



## Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences Engineering and Technology (PASET) Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (Rsif)

### High-level Policy Dialogue on Higher Education and Skills Development

#### CONCEPT NOTE AND AGENDA

**Theme:** Bridging Policy and Practice: Advancing Higher Education, Research, and Innovation for Ethiopia's Transformation

**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025

**Venue:** Haile Hotels and Resorts Group, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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#### Background

African countries are increasingly placing higher education at the center of strategies for sustainable growth and employment. In Ethiopia, this priority is reflected in the Ten-Year Development Plan (2021–2030) and the Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda, which emphasize building a future-oriented education system to support industrialization, job creation, and inclusive development. Aligning postgraduate training with national transformation goals and emerging economic sectors is therefore critical.

In alignment with continental priorities, the African Union Commission's Second 10-Year Implementation Plan (2024–2033) reinforces the importance of higher education and research, targeting the production of 10,000 PhDs, with at least 20% in STEM fields. These goals align with Ethiopia's ambition to become a knowledge-based, innovation-driven economy capable of addressing poverty, promoting inclusion, and enhancing competitiveness on the global stage.

Ethiopia has undertaken notable reforms in its higher education sector in recent years. The Ministry of Education has initiated a review of the Higher Education Proclamation, with a focus on governance, research productivity, and quality assurance. These efforts were reinforced by the 2024 National Higher Education Conference held in Addis Ababa under the theme *"Innovative Pathways to Transform Higher Education in Ethiopia"*, which called for a stronger policy focus and emphasized the need to scale up doctoral training, promote interdisciplinary research, and strengthen university-industry linkages.



Despite this progress, key challenges persist. Postgraduate enrollment remains limited, research infrastructure is underdeveloped, and there is often a misalignment between graduate competencies and market needs. Addressing these gaps requires greater policy coherence, strategic investment, and stronger partnerships between academia, government, and the private sector. Ethiopia's engagement with the Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (PASET) through the Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (Rsif) presents a unique opportunity to address these challenges.

Rsif supports doctoral and post-doctoral training in strategic sectors such as ICT, climate resilience, food security, energy, and materials science—areas aligned with Ethiopia's national priorities. Ethiopia hosts an Rsif African Host University (AHU), further reinforcing its commitment to building high-level research capacity and innovation ecosystems.

Against this backdrop, and building on findings from a recent multi-country study on doctoral and post-doctoral training conducted in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Kenya, this high-level policy dialogue aims to catalyze strategic, evidence-based conversations. The goal is to align higher education, research, and innovation more closely with Ethiopia's socio-economic development goals and long-term transformation agenda.

## Objectives

The high-level policy dialogue aims to:

1. Deliberate on strategic policy approaches to strengthen higher education and skills development in Ethiopia, drawing on insights from the recent multi-country study on doctoral and post-doctoral training conducted in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Kenya.
2. Reflect on Ethiopia's higher education and research landscape in light of national development priorities, while elevating the visibility and support for the Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (Rsif) as a sustainable, government-led model for building science and innovation capacity.
3. Generate actionable policy recommendations to enhance the quality, relevance, and impact of doctoral education, post-doctoral training and research in advancing Ethiopia's transformation agenda.

## Expected Outcomes

The policy dialogue is expected to:

1. Strengthen stakeholder understanding of strategic approaches to higher education and skills development in Ethiopia, informed by comparative insights from across Africa.
2. Promote alignment between higher education policies and national development plans, while elevating the visibility and support for the Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (Rsif) as a sustainable, government-led model for building science and innovation capacity.

3. Generate actionable policy recommendations to enhance the quality and relevance of doctoral education and research in advancing Ethiopia's economic transformation and broader regional development goals.

## Participants

About 50 participants are expected to attend the high-level policy dialogue event. These comprise key stakeholders in Ethiopia drawn from relevant ministries, academia, industry, development partners, regional experts and representatives of the PASET, Rsif and ACTS.

## Program

08:30hrs– 09:00hrs	Arrival and registration
9:00hrs– 9:30hrs:	<b>Welcome Remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Julius Ecuru, Head of Policy and Enabling Environment &amp; Rsif Manager, <i>icipe</i></li> <li>• Dr. Jemal Yousuf Hassen, President, Haramaya University</li> </ul> <b>Opening Remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H.E Professor Birhanu Nega, Minister of Education, Ethiopia</li> </ul>
9:30hrs– 10:30hrs:	<b>Keynote presentation:</b> Transforming Higher Education for a Knowledge-Based Economy: Aligning Policy, Research, and Innovation in Ethiopia  Speaker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ H.E. Dr. Bayissa Badada, State Minister for Research and Innovation, Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MINT)</li> </ul>
10:30hrs– 11:00hrs:	Keynote Reflections and Response
11:00hrs– 11:30hrs	<b>Health Break (incl. group photo)</b>
11:30hrs– 12:30hrs:	<b>Pathways to Strengthen PhD Training and Postgraduate Impact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Agnes Lutomiah, Head of Programme-STIKS, African Centre for Technology Studies</li> </ul>
12:30hrs– 13:00hrs	Discussion and Reflections on the Findings
13:00hrs	<b>Lunch</b>



14:00hrs–  
15:00hrs: Strengthening institutional and national policy synergies to maximize the development impact of doctoral training

**Moderator:** Prof. Solomon Belay Tessema, Innovation advisor to the Minister and Senior Researcher, MINT

Panel Discussants/ panelists:

- H.E Ato Kora Tushune, State Minister, Higher Education, Ethiopia
- Prof Teketel Yohannes Anshebo, Executive Director, Ethiopian Academy of Sciences
- Prof. Kassahun Tesfaye, DG for Bio and Emerging Technology Institute
- Dr. Nigussie Dechassa Robi, Director General, Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR)
- Dr. Zerihun Tadele, University of Bern, ETH Zurich, Switzerland, Ethiopian Diaspora Scientist & Policy Influencer
- Dr Fenet Belay, Assistant Professor, Jimma University and Rsif Alumna

15:00hrs–  
15:30hrs: Panel Reflections and Audience Dialogue

15:30hrs–  
15:50hrs: **Way forward and next steps:**  
Dr. Samuel Kifle, Vice Chancellor, Addis Ababa University

15:50hrs–  
16:00hrs: **Closing Remarks:**  
Dr. Julius Ecuru, Head of Policy and Enabling Environment & Rsif Manager, *icipe*

16:00hrs–  
16:30hrs: **Tea/ coffee break**