

The CAAST-Net Bulletin

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NETWORK FOR THE COORDINATION AND
ADVANCEMENT OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA-EU
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION

South African science minister praises CAAST-Net

Christina Scott

The world's largest association of technology professionals heard the Network for Coordination and Advancement of Sub-Saharan Africa-EU Science and Technology Cooperation (CAAST-Net) singled out for special mention by South African Science and Technology Minister, Naledi Pandor.

Pandor was speaking on 24 May 2010 in Cape Town, South Africa, at an international communications conference hosted by the global non-profit IEEE, originally known as the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, which traces its roots back to 1884.

She used the opportunity early in her speech to tell the delegates about "two important international information and communication technology conferences" which she identified as CAAST-Net's general assembly and the Information Society Technologies in Africa conference, both held in Durban in May.

Pandor also provided many examples of what she described as South Africa's ability to leverage its "good standing with international development partners to facilitate regional projects."

Among these, she mentioned the South African government's support for GEO-Africa, a new permanent African satellite which will provide real-time mapping of the continent. Although the remote sensing project is being done with the private European Aeronautic Defence and Space (EADS) company, which has offices in Egypt, Libya, Morocco and South Africa, the satellite is to be owned and operated by African authorities, she said.

"South Africa recognises the importance of participating in global initiatives," said Pandor, who studied in Botswana, Swaziland and the United Kingdom and began her career as a school teacher and then a university lecturer before later becoming South African minister of education from 2004 until her appointment to the science and technology ministry.

As another example, she mentioned the GEONETCast initiative, which uses both communications satellites and earth observation satellites. GEONETCast is a global collaboration which includes Europe, China, Russia, the USA and Africa.

Although Pandor didn't mention it, the GEONETCast initiative encourages the participation of developing countries through the DevCoCast project, which receives funding from the seventh Framework programme (FP7), the European Community's main instrument for funding research and technological development until 2013.

Participants in the DevCoCast project include the Niger-based African Centre of Meteorological Application for Development (ACMAD), directed



Willem Matthysen of Pearson VUE SA and the South African Science and Technology Minister, Naledi Pandor, at the IST-Africa 2010 conference.

by Alhassane Adama Diallo, which monitors the adverse impacts of climate change while simultaneously accelerating low-carbon intensive economic growth in the continent through clean energy and carbon financing.

Another DevCoCast partner from Niger is the European Union-funded nine-nation West African Centre for Training and Operational Applications in Agrometeorology and Hydrology (AGRHYMET), directed by Brahim Koné.

Other DevCoCast partners include two from South Africa: the Meraka Institute, part of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and managed by Kagiso Chikane, and the Marine Research Institute, directed by oceanography professor John Field at the University of Cape Town.

"Take advantage of Africa's myriad opportunities and come up with technological innovations that can accelerate growth and development," Pandor urged delegates.

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Coordinator's Column

Eric Mwangi, Africa Regional Coordinator



Eric Mwangi

Project progress report

The last quarter has seen a series of activities in the strategic direction of the CAAST-Net project. One of the highlights was the acknowledgement by the European Union (EU) regarding the qualification of the project expansion proposal submitted in January this year. Certainly, the project is in a phase where it is strategising to harmonise the activities in the original proposal with the new revised expansion activities.

Strategy for expansion

Following the approval by the European Commission (EC) of the expansion proposal, during the March–April period, the coordinators and the partners have been involved in extensive consultations and all the technical issues raised in the evaluation summary report have been successfully addressed.

The expansion strategy has two orientations. Firstly, it brings new partners from the different regions of the two continents who will add value to the project due to their previous institutional cooperation activity strengths in science, technology and innovation (STI) – these are the European countries, Spain and Turkey, and the African countries, Egypt, Nigeria and Botswana. It was worthwhile to note that the presence of Egypt, the current African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST) Chair, is of major significance. Secondly, it brings new activities among which include the CAAST-Net engagement with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The two key institutions used by the African Union (AU) to implement the Consolidated Plan of Action are the national governments and the RECs. In order to align the project's activities with AU priorities and EU-AU cooperation, CAAST-Net initiated science, technology and innovation (STI) dialogue activities with the RECs. The concept note has been jointly developed with some of the RECs, and discussions and negotiations are at advanced stages. For example, a CAAST-Net–SADC meeting took place in Botswana in February this year.

Project Assembly meeting – Durban, May 2010

The third annual Project Assembly meeting, jointly co-organised by the Department of Science and Technology and Research Africa, was held in Durban, South Africa. One of the most impressive observations was the high participation by all partners (except for a few partners due to logistical issues). This event served as a platform to welcome the new partners to the consortium and also discuss the expansion strategy. The stakeholders' meeting was enriched by the participation and presentations from key EU-AU STI policy institutions including the African Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology (AMCOST), African Union-Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology (AU-HRST), New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD Agency) and the EC among others. The meeting was also dignified by the presence of four Project Advisory Panel members who provided strategic leadership.

CAAST-Net participation in the JEG8 meeting

For the first time, CAAST-Net was officially invited to present its activities in the Joint Expert Group for the eighth European Union-Africa Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space (JEG8) meeting in Durban. The recognition of CAAST-Net as one of the instruments to be linked or to potentially provide synergy in the implementation of the eighth Partnership of Science, Information Society and Space was a significant high-profile milestone achievement.

What is CAAST-Net?

CAAST-Net's goal is an increase in the quality and quantity of bi-regional cooperation in science and technology between Europe and Africa, targeting areas of mutual interest and benefit through greater use of instruments under the seventh Framework programme, as well as through other instruments of international cooperation, and through lobbying for greater synergy between research and development, and development instruments. In support of its goal, CAAST-Net has a range of activity clusters aiming:

- to support and inform existing Europe-Africa science and technology policy dialogue and cooperation processes
- to identify and prioritise common research areas of mutual interest and benefit, especially for inclusion in the thematic priorities of the FP7 Cooperation programme, harnessing cooperation to address specific problems faced locally and regionally within Africa, as well as common problems of a global nature
- to promote synergy between Europe-Africa science and technology partnerships and development cooperation instruments in order to enhance the creation and application of new knowledge in support of achieving the millennium development goals, poverty alleviation and economic growth

- to undertake specific activities dedicated to strengthening of the participation of African countries in the seventh Framework programme through a series of events aimed at raising awareness, providing information, brokering partnerships and optimising synergies
- to monitor the performance and impact of Europe-Africa science and technology cooperation under the seventh Framework programme to inform future cooperation policy

Many of CAAST-Net's activities, such as brokerage events, conferences, information days and thematic discussion platforms are open to participation by interested parties. CAAST-Net has an "open-door" policy to its wider stakeholder community and is dedicated to continued dialogue and networking with our stakeholder community. We strongly encourage engagement with the project by all stakeholders to share information, and to be kept informed of opportunities.

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Letters

Science and technology in the African Union Commission

The African Union Commission (AUC) acknowledges the progress made by CAAST-Net as an European Union instrument on International Cooperation on Science and Technology Network (INCO-NET). The AUC observes the active role of CAAST-Net in S&T on the African continent, and its ambitious approach to contribute to the implementation of the Consolidated Plan of Action (CPA).

In Africa, science and technology is high on our political and development agenda. The act establishing the African Union (AU) underlines that research and cooperation in S&T has the potential to raise the living standards of people in Africa. The establishment of the AU in 2002 was accompanied by the setting-up of a Commission with special departments that drive development programmes in key specific sectors, including the Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology (HRST) that oversees the portfolio of Africa's S&T programme.

Africa's S&T CPA brings together AU and NEPAD S&T programmes into a single framework that articulates Africa's commitment to use S&T for socio-economic transformation through implementation of research and development, policy and institutional flagship programmes. The African Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology (AMCOST), currently chaired by the Arab Republic of Egypt, is a key AU organ on S&T governance and the implementation of the CPA.

The Summit of January 2007 adopted the theme "Science, Technology and Research for Africa's socio-economic development" to facilitate a focused discussion at the highest level on issues

surrounding the effective utilisation of S&T for development. The Assembly subsequently declared 2007 as the launching year of building constituencies and champions for science, technology and innovation in Africa and called for enhancing scientific cooperation.

In the second half of 2010, the AUC will expedite work on the 15 million Euros AU research grants programme within the framework of the eighth Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space of the EU-Africa Joint Strategy of 2007. The objective is to create a system of competitive research grants at pan-African level and to build AUC capacity to manage the research grants. This is the first time the Commission is developing a practical mechanism that directly and financially supports research in Africa. Calls for research proposals will be launched soon on the African continent.

The AUC, with the support of key development partners, launched the 2010 prestigious African Union scientific awards programme for younger researchers at the national level, regional level for women and continental level for all African scientists. This programme acknowledges the achievements of African scientists and promotes all efforts to transform scientific research to benefit the society. Prizes will be awarded in life and earth sciences as well as basic science, technology and innovation. The prizes for the regional and national awards will be awarded on 9 September 2010. Information on this programme can be obtained from AU ministries in charge of S&T, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the AUC.



Hambani Masheleni

The AUC is in close dialogue with the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for the implementation of the African Observatory for Science, Technology and Innovation (AOSTI) flagship programme. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea offered to host the single African STI data repository and availed a seed fund of US\$3,6 million. Among other core functions, the observatory will coordinate the production and development of STI indicators in Africa, carry out STI indicators capacity building and training, and provide advice on STI policy to AU member states and RECs.

The AUC is also exploring the feasibility of launching a programme to strengthen and support the AU Network on STI incubators as a cornerstone for Africa's industrial and technological development.

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Melissa Plath

Science and technology events in Finland

Historically, Finland has viewed research and participation in science and technology (S&T) as of strategic importance. This view has not changed, with Finland investing an increasing amount of funds in S&T research and pursuing a reputation for excellence and innovation in the field. Furthermore, Finland is looking more and more to Africa as a partner in research and for cooperation in multilateral or bilateral projects. In this spirit, Finland is hosting several important events and conferences to promote both S&T and cooperation between Africa and Finland.

From the 10 to 15 August, a conference entitled "Reusing the Industrial Past" will take place in Tampere, Finland. It is organised jointly by the International Committee for the History of Technology (ICOHTEC) and the International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (TICCIH). For more information, please see: <http://www.tampere.fi/industrialpast2010/>.

The University of Eastern Finland will host a conference on "Global Responsibility in Research and Education: Practices in Partnership and Daily Activities." This event will take place between the 15 to 17 September in Kuopio, Finland and will be simultaneously video-conferenced to sites

around the world. For details, please see: <http://webd.savonia.fi/grcongress/>.

From the 30 September to 1 October, the University of Turku in Finland will host the Nordic Africa Days. The thematic focus is "Time Space Africa: Reconnecting the Continent." For more information, please see: <http://web.abo.fi/fak/hf/hist/nad2010/>.

The University of Jyväskylä in Finland will host the Nanoscience Days from the 27 to 29 October which will focus on the developments in nanoscience technology, trends and perspectives. For more details, please see: https://www.jyu.fi/science/muut_yksikot/nsc/en/nsdays.

From the 6 to 10 December the 2010 Euro-Africa Week on ICT Research and e-Infrastructures will be held in Helsinki, Finland. The conference will combine the third Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum on ICT Research and the 2010 Euro-Africa e-Infrastructures conference into one dynamic event. Furthermore, the meeting of the Joint Expert Group for the eighth Africa-EU Strategic Partnership for Science, Information Society and Space (JEG8) will take place in conjunction with this event. Please visit: www.euroafrica-ict.org/category/euroafrica-ict-upcoming-events/cooperation-forums, or <http://www.ei-africa.eu>.

Melissa Plath, who is the Project Coordinator for the University Partnership for International Development (UniPid) at the University of Jyväskylä, a CAAST-Net partner, extends a warm welcome to anyone interested in attending one or more of these interesting events in Finland. She can be reached at melissa.a.plath@jyu.fi



Mohamed Ben Amor

What is JEG8?

Mohamed Ben Amor, Co-Chair of the Joint Expert Group of the eighth European Union-Africa Partnership on Science, Information, Society and Space, answers some questions.

Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu

The Joint Expert Group for the eighth European Union-Africa Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space (JEG8) has complained of apathy and a lack of participation from member states. Part of the problem is that little is known about the initiative. Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu spoke to Mohamed Ben Amor, the Africa chair of JEG8, to find out why JEG8 was created and more about its central function as well as its potential future.

What is this Joint Expert Group 8?

Its specific function is to improve collaboration between the two continents in science, information and space. This is achieved by providing advice on how projects in the partnership can be implemented and helping member states to 'domesticate' projects.

Where did it come from?

The idea to create JEG8 was borne out of the Africa-Europe Summit in Lisbon, capital of Portugal, in 2007, where heads of state launched the Africa-European Union Partnership. The partnership outlines eight strategic areas of cooperation that include science, information and space. Heads of state agreed that they would need 'tools' to help in the implementation of the partnership in the different areas, which prompted the creation of the JEG8.

Who works on the Joint Expert Group 8?

The group has four vice presidents from Finland, Sénégal, South Africa and Portugal. Membership is open to member states, civil society, the African Union Commission, the European Commission and the private sector.

What is the Joint Expert Group 8 doing?

Our projects include Africa Connect, which seeks to bridge the digital divide in education and research institutions in sub-Saharan Africa.

Who funds the Joint Expert Group 8?

JEG8 is self-funded but will be looking to heads of state for financial support.

JEG8 met in Durban. What was the outcome?

We need to reform regional and national ICT regulatory frameworks to promote investment from the private sector and reduce telecommunications costs. According to the World Bank, the cost of service delivery in Africa is twice as expensive as in other developing countries.

What is the future of JEG8?

JEG8 is preparing for a meeting in Brussels, Belgium, from 15 to 17 September 2010. Member states will draw up a new action plan for the Africa-EU summit in Libya in November 2010. That action plan will decide whether JEG8 continues.

- On 24 June 2010, the European members of the JEG8 were due to meet in Brussels, Belgium, at the EuroAfrica-ICT Concertation Meeting.
- Twenty African ministers responsible for information and communication technology met from 7 to 9 June 2010 in Dakar, Sénégal with a wide variety of researchers and policymakers, including the executive secretary of the NEPAD Planning and Co-ordination Agency, Ibrahim Assane Mayaki. The Coordinator of NEPAD's ICT chapter is Sénégalaise President Abdoulaye Wade.

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How do we connect Africa?

Christina Scott

Support for the Harmonisation of the Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa project (HIPSSA) is one of the efforts funded under the partnership on science, information society and space. The effort, launched in 2008 and jointly funded by the European Commission and the International Telecommunications Union, was meant to harmonise ICT policies and regulatory frameworks.

The Africa Connect project to improve internet connectivity in education and research in sub-Saharan Africa was another project supported by the EU-Africa partnership on science, information society and space.

The feasibility study for Africa Connect, released in March this year, found that the physical infrastructure to develop an African research network was largely in place.

However, the feasibility study, known as FEAST,

identified the lack of affordable telecommunications as a major obstacle. Another problem was poorly-enforced regulatory frameworks. The main obstacle identified was that the majority of the national research and education networks were unprepared.

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Framework needs to be simpler

Jerzy Langer

“O wonder! How many goodly features are there here! How beauteous Framework is! O simplified new world! That has such programmes in’t!”

Change four words and you have Miranda’s dialogue with Ferdinand in the chess scene from Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest*. But it would take much more than that to transform the EU Framework programme into a precision instrument for research in a United Europe.

The complexity of project preparation and administration were seen as major disincentives to participation in the sixth Framework programme (FP6). Another was the relatively low success rate. But simplifying the application process will not compensate for the exceedingly small chance of receiving a grant. So why has talk of simplifying the process become a major focus of the political debate on the future of Framework? Is it not simply a substitute for more important discussions on the substantive goals of this programme and the best way to achieve them?

The Framework programme comes out of the EU budget, and is thus a personal responsibility of the European Commission officers. The Court of Auditors has only just begun to acknowledge that high-quality science is a risky business and some failures are inevitable. It is an encouraging sign that the new Research Commissioner was a long-term member of the court. She is now on the other side and will quickly learn that only mediocre research is risk free.

It is also clear that the bureaucratic burden Framework imposes is not its only weakness. An official assessment of FP6 highlighted a number of other failings, notably the inability to recruit enough partners from industry, which must be examined and addressed. Nor is the system sufficiently fair. Although its nominal success rate was much the same across Europe, the average value of contracts won by the 12 new member states was less than half the 250,000 Euros for countries of the ‘old’ union.

And how does financial success in the programme correlate with the economic power of the member state? Greek applicants to FP6 were as successful as the Swedes and Finns but the latter spend seven times more of their GDP on research than the Greeks.

Far too often, the people coordinating the programme appear to act like an old boys’ network made up of representatives from the large, non-industrial research institutions. Another flaw is a strong gender imbalance in participants, and there is also the issue of the time taken to negotiate a contract, on average about a year.

It is no surprise that the assessment team made a number of recommendations aimed at producing a simpler, more logical and transparent process. For researchers there should be a shift from contracts to individual

grants and for institutions from contracts to agreements based on full economic costs. Finally there should be efforts to evaluate the outcome and long-term impact of projects.

But it would be unwise to debate improvements to Framework without looking at the overall R&D scene in Europe. Neither will the habitual attacks made on the bureaucratic reputation of Brussels be helpful in achieving a sensible solution. We must examine ourselves and our own perspectives—after all, Framework funding is not ‘their’ money—it is ours, paid by our own taxpayers.

Indeed, many of the barriers to research are created by individual member states. So there are specific national rulings on: what is allowed (for example, stem cell research, genetically modified organisms and so on); who may and may not review grant applications; the limitations to transferring a grant; and on the criteria under which non-residents are eligible to apply for a grant.

In some countries, independent research councils provide most funding, while in others it is channelled through government-controlled agencies. And of course, there are dramatic differences in science expenditure of almost a full order of magnitude across Europe.

Framework could, and should, be more than just a fill-in between the various national or industry-sponsored research programmes. It is an important and much needed instrument, but to achieve its full potential, a radical new way of thinking is required.

So not only must there be a radical simplification of the administration procedures, we must also develop a new vision of what Framework can achieve. It can open new avenues that would otherwise be blocked off. It must create value and confer prestige on participants. This is an ambitious goal but one that all Europeans would understand, accept and support.

It is an achievable goal but only if given the highest political priority and fully supported by member states, the European Parliament and the Commission. It must become a pillar of the new strategy Europe 2020, the foundation of the Research, Education and Innovation Area, not just a European Research Area. Only then will Framework become a symbol of intellectual achievement and the quest for knowledge and scientific truth in a United Europe. And only then will the award of a European Framework grant become a researcher’s highest distinction and a career milestone.

Jerzy Langer is a former vice-minister of science in Poland and a member of the sixth Framework programme assessment group. This article was originally published in Research Europe. For more information on this newsletter, please go to www.researchresearch.com

Hurdling telecommunications obstacles

Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu

Equality among researchers, regulatory reforms in information and communication technologies, and nurturing a new generation of computer-literate young entrepreneurs should be priorities for policymakers.

So said delegates in a brief survey done at the annual Information Society Technologies in Africa (IST-Africa) conference, held this year in Durban, South Africa.

The delegates were referring to the European Union-Africa Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space, one of eight topic-specific partnerships between the two continents.

Some IST-Africa delegates said equality is important to ensure the success of the EU-Africa partnership, which was adopted at the Lisbon Summit in December 2007.

Naledi Pandor, South Africa’s Minister of Science and Technology, agreed, saying in a speech

at IST-Africa that the “success of our partnership will depend on increasing Africa’s contribution to global science as, I must stress, an equal partner.”

However, African countries need to increase their science investment if they want to sustain the partnership with Europe. Most of the funding for initiatives under the partnership comes from European taxpayers via the EU.

“While the support offered by our European partners is valuable, this funding will only have a sustainable impact if African countries step up their own investment in science and technology,” Pandor said as she closed the IST-Africa meeting earlier this year.

Fadila Boughanemi, the Senior Policy Officer for Science and Technology Cooperation with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries at the European Commission, said the recent shift in the relationship from donor/recipient

to a partnership will help ensure that science overcomes the developmental challenges faced by both continents.

Mohamed Ben Amor, the Director General of Telecommunication Research Centre (Centre d’Etudes et de Recherche des Télécommunications or CERT) in Tunisia, said the partnership needs to focus on building the capacity of the youth.

Amor, who is also the Co-Chair for Africa for the Joint Expert Group for the eighth EU-Africa Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space (JEG8), says the partnership also needs to offer support to member states and regional economic communities to reform regulations in ICT.

This article is based on a report by Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu originally published in the Research Africa electronic newsletters.

CAAST-Net Assembly in Durban, South Africa

Hosted by the South African Department of Science and Technology (DST), with South African-based Research Africa as the official media partner, the third CAAST-Net Project Assembly was held from the 16 to 18 May 2010 at the Hilton Hotel in Durban, South Africa. It started with the CAAST-Net board meeting on the first day, followed by a stakeholders' meeting on the second and ended with an advisory panel meeting on the third. Stakeholders and invited guests were treated to dinner and cocktails at the Moyo restaurant, situated on Durban's uShaka Pier, courtesy of DST and Research Africa.



Partners having an intensive discussion at the CAAST-Net board meeting.



Daan du Toit, European Union representative from the South African-based DST, gives his presentation at the stakeholders' meeting.



Marie-Christine Gasingirwa from the Ministry of Education in Rwanda and Thabisa Mbungwana from the South African-based DST.



Funda Mpanza, Technical Advisor for the Southern African Development Community, addresses the audience at the stakeholders' meeting.



Eric Mwangi, Africa Regional Coordinator of CAAST-Net, converses with Brigitte Decadt from the Belgium Federal Science Policy Office.



Crispus Kiamba, Francesco Affinto, Gerasimos Apostolatos and Fadila Boughanemi during a tea break.



Botlhale Tema, an independent consultant and former Director of Human Resources, Science and Technology, African Union, questions the African-European collaborative relationship.



Crispus Kiamba, Permanent Secretary of MoHEST, gives his audience a large smile.



Delegates attending the CAAST-Net Project Assembly pose for a memorable group photograph.



Burçak Çullu from TUBITAK in Turkey and Christian Hansen from VINNOVA in Sweden networking during a tea break.



Marie-Christine Gasingirwa (right) is the Director General in Charge of Science, Technology and Research at the Ministry of Education in Rwanda.

Third country participation in FP7

José Bonfim, who has participated in international cooperation science and technology networks and projects, gives us the lowdown on the legal and financial aspects of third country participation in the seventh Framework programme.



José Bonfim

 José Bonfim

Third country participation

The submission of proposals to the European Union (EU) from non-European countries, known as third countries, for participation in the seventh Framework programme (FP7) for research, technological development and demonstration activities is not only possible, but welcomed.

In the Framework programme, third countries consist of two groups:

- international cooperation partner countries (ICPCs), and
- high-income countries.

All African countries are included in the ICPCs. A complete list of ICPCs can be found in: <ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/icpc-list.pdf>.

The participation of entities from ICPC countries is justified in terms of their enhanced contribution to the objectives of the Framework programme. The international cooperation between entities of EU member states (as well as candidates or associated countries) and organisations or individuals established in third countries in the area of science and technology is a relevant objective of the Framework programme.

So far, African countries have been participating in the Framework programme through different calls in the various programmes and schemes. However, there is still room for a more intensive participation.

Key legal aspects

In general, participation (and not necessarily funding) of a third country is always possible, and it may happen to be mandatory for given calls.

There are two ways that enable third countries to undertake international collaborative research in the Cooperation programme:

- submitting proposals for collaborative participation in the thematic areas, and
- submitting proposals for calls in thematic areas dedicated specifically to third countries (and therefore requiring only their participation).

The participation of third countries is still possible in the Capacities programme of the Framework programme. The People programme offers very interesting opportunities for researcher mobility and career development. Other schemes, such as the science in society programme within the Capacities programme, provides opportunities for the participation of third countries as well.

The participants of ICPCs are subject to similar rights and obligations as the EU partners, in particular with respect to funding, scientific and financial reporting, audits and intellectual property rights. The participants will have to sign a grant agreement following the process of evaluation and selection of the proposals as well as a consortium agreement among partners where applicable.

The technical contribution of each partner should be specified in the description of work of the proposal submitted to a given call. The rules of participation in the Framework programme are defined in the terms of reference of each call.

Key financial aspects

The funding may cover different types of projects:

- collaborative projects
- networks of excellence
- coordination and support actions
- support for frontier research
- research for the benefit of specific groups, and
- support for training and career development researchers.

The maximum contribution from the European Commission (EC) varies according to the type of activity in the project.

With respect to criteria for funding, the participants of ICPCs have two options: either they have to comply with the same rules of the European partners or they may use the lump sum funding method.

In the current method used for the European partners, a detailed report of costs incurred in different activities (research and technological development, demonstration, training, coordination, support and management) has to be provided.

In order to allow for a more simplified method for financial reporting for third countries the lump sum method was created as mentioned above. Through this method, the EC pays a given amount per research/year, taking into account the economy of each country in the list of ICPCs. In using this method, the ICPC countries have been classified in three groups: low income; lower middle income; upper middle income.

The EU lump sum contribution applicable for each of these categories can be viewed in the table below.

Category of ICPC	Contribution (Researcher/Year)
Low income	8,000 Euros
Lower middle income	9,800 Euros
Upper middle income	20,700 Euros

Useful websites

FP7 offers many opportunities through different schemes that enable African and European researchers to cooperate with each other.

- The European Commission's CORDIS website http://cordis.europa.eu/home_en.html regularly publishes calls under the seventh Framework programme. After accessing the home page, please click on the "calls" button under the "7th Framework Programme" heading to find a comprehensive list of calls. Alternatively, if you would like to find out more about participating in the seventh Framework programme, including a list of eligible countries, please click on the "7th Framework Programme" heading located on the home page and then the "Participate in FP7" link in the right hand-side column. You can also access a document that provides guidelines for third country participants by clicking on the "documents" button under the "7th Framework Programme" heading, scrolling down to the "Guidance documents" heading and clicking on the "Short guideline on proposal submission and negotiation with third country participants" link.
- The CAAST-Net website also provides general information about FP7. Please visit <http://www.caastr-net.org/> and scroll down the page until you see the "FP7" heading. Click on the "What is FP7?" link under the "FP7" heading to access Framework programme pamphlets and related website links. If you click on the "View the latest FP7 calls" link under the "FP7" heading, you will be taken to the European Commission's CORDIS website where you can view the latest calls.

José Bonfim is the Senior Advisor for Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (Foundation for Science and Technology) in Portugal. For more information, please visit their website <http://alfa.fct.mctes.pt/>. José Bonfim can be contacted by email at jose.bonfim@fct.mctes.pt

CAAST-Net negotiating with African regional economic communities

Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu

The Network for Coordination and Advancement of Sub-Saharan Africa-EU Science and Technology Cooperation (CAAST-Net) is expanding.

The Network has increased the number of partners, introduced a new project on horizon scanning and is improving ties with regional economic communities.

Botswana, Nigeria and Egypt are joining the project, said Andy Cherry, the Project Coordinator for CAAST-Net.

The new partners' roles will be delineated once they have signed a grant agreement with the European Commission, which funds CAAST-Net.

Earlier, Cherry told delegates at the Network's 2010 assembly in Durban, South Africa, that the expansion was a response "to the ever changing environment" in which CAAST-Net works.

The Network's expansion was the result of a call by the European Commission to increase the "range of activities" and offer more "engaging with the regional economic communities" such as the 15-nation Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). For example, Ousseni Salifou from Niger heads the ECOWAS commission on agriculture, environment and water resources and would be a natural partner.

Regional structures such as the five-nation East African Community "are a central pillar of our expansion," said Cherry, who is based at the Association of Commonwealth Universities in Britain.

"We will be working closely with regional economic communities to act as a platform to add value in the relationship between the regions and the European Commission," he said.

Cherry acknowledged that the Network faces significant challenges in establishing communication with the regional economic communities.

CAAST-Net is in talks with the Southern African Development Community (SADC), headquartered in Gaborone, Botswana, as a first step.

CAAST-Net plans to hold workshops to help identify regional priorities that could benefit from the European Union funding.

CAAST-Net tries to increase African scientists' participation in the seventh Framework programme for research and technological development, the European Union's chief source of research funds from 2007 to 2013. The Network also tries to strengthen African research capacity by facilitating researchers' involvement in international joint research projects.

The Network will also embark on analysis of future trends.

Horizon scanning will help to "provide a vision for future science and



Delegates thrashing out the issues at the CAAST-Net Assembly held from the 16 to 18 May in Durban, South Africa this year.

technology policy, and research and development trends," said Daan du Toit, the Brussels-based Counselor for South Africa's Ministry of Science and Technology.

Two reports will be published in the next 18 months: one on future research and development trends, and another on policy implications of identified trends.

Cherry said the project will explore "scenarios" for collaboration.

"We will start by benefitting from scanning horizon activities in South Africa and the United Kingdom," he said.

The Network "will use the model to extrapolate to a wider context, to explore possibilities for developing cooperation between Europe and Africa."

Horizon scanning will look at "likely scenarios for collaboration and preparing a policy environment for future cooperation," Cherry told Research Africa.

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Research universities demand a say in FP8

Inga Vesper

Europe's research-intensive universities have called for more consultation with the Commission on shaping the next Framework programme.

Concerns about suggestions to allocate some eighth Framework programme (FP8) funding based on research outputs have prompted the League of European Research Universities to demand more consultation with the Commission. In its suggestions for FP8, LERU stated that major changes in funding have to be agreed by the whole research community rather than just set by the policymakers.

"What is output, how is it going to be measured," asked Stijn Delaure, an EU research policy adviser at LERU. "The scientists need to define this, and not the European Commission or any other administration. It is really important to have a broader discussion on this."

LERU published its suggestions for the next Framework programme on 7 June. The move

towards output-based funding was proposed by the European Commission in April as part of a communication on simplifying the funding process. However, LERU expressed concerns that this move might bring about additional complexities, which could be avoided by simplifying the existing funding regulations.

The Commission said that it is planning to discuss the Framework programme with all interested parties. "On FP8 we are planning open and comprehensive consultation on all issues including the ones set out by LERU," a spokesman for the Commission told Research Europe. "The main consultation is likely to begin in early 2011."

LERU also called for an increase in the programme's budget, most notably for the European Research Council. The ERC brought new ideas to the European research community and helped attract excellent researchers to Europe,

said Delaure, therefore it needs more money.

The group also wants a better balance between impact-driven and science-driven research, with a massive funding increase for frontier research. LERU favours a general increase in funding under the Framework programme, saying that politicians have to show their dedication to science. "Europe politically agreed on the 3 per cent rule for R&D expenditures, but is far from reaching this," said Delaure. "Europe vigorously discussed, agreed upon, and is implementing climate-change and environment related regulations, but where is the courage to do this for research and innovation?"

Inga Vesper currently works in London, UK, for the Research Europe and Research Fortnight print and online publications, both edited by Ehsan Masood. For more on these newsletters, or their sister publication, Onderzoek Nederland, please go to www.researchresearch.com



Abdelhamid El-Zoheiry

Egypt acts as matchmaker for ministers, researchers and networks

Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu

Egyptian government officials will encourage senior policymakers across Africa to make the best use of the Network for Coordination and Advancement of Sub-Saharan Africa-EU Science and Technology Cooperation (CAAST-Net).

Hany Helal, Egypt's Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, is Chair of the African Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology (AMCOST) for the next two years and intends to ensure that his fellow ministers are aware that their country's scientists can compete to obtain funding and join world-class collaborations.

Abdelhamid El-Zoheiry, the Coordinator for European Cooperation at the Egyptian ministry, said in a telephone interview from Cairo that his country will "establish a link between CAAST-Net and AMCOST."

AMCOST represents all the African ministries responsible for science and technology and is run by a five-country secretariat that currently includes Egypt and South Africa.

"CAAST-Net can't work in a vacuum," said El-Zoheiry, who directs the Learning Resource Centre for children with learning difficulties at Cairo University's prestigious Kasr AlAiny medicine school, one of the first medical faculties in both the middle east and Africa.

When the network "conducts workshops and comes up with projects, the outputs have to be taken up by a body with political muscle. This body will be AMCOST," explained El-Zoheiry.

For example, CAAST-Net announced at its third assembly, held in South Africa earlier this year, that it intends to do horizon scanning to identify developments, trends and changes in the medium to long-term future. Such reports would be invaluable for science ministers trying to keep abreast of a rapidly-shifting science and technology landscape.

African science ministers could also

benefit from CAAST-Net participation in the International Cooperation Network (INCONET) launched by the European Union (EU) in 2008 to improve African scientists' use of the seventh Framework programme, the EU's chief funding instrument for research and development until 2013.

Egypt is ideally placed to encourage closer collaboration among researchers and policymakers, as it is one of the newest members of CAAST-Net as well as becoming Chair of the AMCOST policy forum earlier this year.

The North African country is also strategically placed as a member of two other international cooperation networks.

One new network is the Science and Technology International Cooperation Network for Gulf countries (INCONET GCC) launched in Abu Dhabi in February this year with Mohamad Al-Quabaisi Mohamad from the Masdar clean energy initiative in the United Arab Emirates as its Secretary General. In April the INCONET GCC launched its external advisory board, which includes Mohammad Al-Badrani, who is based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, as Assistant Director of the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology's international cooperation department.

The other network to which Egypt belongs is the 28-partner Mediterranean Innovation and Research Coordination Action, which began in 2008 and had an expected lifespan of two years, according to Raghda Zaid of Jordan's Higher Council for Science and Technology.

Such networks, El-Zoheiry said, increase partnerships between researchers in the developing world and researchers in the EU.

At the same time, networks encourage useful collaboration among researchers in the South, who are often isolated from each other by issues such as deteriorating technical infrastructure and shaky support systems.

MHESR

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Mobile: +20 12 267 77 75

Email: zohiery@rdi.eg.net

CAAST-Net was particularly useful in helping African scientists collaborate with each other, El-Zoheiry said, adding that he himself had been a beneficiary of this.

"It is a good platform for Africa-to-Africa cooperation. The meeting in Durban gave us a platform to discuss our cooperation with Kenya and South Africa," he said.

The Arabic country's roles will be defined as soon as they have signed a grant agreement with the European Commission, which funds CAAST-Net, according to an earlier interview with Andy Cherry, the project's London-based Coordinator.

Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu is a Zimbabwean journalist at the Research Africa newsroom in Cape Town, South Africa. If you would like your organisation profiled, please email her at dfn@research-africa.net

Learning Resource Centre, University of Cairo:

<http://www.lrc.edu.eg>

Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

<http://www.mhesr-initiatives.org/>

Cairo University medicine school

<http://www.medicine.cu.edu.eg/beta/en>

INCONET Gulf Cooperation Countries

<http://www.inconet-gcc.eu/>

Mediterranean Innovation and Research Coordination Action

<http://www.miraproject.eu>

African Union seeks to improve its communication

The African Union (AU) expects to improve the way it conducts research and distributes information using a new knowledge management scheme. Knowledge management refers to a variety of strategies and practices an organisation can employ to identify, create, and disseminate information. The AU hopes the knowledge management system will also encourage policy implementation. The system will enable the pan-African body to effectively disseminate information about its activities to member states. It offers "document management, dissemination of information and knowledge, assigning of tasks, discussion forums, and enabling the constitution of task forces which can deliberate and finalise documents using the system," the AU said in a statement released after the launch of the system.

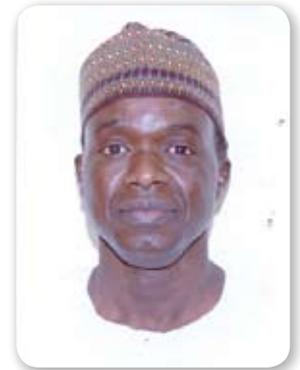
Profiles

Nigerian scientists fight isolation

Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu



Nnaemeka Orji



Umar Bindir

Global Research Report: Africa
<http://researchanalytics.thomsonreuters.com/m/pdfs/globalresearchreport-africa.pdf>

Africa's most populous nation has high hopes now that it has joined the Network for the Coordination and Advancement of Sub-Saharan Africa-European Union Science and Technology Cooperation (CAAST-Net).

Nigeria's National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP), which commercialises research and strengthens links between academics and industries, will be a key partner in this relationship.

Nnaemeka Orji, NOTAP's Chief Technology Officer, hopes that isolated West African scientists will be able to develop working relationships with both African and international colleagues through the network.

Nigeria is helping to establish a West African communication link for CAAST-Net, he said.

"Part of the outcome of what NOTAP has done with the region is to mainstream it into what CAAST-Net is doing," said Orji, a biochemistry graduate from Nigeria's University of Calabar in Cross River State.

However, other research suggests that Nigeria's academic links are not based so much on geography as on linguistics, with particularly strong ties to Kenya on the opposite coast, as well as Anglophone countries such as The Gambia and Ghana, and weaker ties with French-speaking countries nearby.

According to Jonathan Adams, the British Director of Research Evaluation for Thompson Reuters, who co-authored the Global Research Report on Africa which was published earlier this year, organisations such as NOTAP and CAAST-Net faces an uphill task.

"Despite Nigeria's high volume output, it is not returning as much research as would be expected given the size of its economy," wrote Adams, along with co-authors Christopher King, Editor of

ScienceWatch.com, and Daniel Hook, Managing Director of the UK-based research management company Symplectic.

"Other analyses show that Malawi, with one-tenth the annual research output of Nigeria, produces research of a quality that exceeds the world average benchmark while Nigeria hovers around half that impact level."

Nonetheless, the Global Research Report suggests, Nigeria will play a critical role in an organisation such as CAAST-Net.

"Nigeria, despite its disappointing level of research investment, nonetheless has an important connecting role. Not only is it a part of the Anglophone collaborative network but it also has significant — albeit weaker — connections with its West African neighbors, and it connects strongly to South Africa."

In fact, according to the Global Research Report, Nigerian researchers are already collaborating closely with China, are well-positioned to partner with the emerging Brazilian research base and "could thus serve as a key doorway into the West African and into Anglophone African research base for some of the most exciting research now appearing in Asia and Latin America."

NOTAP, which has its headquarters in the inland capital of Abuja, deliberately situated in the very heart of the often-divided nation, is pressing ahead. It has already arranged for a meeting between its scientists and CAAST-Net officials next month.

The meeting is linked to the gathering of science experts for the 15-nation Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) from 27 to 30 July 2010 in Abidjan in nearby Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast).

Orji said CAAST-Net will help raise the profile of science within ECOWAS.

"Science and technology is a difficult field for people to understand," he said. "For politicians, it is easier to say, 'we have built 20 hospitals.'"

"When you talk about science, you are talking about huge investments that may take time to yield results. So advocacy is important."

The NOTAP agency operates under the new Ministry of Science and Technology Mohammed Abubakar – the former Vice Chancellor of Kebbi State University. Abubakar has been in his job for three months. NOTAP, on the other hand, has been in existence for three decades.

The agency currently operates under the leadership of Umar Bindir, a chartered engineer and graduate of a UK university, Cranfield, which has industrial-scale facilities and close links with industry and commerce.

Bindir, who has had a long career engineering agricultural tools, is also Director of Technology Acquisition and Assessment at Nigeria's science and technology ministry.

NOTAP

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Email: emekarj@yahoo.com

If you would like your organisation to be profiled, please email Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu, Senior Reporter at Research Africa, at dfn@research-africa.net

Calendar

Event	Location	Date	Website	Contact
Sixth Conference of the International Geoscience Educators Organisation	Johannesburg, South Africa	30 August - 3 September 2010	http://web.wits.ac.za/NewsRoom/Conferences/GeoSciEd	Ian McKay: witsgeoutreach@gmail.com Gillian Drennan: Gillian.Drennan@wits.ac.za
22nd International CODATA conference	Stellenbosch, Cape Town, South Africa	24-27 October 2010	http://www.codata2010.com/	http://www.codata2010.com/contact-us.php

Mapping the future

Gerard Ralphs

What will cooperation in science and technology between Europe and Africa look like in five, ten, or even twenty years?

In the terminology of 2009 Dinokeng scenarios, a high-level exercise to predict South Africa's socio-economic future, will the two continents walk alongside one another, move in different directions or will one lag behind the other?

These are some of the guiding questions shaping CAAST-Net's latest project, which is being led by the South African Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the UK-based Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU).

The initiative, known as "Longer-Term Horizon-Scanning for Africa-EU S&T Cooperation," aims to produce a series of scenarios or visions for the future. These would help to define and inform policy and bi-regional S&T policy and dialogue.

The DST's European Union representative, Daan du Toit, who first presented the concept at the CAAST-Net stakeholders' meeting on 17 May in Durban, says the initiative may also ensure CAAST-Net's long-term impact beyond the project's current lifespan.

The foresight exercise will produce two reports – the first a long-term scanning report predicting future trends in research cooperation, the second a report outlining the policy implications of the identified trends.

According to du Toit, "the long-term scanning report will consist of four scenarios elaborating possible trends for Africa-EU S&T cooperation, and how they are shaped by and respond to external factors."

External factors include bi-regional geopolitics, existing global challenges, the impact of emerging research and "disruptive technologies," and developments in S&T policy at large.

"For every scenario [there will be] short- (2015), medium- (2020) and long-term (2030) perspectives," said du Toit.

The horizon-scanning will integrate CAAST-Net expertise with the work of existing initiatives such as the European Foresight Monitoring Network.

The project will also work closely with the Planning and Coordinating Agency of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the African Union's Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology.

Stakeholder engagement will predominantly take place through online consultations, which will be based on a series of concept papers prepared by the team of CAAST-Net experts.

In a May 2010 report in *Research Africa*, CAAST-Net Coordinator, Andy Cherry, said that the starting point for the initiative would not be a blank slate.

"We will start by benefiting from scanning horizon activities in South Africa and the United Kingdom and will use the model to extrapolate to a wider context to explore what are the possibilities for developing cooperation between Europe and Africa. The exercise will look at what are the likely scenarios for collaboration and preparing a policy environment for future cooperation."

The first report of the CAAST-Net horizon-scanning initiative is expected by the end of 2010.

The second report will be finalised during the first half of 2011.

Both reports will be delivered by CAAST-Net to the relevant policymakers.

For more information, please email Daan du Toit of the South African Mission to the European Union at daan.dutoit@dst.gov.za



Daan du Toit at the CAAST-Net stakeholders' meeting in Durban, South Africa in May, 2010

The Dinokeng ('a place of rivers' in the Tswana language) scenarios were convened by Chairperson, Mamphela Ramphele, an academic, businesswoman, medical doctor and anti-apartheid activist who brought 35 leaders from different sectors of South African society together to discuss the current political, social and economic realities facing the country, develop stories of possible futures and extend the scenario-building process to groups across the country. Exercises are in the public domain and can be downloaded here: <http://www.dinokengscenarios.co.za>

Gerard Ralphs is the Project Manager for *Research Africa* and is currently based in Durban, South Africa. He can be reached at gpr@research-africa.net

A library of Africa's groundwater, fossil energies and mineral resources

Gerard Ralphs

Aegos is the acronym for the African-European Georesources Observation System project – a three-year project with funding from the European Union's seventh Framework programme (FP7) for 2008 to 2011.

According to its website, Aegos aims to lay the foundations for "an information system containing and making accessible data and knowledge on African geological resources including mineral resources, raw material, groundwater and

energy."

Aegos is made up of 23-partner consortium, which includes ten European and eight African geological surveys. A consultant, a non-profit organisation and three international organisations make up the remaining five partners.

The project also draws on the services of six sub-contractors, three of which are from countries located in Africa.

The first round of FP7 calls for

proposals of December 2006 led to the formation of the Aegos project, which officially kicked-off on 9 February 2009.

In FP7-speak, Aegos is a "support action" for the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), which has been able to forecast meningitis outbreaks, protect biodiversity, improve climate observations in Africa, promote solar energy and improve agriculture. GEOSS even forecast the weather for the 2008 Beijing Olympics!

A dialogue between the Aegos project and the Geoss community will take place at the Geological Society of London's Burlington House on 7 and 8 July 2010. Those wishing to participate should contact Cindy Petersen of South Africa's Council for Geoscience.
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Fax: +27 86 615 5858
Website: <http://www.geoscience.org.za>

Southern Africa has won the bid to host the 35th International Geological Congress (IGC) in 2016. The event, held every four years, is a meeting of more than 6,000 earth scientists. Chairperson of the Council for Geosciences of South Africa, Phuti Ngoepe, said the bid was made by South Africa with the full support of Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and Tanzania.