

Lausanne, 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020

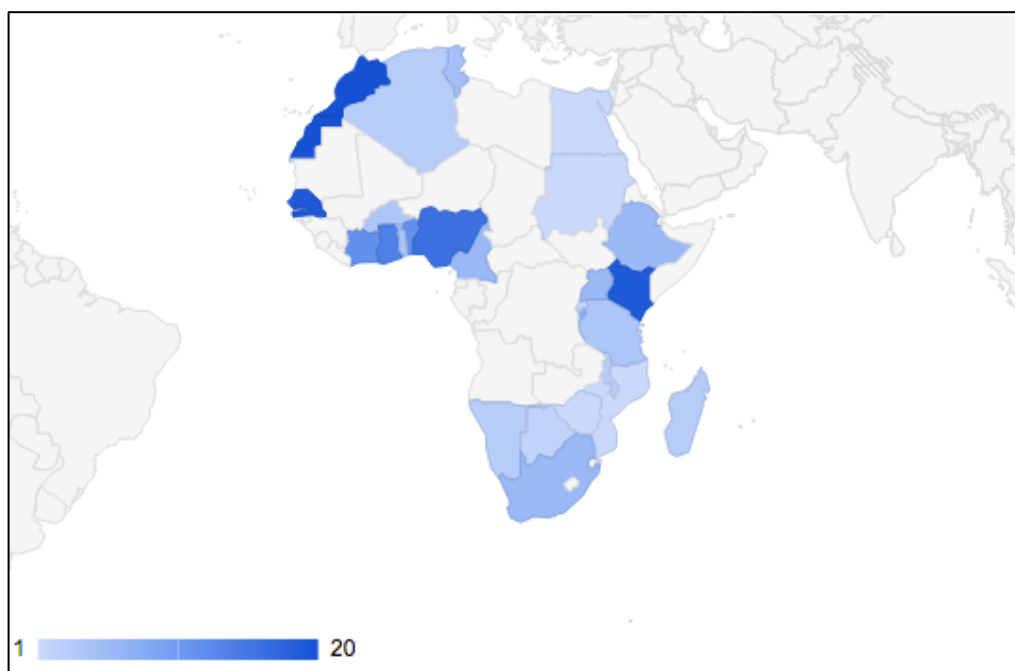
## Excellence in Africa : A successful first call for proposals

**The first call for proposals of the Junior Faculty Development program in African universities – the first pillar of an Excellence in Africa initiative (EXAF) jointly launched by EPFL and UM6P – closed on 15<sup>th</sup> April. No less than 182 applicants submitted their application on the EPFL platform. This large number of applications shows that the program has raised great interest throughout Africa, and it augurs well for the future of this new initiative.**

« Excellence in Africa (EXAF) » is a joint initiative launched by UM6P (Mohammed VI Polytechnic University – Morocco) and EPFL and intended to foster excellent scientific research throughout the African continent. The first pillar of this initiative, the “Junior Faculty Development program”, is designed to pair up junior professors at African academic institutions and EPFL professors.

A first call for proposals was launched on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020. Initially set for 31<sup>st</sup> March, the deadline was extended by two weeks due to the Covid-19 situation. The call is a great success, to say the least. More than 180 professors based in Africa submitted an application. The geographic distribution of the applicants (see the map below) points to an effective dissemination strategy. The institutions of the applicants cover half of the African countries (27).

“This is great news. These results show that this innovative program has raised significant interest throughout Africa, both in French-speaking and in English-speaking countries”, said Jérôme Chenal, the Academic Head of EXAF. “This large number of applications suggests that our innovative approach is timely, and it was welcomed by the scientific community in Africa”. There is no bias between English- and French-speaking countries in Africa. Indeed, there are three English-speaking countries among the five countries with the highest number of applications. The map also shows a relatively equal distribution between North African and sub-Saharan countries.



*Distribution of applications per countries*

The first call for proposals is now closed, and the EXAF team is going to process the applications. “The selection will be based, inter alia, on the advice of a scientific committee”, mentioned Olivier Küttel, the Head of International Affairs at EPFL. This committee will contribute to the selection of the applicants, based both on the quality of their application and on the availability of an EPFL professor willing to collaborate with the applicant. If these two criteria are met, applicants will be invited to submit a joint proposal by 25<sup>th</sup> August 2020. As Andreas Mortensen, the Vice President for Research at EPFL, concluded, “this is a new type of initiative, with new protocols, and it is thus too early to draw conclusions on its success, but the large number of applications is a very promising initial result. It shows that through this partnership between our two universities, we have a great opportunity to make a tangible contribution to promoting scientific excellence in Africa.”