The CAAST-Net Bulletin

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

Inside this Issue…

Calling all CAAST-Net stakeholders to Mombasa

Early next month a range of stakeholders from Europe and Africa's S&T communities will descend on Mombasa for discussion on key bi-regional policy objectives.

Bonn and Nairobi. KENYA'S MINISTRY of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MoHEST) and the International Bureau of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (IB-BMBF)—leaders of CAAST-Net's Work Package 3—are organising the first CAAST-Net Stakeholders' Conference on Africa-Europe Cooperation in Science and Technology. The event is to be held in Mombasa on 10 and 11 November 2009 at the Whitesands Beach and Resort Hotel.

The conference is poised to attract the participation of high-level policy-makers, scientists and other key stakeholders from Africa and Europe in order to address the rapidly changing EU-AU S&T landscape, particularly with respect to the 8th Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, which was agreed upon in Lisbon in December 2007. The recommendations arising out of the conference are expected to provide both substantial input and impetus into the ongoing dialogue processes taking place at different levels in order to enhance S&T cooperation between Europe and Africa.

To achieve these objectives the conference will facilitate an exchange between participating stakeholders on issues such as: The analysis of EU-Africa S&T cooperation practices; barriers to overcome and the challenges of fostering an S&T cooperation serving European and African needs; new approaches and recommendations on how to better exploit the potential of S&T cooperation between Europe and Africa; the role of policy coordination in building coherency and efficiency between bilateral and multilateral approaches.

The conference will comprise a range of plenary sessions and three parallel workshops dealing with the opportunities and limits of cooperation mechanisms in S&T and development on the basis of good practice examples. The particular focus of the three workshops will be: The EU's Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7); bilateral cooperation and the coordination of bilateral activities; synergising S&T and development

FP7 Information Days

CAAST-Net's Work Package 5, which is tasked with raising awareness about FP7, will be organising two FP7 information days on 3 and 9 November 2009 in Yaoundé, Cameroon and Mombasa, Kenya respectively (see Page 7). The focus of these events will be on the policy framework and structure of FP7, the rules of participation, and the possibilities for African researchers to participate in the Cooperation and People Specific Programmes of FP7. **BW&EM**
For more information about the 2009 stakeholders' conference write to sc2009@caast-net.org.

AN FP7 CALL WITH A DIFFERENCE

Brussels. MOMENTUM IS BUILDING among scientists from Europe and Africa ahead of the submission deadline for proposals under the FP7 Africa call (FP7-AFRICA-2010), says CAAST-Net coordinator Dr. Andy Cherry. Cherry attended the official information day for the call, which was held at the European Commission's Centre Borschette in Brussels on 18 September.

The information day, which included a brokerage session, provided the opportunity for participants to hear flash presentations on a wide range of organisations, projects and initiatives with an interest in the activities of call. Detailed sessions on the specifics of the call, as well as FP7 administration issues were also key features of the event.

The call's total indicative budget is €63 million. Topics covered include health, the environment (including climate change), food, fisheries, agriculture and biotechnology. Though it is published in the frame of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), both Africa's Science and Technology's Consolidated Plan of Action, as well as the 8th Partnership of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, informed the call's formulation.

Encouragingly, official delegations of both the New Partnership for Africa's Development Office for Science and Technology, as well as the African Union's Department for Human Resources, Science and Technology attended the information day in Brussels.

The European Commission's Commissioner for Science and Research Dr. Janez Potočnik delivered the opening address, which was pre-recorded and streamed via You Tube to parallel events taking place on the African continent.

"I hope this is the beginning of something new and something different for African research," said Potočnik.

"This call is different […] because this time the priority research areas were chosen by Africa. They are not only relevant to Africa's needs but based on existing African capacity. This is a significant move from existing cooperation with European scientists, research organisations and funders deciding what's best for Africa, to a new situation where research is managed by African institutions via partnership with Europe."

The submission deadline is 14 January 2010. **GR**

Knowledge management and outreach

CAAST-Net editor **Gerard Ralphs** maps out work to be done by Work Package 6.

Durban. CAAST-NET IS PART OF A GROWING NETWORK of projects and initiatives tackling cooperation between the European Union and sub-Saharan Africa in different thematic areas and at different levels. Most if not all such projects and initiatives have an element of knowledge management and outreach, and the reason for this is twofold. On the one hand, it is important that each entity's outputs are stored and inventoried for effective information sharing and online collaboration; on the other hand, it is equally essential these outputs are disseminated to a wider community. For CAAST-Net, this is the job of Work Package 6 (WP6).

The key challenge for WP6, raised in discussions during the recent stakeholders' meeting at CAAST-Net's 2nd Annual Project Assembly in June 2009, effectively highlights the nature of the work to be done going forward. That is, how can CAAST-Net more effectively reach its audiences, in Africa and Europe, given the challenges of communicating in each context and, indeed, across contexts?

We can begin to answer to this challenge by outlining what in fact it is that CAAST-Net aims to disseminate, as well as who it targets through its dissemination efforts. The project has a set of deliverables, which vary in scope, size and nature. Thus, while some deliverables are technical reports on a particular issue or subject, others are actual high-level meetings, workshops and conferences, such as the upcoming stakeholders' conference (see Page 1 and Page 10). Indeed, some deliverables are entirely internal to the project's implementation and are therefore disseminated quite differently to others, which may be disseminated more conventionally— for example, through the distribution of reports or leaflets at meetings and events.

The important point is that all deliverables have varied dissemination components. This means each deliverable requires a unique and tailored approach.

The same logic applies to those individuals or institutions targeted by CAAST-Net deliverables—some deliverables will be solely relevant for the purpose of project monitoring by the European Commission, while others, such as the Work Package 2 deliverables on recommendations for bridging S&T and development cooperation approaches, or Work Package 5 deliverables on the promotion of FP7, will have a wider range of interested stakeholders identified in the particular research, discussion and networking activities leading up to the production of the final deliverable report.

At present, the CAAST-Net website—more formally known as the Community Knowledge Management Platform— is a key source of information about CAAST-Net and its deliverables, and is also a growing repository of information about the broader Europe-Africa S&T cooperation landscape. Ordinary website visitors are able to view a significant range of its content, while users—those who sign up—may also leave their comments and acc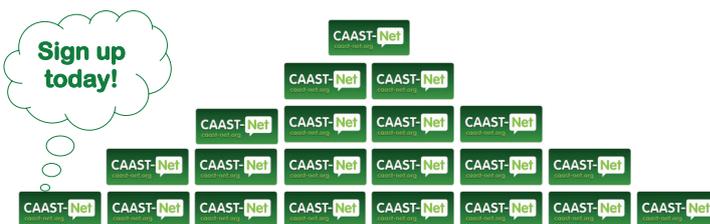ess certain restricted pages, a feature designed to encourage participation in the work of the project and the growth and development of different readerships. Other key website features include a document library, calendar of events and a public notice board for items of current interest.

Moreover, the information we deliver to our website users and event participants through this, CAAST-Net's quarterly bulletin, as well as the

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> Gerard Ralphs
> *CAAST-Net Editor*

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project's periodic e-mail updates, provides a further important window into the project and its activities.

Dissemination of project analyses is also targeted at wider, non-CAAST-Net readerships through the publication of full-length or abridged articles and papers in newspapers and journals (see, for example, Page 6). As CAAST-Net deliverables are produced at an increasing rate, this is an approach which will be used equally frequently by building cooperative links with both new and existing channels.

Since the CAAST-Net kick-off meeting in February 2008 significant strides have been taken to develop a range of communication approaches and avenues.

But there is much further to go.

At the June stakeholders' meeting WP6 briefly outlined the broad pillars of its knowledge management and outreach strategy. As the project and the SSA-EU S&T landscape at large is a dynamic and growing one, three areas were identified in which attention should be focused. Importantly the key word adopted for each strategic objective is the word *build*, implying a constructive process.

Build the CAAST-Net brand
A brand, understood in the broadest sense to include not simply commercial products and services, requires consistent and disciplined input, creativity and attention to detail. Moreover, a brand's reputation needs to be earned by consistent positive feedback from its target users, which in turn leads to a natural brand development. Each WP6 outreach effort therefore demands careful consideration to ensure it meets the highest possible standards of quality and contributes effectively to the goals of the project.

Build the CAAST-Net Community Knowledge Management Platform
WP6 recognises the importance of a user friendly, accessible central online repository as critical to improved bi-regional cooperation in science and technology. For many based in Europe internet connectivity is a given, while for many based in Africa connectivity is expensive and unevenly available. With this reality in hand, WP6 needs to work tirelessly to ensure access to information for the full range of website users, which, simply put, means doing our best to ensure download time is kept to a minimum *and* alternative modes of dissemination are fully explored and exploited. In 2009 an INCO-NET editors' forum is being established to encourage information sharing and the establishment of best practices in the implementation of INCO-NET knowledge management and dissemination.

Build the CAAST-Net community
There would be little point in pursuing the objectives mentioned above if these were not targeted at a community of individuals, organisations and institutions with a stake or interest in sub-Saharan Africa-EU science and technology cooperation. This objective is therefore our cornerstone, and we rely of the input of all CAAST-Net work packages, as well as existing community members, to actively engage in creating the CAAST-Net community. But how will this happen? A creative and multi-faceted approach is needed. This means events that draw strong participation, a dynamic information system with frequently updated content to retain users' interest and encourage online participation, and perhaps most importantly a forward-looking set of policy interventions to ensure the added-value of CAAST-Net analyses in policy discourses.

Above all, as 2009 races to its end, the tasks that lie ahead need to be informed by the project's central goal—a greater quality and quantity of sub-Saharan Africa-EU S&T cooperation. **GR**

Getting ahead on FP7 project administration

All FP7 projects include a series of important administrative components. Effective project administration is therefore key to a successful project. This checklist developed by CAAST-Net project administrative officer Sara Calamassi aims to assist newly formed FP7 consortia to anticipate the administrative work ahead.

Building a consortium

Does each partner in the consortium have the required time, skills, resources and understanding of FP7 to carry out the project?

It is important for potential partners to recognise the sort of funding instrument the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) is, as well as to recognise that it is principally a vehicle to drive European competitiveness in the global economy at large. In this way FP7 is not a development tool targeted at Africa, but a research tool created primarily to aid European researchers. However, there is a significant international cooperation dimension of FP7, which is where opportunities may be found for countries in sub-Saharan Africa to participate on the basis of mutual interest and mutual benefit.

In order to participate, potential partners need to carefully assess whether they have both the technical and administrative capacity to be involved in an FP7 project. In addition, both the time and effort required to implement a project should not be underestimated.

From the perspective of project management and administration, ideally potential partners should identify at least two individuals within their organisations to take part, depending on the nature of the project. Tasks can be further divided into technical tasks—the implementation of the project's core deliverables—and administrative tasks, which is primarily concerned with project reporting within the legal and financial strictures of the Framework Programme.

Understanding the EC's regulations

Is each consortium partner aware of the European Commission's (EC) regulations regarding audits, financial reporting, and the range of FP7 legal issues?

Potential partners need to be acutely aware of the penalties that the EC may impose on entities for failing to respect FP7 rules and guidelines. Simply put, potential beneficiaries of FP7 funding need to understand the contract they will be signing with the EC. In order to do so, every potential beneficiary should consult the following three documents:

1. Annex II to the Grant Agreement
(www.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/fp7-ga-annex2-v3_en.pdf)
2. Guide for Beneficiaries
(www.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/beneficiaries_en.pdf)
3. Guide for Financial Issues
(www.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/financialguide_en.pdf)

Potential beneficiaries also need to familiarise themselves with the CORDIS website [see http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html]. This is where the EC publishes all information relevant to FP7 projects. Check back to the site regularly to keep up-to-date of any changes.

Sources of information

Do beneficiaries have access to all important sources of information for the preparation and implementation of the project?

Any potential beneficiary should ensure individuals working on FP7 projects are well-informed about the range of technical and administrative issues relevant to the project.

The following sources of information will be useful and should be explored: The EC itself; National Contact Points; the project's coordinator; the FP7 Finance Helpdesk [see see http://www.finance-helpdesk.org/]; and other FP7 projects in the beneficiary's home or neighbouring countries.

Sources of information (cont.)

Networks between projects should be encouraged to foster communication, exchange and to facilitate the sharing of knowledge. FP7 information days are frequently organised by the EC, NCP networks and a range of FP7 projects, such as CAAST-Net, which should also be attended if possible. Apart from gaining technical know-how, these are usually an excellent opportunity to build both personal and project networks.

How to work with EC project officers

Each project is assigned an officer at the European Commission who monitors the implementation of the project. How well do you know your EC project officer?

The EC will only want to communicate with a project's coordinator. Thus, all matters for the attention of the EC should be raised via the coordinator. Issues should be raised early on so that they do not turn into problems later.

It is also important for potential coordinators to foster strong communication channels within the consortium from the start. This can be done through a weekly e-mail alert or newsletter. For projects that work across continents, special efforts should be made to ensure all partners are kept informed of the latest developments. Please remember what may seem like an insignificant administrative issue may need to be approved by the EC—a process that can take many months.

Administration over the long run

The direction and momentum of a project is determined by both its partners and the project management team. The project administrator (who may be distinct from a project coordinator) has a key role to play in ensuring each partner is kept informed of their duties to the EC at each stage of the project.

In sum, familiarise yourself with all available information of FP7 project both from official sources (CORDIS) and others. Get to know the networks of NCPs well enough to be able to call on them at any time during the life of the project.

Maintain good communication with the EC project officer at all times, most especially during the project reporting phase, which happens once a year, and which can be extremely challenging for large consortia dispersed across the continents.

Project coordinators need to familiarise themselves with websites like the Financial Helpdesk in order to ensure financial reporting is conducted to the standards outlined by the EC. This is another crucial dimension to ensure the successful implementation of a project. On-the-spot audits may take place at any time during and up until five years after a project has been concluded, so it is critical that all documents are stored and inventoried effectively.

In addition to the EC's FP7 portal, CORDIS, there are many commercial and non-commercial websites that have been developed to provide information on FP7 project management, and which may be consulted [for example, see http://www.eutrainingsite.com/home.php, http://www.meeusfp7.eu/, http://www.desca-fp7.eu/].

Develop networks with other FP7 project coordinators to share knowledge and best practices. As a first port of call visit the FP7 project database to search by project [see http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/projects_en.html].

Finally, develop strong project management tools. Some current websites including the FP7 financial helpdesk [see www.finance-helpdesk.org/front/ShowCategory.aspx?CatId=30] offer templates that can be customised to particular projects.

For more info contact Sara Calamassi (s.calamassi@acu.ac.uk).

What's going on?

We've compiled list of key information sources on Africa-Europe S&T cooperation to assist researchers and policy-makers to keep track.

The issues at large...

Europafrica.net

These regular e-mail alerts aim to keep readers informed about the implementation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, including the 8th Partnership for Science, Information Society and Space. To sign up go to http://europafrica.net/. To receive the monthly *Europafrica Bulletin*, which provides more comprehensive coverage of the issues, write to europafrica@ecdpm.org.

Weekly Compass

In line with the objectives of the (European Centre for Development Policy Management) ECDPM to "enhance international relations in the areas of economic and trade, governance, policy and international relations, international development cooperation," its *Weekly Compass* is a definitive information source for those interested in tracking ACP-EU relations. To receive this important publication go to http://www.afflux.com/ECDPM/subscriptions/.

Research*eu

Research*eu is the European Commission's monthly research magazine, which is available in English, French, German and Spanish. A free sample copy or subscription can be obtained from the Communication Unit of the EC's Directorate-General for Research. Go to http://ec.europa.eu/research/research-eu to find out more.

Press...

SciDev.Net

The Science and Development Network provide "news, views and information about science, technology and the developing world" primarily through its excellent website [see http://www.scidev.net]. Topics covered include: Agriculture and environment; climate change and energy; health; new technologies; science and innovation policy; science communication. To receive e-mail updates, the content of which you can customise according to your area of interest, click 'Sign up' in the red text box on the right hand side of the page.

Research Africa

Research Africa is the newspaper for the African research world. A combination of in-depth reporting on the latest issues in African research and research policy, as well as an online database updated daily with the latest funding opportunities makes Research Africa a key source of information for policy-makers, researchers and research managers. A range of individual and institutional subscriptions are available. Go to http://www.research-africa.net or write to Caite McCaan (cm@research-africa.net).

African Press Organization

This is a reliable daily press releases service, which means your inbox will fill up quickly; on the other hand, you will be kept well-informed on a broad range of issues from the African continent, not exclusively S&T. To sign up to receive these updates send an e-mail to apo-opa-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Content is also available in French.

University World News

UWN is a newspaper that provides coverage on a wide range of issues in higher education. A global and an Africa edition are available, which registered users can choose to receive by e-mail. To sign up go to http://www.universityworldnews.com/ and click 'Receive our free newspaper'.

HSRC Press

South Africa's Human Sciences Research Council Press is arguably one of Africa's best publishers of social sciences and humanities research; and all its books and publications are available for download on an open access basis. To be kept informed of new and forthcoming HSRC Press titles sign up at http://www.hsrcpress.ac.za.

By theme...

WHO Bulletin

Since 1948, the World Health Organization has published a monthly peer-reviewed bulletin. Though global in orientation, the WHO Bulletin tackles many issues of relevance to health and health research in both Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. Register at http://www.who.int/publications/en/. The WHO's Afro periodical covers African health issues [see http://afro.who.int/press/periodicals/index.html#AFRO News].

IST-Africa

The IST-Africa (Regional Impact of Information Society Technologies in Africa) project newsletter provides information and updates on the range of its activities, including networking, training, and capacity building in an Africa-Europe context. To subscribe go to http://www.ist-africa.org/home/default.asp?page=register-mailing-list.

Biolines

AfricaBio is a "non-political, non-profit biotechnology association for the safe, ethical and responsible research, development and application of biotechnology and its products." AfricaBio's newsletter, *Biolines,* is published monthly and contains news, reports as well as a notice board of upcoming events. To receive Biolines contact AfricaBio by writing to Prof. Joceyln Webster (jocelyn@africabio.com).

SARNISSA

SARNISSA is the acronym for the Sustainable Aquaculture Research Networks in Sub-Saharan Africa. Its monthly newsletter is a mine of information on aquaculture issues, news and events. A major draw card of the SARNISSA project is its Aquaculture Compendium, "an online encyclopaedic repository of publications and information about aquaculture." Registered stakeholders are provided with free access. Go to http://www.sarnissa.org/tiki-index.php.

FARA E-Bulletin

The Forum for Agricultural Research has an informative bi-monthly e-bulletin. Each issue includes sections on the FARA secretariat's activities, events, news, resources and opportunities. To sign up for the *FARA E-Bulletin* go to http://fara.infosysplus.org/.

Alternative Energy Africa

"Filling the Energy Information Gap in Africa" is the motto of this publication. To be kept updated of news and upcoming events in the field of African energy sign up at http://ae-africa.com/.

ST-EAP Alert

The Science and Technology Europe-Africa Project (ST-EAP) disseminate information via e-mail alerts from time-to-time on various events and projects of importance. To add yourself to the ST-EAP mailing list write to Zethu Mkhondo (NMkhondo@csir.co.za).

FP7...

FP7 Finance Helpdesk

For readers currently involved in FP7 projects, the FP7 Finance Helpdesk newsletter is a must read! The contents of newsletters are sent by e-mail to registered users. Go to http://www.finance-helpdesk.org.

CORDIS

The CORDIS website is the definitive source of information about FP7. With a comprehensive research and development news service and the latest funding opportunities presented in multiple languages among many other items, CORDIS should definitely be added to your list of bookmarks. Go to http://cordis.europa.eu/. GR&AC

Editor's note: With thanks to Dr. Andy Cherry for editorial input.

Events: October to December 2009

DATE (2009)	EVENT	WHERE	HOST(S)	CONTACT
20-23 October	TWAS 11th General Meeting	Durban	TWAS	Mohammed Hassan (mhassan@twas.org)
3 November	CAAST-Net FP7 Information Day	Yaoundé	CAAST-Net	Jean Jacques Roubion (jean-jacques.roubion@ird.fr)
4-5 November	CAAST-Net Thematic Workshop—Health	Yaoundé	CAAST-Net	Jean Jacques Roubion (jean-jacques.roubion@ird.fr)
9 November	CAAST-Net FP7 Information Day	Mombasa	CAAST-Net	José Bonfim (jose.bonfim@mctes.fct.pt)
10-11 November	CAAST-Net Stakeholders' Conference on Africa-Europe Cooperation in Science and Technology	Mombasa	CAAST-Net	Birgit Wirsing (birgit.wirsing@dlr.de)
23-25 November	COVIDSET III	Kampala	ANSTI	ANSTI Secretariat (j.massaquoi@unesco.org)

URL **Calendar** http://www.caast-net.org/xwiki/bin/view/Main/Calendar

Letters

Editor's note: To send letters to the editor write to editor@caast-net.org.

Advancing bi-regional collaboration

How can collaboration between the European Union (EU) and sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries efficiently address the interests of SSA countries both in terms of research and development and economic impact?

It should be clearly understood that the development of science and technology (S&T) is the last priority of many African countries, with the exception of South Africa, which is at a very advanced stage of development comparable to that of European countries. CAAST-Net is therefore a useful instrument to develop cooperation mechanisms in S&T between the EU and SSA countries, and to further enhance existing programmes in research and technological development (RTD). At the policy level the African Union (AU) and African Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology (AMCOST) have set research priorities through Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action. By the same token, the EU has its Seventh

Framework Programme for RTD (FP7). And common priorities are to be found in the agendas of these programmes. However, there is not yet a precise timeframe for the implementation of joint activities because the levels of research advancement in SSA countries vary from country to country. In addition, budgetary allocations for research cooperation are not always forthcoming.

Thus, at the project level it is my opinion that more emphasis should be placed on how CAAST-Net deliverables can tangibly contribute to improving cooperation between EU and SSA countries. Approximately 60 deliverables are listed in CAAST-Net's description of work. Supposing they are released according to schedule, the question which will be asked of the project at the end of its life cycle is this: Has cooperation between the EU and SSA countries improved as a result of project's efforts?

The CAAST-Net website is a powerful tool for updating all stakeholders from the EU and SSA countries on the strengthening of research cooperation. But a number of challenges persist for the project as a whole. For example, during joint meetings, the extent to which all participants feel they can fully

contribute to discussions poses a challenge to the consortium. To support equal participation, all participants should ensure they are well-informed before the meeting takes place about progress made by the project, so that they may update themselves on the situation and have sufficient time to gather national views, or indeed regional views from other SSA countries, in order to react and input in an appropriate manner.

In addition, progress reports developed by each work package could be circulated before meetings, so that discussions and comments can be targeted and fruitful. An information-driven approach will also encourage the involvement of more stakeholders from whom additional comments and analyses can be gathered. The proceedings of meetings, data, analysis and conclusions can then be meaningfully disseminated through the CAAST-Net communication channels.

If bi-regional research cooperation is to be advanced by CAAST-Net all partners and stakeholders should be encouraged to participate fully and to keep up-to-date.

Xavier Rakotonjanahary
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Madagascar

Coordinator's Column

By **Dr. Eric Mwangi**
Africa Region Coordinator
(with input from Dr. Andy Cherry)

Nairobi. THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S Commissioner for Science and Research, Dr. Janez Potočnik, visited Kenya and Ethiopia between 6 and 9 September, 2009. At the Kenyan Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology Commissioner, Potočnik held official talks with the Minister, who is also the AMCOST Chair, the Permanent Secretary, Professor Crispus Kiamba, as well as the CAAST-Net Africa Region Coordinator, Dr. Eric Mwangi, among other senior government officials. Discussions focused on: AMCOST achievements and challenges; EU-AU relationships in science and technology and, within this context, the role of CAAST-Net was highlighted; the role of AMCOST in the Joint Expert Group of the 8th Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space.

In Addis Ababa, Commissioner Potočnik held official talks with African Union Commissioner Jean-Pierre Ezin, and attended an official function to commemorate the AU's Science Day. During this function, the Commissioner participated in the prize giving ceremony for the AU Women Scientists Awards. This scheme was setup in 2007 with the purpose of supporting and popularising science and technology among women in Africa. Commissioner Potočnik used the opportunity to announce the €63 million FP7 2010 call for Africa, which addresses water, food security and health topics for collaborative research projects between European and African scientists. Encouragingly, he also indicated the EU's willingness to support the AU's Research Grant scheme.

Both Ezin and Potočnik emphasised the need for greater enhancement, harmonisation and cooperation in science and technology between Africa and Europe. In that respect the roles and potential of the two INCO-NETs, MIRA and CAAST-Net, were highlighted. It is of course hoped that the CAAST-Net stakeholders' conference to take place in in Mombasa this November will contribute significantly to this process. Moreover, the advances made by the AU's Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology in the development of the Lighthouse Projects was highlighted by Commissioner Ezin. This list of projects identifies thematic areas of immediate importance to CAAST-Net's Work Package 4. Finally, both commissioners stressed the important role of the Regional Economic Communities (REC's) in the implementation of the 8th Partnership. In light of the proposed expansion of CAAST-Net, this is an area in which the project will continue to work to build strong links and networks.

African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development launches first edition

Durban. SEPTEMBER SAW THE launch of the much-anticipated first edition of the *African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development*.

AJSTID is a peer-reviewed and multidisciplinary journal, which aims to bring together the work of researchers and policy pundits from across a range of research fields and contexts. Its geographical coverage is not exclusively Africa and includes other low-income countries.

The journal's editors-in-chief are Professor Mammo Muchie who holds a joint appointment with Aalborg University and the Tshwane University of Technology, and Dr. Angathevar Baskaran of the Middlesex Business School.

"There are journals on specific science or technology, such as biotechnology, related to Africa, but journals that explicitly link science, technology innovation to, and in the context of, African development and integration do not exist.

"So AJSTID fulfills a real need and tries to bridge a yawning knowledge, research and publication gap in this interdisciplinary field," the editors told *Research Africa* earlier this year.

The journal is interested in research that is basic, applied or policy relevant, say the editors.

The themes covered by the journal are wide-ranging and include: The role of science, technology and innovation in the processes of industrial growth and development; the emergence and the making of innovation systems in the context of broader socio-economic development; exploring the inclusion of innovation and knowledge in sub-national, regional, global and local innovation networks and cross border integration processes in Africa;

research on the interaction among governments, industries, businesses, universities and communities in the use and application of science, technology and innovation policies; particularly comparative works that have implications for all developing economies; critiques of science, technology and innovation policies and their applications in Africa; exploring co-evolutions, broad-based innovations and indigenous knowledge systems in the context of African development.

If the list of contents is anything to go by, this first edition promises a varied combination of research papers, research notes and book reviews on topics as such as open source software, theories of innovation and local e-governance.

Also included in the line up is a submission authored by Daan du Toit, South Africa's senior science and technology representative to the European Union, and representative of CAAST-Net consortium partner, the SA Department of Science and Technology. In an article entitled "Stregthening Science and Technology Policy Dialogue Between Africa and Europe" du Toit draws attention to the importance of an intensified bi-regional policy dialogue in science and technology, and outlines eight spheres of "policy contact" currently shaping the policy landscape and from which a new policy dialogue platform may evolve. Du Toit's article nudges a vibrant policy debate a step further, and is a must-read ahead of the forthcoming stakeholders' conference to be held in Mombasa next month (see Page 1). **GR**

E-mail sales@adonis-abbey.com to subscribe.

News from the Africa-Europe S&T landscape

3rd African Congress for Scientific Research and Technology
The African Society of Scientific Research and Technology and the Human Resources Science and Technology Cluster of the African Union's Economic Social Cultural Council, in collaboration with the National Research Center of Egypt, are organising the 3rd African Congress for Scientific Research and Technology in Cairo, Egypt. The meeting will take place between 1 and 3 November, 2009. The theme for this year's congress is: Scientific Research and Technology to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

Tuberculosis Vaccines Development Funding
A call for the support of clinical trials, capacity building and networking in tuberculosis vaccines development has been published by the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP). Total funding is worth €3 million, however equivalent co-funding is expected from EDCTP-EEIG Member States. The deadline for submission of proposals is 15 December 2009. Three-to-six projects are expected to be funded.

IST-Africa 2010 Conference: Call For Papers
The IST-Africa 2010 Conference and Exhibition, hosted by the government of South Africa through the Department of Science and Technology, will take place in Durban, South Africa, from 19 to 21 May 2010. The deadline for the submission of papers is 6 November 2009.

New Initiative to Encourage Europe-Africa Exchange
Action 4 of the Erasmus Mundus Project, Access to Success: Fostering Trust and Exchange Between Europe and Africa, aims to "address identified obstacles to EU-African higher education cooperation by providing structured opportunities for mutual exchange and discussion between the higher education communities in the two continents." For more information go to http://www.eua.be/international-relations/access-to-success/.

URL http://www.caast-net.org/xwiki/bin/view/Main/Public+Noticeboard

Expanding the European Research Area

SICAs, ERA-NETs, BILATs, INCO-NETs: these are all common terms in the world of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7). Yet for the uninitiated they are simply more acronyms to add to the thousands already floating around. This issue we feature the first in a series of interviews on the different models of FP7 projects, in which José Bonfim of Portugal's Foundation for Science and Technology outlines the basic precepts of an ERA-NET.

What is an ERA-NET?

An ERA-NET project is a network of national ministries or agencies that run national programmes in different areas of science and technology (S&T). This scheme was designed to promote the coordination of such national programmes in European countries in order to support the development of the European Research Area. The European Research Area is a political concept endorsed by the European Parliament and Council, which aims to bring coherence to Europe's efforts in research and innovation. The ERA-NET scheme is mostly addressed at national bodies; that is, programme owners, programme funders or organisations acting on their behalf.

The particular objectives of an ERA-NET are: To provide for information exchange between the entities involved; and to define, prepare, implement, fund and support joint research activities.

Through joint calls devised and agreed upon by the partners of a given ERA-NET, researchers from the partners' countries may submit proposals on selected topics. All the coordination processes undertaken in the definition of these calls—evaluation procedures, decision-making on the selected projects, and follow-up—are decided upon within the structures of the ERA-NET consortium.

It is important to note that the funding of the selected projects is provided by the national agencies themselves, which previously define their financial commitments. The FP7 funding for ERA-NET projects is purely for the running of the network. In other words, if national agencies wish to launch a call for transnational research projects, they have to draw upon their own budgets.

What is the duration of an ERA-NET?

Typically three-to-four years. An example of an ERA-NET launched in 2009 is the Black Sea BS-ERA.NET—January 2009 to September 2011.

The call FP7-ERA-NET-2010-RTD is coordinated across five themes of the FP7 Cooperation Specific Programme. What does this mean for participants interested in the activities of ERA-NETs and who may wish to submit a proposal?

This means that proposals for an ERA-NET can be submitted within the remit of the following thematic areas: Environment (including Climate Change); Health; Food, Agriculture and Fisheries and Biotechnology; Nanosciences, Nanotechnologies, Materials and Production Technologies; and Transport (including Aeronautics). The partners in such an ERA-NET are typically at least three independent legal entities. Each of these partners must be established in a different EU Member State or Associated Country.

To what extent are African research and policy institutions eligible to participate in activities under FP7 ERA-NET calls?

This particular call (FP7-ERA-NET-2010-RTD) is not addressed to African institutions directly, though it may happen that the selected ERA-NETs might decide to approach non-European countries for joint activities via the joint calls elaborated within the ERA-NET. But African institutions would not be eligible to be partners in ERA-NET consortia. The thematic ERA-NETs mentioned above should be distinguished from INCO ERA-NETS, which I will elaborate on below.

In the area of International Cooperation under the FP7 Capacities Specific Programme there is a call for an ERA-NET addressed specifically to Africa. This is a very special case of an ERA-NET that might include non-European institutions under certain conditions.

It is important to note that there are but a few of these very special types of ERA-NETs oriented to non-European regions.

How are ERA-NET projects distinguished from other FP7 project models?

ERA-NETs are neither research projects nor demonstration projects. As mentioned, ERA-NETs are essentially networks of national ministries, agencies or institutions that collaborate to exchange information, and prepare and implement coordinated activities, namely joint calls within the network so that research projects might be funded by national agencies in a coordinated way. The big difference between ERA-NETs and INCO-NETs (like CAAST-Net) is the fact that an ERA-NET is more about the coordination of programme owners or managers, and less about bi-regional dialogue, the promotion of regional participation in the Framework Programmes and the definition of mutual research priorities, which is the particular focus of an INCO-NET.

SICAs (Specific International Cooperation Actions) are research projects in the thematic priority areas of the FP7 Cooperation Specific Programme. A number of SICAs, for example, are funded under the so-called FP7 Africa call (FP7-AFRICA-2010) with a particular focus on areas such as health and the environment.

How will ERA-NETs like the ERA-NET targeted at Africa in 2010 (INCO 2010-3.1 Africa) support sub-Saharan Africa-EU bi-regional cooperation?

The International ERA-NETs are explicitly targeted at a specific region of the world. And there are just a few: Africa, Russia, India, China, the Western Balkans, Latin America and the Black Sea region. This second type of ERA-NET may show important synergies with INCO-NETs such as CAAST-Net, and in this way support bi-regional cooperation. In particular, the ERA-NET for Africa will contribute to the coordination of existing or new European national or regional programmes with programmes in the countries and regions of Africa. In particular, it could address the critical areas such as health, climate change, energy, water and food security. It should also help the implementation of the 8th Partnership of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy.

FP7 INFO DAYS

YAOUNDÉ, CAMEROON
3 November 2009
Contact
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MOMBASA, KENYA
9 November 2009
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REVIEW: International cooperation with Africa in FP6

Title: International Cooperation with Africa in FP6
Year Published: 2009
Publisher: European Commission

This informative 348-page catalogue documents African participation under the European Union's Sixth Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration (FP6)—2002-2006.

Throughout FP6 as a whole, 3688 applications were received from research teams in 51 African countries, of which a total of 878 participations in 319 projects resulted.

In the category Specific Measures in Support of International Cooperation Activities (INCO) of FP6, 2365 applications from 49 countries were registered, resulting in 486 participations. From this pool, 131 projects involving teams from 31 African countries received EU funding of close on €100 million.

In addition to the useful statistics reported, which includes per country figures for FP6 participation (see Table Above), the catalogue provides detailed two-page synopses of FP6 INCO projects. Each synopsis includes a summary of the context and objectives of the particular project, the activities, as well as the expected results and outcomes. Usefully, the contact details of all project contractors, as well as each project's coordinator are also listed.

A foreword by the Director General for Research, José Manuel Silva Rodriguez, and a well-composed contextual introduction, will assist those new to the EU Framework Programmes to better understand the trajectory international research cooperation activities with Africa have followed over time.

"The African and European teams succeeded in a very competitive environment, where not all proposals meeting the quality thresholds could be financially supported because of funding limitations of the INCO Programme," the introduction states.

"The value of these collaborations is thus not just measured in the financial contribution from the INCO Programme to African teams. A significant part of the value lies in EU-Africa networking, which also mobilised other societal groups beyond academia and the usefulness of the knowledge for all parties involved and its contribution to overall sustainable development. More than €94 million was directly transferred to African teams, while total funding of the projects was significantly higher due to contributions to other teams and participants' own resources."

This report adds usefully to the existing knowledge on FP6, and is a worthwhile download and necessary read. **GR**

Editor's note: To access this and other key reports go to the CAAST-Net document library [see http://www.caast-net.org/xwiki/bin/download/Main/document+library/].

CAAST-Net consortium countries' participation in FP6*				
Country/Territory	Population (2004) ('000)	Participation in INCO (applications/funded)	Participation in other parts of FP6 (applications/funded)	2005 Ranking for Human Development Indicator
Uganda	28,947	102/19	29/8	154
South Africa	47,939	164/36	384/99	121
Senegal	11,770	67/19	40/18	156
Rwanda	9,234	3/0	2/1	161
Kenya	35,599	172/27	86/19	148
Madagascar	18,643	8/2	4/0	143
Ghana	22,535	77/10	47/9	135

Source: International cooperation with Africa in FP6 (EC, 2009). *Excludes Cape Verde and Cameroon.

FP7 tips: Top six hints for consortia in proposal-writing mode

1. Read the call fiche carefully

So says Professor Iqbal Parker, South Africa's National Contact Point for health, who is also a member of the FP7 HEALTH-NCP-NET project. Parker adds that it is critical that proposals meet the criteria as stipulated in the call. Where there is uncertainty about a particular aspect of a call consortia should contact the European Commission.

2. Projects should add value

Cristina Pinto, South Africa's longstanding legal and financial National Contact Point, says that proposals must contribute to existing programmes and initiatives as this is the basis upon which a particular call has been constructed. Pinto made this point with reference to the FP7 Africa call, though undoubtedly the general principle applies. "Similarly, the evaluators of the call will, no doubt, be tasked with ensuring that initiatives funded under the call similarly complement and not detract from any current programmes," explains Pinto.

"As with making an application to any funder, the key to success lies in understanding the funder's needs and requirements and ensuring that the proposal submission, at a minimum, meets these."

3. Observe the evaluation criteria

There are three main criteria for the evaluation of FP7 project proposals. These are: S&T Quality; Implementation; Impact.
It is critical that proposals are well-rounded in all three spheres, and are able to demonstrate how the proposal fulfills each criterion. For "similar looking" projects, in the competitive funding environment that is FP7, this may be the difference between success and failure.

4. Budget, budget, budget

Proposals should budget according to the total call funding guidelines provided by the EC. If budgets exceed available funding a project proposal may face rejection. By the same token, if projects are under-budgeted the consequence may also be a failed proposal.

5. Get your proposal in on time

The EC deadlines are non-negotiable and must be strictly observed—to the minute. The typically submission time is 17h00 Brussels time. FP proposals are submitted via EPSS, an online submission system. Hard copy proposals can be submitted to the EC at any time prior to the deadline in the event that EPSS submissions fail. Applicants should not wait until the last minute to submit!

6. Source credible information

Birgit Wirsing of the German Aerospace Agency says applicants should look for credible sources of information and get in touch with National Contact Points, who organise pre-deadline information days and consultancy sessions. "Good information is key for success," says Wirsing. Prepare your proposal well in advance to avoid resource wastage. If it's too late, wait until the next round of calls.

ICT 4 development

The 4th International Network for Postgraduate Students in the Area of ICT4D Symposium was held at the ICT4D Collective at the University of London on 11 and 12 September. David Korpela participated in the event and filed this report.

London. Hosted by the UNESCO Chair in ICT for Development, Professor Tim Unwin of Royal Holloway, the IPID Symposium brought together postgraduate researchers from over 20 countries to present research and discuss issues relating to ICT for developing regions.
The symposium represented a convergence of disciplines— including technical disciplines such as computer science and information technology, as well as social sciences disciplines such as intercultural communication, political science and anthropology—to examine ICT4D from multiple perspectives and approaches. Among the particular emerging research themes presented by postgraduate students were eGovernance, eHealth, eLearning, eRebellion, innovations in mobile technology for rural networks and rural development.

Keynote presenter, Matti Tedre, from the University of Joensuu (Finland) shared his experiences of working as Director of the Information Technology Department at Tumaini University, Iringa, Tanzania. Tedre highlighted opportunities to use ICT for Tanzania's development and the need for training programmes in this field, as well as the practical challenges of infrastructural shortcomings and cultural differences that he faced during his time in Tanzania.

Open communication and dialogue are vital in the field of ICT4D as technical experts interact with end users in a different cultural context to create systems that function effectively. Efficiency is not always the primary goal as technology is adapted to meet the needs of the local population within the existing social structures. This presentation set the tone for the symposium as a whole, and encouraged postgraduate researchers to openly share their experiences, successes and failures in employing ICT for development.

The second keynote presenter, Ken Banks (FrontlineSMS), highlighted the application of mobile technology for social change.

FrontlineSMS is a mobile application that allows the management of a client database enabling mass mobile communication.

The technology is being used by doctors to inform patients of mobile clinics, humanitarian actors to alert field staff, election monitoring, political or social activitsm and a variety of other innovative approaches. Simple SMS mobile technology is improving communication and management to overcome geographic, social   and infrastructural challenges in developing country contexts.

Overall, the symposium emphasised the complexity and multidisciplinary nature of development. Technical or social solutions in themselves are not enough to bring about lasting change. The IPID Symposium is an important step towards increasing dialogue among researchers and practitioners from various fields trying to address the same issues.

IPID is an international postgraduate network with over 470 students from 343 universities in 133 countries. The network is open to all students in the field of ICT for developing regions. IPID exists to support and facilitate networking and knowledge sharing, and is supported by the Swedish Program for ICT in Developing Regions (SPIDER). IPID is also a key partner of the Finnish University Partnership for International Development (UniPID) network. Such networks support the activities large projects, such as CAAST-Net and the EuroAfriCa-ICT project by facilitating dialogue and linkages between researchers and emerging experts from around the world.

Approximately 20 papers were presented at IPID 2009. To access these online go to http://www.humanit.org/PID/wiki/index.php/ICT4D_Symposium_2009_Recordings. **DK**

David Korpela represents the Finnish University Partnership for International Development as a partner in CAAST-Net Work Package 5.

EURO-AFRICA COOPERATION FORUM ON ICT RESEARCH

FEBRUARY 2, 2010 — ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

- Network with key stakeholders in the field—both private and public sector

- Identify potential cooperation partners

- Be updated on the EU-AU Partnership on Science,

- ICT and Space (the 8th Partnership) as well as EC/AUC/ACP Programmes

- Hear about opportunities to enhance African participation in the 7th Framework Programme (FP7)

- Get detailed information on successful EU-African FP7 cooperation projects and EU-African PPP (Public-Private Partnerships)

The 2nd Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum on ICT Research will take place on 2 February 2010 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at the United Nations Conference Centre. Following the considerable success of the 1st Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum in 2009, which drew 320 participants from 50 countries, the 2nd Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum on ICT Research will bring sub-Saharan African and European organisations together to address the development of collaborative projects on ICT research. This one-day event is being organised by the European Commission (DG INFSO) with the support of the African Union Commission (AUC) and EuroAfriCa-ICT.
For more information go to http://www.euroafrica-ict.org/ or contact Tshepang Mosiea (tmosiea@csir.co.za) and Karine Valin (karine.valin@sigma-orionis.com).

A look back at INTERLINK

The FP6-funded INTERLINK project to promote international cooperation in environmental research drew to a close on 30 September 2009. In this interview, project coordinators **Nadège Austin** and **Alice Pedrotti** from the French Environment and Energy Management Agency reflect back on INTERLINK's evolution, achievements and the implementation of the project's results and recommendations.

INTERLINK is an acronym for Promoting International Cooperation for Environment Research through Dissemination and Networking Activities. How did the project perform over its lifetime in meeting this objective?

INTERLINK is about promoting international cooperation in environmental research in the frame of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7), between Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and EECA (Eastern Europe and Central Asia) countries. ADEME, which coordinated INTERLINK, are very proud of the project's achievements. Indeed, in the two years of the project, and despite a very small budget given the size of the consortium, INTERLINK reached all of its objectives. Among the different tasks of the project, we organised an informal dialogue on African research priorities with the European Commission in November 2008, and this successful event gave the project and its partners a lot of visibility within the European Commission's Directorate General for Research, which of course is very good!

The INTERLINK consortium consisted of a range of actors— National Contact Points, National Information Points and various international organisations—located in different contexts across Europe, Africa and the EECA countries. What challenges did this pose for the implementation of the project, and how were these overcome?

INTERLINK posed two main challenges. First of all, its consortium gathered a total of 27 partners, which is a very large number of partners. In order to manage the consortium efficiently, and to keep all partners involved, we at the French Environment and Energy Management Agency (ADEME) had to spend a lot of time on coordination and internal communication. We used an extranet to allow all partners to have immediate online access to any document produced in the frame of the project, and we had an intern working almost full-time on the administrative coordination of the project.

The second challenge concerned the fact that there were two geographical targets for the actions of the project, the EECA countries and sub-Saharan Africa. At first, not all partners felt altogether concerned by all the events and actions of the project. For example, partners from Eastern Europe were more interested in the actions aimed at EECA countries, than those aimed at sub-Saharan Africa. However in the end, everybody benefited from the networking and promotion actions of the project, and we made sure that the material produced would fit the needs of all target regions.

Among other activities, the INTERLINK project engaged in a mapping exercise—to determine institutional interest in international cooperation in environmental research across Africa, Europe and the EECA countries. It also documented a number of international cooperation success stories. Can you outline the purpose behind these activities, and how these exercises will be carried forward to inform future research activities and international cooperation policy?

These two activities were part of the project's effort to promote international cooperation opportunities. In the first place, the identification of approximately 50 scientific networks willing to work internationally was carried out with the objective of improving the contacts within the target regions, promoting the local expertise and facilitating the access to regional knowledge. Descriptive fact-sheets about the identified players are available on the INTERLINK website, and we encouraged their wide dissemination. In the second place, INTERLINK partners identified about 10 success stories within international cooperation on environmental research and development in the frame of the EU's Framework Programme.

These stories were designed to present to the scientific community from all target regions (EU, EECA and Sub-Saharan Africa) the benefits of such international cooperation. The success stories include a summary of the project's objectives and achievements, feedback from the EU coordinator and feedback from an African or EECA partner, in order to bring forward the different points of view concerning the management of a cooperation project.

We wanted to make sure that both the benefits and drawbacks from such experiences would be shown in the success stories, so that the picture is complete. And we realised that in all cases, the pooling of skills resulting from the cooperation in the project, as well as the achieved visibility, are more important than the drawbacks, which concern mostly the difficulty of project management.

As with the R&D networks, all the success stories are available on the INTERLINK website, in web page format as well as in ready-to-be-printed posters.

The INTERLINK project played a role in informing the formulation of the recently published €63 million FP7 call for Africa, which addresses multiple objectives—FP7 objectives, the objectives of the 8th Partnership of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, the objectives of Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action. What was the nature of INTERLINK's participation in the development of the content for this call?

One of the activities of INTERLINK was to organise an informal dialogue between the European Commission and the African scientific community, with the objective to help identify research topics of a strategic nature *and* of a regional dimension, which would attract the participation of African researchers in European projects.

On 7 November 2008, about 10 representatives of the European Commission gathered in the Berlaymont Building in Brussels with more than 20 African experts representing sub-Saharan Africa and 10 INTERLINK partners, to discuss mutual environmental research priorities. This encounter was made possible thanks to additional funding from ADEME, the Department of Science and Technology from South Africa and the ST-EAP network. During the dialogue, the African experts identified ten topics under two areas of the environment thematic of FP7: Climate Change, Pollution and Risks and Sustainable Management of Resources. These topics took into account the knowledge and the expertise of local communities, the local climate, risks and African priorities, such as the fight against poverty, drought and natural hazards. Moreover priorities elaborated included facilitating and enhancing decision-making and local governance systems, improving data collection and database and strengthening the links between the scientific community, the local communities and the policy makers.

In July 2009 when the European Commission published the Africa call—a special call within the FP7 Environment call targeting international cooperation between the EU and African countries— ADEME and all INTERLINK partners had the pleasure of noticing that several of the topics selected by the African experts during the dialogue had been introduced in the work programme.

With such a work programme, and with the help of the scientific networks which we identified, we hope that African researchers will be encouraged to join or build consortia around these subjects and will submit proposals to this call.

What are some of the other achievements of the project?

As part of the promotional material, an explanatory guide for ICPC (International Cooperation Partner Countries) partners, who are partners that have signed an agreement with the EC on FP7 participation, was produced in English, Russian and French. The title of the guide is *International Cooperation in Environmental Research: All You Need to Know to Participate.*

It was written in the form of frequently asked questions (FAQ) so that partners interested in scientific cooperation projects can easily find information on the programme and its main rules, on how to join a consortium and how to manage an FP7 project. The project also worked a lot on awareness-raising events in the target regions. Four workshops were organised in 2008 and 2009 in Africa (Dakar, Yaoundé, Pretoria) and in Belarus (Minsk) in order to promote the opportunities offered under FP7 for international cooperation, and to provide African and EECA researchers with the necessary information to join an EU research project. In parallel, all European NCP partners were encouraged to present INCO opportunities during their FP7 information days. In two years, the INTERLINK partners reported more than 30 information days in which international cooperation was promoted, which reached more than 1800 individuals.

Finally, an international workshop and brokerage event was organised in Vienna in September 2009 under the theme of Water Management and Sanitation. The objective of this last event, during which the European Commission presented the FP7 Africa call (FP7-AFRICA-2010), was to raise awareness on the ways in which third countries researchers can be involved in EU research activities. Participants had the opportunity to learn about relevant networks and best practices of EU-funded projects, receive background information about the current calls on the FP7 environment theme, and to make contact with collaboration partners from Europe, Africa and EECA.

How can the project's outputs and reports be accessed?

Of course, all our results and reports are published on the INTERLINK website [see http://www.interlink-fp6.com], which will be available until the end of FP7 in 2013. Additionally, most of the INTERLINK partners are now cooperating on Environment-NCP-Together, which is another project aimed at sharing information between the Environment NCPs in order to promote participation in the FP7 calls. Environment-NCP-Together will use the material produced by INTERLINK and disseminate it to its target audiences.

The INTERLINK consortium consisted of nearly 30 partners. What lessons and experiences can you share with already existing consortia, as well as consortia in the proposal writing stage, on successful participation in the EU's Framework Programme?

First of all, as far as project management is concerned, we can say that it is important not to underestimate the time needed to co-ordinate a large consortium. It is a time-consuming job, and the outcome of the project is tightly linked to the ability of the coordinator to accurately guide the project partners through the planned actions, according to its strategic objectives.

However, despite this aspect, our cooperation was highly beneficial, not only in terms of achievements, but also in terms of professional networking and personal enrichment. We thought it was extremely enriching, for example, to deal with so many cultures and perceptions. We also enjoyed cooperating with other similar projects, such as CAAST-Net, and working toward broader strategic achievements in the frame of the EU-Africa strategic partnership. During the last consortium meeting, each partner was invited to share his or her views on the two years of the project. As it happened, all partners thought that the project brought them a lot of benefits, even if they didn't all play a big part in it. Moreover, this experience allowed them to share information, best practices and reinforce friendships and professional cooperation.

Finally, we were highly impressed with the involvement of researchers from the target regions and the quality of the work they provided; we saw the will for international cooperation and we do hope that INTERLINK, ADEME and its partners have meaningfully contributed towards this.

For more information go to http://www.interlink-fp6.org or contact Nadège Austin (nadege.austin@ademe.fr).

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The project at a glance

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 FP7, as well as through other instruments of international cooperation, and through lobbying for greater synergy between R&D and development instruments. In support of its goal, CAAST-Net has a range of activity clusters aiming:

- To support and inform existing Europe-Africa S&T 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 S&T partnerships and development cooperation instruments in order to enhance the creation and application of new knowledge in support of achieving the MDGs, poverty alleviation and economic growth.
- To undertake specific activities dedicated to strengthening of the participation of African countries in the 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 S&T cooperation under the 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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Enhancing SME participation in SA-EU S&T collaboration initiatives

South Africa's Department of Science and Technology in partnership with the Swedish Innovation Agency hosted a fringe event for SMEs on 9 September ahead of the second South Africa-EU Summit.

Cape Town. The Table Bay Hotel was the location of the South Africa-EU SME Event, which was organised to bring local small and medium enterprises (SME) into conversation with South African and EU policy actors and public officials in the field of South Africa-EU science and technology cooperation.

In particular, the event aimed to facilitate SME participation in the EU's Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7), as well as other EU collaboration initiatives, such as EUREKA (a Network for Market-Oriented Research and Development); and to provide a platform for participants to share knowledge and experiences.

The range of participants included local government representatives, SME actors, representatives from the European Commission, officials from the delegation of the Swedish Presidency, as well as experts on the recently signed South Africa-European Cooperation in Science and Technology Reciprocal Agreement (COST) [see http://www.esastap.org.za].

A series of presentations were delivered, which covered topics such as instruments and policies to support SME participation in EU S&T programmes, the current status of SME participation the EU's FPs, as well as both South African and Swedish case studies on existing SME participation in EU S&T programmes.

A panel discussion on strategies for improving cooperation was also convened.

Director for Strategic Partnerships at the DST, Thabisa Mbungwana, says that support from the South African government is available for local SMEs who wish to collaborate with EU counterparts.

"DST will continue supporting SMEs and raising awareness among the South African SME community about relevant research collaboration opportunities with the EU and will strengthen information dissemination efforts to SMEs.

"DST is in the process of appointing an FP7 National Contact Point for SMEs whose main task will be to reach out to SMEs and help them through the process of finding and disseminating information about collaboration opportunities with the EU, and finding EU partners to collaborate with South African SMEs."

This event is one of a number of activities to be undertaken by the DST through its European-South African Science and Technology Advancement Programme (ESASTAP), to raise awareness of SA-EU collaboration opportunities within the SME community.

"Historically there has been limited SME participation in EU programmes so the event was one way of encouraging more participation by SMEs and sharing the potential benefits with SMEs," says Mbungwana.

"Participants appreciated the opportunity to have a platform where SME interests are supported by government, and support tools are made available to encourage the performance of research and development by SMEs."

The second South Africa-EU Summit, which was held on 11 September, was hosted by the President of South Africa to evaluate progress on ongoing SA-EU collaborations since the first Summit, and to pave way for future collaboration between the EU and SA in various areas of importance between the parties, including science and technology. **GR**

For more information about this event write to Thabisa Mbungwana (contact@esastap.org.za).