CAAST-Net PLUS

Building Bi-Regional Partnerships for Global Challenges

A support service needs assessment

caast-net-plus.org

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1. Introduction

For more than four years of CAAST-Net Plus, the project has provided practical support to bi-regional research partnerships and networks in support of its aim to encourage new and diverse multi-stakeholder partnerships that, through research and innovation, tackle global challenges in health, food security, and climate change that affect Africa and Europe. The primary focus of this support has been on raising awareness of the research and innovation collaboration opportunities offered by Horizon 2020 and on expanding and strengthening the National Contact Point (NCP) network in Africa.

a. Horizon 2020

Horizon 2020 is the European Union's 8th successive Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, replacing the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). Launched on January 1, 2014, Horizon 2020 provides funding for research and innovation, with over €80 billion available over seven years. Funding in Horizon 2020 is focused in three priority areas: excellent science, industrial leadership, and societal challenges.

Excellent Science
Activities funded under this priority pillar aim to serve as a base for reinforcing and spreading the European Union's science excellence as well as to make the Union's research and innovation system more competitive globally. The funding focuses on frontier research by the best individual teams through the *European Research Council*, collaborative research to open new fields of innovation in the *Future and Emerging Technologies* programme, opportunities for training and career development in the *Marie Sklodowska-Curie actions*, and ensure access to world-class facilities through funding for *Research Infrastructures (including e-infrastructures)*.

Industrial Leadership
This pillar focuses on supporting the development of technologies and innovations that will play a key role in industry in the future and supporting the advancement of European SMEs into world-leading companies. The funding provides strategic investment in key technologies and underpin innovation across existing and emerging sectors through the *Leadership in Enabling and Industrial Technologies* actions, leverage private finance and venture capital for research and innovation through *Access to Risk Finance* activities, and foster all forms of innovation in SMEs in the *Innovation in SMEs* activities.

Societal Challenges
Activities under this pillar address challenges and issues of global concern. Funding is provided through activities in the following challenge areas: *Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing*; *Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry, Marine, Maritime and Inland Water Research and the Bioeconomy*; *Secure, Clean, and Efficient Energy*; *Smart, Green and Integrated Transport*; *Climate Action, Environment, Resource Efficiency and Raw Materials*; *Europe in a changing world – Inclusive, innovative and reflective Societies*; *Secure societies – Protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens*.

Horizon 2020 is the most open research funding programme in the world, with a general principle of openness to participation from international partners in 'Third Countries'. Complementing the general opportunities, targeted international activities are included across the programme. Importantly, Horizon 2020 is neither a development aid nor a bilateral cooperation programme, but rather a programme focused on European needs and global challenges, open to international cooperation. Through this framework, participation in Horizon 2020 is open to partners from Africa.

b. Africa in Horizon 2020

The strategic orientation of Africa in Horizon 2020 is largely determined by the EU-Africa High Level Policy Dialogue[1] and multi-annual roadmaps for cooperation[2], and implemented through the Societal Challenges pillar of Horizon 2020. The priorities identified through these processes and strategies have resulted in a number of calls targeting international cooperation with partners from Africa. In particular, the development of the EU-Africa Research and Innovation Partnership on food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture (FNSSA), and its accompanying roadmap[3], has resulted in a number of targeted calls.

According to the Cordis[4] database of projects, as of 19 September 2017, Sub-Saharan Africa participation in Horizon 2020 comprises 112 projects with 30 different countries participating. A list of these can be found in Annex 1. South Africa, Kenya, Senegal, Uganda, and Ghana are the top 5 performing countries in terms of numbers of projects. A number of African countries have also invested in NCPs: 21 countries have appointed a total of 105 NCPs, a list of which can be found in Annex 2.

c. CAAST-Net Plus

CAAST-Net Plus, funded by the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme, is a network of 26 partners from Africa and Europe. CAAST-Net Plus aims to strengthen the cooperation in research and innovation between the two regions to more effectively tackle the global challenges of health, food security, and climate change.

CAAST-Net Plus provides practical support to bi-regional research partnerships and networks in support of its aim to encourage new and diverse multi-stakeholder partnerships that, through research and innovation, tackle global challenges in health, food security, and climate change that affect Africa and Europe. This is realized through practical workshops on Horizon 2020, organized for representatives of African research institutions, researchers, and government officials. The workshops aim to provide information on the Horizon 2020 programme, opportunities within Horizon 2020 for African participation, and the rules participating in the programme. Critically, the workshops also aim to support the establishment of National Contact Points (NCPs) for Horizon 2020 in African countries. NCPs play an important role in supporting participation in Horizon 2020

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[1] http://www.rinea.org/en/589.php

[2] http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm?pg=strategy

[3] http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/policy/eu-africa_roadmap_2016.pdf

[4] http://cordis.europa.eu/home_en.html

through increased awareness of EU funding instruments, timely and precise information on specific calls, technical understanding of the requirements, support for partner search and networking, and assistance with legal and financial administration issues.

d. Aim and Structure

This report summarizes the experiences and insight of the CAAST-Net Plus partners implementing activities aiming to support greater African participation in Horizon 2020. The report gives an overview of CAAST-Net Plus' strategic approach to providing this support and summarizes the activities undertaken. The report also seeks to examine each activity more thoroughly by identifying the needs of participants, the results from the sessions, and the future needs of participants. Finally, the report identifies some good practices for implementing support activities for increasing African participation in Horizon 2020 and makes recommendations for future implementation of these activities.

The content of this report is built from the accumulated expertise and experience of the partners implementing these activities and builds on the CAAST-Net Report *Status of African National Contact Points*[5]. To support this report, CAAST-Net Plus conducted an online survey of participants to measure the success of the activities and to identify their future needs. The goal was not to receive in-depth feedback for individual events, but rather to gain a more general sense of the experiences and needs of participants. Attempts were made to collect feedback after each event organized by CAAST-Net Plus, but due to the variety of partners involved in the task, the different ways the events were organized, and the nature of the events themselves, the feedback forms were inconsistently administered. The results from this survey are presented here and inform the analysis in this report. The survey was sent to those participants of both Horizon 2020 workshops and NCP training activities whose emails were identifiable. Of those, 40 completed the questionnaire. The low response rate is consistent with online surveys and likely also affected by a number of other factors, such as the timing of the survey (sometimes years after the event was held), the nature of the feedback, and normal changes in work tasks and employment. A comparison between the final survey and feedback from individual events may have been useful, but due the circumstances described above, this was not possible.

2. Strategy and Activities

a. Strategic Approach

Two primary objectives drove the strategic orientation of CAAST-Net Plus' activities for encouraging new partnerships: (1) raise the level of awareness about Horizon 2020 among African and European STI research communities, but also of other significant programmes supporting bi-regional cooperation, and of the opportunities they present for cooperation, particularly around global challenges; and (2) support the enlargement of the NCP network in Africa[6].

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[5] https://caast-net-plus.org/object/document/642/attach/D5_2_4_1_African_NCP_status_report.pdf

[6] CAAST-Net Plus Description of Work

In support of these objectives, CAAST-Net Plus has undertaken two main activities: Horizon 2020 Information Sessions and NCP trainings. Horizon 2020 Information Sessions were typically one-day events aiming to increase researchers' awareness and understanding of the programme. Similarly, NCP trainings were typically one-day events aimed at providing information and tools for new or potential NCPs to better carry out the tasks to support their research community. The activities, which were held either as stand-alone events or included as part of a larger event, were designed to be flexible, allowing modification in terms of length or content to meet the needs of the participants or other factors.

To implement these activities, CAAST-Net Plus utilized three complementary strategic approaches. These approaches, often implemented concurrently, helped CAAST-Net Plus to address the large geographical area (sub-Saharan Africa), differences in awareness and experience with the EU's Framework Programmes, and the project's financial limitations. The approaches are described below in more detail.

I.   Combined Trainings

A central tenet of the CAAST-Net Plus strategic approach was to combine training events where possible by holding Horizon 2020 Information Session and NCP trainings back-to-back. This served several important purposes. First, it ensured that both researchers and potential or current NCPs were provided information on Horizon 2020. Second, it facilitated networking between the research community and potential or current NCPs. Third, combining events reduced costs, allowing CAAST-Net Plus to hold substantially more events than originally foreseen.

II.   Regional Approach

Recognizing the large geographic area in which CAAST-Net Plus activities were focused, the need for a strategic regional approach was clear. This was carried out in two main ways: (i) Regional NCP trainings, where current or potential NCPs from different countries in the same region were invited to a single event, and (ii) Roadshows, where the CAAST-Net Plus team travelled to a number of countries in the same region in a short period of time. Making use of this regional approach not only facilitated a wider reach of the activities, but also encouraged networking and mutual learning between participants and helped to reduce costs.

III.   Co-Organize with Partners

CAAST-Net Plus is not the only project conducting such Horizon 2020 and NCP events, and organizing such events separately is not only more expensive, but could run the risk of causing confusion in the stakeholder community. Therefore, working with partners with similar aims has been a conscious strategy for CAAST-Net Plus. Collaborating primarily with other EC-funded projects, e.g. INCONTACT, IST-Africa, and the EC itself, these partnerships have ensured synergy of efforts, built and exploited expertise within the projects themselves, and reduced costs for the projects involved.

b. Activities

In all, CAAST-Net Plus organized, co-organized, or gave presentations in 21 events that drew over 1400 participants from 32 different African countries. A comprehensive list of the events is included below in Table 1 CAAST-Net Plus Events.

	City, Country	Kind of Event	Number of Participants[7]	Strategic Approach
1.	Accra, Ghana	Horizon 2020 Info Session NCP Training	75	Combined Training
2.	Abuja, Nigeria	Horizon 2020 Information Session NCP Training	84	Co-organized (EC)
3.	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Horizon 2020 Information Session	50	Co-organized (IST-Africa)
4.	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	Horizon 2020 Information Session	48	Roadshow, Co-organized (EC, IST-Africa)
5.	Nairobi, Kenya	Horizon 2020 Information Session	150	Roadshow Co-organized (EC, IST-Africa)
6.	Kampala, Uganda	Horizon 2020 Information Session	54	Roadshow Co-organized (EC, IST-Africa)
7.	Lilongwe, Malawi	Horizon 2020 Information Session	50	Roadshow Co-organized (EC, IST-Africa)
8.	Pointe aux Piments, Mauritius	Horizon 2020 Information Session NCP Training	128	Regional Training Co-organized (EC, IST-Africa)
9.	Kigali, Rwanda	Horizon 2020 Information Session	41	Co-organized (CN+ WP2, EC)
10.	Maputo, Mozambique	Horizon 2020 Information Session	75	
11.	Luanda, Angola	Horizon 2020 Information Session	95	Co-organized (EC)
12.	Kampala, Uganda	Horizon 2020 Information Session	60	
13.	Buea, Cameroon	Horizon 2020 Information Session	45	Co-organized (CARIMA)
14.	Accra, Ghana	Horizon 2020 Information Session NCP Training	76	Regional Training, Co-Organized (INCONTACT, EC)
15.	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Horizon 2020 Information Session NCP Training	18	Regional Training, Co-organized (AUC, EC)
16.	Khartoum, Sudan	Horizon 2020 Information Session	150	Co-organized (EC)
17.	Accra, Ghana	Horizon 2020 Information Session	90	
18.	Lagos, Nigeria	Horizon 2020 Information Session NCP Training	40	Co-organized (EC)

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[7] Numbers may not be exact.

19.	Port Louis, Mauritius	Horizon 2020 Information Session	47	Co-organized (EC)
20.	Kampala, Uganda	Horizon 2020 Information Session	19	Co-organized (CN+ WP2)
21.	Gaborone, Botswana	Horizon 2020 Information Session NCP Training	30	Regional Training, Co-organized (EC)

Table 1 CAAST-Net Plus Events

I. Horizon 2020 Information Sessions

Over the 5 years of the CAAST-Net Plus project, 21 Horizon 2020 Information Sessions were organized across sub-Saharan Africa. The sessions typically comprised presentations given by CAAST-Net Plus partners or invited experts focusing on the rules for participation, opportunities for African researchers to take part in Horizon 2020, and tools for finding more information. Whenever possible, case study presentations were given by researchers from the country who had taken part in a Horizon 2020 or EU Framework Programme project. Time was also allocated for discussion and networking. The template agenda used for the Horizon 2020 Information Sessions is included in Annex 3.

The choice of location for the events was strategic. For example, cities serving as regional hubs – Accra, Ghana is a good example of such a hub – were natural choices for regional events in particular. Cities of importance in the EU-Africa policy dialogue – such as Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – served to link activities with important events, policy makers, or underscore the importance of bi-regional STI cooperation. In other cases, the European Commission and/or the delegation in the country requested an event to take place in a specific location, Port Louis, Mauritius, is such an example. The locations were also chosen on a practical basis – based in a CAAST-Net Plus partner's country, part of a larger event, or organized in a place with easily accessible services.

Participants in Horizon 2020 Information Sessions were primarily identified and invited by the local organizers of the event, assuring the relevance of the participants. The events were also publically advertised on the CAAST-Net Plus website and researchers would occasionally request to attend an event.

II. NCP Trainings

In addition to the Horizon 2020 trainings, CAAST-Net Plus organized 7 NCP Trainings. As mentioned earlier, these were strategically organized alongside Horizon 2020 Information Sessions. The Trainings typically included presentations given by CAAST-Net Plus partners or invited experts focusing on the roles and responsibilities of NCPs, examples of how NCPs work in different countries, and tools for working as an NCP. To support learning processes, interactive pedagogical methods were also utilized, in particular peer learning, collaborative learning methods, and problem-based learning. Time was also allocated for networking. The template agenda used for the used for the NCT Trainings is included in Annex 4.

Kind of Event	Number
Horizon 2020 Information Session	21
NCP Training	7

Table 2 CAAST-Net Plus Event by Type

The goal was two-fold: to strengthen the existing network of African NCPs and to support its enlargement. For this reason, participants in the trainings were both existing NCPs and potential NCPs. Identifying and selecting participants to take part in the trainings were carried out by the organizing partners, the local organizers, and by national authorities. For existing NCPs, the organizers selected invitees based on criteria like the theme of the event, previous participation in a CAAST-Net Plus training, etc. For potential NCPs, national authorities were invited to identify individuals who could potentially serve in the role as NCP. This not only promoted the nomination of NCPs in the country, but also assured the relevance of the invitees.
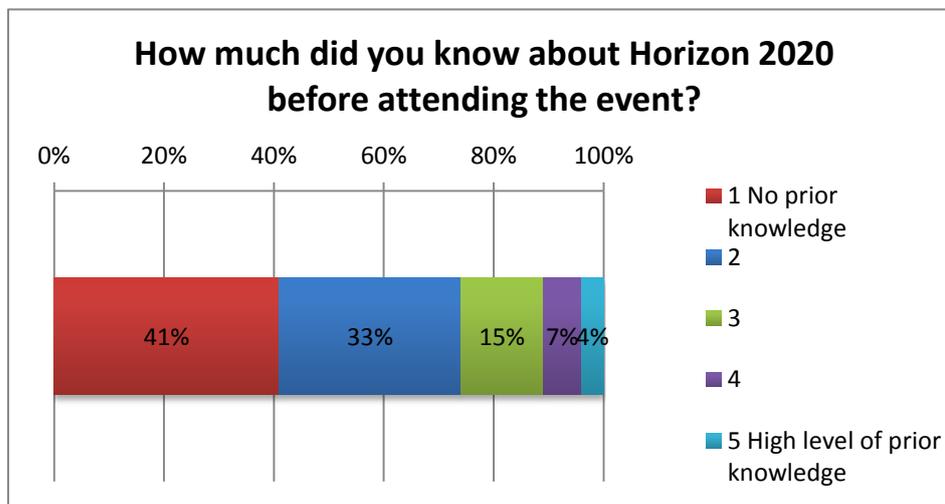
3. Horizon 2020 Information Sessions

a. Needs

For researchers based in Africa, a number of needs exist in order to increase participation in Horizon 2020. While there are differences between researchers, countries, and regions, some general needs have clearly emerged from discussions with participants, questions in the Information Sessions, and feedback from the CAAST-Net Plus survey of participants. These needs can be categorized as: (i) increasing awareness of Horizon 2020; (ii) greater familiarity with Horizon 2020's opportunities, rules, and instruments; and (iii) better support for applications to Horizon 2020, including networking with European researchers.

I. Awareness raising

According to the CAAST-Net Plus survey conducted among participants of the Horizon 2020 Information Days and NCP Training workshops, 86% of respondents had little to moderate prior knowledge of Horizon 2020.

How much did you know about Horizon 2020 before attending the event?

Participants in NCP trainings were similarly asked to rank on a scale of 1-5 their estimation of the awareness of researchers in their country of Horizon 2020. Responses ranged between levels 2 (38%), 3 (43%), and 4 (19%). The results of the survey echo the experiences from the events themselves – very few of the participants had previous knowledge of Horizon 2020, nor of earlier Framework Programmes.

The need to raise awareness is, firstly, about ensuring there is an understanding that the Programme exists and what it is intended for and secondly, about providing the basic information required for understanding Horizon 2020. Two common misconceptions were pervasive throughout the time CAAST-Net Plus organized the Sessions. First, many researchers initially understood Horizon 2020 as

a development aid programme. Considerable effort was made on framing the context of the Programme – as a research and innovation funding programme – and the potential for African participation in it – as partners in collaborative research projects. The second common misconception was that Horizon 2020 is a bottom-up funding instrument whereby researchers can submit proposals based on their own research interests. Similar effort was spent to explain the top-down approach of Horizon 2020 and how the Programme differs from other funding schemes. This awareness raising on the basic information about Horizon 2020 was an important need for the African research community, many of which were not previously aware of the Programme.

II. Familiarization

Beyond simple awareness raising, there is a clear need for better familiarizing the African science community with the opportunities, rules, and instruments in Horizon 2020. From the same survey, 75% of respondents indicated that even after attending the event, there were still areas in Horizon 2020 in which they would need more information. Information Sessions only provide a basic introduction to Horizon 2020, sacrificing in-depth information on the programme for an overview of the most relevant components and rules for participants. While this is useful for participants new to Horizon 2020, it is not enough to create confident participants in Horizon 2020. Particularly for researchers and institutions new to the Framework Programme, low levels of understanding can be a stumbling block for engagement in the first place. This response makes clear that the introductory information provided by the Horizon 2020 Information Sessions is exactly that, an introduction. Regular efforts must also be made to provide the African research community with reliable, consistent, relevant information on Horizon 2020's open calls, instruments, and rules.

III. Specific Support

Additionally, the African science community needs support in specific areas critical for accessing Horizon 2020. Participants identified proposal writing, and networking and partnership building as the most critical areas where additional capacity is needed. Assistance for proposal writing is perhaps the most requested support mechanism from participants in CAAST-Net Plus' Horizon 2020 Information Sessions. Specific topics, such as how to write a winning proposal and how to formulate expertise for proposals, have been consistently requested. Support for networking and partnership building is also regularly requested. This is not a surprise considering that nearly 75% of respondents to our survey indicated that they did not have active collaboration with European partners. This provides a challenge for those wishing to participate in Horizon 2020 – for most instruments, eligibility requirements stipulate that three partners, each from different European Union Member States or Associated Countries are required.
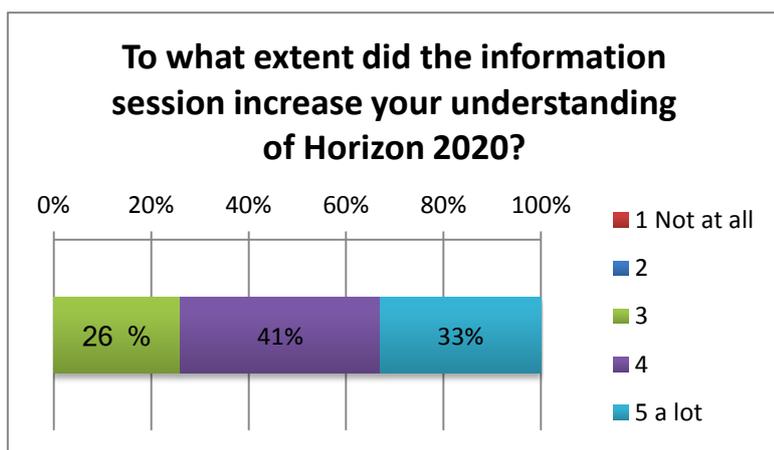
b. Results from Sessions

The results from the Information Sessions were fairly positive, both in terms of the participants' rating of the sessions and the outcomes they indicated as resulting from their participation in the Sessions. On average, participants rated their satisfaction with the sessions as 4.3 out of a maximum of 5. The breakdown of the ratings as given in the participant survey can be found below.

Based on results from the survey and the observations of CAAST-Net Plus, three main outcomes emerged from the Information Sessions: participants were (i) better informed about Horizon 2020, (ii) more willing to apply for Horizon 2020, and (iii) developed new contacts.
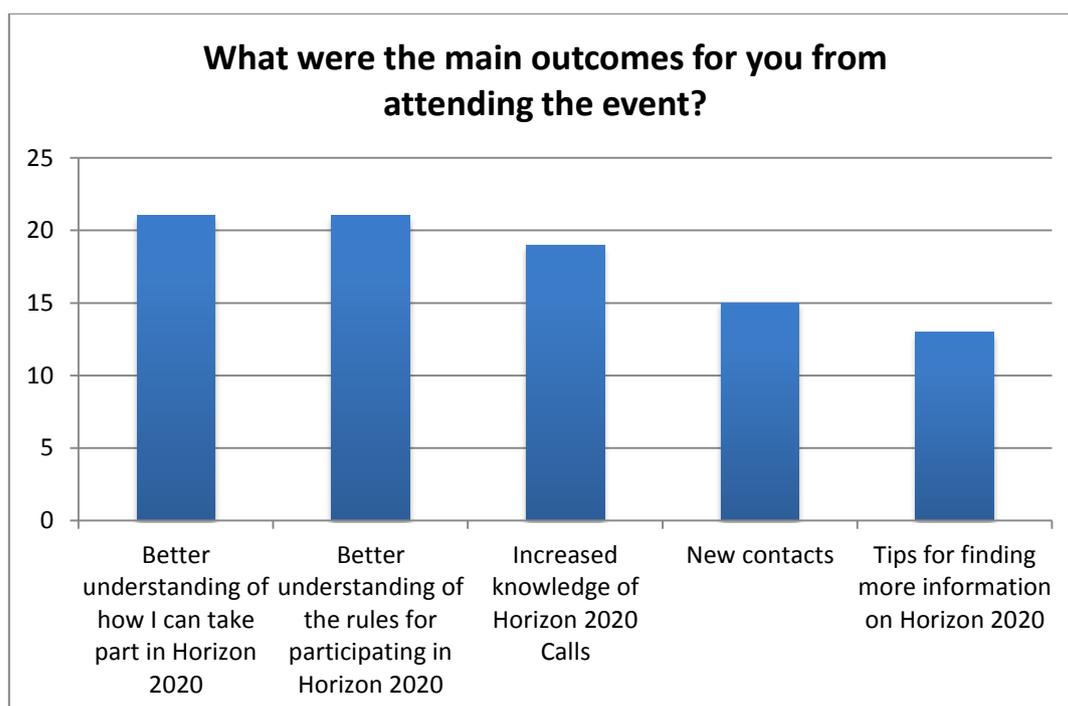
I. Better Informed Participants

"Better understanding of the rules for participation in H2020 as the programme had just started and the new procedures were not yet clear to researchers."

To what extent did the information session increase your understanding of Horizon 2020?

Legend
■ 1 Not at all
■ 2
■ 3
■ 4
■ 5 a lot

26 % | 41% | 33%

In the online survey of participants, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the Information Session increased their understanding of Horizon 2020. The responses show that the sessions were fairly successful in this aspect, with all responses falling within the 3 (somewhat) to 5 (a lot) rating. A breakdown of the 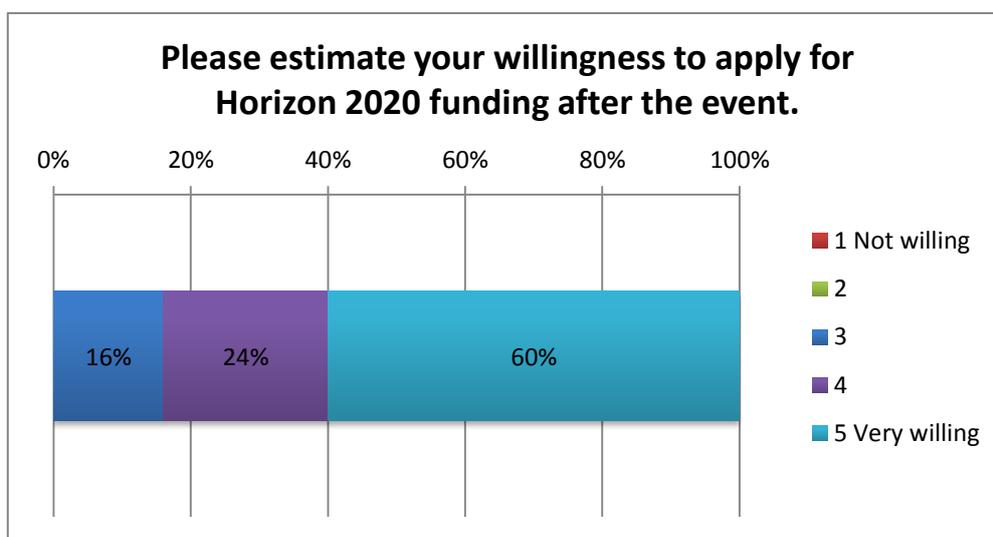responses is depicted below. In addition, the survey asked participants to indicate the main outcomes from attending a CAAST-Net Plus event. A check-list of options was given, including the possibility to include other outcomes not listed. A second question asked respondents to identify the most important outcome of the event from their own perspective. The responses to both these questions confirmed the observations made in the events themselves – participants were better informed about Horizon 2020 overall, but also in specific areas, such as how to take part in the programme, the rules for participating, and relevant calls in Horizon 2020.

What were the main outcomes for you from attending the event?

Outcome	Value
Better understanding of how I can take part in Horizon 2020	21
Better understanding of the rules for participating in Horizon 2020	21
Increased knowledge of Horizon 2020 Calls	19
New contacts	15
Tips for finding more information on Horizon 2020	13

II. More Willing to Apply

"As a researcher, Horizon 2020 provides a platform for obtaining grants for research in various field of endeavours."

Another key result of the session was an increased willingness to apply for Horizon 2020. Survey responses show that after attending the event, participants were 'somewhat' (3) to 'a lot' (5) more willing to apply for Horizon 2020. A breakdown of the responses is depicted below. In an open question, respondents were asked to explain what influences their willingness to apply for funding from Horizon 2020. Answers ranged from the practical, such as the suitability of the calls themselves; to the technical, for example the amount of 'protocol' for applying; to the political, such as contributing to policies; to reasons related to social good, such as

Please estimate your willingness to apply for Horizon 2020 funding after the event.

16%	3
24%	4
60%	5 Very willing

Legend:
- 1 Not willing
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 Very willing

contributing to knowledge on issues of global relevance. Specific components of the Information Sessions themselves, such as practical exercises and group work, were also cited as increasing the willingness to apply for Horizon 2020 projects.
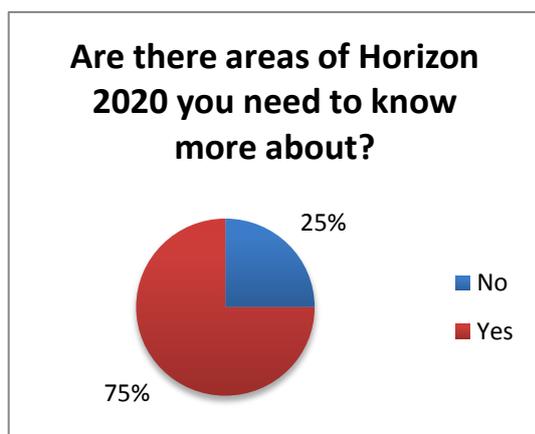
III. New Contacts

"This assisted our office to be able to further disseminate knowledge on Horizon 2020 calls and [find] new contacts for collaboration."

The third significant outcome from the Information Sessions based on feedback from participants was the development of new contacts. In the survey conducted, 53% of respondents identified new contacts as a major outcome from the Information Sessions. This is particularly interesting as the sessions themselves did not include any specific activities or exercises to specifically support networking. However, the activities were often undertaken as group work, which had the added benefit of supporting networking and discussion between participants. In addition, time was left in the programme for breaks, which also supports networking between participants.

c. Future Needs

From the outcomes described above, it becomes clear that the CAAST-Net Plus Horizon 2020 Information Sessions serve an important role in providing researchers based in Africa with basic information on Horizon 2020. The feedback from participants reinforces this conclusion. A large number of events have been organized in the past 5 years, by CAAST-Net Plus and other EC-funded projects, with the aim of increasing knowledge of and familiarity with Horizon 2020. Despite these efforts, there are still a large number of researchers who are unfamiliar with H2020. These kind of introductory 'Information Sessions' will continue to be useful now and in the future, and efforts should be placed in continuing these efforts for Horizon 2020 and for future framework programmes.

Are there areas of Horizon 2020 you need to know more about?

- 25% No
- 75% Yes

Beyond the need for introductory information, it has also become clear that researchers would like more detailed information on Horizon 2020. Of the participants who completed the survey, over 75% indicated that there are areas of Horizon 2020 on which they would like more information. Specific requests include themes like obligations of third parties, financial rules of Horizon 2020, proposal writing, how to form relevant partnerships, and financial management. These topics are too detailed to be included in introductory events like the Information Session, but could serve as the basis for future interventions. A range of services should be available to the African research community to better encourage and support African participation in Horizon 2020.

Support for networking and partnership building will continue to be important. For African researchers, the need to form meaningful partnerships with European institutions is an essential one for accessing Horizon 2020 funding, and this should be expected to be the case for future framework programmes as well. It is clear that the existing scope of collaboration between researchers from the regions needs further development – the survey found that only 25% of respondents had active collaboration with European partners. Forming these partnerships is a difficulty recognized by many participants in Information Sessions and one which would benefit from targeted interventions. Providing opportunities and spaces for networking, for example stakeholder fora or similar events, can serve as one way to address this need. However, other interventions could also be designed to support networking in response to specific opportunities, themes, or priority areas.

4. NCP Trainings

a. Needs

The needs of National Contact Points based in Third Countries are different from those located within Europe. For current or potential NCPs in Africa, the needs can vary quite substantially. Countries like South Africa have a robust existing NCP network with substantial experience and understanding of the role of NCPs, clear information pathways, and significant links to European NCP

networks. Whereas other countries, such as Ghana, are in a building or growing phase for their NCP networks. Investments have been made in the network itself, and the experience, information pathways, and links are in the process of being built. And in other countries, the NCP networks are nascent, consisting of one or two formal (or informal) NCPs with limited experience, access to information, or links to external networks. Despite this diversity, the most important needs for African NCPs generally fall into these core areas: (i) Understanding the role of NCPs, (ii) access to information, and (iii) networks.

I.   Understanding the role of NCPs

Perhaps the biggest need for the majority of participants in the NCP trainings was to better understand what a National Contact Point is and their role in the landscape of Horizon 2020. For many participants in Horizon 2020, there was a general lack of understanding of what NCPs do, how they do it, when they do it, and how to access more information. NCPs were often seen as individuals, rather than part of a larger national NCP network, and almost no links existed with European NCPs or networks of NCPs. This was true regardless of if the training's participants were primarily appointed NCPs or potential NCPs, suggesting that higher level support for building a NCP network does not necessarily translate into support at the individual level.

Another sticking point in many of the events was the issue of financing for the NCP network and the work of the NCPs. Most participants were unsure or unaware of how the work and network of NCPs are financed, which often led to questions and discussion around the issue of financing. The partners leading the events found that it was important to explain both the financing arrangements and the reasoning behind it. This sometimes led to heated discussions, particularly during regional trainings, highlighting the importance of explaining the rationale behind this approach to financing.

II.   Access to information

The trainings also highlighted the need for better access to timely information. This need is twofold. First, generally speaking, NCPs had difficulties knowing where to access information on Horizon 2020 and its calls, rules, and other important information. This limited access to information negatively impacts the ability of NCPs to disseminate information or advise the scientific community. Secondly, because accessing the information is difficult, the timeliness of the information is impacted in turn. The NCPs, then, do not have the information when it would have the most impact for the scientific community. In this sense, the impact of the NCPs becomes more limited. For countries that do not have NCPs, there is a need to better understand the processes and procedures in nominating and confirming country-representatives.

III.   Networks

The need for building networks is a crucial one. The experience from the trainings highlighted the isolation that many NCPs in African countries are facing. Particularly for those NCPs based in countries with nascent NCP systems, building networks is important for developing the expertise of the NCPs and their ability to undertake the tasks. But even NCPs based in countries with growing or robust NCP networks would benefit from more and better networks with other NCPs.

At a national level, networks can help to ease the burden of the work for the NCPs, support the dissemination of information across research and geographical areas, and provide mutual learning and support. Regional level networks are essentially non-existent within Africa at the moment. However, creating and developing regional networks would function in a similar role to national networks in supporting professional development and information dissemination, but would also serve to help even the disparities between different countries' NCP systems and contribute to shared growth and development. At the global level, better links need to be made to formal NCP thematic networks, to European NCPs, and even to other Third Country NCPs. Linking to NCP thematic networks and to European NCPs could help ensure better and more efficient access to relevant information. Building networks with other Third Country NCPs would have the benefit of showing how other countries are designing and running their NCP systems and work, allow for mutual learning and the development of innovative approaches.

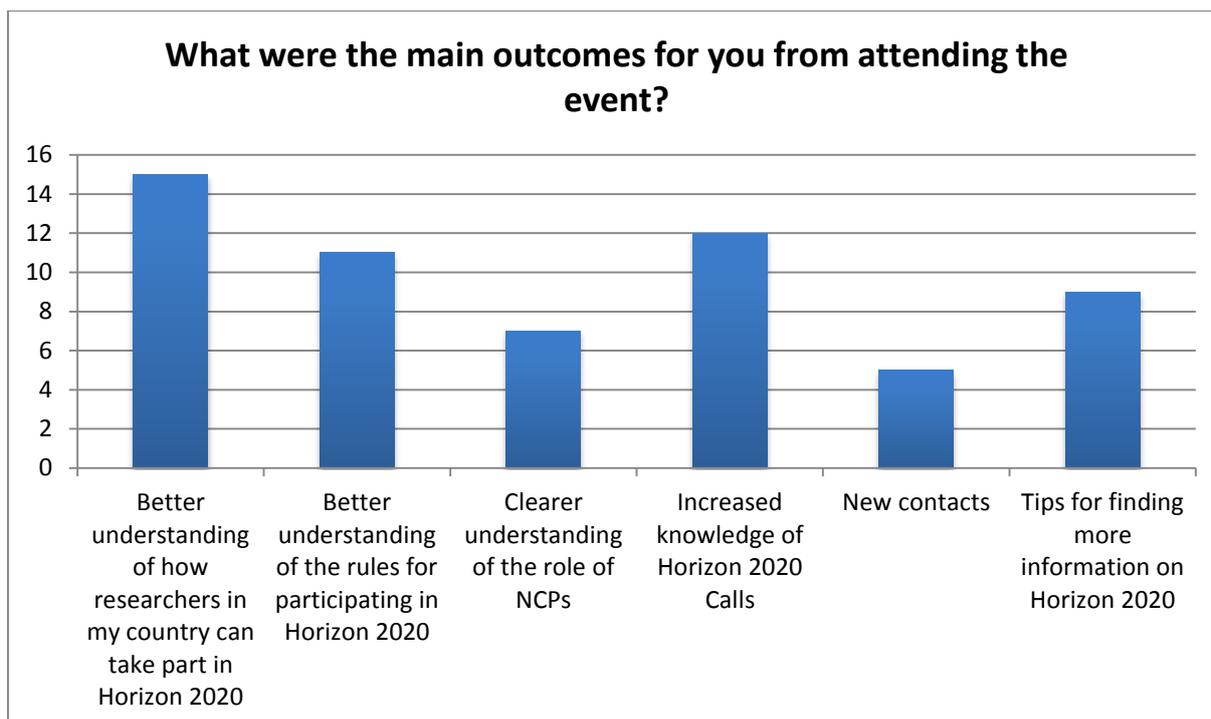## b. Results from Trainings

The diversity of the NCP networks in Africa described earlier provided both challenges and opportunities for conducting the trainings. A shared knowledge basis could not be assumed, so attention was paid to covering the basics of Horizon 2020 and the role and work of NCPs. This served to create this shared knowledge basis, but also as a refresher for more knowledgeable participants. Opportunities for peer learning were also utilized so that more experienced NCPs could share good practices and mutual learning could take place. The results from the NCP trainings were fairly positive, both in terms of the participants' rating of the sessions and the outcomes they indicated as resulting from their participation. On average, participants rated their satisfaction with the sessions as 3.87 out of a maximum of 5. The breakdown of the ratings as given in the participant survey can be found below.

Based on results from the survey and the observations of CAAST-Net Plus, three main outcomes emerged from the Information Sessions: (i) better informed NCPs, (ii) clearer understanding of the role of NCPs, and (iii) peer learning.

I. Better informed NCPs

"For me the most important outcome was the increased knowledge on the Horizon 2020 and the rules of engagement. This is because knowledge is key and through the workshop the participants were provided this important element."
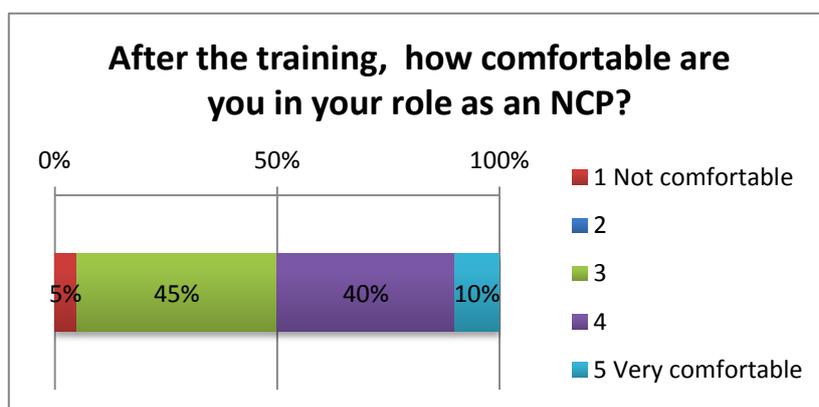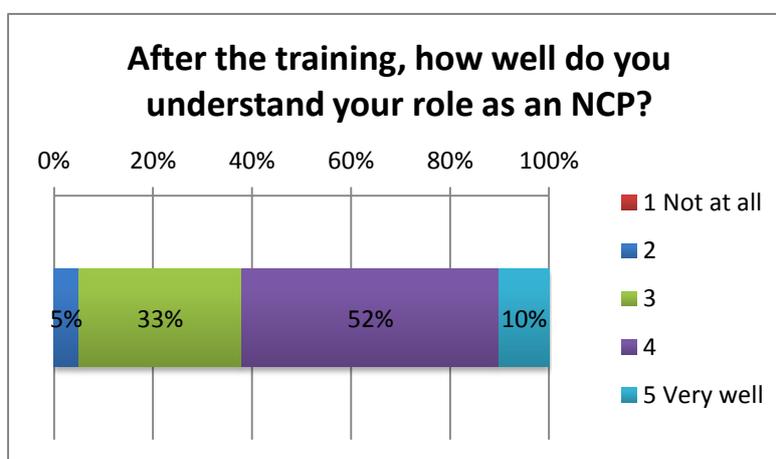
A significant outcome from the NCP trainings was that participants were better informed about Horizon 2020, including how researchers from Africa could participate, Horizon 2020 calls, and the rules for participation. In the online survey of participants, 71.4% of respondents indicated that "a better understanding of how researchers from my country can take part in Horizon 2020" was a main outcome. This is significant because this is at the very core of what NCPs need to be able to communicate to the scientific community in their country. Beyond this, a better understanding of Horizon 2020 is ultimately extremely important for NCPs to be able to serve their stakeholders well. A breakdown of the other responses given in the survey is included below.

What were the main outcomes for you from attending the event?

II. Clearer understanding of the role of NCPs

"The role and expectation of NCP. Before the training I didn't know what was expected from me."

An equally important outcome from the NCP trainings was the development of a clearer understanding of the role of National Contact Points. While only 33% of respondents selected this as a main outcome, the open answers to the question asking their opinion on the most important outcome and the experiences from the trainings themselves indicate the

After the training, how well do you understand your role as an NCP?

importance of this result. As highlighted above, one of the main challenges for NCPs based in Africa, generally speaking, is to have a clear understanding of the role of NCPs, including what their work entails and how they should undertake this role. This is supported by

After the training, how comfortable are you in your role as an NCP?

comments given in the survey, including the one quoted above, where the clarification of this role is seen as the most important outcome from the training. When asked to rate their understanding of their role as an NCP after the training on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (very well), the responses mostly fell between 3-5, with an average of 3.6, and rating their comfort in their role as an NCP at an average of 3.5 on the same scale. Depictions of the responses are depicted in the graph above.

III. Peer learning

"CN+ encouraged knowledge sharing among participants and facilitators."

As described earlier, the diversity in knowledge, experience, and support for NCPs around Africa and in the NCP trainings posed some challenges. To address these, CAAST-Net Plus actively sought to include peer learning and interactive activities as much as possible during the training sessions themselves. The insight and knowledge gained from this peer learning process proved to be an important outcome for the participants in the sessions. NCPs from neighbouring or example countries were often asked to present during the NCP trainings to share their experiences and processes of being an NCP and setting up an NCP system. These presentations were seen as being extremely useful, in particular because they were able to provide an example from Africa and to which the participants could relate. This allowed participants to understand how their own country might build an NCP system, and how they might organize their own work.

c. Future Needs

From the needs and outcomes described above, it is clear that effort must continue to be made toward the further development of NCP networks in Africa. Identifying suitable contacts and allocating appropriate roles based on their expertise and capacity is still needed to further expand the NCP network in Africa. Furthermore, continuing training sessions is essential for ensuring that appointed NCPs have a solid knowledge basis on which to structure their work. These sessions also serve the important purpose of giving NCPs the opportunity to meet others in this role and to learn from their peers. A criticism of the trainings has been the limited time given for the trainings – usually one day focusing on NCP work. Future training sessions could be two days, which would allow more time for interactive and peer learning methodologies.

As more NCPs are nominated in African countries the need to better connect African NCPs to one another is apparent. For countries that have started building their NCP activities in Horizon 2020 and those with more nascent networks, being better connected to other African NCPs could help to better address the needs of the scientific communities in their countries, support more professional NCP services, and help to advance the development of their own NCP networks. For countries with robust NCP networks, these networks serve to further develop their own expertise by taking on trainer or leader roles. Building a regional network or networks of African NCPs would ultimately lead to more participation from African institutions in the framework programmes and help smooth the transition from Horizon 2020 to Framework Programme 9.

In addition to regional networking, concerted effort should be made to link African NCPs with those in Europe and other Third Countries. In practical terms this could be to ensure that African NCPs are

invited to NCP networks, events, or other activities where NCPs are meeting. Other concrete actions, such as inviting different experienced NCPs to trainings (a common practice already in CAAST-Net Plus trainings) or creating a virtual mentorship, would further support the creation of these links. Helping to build this connection to European and other Third Country NCPs would assist in further developing the NCP systems by widening the scope for peer learning and creating information pathways that are currently difficult to achieve.

5. Conclusions: Good Practices and Recommendations

Based on the experiences of the CAAST-Net Plus partners and the responses to the survey conducted, a number of good practices and recommendations have been identified to better address the needs identified above and to build on the results from the sessions. These good practices should be considered for future activities, in addition to the future needs identified in the text above.

I.   Utilize peer-learning and interactive pedagogical methods.

To support better familiarization and comfort with the material, peer-learning and interactive methodologies are useful. These methodologies give participants the opportunity to work in a guided environment to solve some of the bigger challenges facing researchers new to Horizon 2020 or NCPs unsure in their work. For example, inviting researchers with Horizon 2020 projects to tell about their projects and lessons learned; using group-work on specific problems related to the application process, financial questions, or the work of NCPs; or inviting both experienced and new participants can all be used as tools for increasing the familiarity participants have with Horizon 2020. These practices engage participants and the increased experience encourages their future utilization of the knowledge and skills gained in the workshops.

II.   Collaborate with the European Commission.

Partnering with the European Commission in the organization of both Horizon 2020 Information Sessions and NCP trainings is useful in a number of ways. The participation of the EC in the event itself is a useful way for ensuring reliability and accurate information. In cases where the trainers themselves may be unsure, the EC official can be of use. Co-organizing with the EC also has the important benefit of ensuring strategic alignment to the priorities of the bi-regional science, technology, and innovation context. Finally, the presence of the EC can also support high level interest in the country hosting the event, which is important particularly for developing and expanding NCP networks.

III.   Follow a regional approach.

Particularly in the case of NCP trainings, designing an event that includes participants from neighbouring countries is useful. This allows participants to learn from one another, discuss differences and similarities between the countries and their contexts, and build networks that can be utilized later for continued learning and support.

IV. Be willing to hold multiple events in the same country.

It is clear that one event in a country is not enough to support a truly widespread or a thorough understanding of Horizon 2020. Due to the dispersed nature of the research and scientific community in most countries, a single event in a single city will never be able to reach the wider community. Indeed, this highlights the importance of NCPs, and particularly NCPs in Third Countries. This same approach, however, applies to the training of NCPs, particularly in countries with growing or nascent NCP networks. Repeated training supports the professional development of NCPs and supports larger high-level exposure to the arguments for NCPs, helping to make the case for investing in NCPs. Being willing to invest in returning to a country to hold multiple events is one possibility for increasing the number of Horizon 2020 applications with partners from that country and growing the NCP network within the country.

V. Be aware of raising expectations.

Finally, it is important to be aware of the impact Horizon 2020 Information Sessions and NCP Trainings can have on the expectations of governments and scientific communities. With such concerted and sustained efforts, expectations for receiving Horizon 2020 funding will raise. The risk is that these expectations will raise to levels that cannot be matched by the funding and opportunities available in Horizon 2020. If investments are made in NCP networks, this expectation only increases. Future efforts for supporting greater participation in Horizon 2020 and expanding the NCP network should not ignore this issue and consider practical ways to address these expectations.

Annex 1: Sub-Saharan African Horizon 2020 Projects[8]

Country	Projects	Number of Projects
Benin	• PEVIA • SaferAfrica	2
Botswana	• AfriAlliance • PROIntensAfrica • IST-Africa 2016-2018	3
Burkina Faso	• AfriAlliance • LEAP-Agri • INFRAVEC2 • PROIntensAfrica • RINEA • WAZIUP • EBOVAC2 • SaferAfrica	8
Burundi	• RINEA • IST-Africa 2016-2018	2
Cameroon	• BREEDCAFS • LEAP-Agri • SaferAfrica • DMC-MALVEC • OurMythicalChildhood • IST-Africa 2016-2018	6
Cape Verde	• FarFish • SALSA • SEACRIFOG	3
Cote d'Ivoire	• EHVA • AfriAlliance • EWIT	3
Ethiopia	• InnovAfrica • MUSA • RINEA • mHealth4Afrika • WATERSPOUTT • DMC-MALVEC • BM	10

	• FLOWERED • Its4land • IST-Africa 2016-2018	
Gabon	• VSV-EBOVAC • VSV-EBOPLUS	2
Ghana	• AfriAlliance • TROPICSAFE • LEAP-Agri • PROIntensAfrica • TANDEM • SALSA • SMART • SEACRIFOG • Perform 2 scale • WAZIUP • MAGIC • Sci-GaIA	12
Kenya	• TRUE • FUTURE-RADAR • AfricanBioServices • DIVERSify • InnovAfrica • PALE-Blu • RESCCUE • MUSA • H2020_Insurance • REFRESH • LEAP-AGRI • VicInAqua • SALSA • mHealth4Afrika • B3Africa • VetBioNet • SEACRIFOG • EWIT • ECOPOTENTIAL • UBORA • Ground Truth 2.0 • EMPOWER	28

	• TRUST • COMRADES • DAFNE • FLOWERED • its4land • IST-Africa 2016-2018	
Lesotho	• IST-Africa 2016-2018	1
Liberia	• HOLISHIP	1
Madagascar	• ARISE2	1
Malawi	• InnovAfrica • mHealth4Afrika • Perform 2 scale • WATERSPOUTT • SURG-Africa • IST-Africa 2016-2018	6
Mali	• INFRAVEC2 • WOSCAP	2
Mauritania	• FarFish	1
Mauritius	• IST-Africa 2016-2018	1
Mozambique	• EHVA • EMI-TB • FORAM • SafeWaterAfrica • DAFNE • IST-Africa 2016-2018	6
Namibia	• HiTech AlkCarb • PARTY • RINEA • SEACRIFOG • IST-Africa 2016-2018	5
Nigeria	• MUSA • RINEA • MycoKey • B3Africa	4
Rwanda	• InnovAfrica • its4land	2
Senegal	• REACTION • ZIKAlliance • FarFish	14

	- PALE-Blu - LEAP-AGRI - INFRAVEC2 - PROIntensAfrica - EUNPACK - WAZIUP - MAGNIFIC - ZikaPLAN - EbolaMoDRAD - IST-Africa 2016-2018 - GRICAS	
Seychelles	- FarFish	1
South Africa	- Honeyguides-Humans - RINGO - FERTINNOWA - M-ERA.NET 2 - GLOBUS - Neurostresspep - 4D hybrid - AfriAlliance - NUCLEUS - InnovAfrica - STRADE - MinWaterCSP - AENEAS - ERA-MIN 2 - MarTERA - WaterWorks2015 - ITERAMS - TROPICSAFE - SEREN 3 - SIENNA - LEAP-AGRI - RadioNet - ESASTAP 2020 - FutureTrust - green.eu - AtlantOS - EVAg	58

	• PROIntensAfrica • RINEA • SPICES • JUMPING JIVE • mHealth4Afrika • B3Africa • BioMOre • VIROGENESIS • AEROGUST • SEACRIFOG • WATERSPOUTT • EWIT • COP21 RIPPLES • ECOPOTENTIAL • GREEN-WIN • TBVAC2020 • WaterWorks2014 • caLIBRAte • MAGIC • Sci-GaIA • SMART2D • EUSPACE-AWE • SafeWaterAfrica • TRUST • INTRAW • CyanoLakes • anTBiotic • INTMET • IST-Africa 2016-2018 • IN-SKA • ICRI 2016	
Swaziland	• IST-Africa 2016-2018	1
Tanzania	• AfricanBioServices • EHVA • InnovAfrica • VicInAqua • SURG-Africa • Sci-GaIA • FLOWERED	9

	• PEVIA • IST-Africa 2016-2018	
Togo	• MAGNIFIC	1
Uganda	• EHVA • LEAP-AGRI • PROIntensAfrica • SPICES • BigPicnic • VicInAqua • B3Africa • PROTEIN2FOOD • Perform 2 scale • WATERSPOUTT • UBORA • SMART2D • FRESH AIR • IST-Africa 2016-2018	14
Zambia	• EWIT • SURG-Africa • Ground Truth 2.0 • DMC-MALVEC • DAFNE	5

Annex 2: National Contact Points[9]

Countries	NCPs
Angola	2
Benin	1
Botswana	0
Burkina Faso	17
Burundi	0
Cameroon	1
Cape Verde	7
Central African Republic	0
Chad	0
Comoros	0
Congo	0
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1
Cote d'Ivoire	1
Equatorial Guinea	0
Eritrea	0
Ethiopia	1
Gabon	0
The Gambia	1
Ghana	11
Guinea	0
Guinea-Bissau	0
Kenya	3
Lesotho	2
Liberia	0
Madagascar	0
Malawi	7
Mali	1
Mauritania	0
Mauritius	0
Mozambique	0
Namibia	0
Niger	0
Nigeria	2
Rwanda	10
Sao Tome and Principe	0

[9] Data retrieved 5.7.2017, and updated on 19.9.2017.

Senegal	1
Seychelles	0
Sierra Leone	0
Somalia	0
South Africa	24
Sudan	0
Swaziland	0
Tanzania	0
Togo	1
Uganda	9
Zambia	0
Zimbabwe	2

Annex 3: Horizon 2020 Information Session Concept Note

CAAST-Net PLUS   **Building Bi-Regional Partnerships for Global Challenges**

Horizon 2020 Information Session
Concept Note

Horizon 2020

In 2014, the European Commission launched Horizon 2020, the European Union's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. Horizon 2020, running from 2014-2020, makes nearly €80 billion available for research and innovation projects. Focusing on excellent science, industrial leadership and tackling societal challenges, the goal is to produce world-class science, remove barriers to innovation, and make it easier for the public and private sectors to work together in delivering innovation.

Horizon 2020 is fully open for participation from around the world, including from Africa. With this new openness, Africa's research and innovation actors have a better chance than ever to leverage the opportunities presented by Horizon 2020 for greater cooperation with European partners. However, despite this opportunity, African researchers have not participated in as great of numbers as could be expected. Reversing this trend can be at least partly achieved by increasing the understanding of Horizon 2020 – and the opportunities it offers – in Africa and increasing the number of trained National Contact Points (NCPs) located in African countries.

The CAAST-Net Plus project, funded by the European Commission, has convened Horizon 2020 Information Sessions across Africa with the aim of increasing African researcher' understanding of the programme. In addition, CAAST-Net Plus has encouraged and supported the nomination of NCPs in African countries.

Overall Objectives:

The overall objectives of the workshop are to:
- Increase the awareness of Horizon 2020 and the opportunities particularly suitable for Africa-EU collaboration in Horizon 2020;
- Describe the rules for participation, how to submit a proposal, and how to identify partners for a proposal;
- Inform about National Contact Points and their role.

Participants

Researchers, Representatives of Research and Innovation offices, National Contact Points

Agenda:

Horizon 2020 Information Session		
CAAST-Net Plus	xx mins	[Presenter]

Introduction to Horizon 2020	xx mins	[Presenter]
African Participation in Horizon 2020: Statistics	xx mins	[Presenter]
Case Presentation	xx mins	[Presenter]
Overview of Horizon 2020: Rules & instruments	xx mins	[Presenter]
Opportunities for African Participation in Horizon 2020	xx mins	[Presenter]
Finding Partners for a Horizon Proposal	xx mins	[Presenter]
Proposal Submission Process	xx mins	[Presenter]
Introduction to National Contact Points	xx mins	[Presenter]
Discussion	xx mins	

Annex 4: NCP Training Session Concept Note

Building Bi-Regional Partnerships for Global Challenges

National Contact Point Training Session

Concept Note

Horizon 2020

In 2014, the European Commission launched Horizon 2020, the European Union's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. Horizon 2020, running from 2014-2020, makes nearly €80 billion available for research and innovation projects. Focusing on excellent science, industrial leadership and tackling societal challenges, the goal is to produce world-class science, remove barriers to innovation, and make it easier for the public and private sectors to work together in delivering innovation.

Horizon 2020 is fully open for participation from around the world, including from Africa. With this new openness, Africa's research and innovation actors have a better chance than ever to leverage the opportunities presented by Horizon 2020 for greater cooperation with European partners. However, despite this opportunity, African researchers have not participated in as great of numbers as could be expected. Reversing this trend can be at least partly achieved by increasing the understanding of Horizon 2020 – and the opportunities it offers – in Africa and increasing the number of trained National Contact Points (NCPs) located in African countries.

The CAAST-Net Plus project, funded by the European Commission, has convened Horizon 2020 Information Sessions across Africa with the aim of increasing African researcher' understanding of the programme. In addition, CAAST-Net Plus has encouraged and supported the nomination of NCPs in African countries.

Overall Objectives:

The overall objectives of the workshop are to:
- Increase the awareness of Horizon 2020 and the opportunities particularly suitable for Africa-EU collaboration in Horizon 2020;
- Provide information and tools for new or potential National Contact Points to better carry out the tasks to support their research community.

Participants

Current or potential National Contact Points.

Agenda:

NCP Training Session		
CAAST-Net Plus	xx mins	[Presenter]
Introduction to the NCP system	xx mins	[Presenter]

What is an NCP? Roles and Responsibilities for NCPs	xx mins	[Presenter]
Setting up an NCP Network: Case Studies	xx mins	[Presenter]
Discussion	xx mins	[Presenter]
What makes a good proposal?	xx mins	[Presenter]
Breakout session: Financial Management and Reporting in H2020	xx mins	[Presenter]
Breakout session: Proposal Writing in H2020	xx mins	[Presenter]
Wrap-up and Discussion	xx mins	