

Towards a new research and innovation policy in Lesotho

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Brussels, 14 January 2022/OACPS: Two reports produced following the six-month mission led by high-level international experts under the OACPS Research and Innovation (R&I) Programme's Policy Support Facility (PSF) are expected to assist the Kingdom of Lesotho to develop a new and effective R&I Policy.

The Country Background Report and the Policy Recommendation Report will contribute to boosting the national R&I system for better impact on society and sustainable development.

The **Country Background Report** ^[1] delivered key insights about the national R&I system, its needs, challenges and recent developments. Elaborated by two independent experts, it highlighted, among other things, a very low level of investments in research and development (R&D) (only 0.05% of GDP), limited exploitation of research results due to low collaboration between academia and companies and fragmented efforts to support start-ups. The report also highlighted that the government is making efforts to strengthen the governance structure and that the young age of the population could play an important role in boosting the research capacity.

Based on this comprehensive analysis of the R&I system in Lesotho, inputs collected during a field phase with a wide range of R&I actors, and further fine-tuning discussions with the national team and the **Policy Support Facility (PSF)** ^[2] Technical Assistance Unit; the panel of four international experts formulated recommendations in a **Policy Recommendation Report** ^[3] (PRR), with guidance spread over the short, medium and long term.

The establishment of a Research and Innovation Agency is a priority to spearhead R&I in the country, manage the R&I Fund, build the research capacity and bring innovations to the market.

The medium-term recommendations were set around three main issues:

- Improve the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of higher education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to better respond to the socioeconomic, cultural and development needs of Lesotho;
- Prioritize investments in collaborative R&I, by strengthening cooperation between government, academia, industry, and society, and mobilizing indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and grassroots innovations;
- Create a more conducive environment for innovation (through incentives, tax measures, innovation hubs, an open data platform, etc.).

In the longer term, the experts advise to actively support the adoption of emerging technologies (in agriculture, health, ICT, digitalisation of manufacturing and the green economy) in order to put the country on a low-carbon, resource-efficient, climate-resilient and sustainable path.

As a quick follow-up to the PSF service, a national R&I policy has been drafted and will be submitted in the coming months to the Parliament for approval.

Lesotho is the first country to benefit from the PSF innovative mechanism, launched in January 2021 by the **OACPS Research and Innovation Programme** ^[4], and funded by the European Union, to unlock the innovation potential for sustainable and inclusive development in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

To learn more about weakness, strengths and opportunities of the Lesotho R&I ecosystem: download the **Country Background Report**. ^[1]

To learn more about recommendations to enhance the national R&I ecosystem in Lesotho:

download the **Policy Recommendation Report** [3].

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- [1] https://oacps-ri.eu/wp-content/uploads/Lesotho_CBR_OACPS_final_2022.pdf
- [2] <https://oacps-ri.eu/en/policy-support-facility/>
- [3] https://oacps-ri.eu/wp-content/uploads/Lesotho_PRR_OACPS_Final_2022.pdf
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