



A Network for the Coordination and Advancement of Sub-Saharan Africa-EU Science and Technology Cooperation

IDENTIFYING TOPICS FOR AFRICAN-EUROPEAN RESEARCH COOPERATION IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

Background note prepared for CAAST-Net Workshop of African-European experts in Addis Ababa on 3-5 March 2010

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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide some contextual background for the CAAST-Net facilitated workshop to be convened in Addis Ababa on 3 to 5 March 2010 where invited African and European experts will seek to identify and recommend topics for socio-economic sciences and humanities (SSH) research cooperation, which would be ideally for African-European cooperation under the SSH thematic priority of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). These topics will be identified under three broad themes, namely:

- Habitats, cities and migration;
- Local heritage and sustainable development; and
- Agricultural policies, land use, land tenure, adaptation to global changes in Sub-Saharan African agriculture

Since the objective of the workshop will be for the participating experts to come forward with new, innovative proposed topics for cooperation, reflecting especially African priorities, this background note will not make any specific recommendations with regard to the possible topics to consider. Rather it will seek to provide contextual background by providing a brief overview of the past focus on cooperation with Africa under the FP7 SSH theme as well as on the themes identified for the workshop. This could provide useful guidance as participants seek to identify topics, which could be well suited to FP7 cooperation.

Secondly, since one of the main objectives of CAAST-Net is to facilitate efforts to support the implementation of the African Union/New Partnership for African Development's (NEPAD) Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action through African-European cooperation under FP7, the background note will reflect on the focus on SSH priorities and the themes chosen for the workshop.

Lastly, in an attempt to stimulate deliberation but by no means to guide discussion, the note will propose possible research topics, related to the themes chosen by the workshop, which could be well suited for FP7. These topics should merely serve as examples for discussions at the workshop.

Focus on Africa in Seventh Framework Programme Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities priority

In terms of the indicative strategic research roadmap for the FP7 SSH priority recently published, Africa will be targeted for specific international cooperation activities under the FP7 SSH Work Programme. The roadmap noted that:

The long-standing and changing cooperation between the EU and Africa also requires sustained research effort, especially regarding the challenges for governance related to scarcity of some resources and richness of others, both causing violent conflicts and other threats to human development and security.

The roadmap is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/roadmap-2011-2013-final_en.pdf

Whilst there will, thus, be a specific new focus on cooperation with Africa under the FP7 SSH theme, it is also useful to bear in mind projects focused on Africa already funded. Perhaps the most important of these and directly relevant to the migration theme of the workshop is the MAFE (Migration between Africa and Europe). An extract of the MAFE project description follows as an indicative example of existing FP7 SSH cooperation between Africa and Europe (note the project includes partners from Ghana, Senegal and the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

MAFE project description

“African migration has become a major concern for European policy makers. New policy measures are under development, but they rely on a poor understanding of the underlying causes and consequences of African migration. The MAFE project aims to overcome this lack of understanding, in order to improve the quality of migration policies.

Objective 1

Create a unique data set on Afro-European migration. Comparable data will be collected in both sending and receiving countries, ie in sub-Saharan Africa and Europe. The project aim is to replicate a survey under way on Senegalese migration with new populations, ie Congolese and Ghanaians. The project methodology is built upon key studies on international migration in the world and will create unique data that is representative, longitudinal and multi-level.

Objective 2

Provide new analyses through innovative techniques. Using this new data, the MAFE project will employ methods of longitudinal data analysis to provide policy makers with new insights into the changing patterns and determinants of migration and circulation between Africa and Europe, as well as on the socio-economic changes associated with international migration.”

Another existing FP7 SSH project related to the migration theme is DIASPEACE (Diasporas for peace: patterns, trends and potential of long-distance diaspora involvement in conflict settings/ case studies from the horn of Africa). The project includes partners from Ethiopia and Somalia. Again the project description follows for indicative purposes:

DIASPEACE project description

DIASPEACE seeks to generate policy-relevant, evidence-based knowledge on how diasporas (exiled populations from conflict regions) play into the dynamics of conflict and peace in their countries of origin. In a globalised world diasporas have become new forces shaping the interactions between countries, regions and continents. On one hand, they are seen to fuel conflict by transferring remittances and logistic support to the warring parties, and to exacerbate tensions through radical mobilisation along ethnic and religious lines.

One the other, diaspora groups are playing an increasingly prominent role in peace and reconciliation processes. There is a need for a balanced empirical account of the nature, motivations and impact of transnational diaspora activities in conflict settings. The project has an empirical focus on diaspora networks operating in Europe which extend their transnational activities to the Horn of Africa. This is a region where decades of violent conflict have resulted in state collapse and the dispersal of more than two million people. The project will conduct field research in seven European countries and in Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

DIASPEACE aims to:

- devise and test methodologies of multi-sited comparative research and to develop the conceptual framework for researching migrant political transnationalism in a conflict context;
- facilitate interaction between diaspora and other stakeholders in Europe and in the Horn of Africa; and
- provide policy input on how to better involve diaspora in conflict resolution and peace- building interventions, and how to improve coherence between security, development and immigration policies.

Another FP7 SSH project with specific relevance to the themes chosen for the workshop is the CREATING (Cooperative research on East African territorial integration within globalisation) project, with partners from Kenya and Uganda. Climate change, migration and cities are all included in the focus areas of the project. Its project description is therefore again provided as an indicative example.

CREATING project description

This project seeks to improve research capacity and develop collaboration amongst researchers in Europe and East Africa, and by doing so to contribute to the larger objective of regional integration. The project will enhance integration in the research community in both Europe and East Africa through bringing researchers together in a series of training activities. These activities will focus on two kinds of transborder environment: mountains and Lake Tanganyika. Through this focus on resources which span the borders of the multiple political units of East Africa, the project will contribute directly to public understanding of some of the challenges to regional integration in East African context.

The project is organised around four themes, all of which relate to human use and management of these cross border resources: resource management and livelihood sustainability, environmental and climate change, migration and identity and the role of small and medium cities. At the core of the project, five institutions four European, and one East African will be brought together; the project will also draw on the skills and knowledge of four university research institutions in Europe, whose staff will take the role of leaders for each of the four themes. All the individuals and institutions involved have substantial experience of work in Africa, and have commitment both to the enhancement of an integrated European research capacity and to the building of research capacity and regional integration in East Africa.

Other FP7 projects either seek to leverage African experience, for example HI-POD (Historical patterns of development and underdevelopment: origins and persistence of the great divergence) or include substantial contributions by African partners to projects focused on global challenges, for example the INGENIUS project (Impact of networks, globalisation, and their interaction with EU strategies), the EU-GRASP project (Changing multilateralism: The EU as a global-regional actor in security and peace) or the MERCURY project (Multilateralism and the EU in the contemporary global order).

To conclude this section a broader perspective is taken of the workshop selected themes in running FP7 projects. Migration is indeed a topic often focused upon in FP7 projects, as indicated by the following projects, although these did not include a specific focus on Africa: NORFACE (transnational programme on migration in Europe), SOM (Support and opposition to migration: A cross national comparison of the politicization of migration), TRANS-NET (Transnationalisation, migration and transformation: Multi-level analysis of migrant transnationalism), GEMMA (Enhancing evidence based policy-making in gender and migration), and GEMIC (Gender, migration and intercultural interactions in the Mediterranean and South East Europe: an interdisciplinary perspective). These projects provide an indication for the type of cooperation, which could be considered for cooperation with Africa.

There are also running FP7 SSH projects with a specific focus on cities such as the SOCIAL POLIS (Social platform on cities and social cohesion) as well as GILDED (Governance, infrastructure, lifestyle dynamics and energy demand: european post-carbon communities) or GEITONIES (Generating interethnic tolerance and neighborhood integration in european urban spaces). According to the CAAST-Net research no current focus on habitats could, however, be found, except perhaps the DEMHOW project (Demographic change and housing wealth).

CAAST-Net research could also not find specific examples of a focus on cultural heritage and sustainable development, specifically relevant to Africa. In related areas there are, however, projects such as EDC2020 (European development co-operation to 2020), PACT (Pathways for carbon transitions), SMILE (Synergies in multi-scale inter-linkages of eco-social systems) and CONSENSUS (Confronting social and environmental sustainability with economic pressure: balancing trade-offs by policy dismantling). Agriculture has also not been a major focus for FP7 SSH except the CAP-IRE project (Assessing the multiple impacts of the Common Agricultural Policies (CAP) on rural economies).

Socio-economic sciences and the humanities in Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action

The Consolidated Plan of Action is the official framework for the implementation of African S&T collaboration and integration initiatives.

The Plan is available at:

http://www.nepadst.org/doclibrary/pdfs/ast_cpa_2007.pdf

Although the Plan identifies 14 R&D flagship projects, it does not include a specific focus on the socio-economic sciences and humanities. Aimed at Africa's socio-economic transformation, the Plan is, however, intrinsically multi-disciplinarian in focus and most of its activities foresee a strong contribution by the socio-economic sciences and humanities. For example under its section dealing with the building of Africa's science and technology capacities, it is stated that:

Science, technology and innovation policies are required to deal largely with institutional, socio-economic and political factors that either enhance or inhibit innovation in the broad sense of both the generation and application of knowledge in economic production.

The same section also highlights the need for "specific actions for ensuring that scientific knowledge generated by R&D programmes is applied to create social and economic products." Throughout the Plan the reference to the socio-economic sciences is therefore implicit, often direct.

Whilst the Plan does not specifically articulate R&D priorities related to habitats, cities and migration, as well as local heritage and sustainable development, the R&D flagship areas related to building a sustainable energy base, securing and sustaining water, as well as combating drought and desertification, all interrogate the relationship between local heritage and sustainable development. Within this context the relevance of the securing and using Africa's indigenous knowledge base and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity should also be highlighted. The latter also offers an indirect relevance to the adaptation to global changes in agriculture.

When considering opportunities for Africa-EU cooperation under FP7 to support the implementation of the Consolidated Plan of Action, the Book of Lighthouse Projects, prepared by the African Union Commission and the European Commission in 2008, and which identified 19 projects, which should be prioritised for Africa-EU cooperation, should also be considered.

The Book is available at:

<http://www.africa-union.org/root/UA/Annonces/HRST/Book%20of%20Lighthouse%20Projects.pdf>

Projects identified in the Book specifically relevant to themes of this workshop include: "Securing and using Africa's indigenous and traditional knowledge", "African Union Initiative on Climate Change" and "Building Africa's scientific and institutional capacity in agriculture and natural resource management." From a horizontal perspective, projects such as the "African Virtual Campus", the "African Research Grants" and the "Development of a common African Union Science and Technology Policy Framework."

Other policy frameworks should be considered is the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), see: <http://www.nepad-caadp.net/>, which includes a specific focus on agricultural research. One of the Pillars of the Programme is focused upon land and water management. The market access and food supply and hunger pillars also have a strong socio-economic component.

With regard to the habitats theme, the outcome of the African Ministers Conference on Housing and Urban Development (<http://www.housing.gov.za/amchud/>) also merit consideration, as well as work of the African Union on migration and development (<http://www.africa-union.org/root/Au/Conferences/Past/2006/April/SA/Apr5/meeting.htm>).

These notes indicate that the themes identified for the workshop are firmly embedded in African S&T and other policy frameworks.

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Indicative research topics for African-European cooperation

In the light of the background sketched above, and following consultation with a selection of African researchers, notably with the assistance of South Africa's FP7 National Contact Point for the SSH theme, Dr Christa Van Zyl, of the Human Sciences Research Council, the following research topics are submitted as a contribution to enrich the discussion, as a non-exhaustive list of indicative examples of the type of FP7 SSH cooperation, which could be possible in the themes identified for the workshop:

* Details of individual contributions are available on request.

(a) Habitat, cities and migration

- Migration/transport linkage in respect of access to jobs for the in-migrating poor in cities;
- The impact of climate change and the world recession on migration out of poor rural communities;
- Reliable migration data for further analysis; and
- Urbanisation and urban settlement success factors in respect of women and youth in Africa.

(b) Local heritage and sustainable development

- Mainstreaming heritage in development;
- Informing the discourse about cultural practices as possible barriers to progress and development;
- Investigating heritage contribution to development beyond tourism and craft;
- Development of social programmes based on heritage principles;
- Integrating heritage planning with rural economic development programmes;
- New approaches to heritage resource management to safeguard traditional lifestyles and values without stagnating development;
- Development of skills to enable a skilled and knowledgeable heritage sector, including in rural areas; and
- Multi-disciplinarian links between supporting food heritage projects and the maintenance of food supplies as global warming changes the climate, tackling obesity and challenging the shift to western foods, and food tourism in Africa.

(c) Agricultural policies, land use, land tenure, adaptation to global changes in Sub-Saharan African agriculture

- Agricultural development and policies focusing on small-holders, overcoming land constraints;
- Adaptation of small-holder farmers to climate change in arid regions;
- Promoting farmer innovation as a way of improving agricultural development and improving related policies;
- Collaboration between farmers, government and NGOs;
- Institutional innovations for smallholder competitiveness;
- Contract farming, smallholders and commercialisation of agriculture mainly focusing on contract farming;
- Analysing agriculture vulnerability and resilience in the context of shocks and crises;
- Impact of agricultural policy and land reform on livelihoods;
- Livelihood sustainability of land redistribution and tenure reforms;
- Developing low-cost food security monitoring tools to transmit indicator data in real-time;

- Supporting small-scale or to large scale farmers to ensure national and household food security;
- Ecological and livelihood sustainability of smallholder agriculture and optimising the linkages into the local economies - for job creation, IKS & low external input technologies, etc;
- Models of developmental agricultural financing to create or enhance the efficiency of development banks and micro-finance institutions/arrangements;
- Agro-food markets and pricing dynamics: value chain analyses to understand access to inputs and larger output markets;
- Gender and class relations that govern access to land and natural resources in rural areas;
- Access to assets and property rights: questions of inequality, agricultural production, and poverty;
- Agro-food markets and food pricing dynamics: value chain analyses to understand access to inputs and larger output markets; and
- How multinationals are influencing the global and local food chain, implications and repercussions of this process, and how people are responding as actors in this process.

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Concluding remarks

As indicated in this background note, although there has already been some focus on cooperation with Africa under the FP7 SSH theme, notably with regard to migration, there is significant potential for new cooperation in the themes to be discussed at the workshop, for African-European research cooperation to be supported under FP7. Such collaboration will not only support the implementation of African cooperation and policy frameworks, but also harness African and European partnerships to better address global challenges.

Science plays a critical role in stimulating Africa's growth and development. In order to optimally exploit this potential, the contribution of the socio-economic sciences and humanities in order to better understand human and societal dynamics is essential. There is therefore a clear and urgent need for greater African-European research cooperation in this domain, also to complement through a multi-disciplinarian perspective, the many active partnerships in the natural sciences. The organisation of this workshop is therefore most timely.

The task at hand is aptly described in South Africa's Ten Year Innovation Plan, in the description of the human and social dynamics grand challenge:

Human and social dynamics are at the core of nearly every major challenge facing South Africa – from climate change to creating a competitive and innovative workforce. The fifth grand challenge is to increase our ability to anticipate the complex consequences of change; to better understand the dynamics of human and social behaviour at all levels; to better understand the cognitive and social structures that create and define change; and to help people and organisations better manage profound or rapid change.

It is a challenge, which is certainly not unique to South Africa, but also pertains to broader African-European cooperation.