derived from the promotion and projection of Catalan entities or the European and international organizations and networks with which they are actively related.
- OBREAL continued to execute this contract in 2024, through promotion and dialogue actions for Catalan higher education and research in the world.

### 2.1.5 ONGOING PROJECTS IN 2024

#### *Joint QA*

The acronym Joint QA refers to “Strengthen national and regional quality assurance mechanisms through joint assessment and accreditation processes in Africa”. The project aims to enhance the quality and coherence of higher education systems across African countries. By promoting joint assessment and accreditation practices, the project seeks to support national and regional agencies in developing harmonized quality assurance standards.

- **Geographical scope:** Sub-Saharan Africa (Ivory Coast, Cameroun, Burkina Faso), Europe
- **OBREAL’s role:** OBREAL is the coordinator of the project.
- **Funding stream:** Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education (CBHE) - Strand 3 (Structural)
- **Consortium members:** OBREAL, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Liège Université, Université de Montpellier, U Louvaine, Agence Pour l’Evaluation de la Qualité de l’Enseignement Supérieur, Université Alassane Ouattara, Institut National Polytechnique Félix HOUPHOUËT-BOIGNY, Ministère de l’Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique de Côte d’Ivoire, Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l’Enseignement Supérieur, Université Norbert Zongo, Université Thomas Sankara, Ministère de l’Enseignement Supérieur de la Recherche et de l’Innovation du Burkina Faso, Université de Douala, Université de Dschang, Ministère de la Recherche Scientifique et de l’Innovation de Cameroun.
- **Main topics covered by the project:** Modernization and internationalization of higher education, Quality Assurance and recognition, regional integration
- **Duration of the project:** 36 months (starting 1/04/2023)
- **Activities in 2024**

In 2023, the project marked its launch in June in the Ivory Coast, setting the foundation for its activities. One of the key initiatives was the mapping of various quality assurance (QA) standards across Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Ivory Coast, and other African regions. This mapping effort aimed to inform the development of a joint set of standards for institutional and program accreditation in partner institutions, ensuring alignment and improving quality across the regions involved.

#### *DIGIGRAD*

The acronym DigiGrad refers to “Internationalisation and Digitalisation of Graduate Training and Research for the Attainment of African Regional and Global Development Goals”. The project aims to modernize and internationalize graduate education and research in Africa. By focusing on digitalization, the project seeks to improve access to high-quality training resources, enhance cross-border research collaboration, and equip graduates with skills aligned to regional and global development goals. DigiGrad promotes innovative, digitally supported approaches to learning and research, preparing African graduates to address pressing societal challenges and contribute effectively within an interconnected global landscape.

- **Geographical scope:** Sub-Saharan Africa (Kenya, South Sudan, Burundi, Ghana)
- **Funding Stream:** Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education (CBHE) - Strand 2
- **OBREAL’s role:** OBREAL is partner of the Management Team, supporting the coordinator - the African Network for Internationalization of Education (ANIE)
- **Consortium members:** ANIE, Moi University (MOI), Africa Nazarene University (ANU), Université du Burundi (UB), Excellence in Education for Development in Burundi (BIU), Laweh University College (LTD), University of Cape Coast (UCC), University of Juba (UoJ), University of Upper Nile (UNU), OBREAL, Universidad de Extremadura (UEX), Universiteit Maastricht (UM), Università Degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza (Sapienza), UC Leuven (UCL).
- **Main topics covered by the project:** Graduate and post graduate supervision, Internationalization of higher education and internationalization strategies, digitalization
- **Duration of the project:** 36 months (starting 1/04/2023)
- **Activities in 2024**

In 2024, the project developed guidelines for internationalization and digitalization in higher education....

#### *CLIMAR*

The acronym CLIMAR refers to “Strengthening research, innovation and knowledge transfer on Climate Change & Tourism in Higher Education Institutions in Latin America”. The project aims to enhance the capacity of Latin American universities in addressing

the impacts of climate change on the tourism sector. By promoting research and innovation, CLIMAR seeks to advance sustainable practices and knowledge transfer within higher education institutions, fostering resilience in tourism-dependent regions.

- **Geographical scope:** Latin America (Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Panama)
- **Funding stream:** Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education (CBHE) - Strand 2
- **OBREAL's role:** The project is coordinated by the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canarias (member) and OBREAL is part of the Management Team
- **Consortium members:** OBREAL, Universidad de las Palmas de Gran Canaria, University of Alicante, Università di Bologna, University College Cork (IR), Asociación Colombiana de Universidades (ASCUN), Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Universidad de Caldas, Universidad de Cartagena, Universidad Autónoma de Chiriquí, Universidad de Panamá, Universidad Anáhuac Oaxaca, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Quintana Roo, Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata (AR), and Universidad Nacional de Cuyo (AR).
- **Main topics covered by the project:** Environment and climate change and its effects on the tourism sector, professional development and skills for tourism and sustainable development.
- **Duration of the project:** 36 months
- **Outputs:** Transdisciplinary research groups, a transversal module for graduate students and climate change and tourism, a professional development short course on climate change and tourism
- **Activities in 2024**

In 2024, the CLIMAR project consolidated inter-disciplinary research groups on climate change, circular economy, and tourism. These groups co-developed a module for graduate studies on climate change in tourism which partner universities began to pilot in different study programs.

### *SUSTURISM*

The acronym SUSTURISM refers to “Responsabilidade e Sustentabilidade no Turismo”. This project aims to enhance Angola and Cabo Verde's capacity for sustainable tourism through innovative university training, fostering employability, entrepreneurship, and economic growth.

- **Geographical scope:** Africa (Cabo Verde, Angola)
- **Funding stream:** Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education (CBHE) - Strand 2
- **OBREAL's role:** The project is coordinated by the INSTITUTO POLITÉCNICO DE VIANA CASTELO. OBREAL is a partner and in charge of the quality assessment workpackage and advising on the development of modules for skilling.

- **Consortium members:** Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo, KOAN Consulting, University of Santiago de Compostela, OBREAL, Lusíada University (Benguela and Huambo), University of Namibe, Jean Piaget University of Cabo Verde, and ISCEE (Cape Verde).
- **Main topics covered by the project:** Sustainable tourism by promoting responsible practices, environmental care, cultural protection, and digitalization. It emphasizes skills development in entrepreneurship, diversity, and inclusion to foster local economic growth through sustainable tourism models in Angola and Cape Verde.
- **Duration of the project:** 24 months
- **Outputs:** Development of training modules on sustainable tourism for university faculty and future tourism professionals, a guide on sustainable tourism best practices, and resources for digital transformation and entrepreneurship in the sector.
- **Activities in 2024**

#### ENGAGE SDG

The acronym ENGAGE SDG refers to “Developing the capacity of SADC higher educations to use participatory approaches for community-based engagement with selected SDGs”. The project aims to empower universities in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to effectively engage with communities on key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By building capacity for participatory, community-focused methods, the project seeks to strengthen the role of higher education institutions in addressing local challenges tied to specific SDGs. ENGAGE SDG promotes active collaboration between universities and communities, equipping institutions to lead initiatives that foster sustainable development and directly address regional priorities.

- **Geographical scope:** Sub-Saharan Africa (South Africa, Zambia, Mauritius)
  - **Funding stream:** Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education (CBHE) - Strand 2
  - **OBREAL’s role:** OBREAL supports Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) and is part of the Executive Committee.
  - **Consortium members:** OBREAL, SARUA, University of Mauritius, University Technology Mauritius, University of the Western Cape, University of Zambia, University of Lusaka, North-West University, Universitat de Barcelona, University College Cork, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Università di Bologna.
- Call:** Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education (CBHE), Strand 2
- **Main topics covered by the project:** Environment and Climate Change, SDGs, Local economic development, university participatory approaches
  - **Duration of the project:** 36 months
  - **Activities in 2024**



The project launch meeting was held in Cape Town, hosted by the University of the Western Cape in March. ENGAGE SDG partners advanced in the assessment of Participatory Approaches of higher education institutions in different partner countries and built a beta version of an ‘Institutional Participatory Framework’ which will help institutions assess their local collaboration and engagement models along different dimensions and methods (for example, ‘living labs’).

#### QA DOC

The acronym QA DOC refers to *Quality Assurance for Doctoral Education and Research in Africa*. This project aims to enhance the capacity of African institutions to evaluate and implement high standards in doctoral education and research. It focuses on developing and applying common evaluation standards for doctoral schools in countries like Senegal, Guinea, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as strengthening cooperation between African and European universities to foster research excellence

- **Geographical scope:** Sub-Saharan Africa (Senegal, Guinea, DRC), Europe
- **Funding stream:** Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education (CBHE) - Strand 3 (structural)
- **OBREAL’s role:** The Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD), the national QA Agency of Senegal (ANAQ-Sup), and OBREAL are the coordinators of the project.
- **Consortium members:** L’Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Université Gaston Berger de St Louis (UGB), ANAQ-Sup, Ministère (MESRI), Université Général Lansana Conté de Sonfonia (UGLCS), Université Gamal Abdel Nasser, ANAQ – Guinée, Ministère (MESRI) Guinée, Université de Kinshasa, Université de Lubumbashi, ANAQ -ESU, Ministère (ESU) RDC, OBREAL, Universitat Rovira I Virgili, AQU – Agencia de calidad de Catalogne, Université de Montpellier, Universidade de Beira Interior (PT), A3ES (PT), ENQA, DAAD (*associated*)
- **Main topics covered by the project:** Capacity building in research and doctoral education, Establishing and applying quality assurance standards for doctoral training and research in Africa and enhancing cooperation between European and African institutions in research and doctoral education
- **Duration of the project:** 36 months

#### YOUTH WELL

The acronym YouthWell refers to focuses on fostering resilience and democratic engagement among youth, emphasizing mental health and active citizenship. The project aims to improve the capacity of young people to advocate for mental health, enhance their participation in democracy, and develop their leadership and communication skills to foster social inclusion.

- **Geographical scope:** Europe
- **Funding stream:** Erasmus+ under the European Youth Together initiative.



- **OBREAL's role:** OBREAL is a partner in this project, supporting the implementation of activities and helping promote the project's objectives across Europe.
- **Consortium members:** OBREAL, CARDET, KOKEN, The Rural Hub, KMOP, Right Challenge, CESIE, and Western Balkans Institute (WEBIN).
- **Main topics covered by the project:** Mental Health, Active Citizenship, Youth Empowerment, Civic Engagement, and Social Inclusion.
- **Duration of the project:** 24 months (starting 1/01/2023)
- **Activities in 2024:**

### ENOTOUR

The acronym ENOTOUR refers to the project "Alliance for Innovation in Enotourism". It focuses on the development and transformation of the enotourism sector, particularly in European wine regions. The goal is to support the professionalization, digitalization, and marketing of the wine industry while promoting collaborative, sustainable tourism strategies. The project involves the creation of a multifunctional training platform aimed at enhancing the wine and tourism industries.

- **Geographical scope:** Europe (Spain, Portugal, France, Italy)
- **Funding stream:** Erasmus+ Alliances for Innovation
- **OBREAL's role:** OBREAL is a partner in this project, supporting the implementation of activities and helping promote the project's objectives across Europe. It is coordinating the development of six online courses on its training platform.
- **Consortium members:** Universitat Rovira i Virgili (Spain)- coordinator, Université de Bordeaux (France), Università degli studi di Padova (Italy), Universidade do Porto (Portugal), OBREAL (Spain), Eurecat (Spain), Gramona (Spain), Vignobles de Larose (France), Massimago (Italy), Quinta do Portal (Portugal), Escola Enoturisme de Catalunya (Spain), Lycée d'Hôtellerie et de Tourisme de Gascogne (France), Isiss Francesco da Collo (Italy), Escola Profissional de Vila do Conde Unipessoal (Portugal), and several associated partners, including tourism organizations and chambers of commerce.
- **Main topics covered:** Wine tourism, innovation, digital transformation, sustainability in enotourism.
- **Duration of the project:** 36 months
- **Activities in 2024**

In 2024, the project advanced in the establishment of a digital platform designed to support the wine and tourism sectors. Key activities included support to six academic workgroups developing the content of six short online courses (MOOCs) targeting university students and professionals, the development of a self-assessment tool for

business development for wineries and the technical offer for virtual enotouristic experiences.

#### PRICNAC

The acronym PRICNAC refers to “Promotion de la Recherche, l’Innovation et la Culture Numérique en Afrique Centrale”, the project aims to strengthen research, innovation, and digital culture in Central Africa. By focusing on improving digital literacy and fostering innovation in higher education institutions, the project seeks to promote sustainable development and economic growth across the region.

- **Geographical scope:** Central Africa
- **Funding Stream:** ACP Innovation Fund
- **OBREAL’s role:** OBREAL oversees network development, training and communications and sits on the selection committee for the innovation projects.
- **Consortium members:** OBREAL, Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF) – Office of Central Africa and the Great Lakes (coordinator), Conseil Africain et Magalache pour l’Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES), Association of African Universities (AAU).
- **Main topics covered by the project:** Local economic development, Modernization and internationalization of higher education
- **Duration of the project:** 48 months.
- **Activities in 2024**

#### HAQAA 3

The acronym HAQAA3 refers to “Harmonization, Accreditation and Quality Assurance in African Higher Education”. As the third phase of the Initiative, this EU funded service contract is a flagship of the EU’s Global Gateway investment in Africa and an important contribution to African continental integration in the education and skills sectors. OBREAL has also coordinated phase 2 (2018-2023). HAQAA3 as five work areas: Higher Education data for Policy, quality assurance training and capacity building, technical support to a Pan African QA and Accreditation Agency, technical support to the implementation of the African Credit Transfer System and Policy dialogue and regional integration.

- **Geographical scope:** Africa Union (East, West, South, Central and North)
- **Funding stream:** Global Gateway Africa, European Commission
- **OBREAL’s role:** OBREAL is the coordinator of the initiative
- **Implementing Team:** OBREAL, the Association of African Universities (AAU), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). Nine strategic implementing partners are also identified in five regions of Africa, representing higher education networks and associations as well as quality assurance bodies.

- **Main topics covered by the project:** Modernization and internationalization of higher education, Quality Assurance and recognition, higher education data collection and management, credit transfer systems, continental and regional integration.
- **Duration of the project:** 60 months
- **Activities in 2024**

2024 kicked off with major policy dialogue event co-organized with the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) Global Policy Dialogue coordination group: “Africa- EHEA Dialogue on Recognition and Quality Assurance”, hosted by OBREAL in Barcelona. This welcomed diverse African higher education and policy organized which also compose the Advisory Board of HAQAA, as well as representative from ministries of education and stakeholder bodies in Europe. Other important advancements in HAQAA3 in 2024 included: 1) Four regional consultation events (Yaoundé, South Sudan, Mauritius and Cairo) on the governance structure of a Pan-African QA agency, and articulating body for QA systems in Africa, 2) Fourteen national policy visits to promote the African Credit Transfer System and collect data for a state-of -the -art report on credit systems in Africa, 3) the launch of an internal quality assurance training program for university professionals in East and North Africa and a related leadership forum, and 4) the capacitation of AAU staff for the implementation of technical assistance to quality assurance agency and authorities across Africa, in the form of external assessments against continental operational standards (ASG-QA).

## *SPHERE 2*

The acronym SPHERE2 refers to “Centralized Support to the Network of Higher Education Reform Experts”. This service contract provides technical assistance, networking and training to politically appointed networks of higher education experts in EU neighborhood countries.

- **Geographical scope:** Multi-regional. Central Asia, Eastern Partnership, Southern Mediterranean and Western Balkans.
- **Funding stream:** European Commission – Erasmus+ program
- **OBREAL’s role:** OBREAL is the coordinator of the project
- **Implementing Team:** OBREAL and European University Association (EUA)
- **Main topics covered by the project:** Modernization and internationalization of higher education, the European Higher Education Area, higher education policy reform in EU neighborhood countries.
- **Duration of the project:** 36 months
- **Activities in 2024**

In 2024, the project continued to offer training and capacity building to National Erasmus+ offices and to the Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE) from Northern

Africa, the Eastern Partnership, the Western Balkans, and Central Asia. The Overarching Theme of SPHERE activities in 2024 was “Higher education engagement with society and the economy”. This encompassed events that tackled the following sub-themes: Institutional approaches and strategies for greening, Universities in local ecosystems, University-Industry partnerships (educational/teaching focus), Inclusion in internationalization, European University Alliances and their international projection. Three study visits to EU universities were offered (UCC - Ireland, University of Ghent, TAMK - Finland) to the HERE, two seminars, online networking meetings and an annual virtual conference. The SPHERE team facilitated close to 50 Technical Assistance Missions (TAM) across more than 20 targeted countries, and exercise that allows HERE and ministries to request support on specific policy development topics. In addition, a publication was produced on ‘Greening in Higher Education’, an important topic for the network.

## STRENGTH OF THE SOUTH-SOUTH-NORTH DIALOGUE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND RELATED MATTERS

- **Funding stream:** Grants to support the internationalization of Catalan entities in the field of foreign action of the Generalitat of Catalonia 2023-2024.
- The purpose of these subsidies is to finance the expenses derived from the promotion and projection of Catalan entities or the European and international organizations and networks with which they are actively related.

## 2.2 TRAINING

One of OBREAL’s pillars of action is capacity building and training, which supports institutional and professional development, as well as institutional, academic, and administrative staff capacities. OBREAL participates in and designs trainings, online seminars and workshops within the framework of cooperation projects, but also designs and delivers self-funded training courses, physically, hybrid and online. This is done in conjunction with members and partners, capitalizing on a diverse network of international expertise and experience. Training explores reciprocal knowledge sharing approaches, root in examples from the diverse Souths and Norths.

### 2.2.1 OBREAL Training Platform

This year, OBREAL continued to provide courses on its Moodle based **Training Platform**. The platform provides short-courses with a certificate award option, and houses recorded workshops and webinar series aimed at enhancing skills and knowledge in areas such as internationalization of higher education, research management, and academic cooperation. It serves as a resource for higher education institutions and professionals to improve their ability to engage in international collaborations, manage

research projects, and navigate global trends in education and development. The platform offers a range of online training opportunities, often tailored to the needs of universities, researchers, and policymakers, particularly in the context of interregional collaboration.

*“Unlocking the Potential of Biotechnology in Food Production”*

Between April and June 2024, linked to the Interregional Dialogue Conferences of Education and Development, the course “Unlocking the Potential of Biotechnology in Food Production” was offered on the OBREAL Training Platform. This course provides an overview of the applications of biotechnology in the agriculture and food industry, exploring how it contributes to food security, creates economic value, and addresses challenges in developing new varieties. The course also examines the use of biotechnology in livestock and fisheries, the food industry, and agricultural waste management. It is unique in that it provides an inter-regional approach to food security and biotechnology by including perspectives from Africa and Latin America. Researchers, experts and companies from both regions contribute theoretical concepts, best practices and case studies to provide a broader view of the issues. The course was led by OBREAL and the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria. 118 students from academia and industry in Africa, Europe and Latin America completed the six modules for the award of certificate.

*Interregional Webinar Series: Towards the Engaged University*

Co-organized by OBREAL and SARUA, the webinar series aimed to explore the integration of societal engagement into the core academic activities of higher education institutions (HEIs) and the development of meaningful relationships with local communities to produce knowledge. The series explored the institutional conditions for the integration of engagement, including ways in which engagement may be embedded within institutional strategy, and into institutional design. In addition, it considered specific strategies for engagement, such as interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and the establishment of quadruple or quintuple helix partnerships. Five webinars, each entailing a resource list and a short quiz to share knowledge gained, culminated in an optional certificate of participation for the 300 registered participants from 4 continents. The course is now available open source on the OBREAL Training Platform.

This series has also been linked to the Interregional Dialogue Conference on Education and Development and was co-sponsored by the ENGAGE SDG project that SARUA and OBREAL manage.

### 2.2.2 Other trainings and workshops in 2024

Beyond the OBREAL Training Platform, the OBREAL team has provided onside and virtual trainings for members and partners, specifically related to EU grant proposal development and management. These trainings are often executed with a cost-share model, linked to other important regional meetings or have been contracted by international partners and funders.

DATE	PARTNER	ABOUT THE TRAINING	LOCATION
March	ITBA – Buenos Aires	EU funding opportunities and project design	Buenos Aires
September	University of Buenos Aires	Strategies for Internationalization of research	Buenos Aires
September	Panama – GIZ	EU funding opportunities and project design for Central America	Panama - Presential training
	Western Cape Consortium	Horizon Europe project proposal development	Online
November	National University of the East, Paraguay	Workshop on competitive project proposals design in the framework of European calls	Paraguay

## 3. INTERREGIONAL DIALOGUES/STRATEGIC EVENTS

In 2024, OBREAL hosted or helped organize numerous events under its strategic action line of **policy dialogue**, some linked to ongoing projects and others as OBREAL-led initiatives to promote dialogue and cooperation between regions. In addition, OBREAL also attended and contributed to key policy dialogue events organized by its members and partners.

### 3.1 INTERREGIONAL DIALOGUE ON EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT: AFRICA, LATIN AMERICA, THE CARIBBEAN AND EUROPE

One of the highlights of 2024 was, without a doubt, the celebration of the **Second Interregional Dialogue on Education and Cooperation** in Latin America, the Caribbean,

and Africa — a hallmark of OBREAL's policy dialogue efforts, which emphasizes connecting the different Global Souths around common priorities.

Hosted in **Addis Ababa** by the **African Union Commission**, the event received support and sponsorship from the **CAPES Foundation**, the **Ministry of Education of Brazil**, the **Latin American Higher Education Space (ENLACES)**, the **Association of African Universities (AAU)**, and **IDRC Canada**.

The dialogue brought together **over 200 high-level representatives from 53 countries**, as well as international organizations and strategic partners and funders from the Global North and Europe. This included government representatives from Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe, along with university leadership and researchers.

**Thematic priorities** explored during the dialogue included:

- Teacher training and professional development,
- Green and digital transitions,
- Climate change,
- Skills development (skilling, upskilling, and reskilling),
- Research and innovation to address development challenges.

The African Union Commission featured the event as part of the **African Union Year of Education** and used it as a consultation mechanism for revising the **Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA)**.

[The conference report](#) summarized the key conclusions and proposals from the event, including enhanced cooperation between Latin America and Europe, and a proposal for a **bi-regional Africa–Latin America programme on university innovation and engagement**. Notably, Brazil and Colombia made concrete commitments to strengthen academic exchange with Africa — particularly through increased student and researcher mobility — as a way to pursue shared economic interests and recognize common cultural and historical ties. The **Minister of Higher Education of Colombia** officially **offered Bogotá** as the host city for the 2025 Dialogue.

### *3.1.1 Pre-Launch of the 2025 Dialogue at the CILAC Forum*

Following the conclusions of the Addis Dialogue and building on the public commitment by the **Republic of Colombia** to host the 2025 edition, a **pre-launch of the Third Interregional Dialogue on Education and Development in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa** was held on **Tuesday, December 3rd** within the framework of the [CILAC Forum](#).

The pre-launch event, conducted in the presence of authorities and institutional partners, featured the participation of **Colombia's Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Yesenia Olaya**.



### *3.1.2 Official Launch of the Third Interregional Dialogue on Higher Education and Development*

On **December 9th, 2023**, the **Government of Colombia**, the **African Union**, the **Association of African Universities (AAU)**, **ASCUN** (Colombian Association of Universities), and **OBREAL** officially launched the **Third Interregional Dialogue on Higher Education and Development**, laying the foundation for the major summit to be held in **Bogotá in November 2025**.

The launch ceremony was chaired by:

- **Ana Lucia Caicedo Laurido**, Vice Minister for Knowledge, Innovation and Productivity of Colombia,
- **Oscar Domínguez**, Executive Director of ASCUN,
- **Olusola Oyewole**, Secretary General of the AAU,

The event underscored the growing importance of fostering dialogue and cooperation between **Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa** in higher education and development. The speakers invited all interested stakeholders to actively engage in both the preparatory activities and the 2025 summit.

The launch was attended by **over 100 participants**, including representatives from **European, African, Latin American, and Caribbean diplomatic missions** based in Bogotá, along with a broad representation of **universities, education agencies, and local governments from across Colombia**.

## **3.2 EHEA-AFRICA DIALOGUE ON RECOGNITION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The event Africa-EHEA dialogue on recognition and quality assurance: Successes, challenges and perspectives for cooperation was as a joint endeavor of HAQAA and the CG GPD (coordination Group Global Policy Dialogue of the Bologna Follow-Up Group), targeting African and EHEA (European Higher Education Area) stakeholders and members of the BFUG. It was intended as a means to prepare the Global Policy Forum in the Tirana Ministerial Conference of the EHEA, planned for May 2024, but also to further explore topical issues related to recognition and quality assurance that HAQAA has been advancing with diverse African stakeholder organizations in the higher education sector.

Hosted on 18-19 January, 2024 at the University of Barcelona with the support of OBREAL, the hybrid event gathered, physically, approximately 70 representatives of governments, organizations, student bodies and higher education institutions from Africa and the EHEA. The objectives of the dialogue were:



- Continue to explore the topic of recognition and quality assurance in and Africa-EHEA context, particularly by digging deeper into certain key themes of the Conversation series
- Recognition policies and frameworks and how they relate to institutional cooperation and mobility
- Recognition for life-long learning
- Recognition and the role of quality assurance systems and agencies
- Review outcomes and plans of Erasmus+ projects working on these themes in Africa and further afield
- Provide a space for consultation on the draft statement of the Bologna Policy Forum of the EHEA Ministerial Conference 2024 in Tirana
- Outline priorities for future Africa-EHEA dialogue

### 3.3 STRATEGIC EVENTS

OBREAL has organized and participated in many other events around the world in order to contribute its vision and experiences in the different international dialogue forums.

EVENT	LOCATION	DATES
UNESCO UIS Meeting: Education data	Paris	February
Annual Conference of the Asia Pacific Association for Internationalization of Higher Education (APAIE)	Perth, Australia	March
<b>FAUBAI</b>	Sao Paulo	April
<b>41<sup>th</sup> session of the Council of Ministers of CAMES</b> Presented the state of play of cooperation between OBREAL and CAMES and offered a perspective on the relationship going forward. OBREAL is part of the CAMES network of financial and technical partners.	Congo-Brazzaville	May
<b>Steering Committee of the EU's Youth Mobility Flagship of the Global Gateway and 'Framework' working group</b>	Gabaronne, Botswana	June
<b>IUCEA's 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference</b> OBREAL participated to strengthen South-South-North cooperation in higher education for development.	South Sudan	June

<b>SADC – Apiyo</b>	Botswana	
<b>Annual Meeting of African Science Academies (AMASA) and side event</b>  Event is organized by NASAC, OBREAL, United Nations Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries (UNTB), InterAcademy Partnership (IAP), and the Algerian Academy of Science and Technology (AAST), with the support of the African Union Commission, the Association of African Universities, and the Pan African University	Algiers, Algeria	November
<b>SADC Technical Committee of Education Information and Management Systems</b>	Mauritius	August
<b>AI- Commonwealth Consortium</b>	New York	September
<b>QS Africa</b>	Ghana	September
<b>UNESCO Chairs and Partners Forum: Transforming Knowledge on Africa's Future</b>	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	September
<b>IAUP Triennial Conference of Higher Education and Artificial Intelligence</b>	Beijing	November
<b>FICCI (Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industries) Annual higher education conference</b>	Delhi	October
<b>14<sup>th</sup> ANIE conference (African Association for the Internationalization of Higher Education)</b>	Accra, Ghana	October
<b>QS LATAM</b>	Mexico	October
<b>DHG Forum:</b>	Brussels	November
<b>CILAC 2024</b>	San Andres, Colombia	December

## 4. PROGRAMS

### 4.1 JULIO COTLER PROGRAM

[The Julio Cotler Program](#) was launched in 2024 as part of the celebration of the 20th anniversary of OBREAL's creation, as a tribute to Professor Julio Cotler (1932 - 2019). A central intellectual figure of OBREAL's first stage, his belief in the transformative power of higher education to address social inequalities inspires this initiative. The program is aimed at promoting analysis and dialogue on the main challenges facing Latin American democracies and encouraging emerging critical Latin American voices to rethink the structures of contemporary democracies. The Julio Cotler Program launched two calls- one to Peru and one to Latin America more widely, open to young university students in their final year of university studies and graduates of any discipline who are researchers or political or social activists and who have not yet published a research article in a peer-reviewed academic journal.

After a rigorous selection process and a dynamic intellectual exchange workshop, a jury of experts has selected the 2 most outstanding articles from each call for papers. The authors of the selected articles received a financial prize of 2,000 euros and their articles were published online with free access. An award ceremony was organized in Lima on 21<sup>st</sup> November at the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos along side with [a seminar on the political and social thinking](#) of Julio Cotler. Promotional videos were made of each author.

### 4.2 AI AND MULTILINGUALISM YOUTH INCUBATOR

This collaborative initiative by the [Commonwealth Secretariat](#), [OBREAL](#), and the [Association of African Universities](#) (AAU) was launched in 2024 to empower African university students and young researchers to contribute to leverage AI in the pursuit of innovation to solve local and global challenges. An open competition was launched and seven proposals were selected. Successful students were awarded seed funding to implement their innovative international projects. They have also been offered coaching and mentoring from distinguished African experts. Selected projects range from "Utilizing AI-powered calls to improve maternal and infant health in remote regions in Cameroon" to "AI254's Kenyan indigenous languages revival and educational accessibility initiative".

Short videos we produced of each successful candidate and disseminated on social media.

The first phase has served as a pilot that OBREAL intends to upscale.

## 5. KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

One of OBREAL's action pillars is the production of knowledge to contribute to policy debate and to generate new and innovative approaches for education and development. This is done through the production of policy papers and briefs, periodic opinion/think-pieces for the academic world and civil society, and research papers and articles that offer diverse perspectives on South-South-North cooperation.

### 5.1 POLICY BRIEFS

#### 5.1.1 African Continental Integration Policy briefs

Produced as part of the Policy Work Area of the EU funded Service Contract HAQAA3, six policy briefs have been produced and disseminated in 2024:

- Unpacking "Recognition in HE": different issues, different policy contexts, different instruments: A policy-oriented eye opener.
- Misconceptions about harmonization...and one policy conclusion concerning higher education.
- Languages and African regional and continental integration in higher education.
- Neither "teaching-and-learning" nor "learning-and-teaching". The real issue is "what teaching for what learning".
- Giving greater effectiveness to African continental integration in and through higher education: Empowering Universities as Development and Integration Agents.
- African Higher Education Integration must go together with transformation: The role of institutional leadership

All policy briefs are available on the HAQAA3 website and have been utilized as requisite reading for beneficiaries of the different training components of HAQAA.

## 6. PROMOTION AND VISIBILITY

OBREAL has continued to boost its communication tools through the creation of specific content for social networks and the design of new communication activities, such as interviews with members and partners and a podcast series.

### 6.1 PRESENCE ONLINE

#### 6.1.1 Website

OBREAL's online presence is articulated through the website [www.obreal.org](http://www.obreal.org), where news about the events, projects and initiatives is published. By the end of 2024 OBREAL started a process to redesign the website in order to create a more dynamic engaging

platform prioritizing the explanation of the association. The new website is expected to be launched during 2025.

### 6.1.2 Social Media

OBREAL has grown significantly in all its social media channels, especially LinkedIn. OBREAL has promoted all its major events, trainings, projects and activities and it has also created awareness about the main topics the association engages with.

### 6.1.3. Voices

OBREAL has launched a new space for sharing, analyzing, and discussing key current social issues through interviews, debates, and conversations with experts from around the world who help us better understand the common challenges faced by all regions.

During 2024 we recorded and posted 12 in-depth Interviews with experts in various fields that provide a better understanding of complex topics.

During 2024 we recorded and launched 4 podcast episodes which give voice to the stories behind major debates, featuring diverse episodes and conversations that both inform and entertain.

## 6.2 PRESENCE IN MEDIA

In addition to online presence, OBREAL has also given a boost to more traditional communications. During 2023, it has been working on a strategy to expand the association's presence in traditional media.

As an example, two publications in which the association was mentioned can be highlighted, both in "University World News": One on "[Strengthening leadership capacity will drive vital change in HE](#)", and the other on "[Policy entrepreneurs' acknowledged for HE reform efforts](#)".

## 7. OVERVIEW OF MEMBERSHIP

### 7.1 NEW MEMBERS IN 2024

In 2023, OBREAL's membership has grown, with the addition of several new members who bring valuable expertise and perspectives to our association:

ITBA

FUNAAB

UNNE

African Leadership University

Crawford University

UNLP



## 8. ANNUAL ACCOUNTS & BUDGET 2024

### 8.1 Annual Accounts

Profit and Loss Statement	2023
	EURO
	(x)
Services Provided	2.403.134,72
Supplies work performed by others	-1.719.570,89
Pluriannual resources	
Grants and donations	348.967,60
General expenses ( salaries, social security, bank costs and other professional services)	-708.961,65
Depreciation of fixed assets	-1.848,52
Others	-209,34
A) OPERATING INCOME	321.511,92
Other	1.181,06
Exchange differences	172,40
B) INCOME BEFORE TAXES	322.865,38
Income taxes	-80.768,68
C) INCOME FOR THE YEAR	242.096,70

Summary of the Balance Sheet	2023
	EURO
	(x)
NON-CURRENT ASSETS	6.961,23
CURRENT ASSETS	2.899.082,47
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>2.906.043,70</b>
NET EQUITY	262.832,63
CURRENT LIABILITIES	2.643.211,07
<b>TOTAL NET EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b>	<b>2.906.043,70</b>

### 8.1 Budget 2024

BUDGET 2024	2023
	EURO
	(x)
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>3.823.579,00</b>
Finalised projects	178.053,00
Ongoing projects 2024	642.295,00
Others	500,00
Pluriannual Resources	3.002.731,00
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>3.823.579,00</b>
Ongoing projects 2024 (service contracts and grants)	2.274.980,00
General expenses (salaries, social security, office supplies, coordination travel)	1.319.694,00
OBREAL Programmes and Initiatives	112.000,00
Taxes and financial expenses	116.905,00

As we look back on a year of growth, collaboration, and impact, OBREAL remains steadfast in its mission to support higher education development and interregional dialogue. The projects, initiatives, and dialogues highlighted in this report underscore our collective efforts to promote innovation, sustainability, and inclusiveness in education. With an expanding membership and a forward-looking agenda, we are excited to build on the successes of 2023 and continue advancing our goals in the coming years.