

WORKSHOP ON HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) – PRETORIA
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Higher Education in Mauritius

Briefing paper

for the Workshop on Higher Education



This paper outlines the tertiary¹ education situation in Mauritius giving particular attention to the European Commission's contribution. Drawn from publically-available documents, studies, research papers and information supplied by the EUD, it is aimed at **supporting well-informed exchanges of ideas** at the forthcoming Workshop for representatives of EUDs, Commission staff, educationalists and other participants.

1. Background

Mauritius is an Upper Middle income country seeking to become a High Income Country, planning to put in place the right policies in order to unlock the potential for further growth while ensuring social equity and sustainable development. The main axes of the **Government Programme 2015-2019** are to:

- transform Mauritius into a forward looking, environmentally sustainable, economically vibrant and innovative country with modern infrastructure, global connectivity, high skills and technology;
- improve quality of life, accelerate social integration, strengthen democracy and ensure independent functioning of institutions;
- conduct business on the principles of discipline, transparency, accountability and exemplary governance
- ward off unemployment and implement better housing policy;
- promote healthy business climate; and
- distribute national wealth equitably.

Specifically, it is the vision of the Government of Mauritius to transform Mauritius into a **Knowledge-based Economy** by 2025 in the light of a globalised economy, which requires higher skills, more research and innovation, and greater competitiveness. Education is already a top government priority in Mauritius, and the island ranks first in [UNESCO's list](#) of African countries for tertiary education enrolment.

Mauritius has consistently been working to position itself as a 'higher education hub': a crossroads for tertiary education, attracting both high-quality **international academic institutions** and top-tier students from all over the world. Already, institutions like the UK's Middlesex University, the University of Aberystwyth, and the University of Northampton have set up Mauritian branch campuses and Mauritian institutions have also partnered with international awarding bodies to deliver European degrees. More recently, Médine Education Village, a project backed by Mauritian property, the Médine Group, has created a space for European institutions to set up and is already accommodating, among others, the Vatel group and University of Panthéon-Assas specialised in Hospitality/Tourism and Law/Social Sciences respectively.

The demand for higher education is expected to continue increasing in the region and Mauritius aims at playing a meaningful role by offering quality tertiary education, increasing enrolment of international students and attracting reputed universities. Observers have especially noted a [marked rise in higher education activity in sub-Saharan Africa](#), with SADC students being the most mobile in the world. Political stability, a population bilingual in English and French, and its attractiveness to foreign investors work in Mauritius' favour in terms of **Transnational HE**. In addition, its geographical location just a few miles off the east coast of Madagascar, along with the island's cultural and historical ties to Asia and Europe, make it an obvious choice to play host to a new brand of global, affordable, world-class higher education for the continent.

¹ The term 'tertiary' education is used throughout in this paper in relation to Mauritian institutions and documents.



Despite its impressive post-independence performance, the Mauritian economy faces a number of short and medium-term challenges, on both the internal and external fronts. And, even though there are growing cohorts with certificates, the lack of highly qualified labour might hinder the early development of high value industries. Accredited certification in relevant skills is the gateway to employment and an escape from poverty but being employable is not just about learning content but also involves having high level analytical and communication skills, the ability to solve problems, to be innovative, and adaptable, and also about developing flexible talent, and making the most of those skills in new and challenging circumstances... learning, and then graduating, with knowledge and values that prepare students to be **successful and confident world citizens**.

2. Tertiary Education in Mauritius

The tertiary education landscape in Mauritius has witnessed significant transformation since the country's accession to its independence in 1968 when only one institution, namely the University of Mauritius (UoM) was in existence. Today, the Sector is quite diversified and encompasses some 65 institutions, public and private and regional, each with its own specificity.

The public sector covers seven² higher education institutions overseen by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)³. Three public institutions, namely the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD), the Mauritius Institute of Health (MIH) and the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) also run programmes at the tertiary level.

In addition to the above, 55 private institutions are registered locally, providing tertiary education in various fields, ranging from Certificate to Ph.D., with the awarding bodies mostly based overseas (52 out of 58). A majority of the private institutions operate on a part-time basis in the evenings and during weekends, with relatively small student cohorts. The courses offered are generally delivered through some franchise agreements using a variety of modes, namely face-to-face, distance learning or a combination of both.

It is also worth noting that a significant number of Mauritian students go overseas for their higher studies since it is perceived that overseas HE is of better quality and offer a wider choice of subjects.

The Gross Enrolment Rate at Tertiary level (GTER) has been constantly improving over the past decade, and increased from 15.1% in 2000 to 50.1% in 2013. In absolute terms, the number of students in the tertiary education sector increased from 16,735 in 2000 to 50,579 in 2013. However, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (tertiary education enrolment as a percentage of the population aged 20 to 24 years), which was 50.1 % in 2013, decreased to 49.2% in 2014. The majority of students (80%) were enrolled in tertiary education locally in both public-funded institutions (45%) and private institutions (35%). The remaining 20% of the students were enrolled in tertiary education overseas.

The gender-disaggregated enrolment rate in public tertiary education institutions was as follows from 2011 to 2014:

Table 1: Enrolment in public tertiary education institutions 2011-2014

² The University of Mauritius (UoM), the University of Technology of Mauritius (UTM), the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI), the Rabindranath Tagore Institute (RTI), the Open University of Mauritius (OU), previously known as the Mauritius College of the Air, the Fashion and Design Institute (FDI) as well as the newly-created Université des Mascareignes (a merger of the former 2 polytechnics, namely the Swami Dayanand Institute of Management and the Institut Supérieur de Technologie).

³ The TEC has inter alia, has responsibility for allocating public funds, planning and coordinating the development of post-secondary education and training, regulating private post-secondary education institutions locally through institutional registration and programme accreditation to assure quality. The TEC also determines the recognition and equivalence of post-secondary qualifications.

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	<u>2011/2012</u>		<u>2012/2013</u>		<u>2013/2014</u>	
Male	9 390	40%	9 438	40%	11 457	41%
Female	14 178	60%	14 292	60%	16 193	59%
Total	23 568	100%	23 730	100%	27 650	100%

As it can be seen from the above table, male enrolment stands at an average of 40% over the past three years, while female enrolment was 60% on average: there has been no research to understand the reasons for this enrolment in favour of girls. However, it is assumed that boys underachievement at the end of the Certificate of Primary Education, School Certificate and Higher School Certificate, the tendency of parents to send boys rather than girls abroad for higher education as well as the inclination of boys to choose vocational studies might explain this situation.

During the identification and formulation of 11th EDF NIP programmes, due consideration will be given to restoring an adequate gender balance in the enrolment of boys in the tertiary education sector. For research and innovation, no statistics are available for number of researchers by gender. However there is a marked gender difference in the students taking science subjects as there are more boys than girls in highly technical scientific subjects. These issues will also be followed through the successor to the Gender Action Plan for the period 2016-2020. [Of the 579,100 Mauritians employed at September 2015, 45.6 per cent were women and the employability of women is a pressing problem.]

As per the budget 2014 documentation, the expenditure in the education sector, stood at 12.2% of total public expenditure in 2013. For 2014, the share of education in total expenditure is forecast to increase to 12.8%, thereby showing the sustained importance given to this sector by the Government. The tertiary education sector represents an average of 1% of public expenditure. The budget granted to the Ministry of Tertiary Education is detailed in the Table hereunder:

Table 2: Expenditure in the Tertiary Education Sector (2013-2015)

	2013	2014	2015 (estimates)
Expenditure on Tertiary Education (MUR billion)	1,047	1,320	1,491
Total Expenditure in Education (MUR billion)	12,827	14,522	14,871
Tertiary Education as a % of total expenditure on education (%)	8%	9%	10%

As it can be seen from the Table, the share of expenditure on tertiary education in total education budget is increasing over the period 2013 to 2015.

However, despite these positive results, there are still issues in the **quality of learning outcomes** at all levels. Mauritius still lags behind other middle-income countries in terms of learning achievements. A comparison of reading and math scores across countries in the 2009 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows that Mauritius scored below comparable countries such as Malaysia, Costa Rica and Chile, as the Mauritius education system remains biased toward rote learning rather than the type of skills required by the labour market. PISA also showed that a large segment of the population lacks adequate literacy and math skills, which is strongly correlated with high unemployment and poverty rates, and therefore poses a major constraint on economic progress going forward.

There is significant work to be done in the education sector, including the tertiary sector, in order to unlock the true potential of the Republic Mauritius as a knowledge based centre. The multiplier effects of this sector are significant, as reinforcing the education sector would generate investments, create jobs, and also serve regional integration purposes, if the students from the African continent are to be attracted. The skills mismatch existing in Mauritius might also be mitigated if the necessary measures are taken in the relevant elements of the higher education sector.

There are three critical constraints currently being faced at human resources development level in Mauritius in relation to the objective of becoming a High Income Country in the near future – (a) relevance, (b) equity and (c) research and innovation. The first key challenge in the tertiary sector is the **skills mismatch** in the labour market, which is also linked to the youth unemployment. For example, there is a scarcity of engineers specialised in building and infrastructure, despite the need in this sector. This type of skills mismatch can be remedied by improving the relevance of tertiary education to make it more responsive to the needs of the labour market. This would imply improving supply of courses at University level that match the demands for the labour market. In this context, the Ministry will encourage more linkages between all tertiary education institutions and industry.



Even though education achievements are improving markedly and there are growing cohorts with a high school degree, the lack of highly qualified labour might hinder the early development of high value industries. There are two types of skills mismatch prevailing in the country: either the existing Curricula do not match needs of companies or there is absence of offer at the level of university in programmes in critical fields.

The second key challenge is to ensure **equitable access** to tertiary education. The Gross Tertiary Enrolment Rate, which measures the total number of Mauritians enrolled in tertiary education, both locally and overseas, as a percentage of the population aged 20-24 years, stood at 50.1% in 2012 (of which 81 % locally and 19% abroad). The third challenge is to enhance the quality of tertiary education to attain **international standards**, namely by improving effectiveness and efficiency of tertiary education institutions. This challenge is being addressed by the Government of Mauritius.

3. Tertiary Governance and Strategic Planning

The tertiary education sector comprises public as well as private institutions providing an array of courses, from Certificate to Doctorate Level. There are four public universities, three publicly funded tertiary education institutions (TEIs) as well as 52 private TEIs. Government announced in the 2015 Budget the setting up of three polytechnics “to improve employability and adaptability of students for the world of work”.

In Mauritius, tertiary education as well as scientific research falls under the aegis of the **Ministry of Education, Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research** (MoE), with the new Ministry of Innovation accommodating the Mauritius Research Council (MRC). The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) is the regulatory body, allocating funds, monitoring quality, and being responsible for programme accreditation. The Mauritius Research Council (MRC) at the newly established Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation (MTCI, 2015), is responsible for identifying research needs in relation to the socio-economic needs and opportunities of Mauritius and in line with the vision stated above.

The **Tertiary Education Commission** (TEC) regulates the private tertiary education institutions and allocates funding to the public tertiary education institutions. TEC’s current vision and mission, situated in global trends, is to turn Mauritius into an Intelligent Island and a world-class knowledge hub. The Tertiary Education Commission is being restructured into a robust regulatory body that would adopt best and promising practices and international quality standards, in line with Government's vision of good governance and with a view to transforming Mauritius into a Knowledge Hub.

The challenges faced by the tertiary education sector are to develop high value-added knowledge which would enhance its competitive advantage, prepare itself to operate in an internationalised higher education environment, widen access and ensure equity, improve quality, increase and sustain investment in research and innovation and strengthen the governance and financial sustainability of the higher education sector. While addressing the concerns for equity and widening access, the tertiary education institutions are also expected to internationalise and operate in a more competitive environment.

The governments’ vision has been translated into the **Tertiary Education Strategic Plan 2013-2025** geared towards transforming Mauritius into a knowledge-based economy by 2025. The plan focuses on five main goals to create and maintain a conducive environment to make Mauritius a centre of knowledge of high quality and values, strongly anchored in science, technology and innovation while ensuring equitable access to tertiary education to every citizen. It also explains the strategies and activities to achieve these goals.

The first goal provides for **increasing access** to tertiary education to achieve the enrolment of 68,000 students by 2025, including secondary school leavers, students enrolled in continuous professional development, lifelong learning and upgrading of qualifications.



The second focus area of the plan is to achieve **high quality standards** of tertiary education and improve the ranking of tertiary education institutions as well as ensure the relevance of tertiary education programmes to economic and social needs of the country and the region.

The third goal sets out to transform Mauritius into a **prime destination for higher learning** by attracting some 100,000 international students by 2025 and encouraging international tertiary institutions of high reputation, including renowned institutions among the 500 top ranking universities, to set up local campuses/units or partnerships in Mauritius.

Strategic goal number four outcome calls for the **enhancement of research and innovation** and aims at increasing the percentage of the budget allocated to research from the present 0.3% to 1% by 2025; increase by 75% the number of publications and patents by local researchers by 2025; encourages private sector participation in research while rationalising research and innovation to respond to economic and social needs.

The final goal of the plan is to **strengthen governance and financial sustainability** through the introduction of a Tertiary Education Act and the establishment of well-defined performance indicators for publicly funded tertiary education institutions and mechanisms to link funding to quality improvement.

Several initiatives will be implemented to meet the five goals of the strategic plan. They include *inter alia*:

- the development of modern infrastructure,
- the establishment of relevant legal and regulatory frameworks,
- the setting up and implementation of appropriate mechanisms,
- encouraging institutional networking, capacity building, and
- the introduction of several schemes to ease access to tertiary education for local students and community.

Taken together, these represent a substantial investment in Mauritius' educational, economic and social future.

Moreover, with the Ministry of Tertiary Education objective to promote access to HE with foreign institutions as key players, in some cases, quality has somewhat been compromised, despite the existence of the Tertiary Education Commission as a regulatory mechanism. The Government 2015–2019 programme aims at delivering a high standard of academic education and skills for the youngsters. It further recognises that, to achieve meaningful change, technology, communication and innovation will constitute key drivers.

While there has been increased access to education, thereby expanding skills and employment opportunities, it is still seen that educational outcomes are correlated with the socio economic factors. Children from low income families tend to have a low school completion rate. The Government is committed to improve education at all levels in an inclusive and equitable manner. There are a number of initiatives on going to facilitate access to pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education to children from vulnerable groups, as well as increasing the education outcomes for these children. Children attending schools (from primary to tertiary level education) are provided free transport through Government funding. One of the latest examples relates to the setting up of a scholarship scheme for tertiary education for children from vulnerable groups, announced in the Budget 2014, whereby various scholarships and financial assistance schemes (loans and grants) support students from low income groups. The National Scholarship Scheme (Laureate Scheme) has also been expanded since 2013 to include state scholarships on the basis of both merit and social criteria.

According to the World Bank⁴ the most far-reaching phenomena influencing Mauritian economy is the ongoing transition from an economy based on low value added manufacturing to one in which technology and innovation will play a major role for future growth. There are some early indications that the current labour supply is only partially prepared for that purpose, thereby pointing to the existence of a skills mismatch in the economy. One of the indicators of the skills mismatch is the level of youth unemployment, which is quite high. Out of the 44,500 unemployed surveyed in June 2014, around 18,800, i.e. 42% of them were aged below 25 years.

In order to widen access to higher education, the Mauritian government has opened up the sector to foreign higher education institutions. A growing number of Western and Indian foreign accreditation bodies offer courses in the country in parallel with the local tertiary institutions.

An **Action Plan** for the Tertiary Education Strategic Plan, commissioned by the Delegation of the European Union to Mauritius, has recently been elaborated by a team of Consultants. The Action Plan fits within the context of the

⁴ Mauritius Systematic Country Diagnostic (2014)



vision of Government to transform Mauritius into a knowledge-based economy by 2025 in the light of a globalised economy. Measures adopted by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research to improve the functioning of the Tertiary Education sector include:

- improvement of the functioning of feeder channels to tertiary education through the Nine Year Schooling Project at Primary and Secondary levels;
- diversification of post-secondary education through the strengthening of the TVET and Polytechnics subsectors; and
- consolidation of legislation and regulation of the Tertiary Education Sector through the Higher Education Bill to be worked out with the help of an expert from the Commonwealth.

Prime Minister Sir Anerood Jugnauth has clearly displayed its goal to reduce the unemployment rate to 4%. As this rate has never fallen below 7% since 2004, it has been called unrealistic. According to a leading economist, "This is not feasible in the short term⁵. "If the goal is for one year, should be then more than 40,000 posts to absorb half of the existing unemployed, hire new entrants on the labour market without forgetting those who lose their jobs. Since the current trend is that 10,000 people gather on the pavement every year.

The Budget for 2015-2016 provided RS 14.7 billion to the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of education from pre-primary to tertiary level, implement the nine year schooling, reform the tertiary sector as well as revamp and adapt vocational training to the new needs of Mauritian society. The Budget further announced that the three campuses are presently under construction at Réduit, Montagne Blanche and Pamplemousses and they will offer courses in various sectors in view of engaging engages in a new direction on the question of manpower training and development. In its bid to address the issue of unemployed graduates whose training does not match market requirements and improve their chances of getting a job, the University of Mauritius and other qualified institutions will develop tailor-made crash courses in fields with high job prospects.

The role and functions of the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD) will be reviewed to put a much greater emphasis on training plumbers, electricians, welders, masons, carpenters, and other technicians for which there will be increasing demand as the mega infrastructure projects unfold. In addition, a '*Chambre des Métiers*' is being set up with a view to giving greater recognition to the skills and competencies of trade persons and other technicians. It will deliver '*cartes de compétences*' to its registered members.

A new Higher Education Bill to correct the malpractices which have damaged the reputation of the tertiary education sector is in the pipeline. The Bill will also help rebuild the reputation of that sector, raise quality and meet international standards. Furthermore, Government is also introducing a more transparent and efficient Financing Model based on performance for Publicly Funded Tertiary Education Institutions.

4. Research and Innovation

As noted above, a strategic goal of the Tertiary Education Sector Strategic Plan is to strengthen the capacity for research and innovation to respond to economic and social needs. One of the activities to achieve this was to rationalise research by creating a national research and innovation platform and a national research and innovation fund. With the creation of the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation in December 2014 the STI Policy and Innovation Policy and Strategic Plan has been consolidated into the **National Innovation Framework** (NIF). The overall objective of the NIF is to generate key pillars for future robust growth of the Republic of Mauritius. It is also worth noting that the National Innovation Framework encompasses all the schemes related to research and innovation, including National Innovation Programme.

Collaborative research projects across institutions need to be facilitated through a more proactive **Mauritius Research Council**. The foreign universities that set up in Mauritius need to bring value added at all levels including their research expertise. Identifying with key stakeholders areas of research that Mauritius would depend on for the next ten years and giving priority to those would be an important pre-requisite – the following have been suggested (by TESP/MRC):

- Ocean economy;

⁵ Eric Ng, Economist



- Biotechnology;
- Renewable energy; and
- Creative arts.

Research is the main engine for an Innovative Knowledge Hub and has the potential to be a powerful tool in innovation and transforming the country's economy to meet the government's economic development goals. In the current economic climate, researchers and their organisations need to be able to justify public expenditure on research, and to identify cost-effective and revenue generating opportunities in association with the research. As such, it is important to evaluate the impact of research in line with its aims, be they policy- or practice-oriented. Impact is defined here as the application, use and influence of research.

There is a need for innovative applied research in addition to research that informs academic development. As such there is a need to constantly seek new ways to engage with colleagues elsewhere, government, industry, and the community in order to build productive, sustainable partnerships and tackle some of the fundamental issues facing Mauritius and humankind, and to avoid mismatches. Applied research will have a positive impact on economic development. Quality research will be recognised internationally and by the private sector. In order to become a knowledge hub Mauritius should recognise and promote its research quality, especially when it comes to innovative applied sciences.

5. EU Support

The cooperation between the European Union and Mauritius has always been close and fruitful and Mauritius has always shown very good performance for the implementation of European Development Fund (EDF) and other budget lines funded programmes. The successful outcomes of the Article 8 Political Dialogue undertaken since 2011 have shown the high commitment of the Government of Mauritius constructively to discuss policy issues with the EU. The Government has frequently emphasised that the EU is a major partner and EU support under the 10th EDF contributed to the sustainable economic development of Mauritius, with the main focus being the provision of support to the economic and social reform programme through the general budget support instrument.

The EU has been present in the education sector since 2007 supporting reforms in the pre-primary and primary education sectors through the general budget support aid modality coupled with an established policy dialogue. In 2007 and 2008, the EU support focussed on improving the educational outcomes in the primary sector for vulnerable groups. Between 2009 and 2012, access to pre-primary education was monitored, specifically for the children from vulnerable groups. Between 2013 and 2015, the reform of the primary education end of cycle exams and an improvement in access to secondary education are the key results being achieved through the EU support programme.

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development proposed that the EU under the 11th EDF be focussed on the education sector, where there were a number of important reforms that still needed the support of "a key development partner like the European Union". It was therefore agreed by the Government and the EU the focus of bilateral cooperation will be mainly the tertiary education sector, including research and innovation. The aid modality will be determined during identification/formulation, though the Government has requested a Sector Reform Contract.

The overall objective of the EU response strategy under the 11th EDF will be to support the objective of the Republic of Mauritius to evolve from a Middle Income Country to a High Income Country⁶. The **specific objective** under 11th EDF will be to **improve the relevance, quality and equity in tertiary education and research, thereby contributing to transforming the Republic of Mauritius into a knowledge-based and innovative society**. The envelope for Mauritius under the 11th EDF for the period 2014-2020 will be EUR 9.9 million and the financial envelope could be allocated as follows: EUR 7.9 million (80% of total) for the Tertiary Education sector, including research and innovation and EUR 2 million (20% of total) for a Technical Cooperation Facility programme.

The main indicators for the educational elements are three fold:

⁶ It is noted that the NIP was ready in December 2014 but, due to the elections, was not submitted to Brussels at that stage. A Commission Decision is anticipated within the coming days.



- i. Percentage of graduates from public funded institutions who are employed within the scope of their programme within two years of graduation.
- ii. Number of new study programmes mounted in the public universities, which address the skills mismatch in private and public universities and research and innovation sectors and which are industry driven.
- iii. Number of scholarships given to children from low income families for undergraduate studies.

To note that, it might be necessary to slightly revisit these indicators in the light of the identification of the 11th EDF NIP.

The proposed main indicators for Research and Innovation are twofold:

- i. Operationalisation of the National Innovation Programme, including the setting up of the National Research and Innovation Fund.
- ii. Increase in the number of research proposals that obtain funding, including from the private sector.

The expected result under research and innovation is to set up a stronger policy and institutional structure. Under the 11th EDF, the necessary policy and institutional framework to be put in place for the development of research and innovation, including funding, will be taken into consideration. This result will serve five objectives of the National Innovation Framework (NIF), namely:

- i. identify measures to increase the competitiveness of the local industrial sector by promoting the use of technology and innovation;
- ii. identify measures to increase the efficiency of local research and research-related institutions to achieve social and economic development in a sustainable manner;
- iii. devise policies and identify institutions to support the technological transformation, capacity building and innovation of enterprises;
- iv. improve linkages between the research and industry sectors; and
- v. enhance national, regional and international dialogue in innovation.

This **policy dialogue** will be an important element of the action and will involve, mainly with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research and the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation. Other stakeholders like the MRC and the University of Mauritius, the Centre for Biomedical and Biomaterials Research, and any other department or agency concerned with the programme, will also be consulted. All the partners involved in the education sector would also be closely involved in the policy dialogue. The private sector, which is very active in policy dialogue with the Government on issues like skills mismatch and innovation, will be consulted in the design of programmes to be funded under the 11th EDF. The civil society will also be part of the dialogue during the implementation of the 11th EDF NIP. Trade unions and students associations exist and are well structured in the education sector. These consultations with Civil Society Organisations will assist in promoting a meaningful and structured participation of the civil society in the implementation of domestic policies. To the extent possible and when relevant; local authorities will be associated with the dialogue.

To address the relevance issue, the NIP proposes as expected result to increase the relevance of tertiary education, namely through an adaptation of tertiary studies to the demands of the labour market, thereby enhancing the employability of graduates upon the completion of their studies. The percentage of graduates from public funded institutions who are employed within the scope of their programme within two years of graduation will serve as indicator to measure this result.

The links with **wider EU programmes** in the areas of tertiary education and research, such as Erasmus+, Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme, Harmonization and Tuning initiative and Horizon 2020 will be strengthened so as to further assist the Government's objectives in the tertiary education, research and innovation sectors. There will also be close coordination with the regional programmes funded by the European Union under the 11th EDF from which Mauritius can benefit. These relate mainly to the programmes to be funded under the Indian Ocean Commission as determined in the Regional Indicative Programme for the 11th EDF.



6. International Partners and Perspectives

Of the EU Member States, only France and UK are present in Mauritius although cooperation with MS has been significantly reinforced since the Lisbon Treaty and there are joint EU discussions on a number of subjects. Other resident donors are the World Bank, Agence Française de Développement, African Development Bank and UNDP. The IMF is also present through the technical assistance centres and training institute. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) is also present, providing technical assistance. Coordination in this group is close and there is regular dialogue on the different interventions. The donor coordination extends outside the budget support operations also in the areas of technical assistance.

The UK is very active in the tertiary education sector and in the promotion of linkages between British universities and local Tertiary Education Institutions in the Republic of Mauritius while the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office is funding an audit of tertiary education institutions being conducted by the UK based Quality Assurance Agency. The *Service de Coopération et d'Action Culturelle* actively promotes partnerships and linkages between French Universities and local universities. The AFD is doing some analytical work in the area of biotechnology which will inform possible future interventions in the research and development sector.

The European Union will liaise closely with these donors during the implementation of the 11th EDF, in order to ensure coherence and complementarity with the various programmes, with the Government of the Republic of Mauritius playing the leadership role in overall donor coordination. Over and above the existing relations with the EU, UK and France, Mauritius needs to develop stronger links with the BRICS which are investing massively in higher education and where some of the most interesting transformations in higher education are taking place.

7. Issues and Challenges

A. Is the **staffing** of the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) sufficient, in terms of quality and quantity, extending to the provision of relevant expertise, to enable the effective implementation of the TESP and meet the challenges of TE?

B. It is recognised that an innovative knowledge hub:

- Requires international recognition;
- Recognition follows quality innovative research;
- Quality innovative research requires high quality researchers; and
- High quality researchers have a creative, independent, pro-active, accountable, etc. attitude, including good cooperation, communication and leadership skills.

Will such requirements – commencing with the participation of **sufficient high-quality researchers** – be met? What kind of additional (soft) skills do graduates need to succeed in the business environment? The TESP proposes the development of **entrepreneurial skills and attitudes**, i.e. being creative, daring to take well calculated risks, applying initiative, being accountable, having organisational skills, having conducive (supportive, motivating) management and leadership skills, being able to communicate effectively and being able to cooperate. Are those who lead and teach within the tertiary sector committed and competent to convey these skills?

C. Many (but not all) academic staff at the public universities spend significant amounts of their time for **teaching or tutoring at other** (including private) **institutions**, in particular Mauritius-based branches of foreign institutions, instead of doing research. Is this a serious impediment and can it be overcome?

D. The open doors policy of the recent years, aimed at attracting foreign universities to Mauritius, has created a second-tier university situation that may jeopardise rather than favour the emergence of Mauritius as a knowledge hub. Similarly, the reduction of access norms could well result in a lowering of academic quality together with an overall decline in international reputation. How may **standards and credibility** be safeguarded?



An urgent upgrading of existing tertiary institutions to meet international benchmarks in terms of the **quality** of the teaching provision as well as the research output is needed. Will the Tertiary Education Commission be competent and courageous enough to fulfil such a role?

E. High expectations of revenues from transnational higher education seem to have dwarfed the **socio-cultural costs** of a large influx of foreign students in terms of transport, housing, energy, natural resources and environmental protection. There could be an impact on health services and possibly the existing socio-cultural fabric: will people from different cultural backgrounds be capable to adapt to Mauritian cultures? Are the plans for attracting and receiving foreign students realistic and attainable?

F. How best may Mauritius **democratise access** to tertiary education through technology and create a nation of lifelong learners, reducing costs, increasing participation and raising – rather than lowering – standards?

G. How best may **EU support and expertise** be applied in support of Mauritius's higher educational and national objectives?