

The CAAST-Net Bulletin

THE OFFICIAL BULLETIN

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

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CAAST-Net hosts mobility workshop

A workshop was held last week in Brussels to discuss greater Sub-Saharan Africa participation in the People Specific Programme of FP7. Workshop host, Daan du Toit of the South African Mission to the European Union, reports back on the outcome.

THIS WORKSHOP was hosted to consider opportunities and challenges for cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa under the People Specific Programme of the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). It was convened on 24 March at the South African Mission to the European Union in Brussels, and aimed to bring together a diverse range of stakeholders with an interest in researcher mobility exchanges between Africa and Europe.

The more than 20 participants included officials from the European Commission, notably CAAST-Net project officer, Gerasimos Apostolatos; the former EC exchange officer to the African Union Commission, Mario Catizzone; and the Deputy Head of Unit responsible for FP7 Marie Curie Fellowships in DG RTD, Alessandra Luchetti. Other participants included representatives from R&D Liaison Offices in Brussels representing several EU member states or organisations focused on cooperation with developing countries.

A South African researcher working in Brussels also participated to share her personal experiences of

participation in African-European researcher mobility programmes. CAAST-Net partners from South Africa, the United Kingdom, Finland, France, Portugal and Cape Verde also participated.

In the first session of the workshop, Alessandra Luchetti provided a comprehensive overview of all the FP7 People instruments open to cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa. This rich and diverse portfolio includes the Marie Curie Incoming and Outgoing International Fellowships (IIF/IOF), the Industry Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP), and Initial Training Networks (ITN).

The IIF and OIF instruments respectively provide funding for African researchers to spend periods of normally two to three years working in Europe and, likewise, for European researchers to work in Africa. The IAPPs provide for exchanges between researchers working in academia and industry, whilst the ITNs provide support for participation in training activities for early stage researchers as well as the networking between training programmes.

There had not been significant (CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)

Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum on ICT Research

Sarah Hinz of the Africa Unit at the UK Association of Commonwealth Universities attended the Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum on ICT Research last week in Brussels. She explains the purpose of the Forum and reports back on CAAST-Net's participation.

THE EUROAFRICA-ICT PROJECT builds upon the achievements of the START Project and, like CAAST-Net, is funded under the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). The project aims to enhance research cooperation between African, Caribbean and European stakeholders in the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) sector. It is a platform to exchange ICT knowledge, experiences and ideas, and to identify joint projects with the objective to use ICT as a tool to bridge the scientific and digital divides, reduce poverty, and ensure socio-economic development. Bringing together university think tanks, research institutes and private organisations as project partners in a consortium, the EuroAfrica-ICT Project aims to reach a wide audience through its activities and interventions spanning course of its existence.

These include the establishment of a contact and project database, support services to organisations in the ICT field, technical visits to laboratories and other

research facilities, as well as awareness workshops and stakeholder meetings on FP7 participation opportunities for Africa and the Caribbean. In addition, the hosting of two large "Cooperation Forums" forms a substantial part of its work.

First Cooperation Forum

The first Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum on ICT Research was held on Wednesday and Thursday last week. For the first time in Europe, over 320 African, Caribbean and European representatives from academia, various international organisations, civil society and the private sector gathered to deliberate on issues of common concern in the field of ICT research.

The event was co-organised by the European Commission (via the Directorate General for Information Society and Media) and the African Union Commission, with key support coming from EuroAfrica-ICT. It was an opportunity for individuals with an interest in ICT to network with each other (CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

Synergy: the name of the game

One of CAAST-Net's main objectives is to promote synergy between Europe-Africa science and technology research partnerships and development cooperation instruments in order to enhance the creation and application of new knowledge in support of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, poverty reduction and economic growth. This is the particular focus of Work Package 2, which is currently steering its efforts in this direction. In this interview, Arne Tostensen from the Research Council for Norway provides an overview of the EU-Africa S&T-development landscape and the prospects for greater synergy.

The inter-relationships between research, innovation, economic growth and development, and poverty reduction are complex and involve multiple actors on different levels, for example, sub-regional economic blocs, state governments, ministries of science and technology and higher education, as well as line ministries for economic sectors such as trade, agriculture and health, among others. What challenges does CAAST-Net's WP2 face in understanding, facilitating and brokering these relationships in an EU-Africa context for mutual benefit?

The challenges are formidable. Not only is it difficult to understand the relationships between the multiplicity of actors and the dynamics between them, the terrain keeps changing. Moving to facilitation and brokering, the difficulties are partly structural and partly political. The structural challenges have to do with the disparities in terms of power, wealth and the institutional setup between the EU and sub-Saharan Africa. These structures have been built up since colonial times. As a result, they are not easily changed even when policies of change have been adopted. Notwithstanding the resilience of deeply embedded structures, there are political interests that pull in different directions. Such a point of departure should not cause defeatism. It is possible to bridge research and policy-making and subsequent implementation. But it is bound to take time. Some of the structures have to be changed and political interests need to be harmonised through negotiation.

Why is science and technology (S&T) such a key determinant of socio-economic progress?

In the economic history of the developed world from the industrial revolution onwards, the major contribution of STI has been well-documented. By contrast, the predominantly agrarian economies of sub-Saharan Africa are largely based on rudimentary technologies such as hoe cultivation and modest use of inputs such as improved seeds and fertilisers. As a result, productivity is very low and hardly enough to keep up with population growth. The generally small manufacturing sector similarly suffers from diminished technologies at the lower end of the value-added chain. Sub-Saharan Africa needs a technological revolution to enhance productivity and facilitate economic growth as a foundation for investment in education, health and other social sectors.

What is development cooperation?

Development cooperation denotes a relationship between a donor and a recipient who collaborate towards reaching a common goal, be it economic growth at the macro level or eradication of malaria at grassroots level. Development cooperation comprises a wide range of activities. Although attempts are made to forge collaborative partnerships between equals, unfortunately the reality is almost invariably between unequal partners in terms of funds and other resources. The donor has the upper hand by virtue of the funding provided and the built-in conditionalities. This is not to say that the recipient has no voice, only that the power relationship is uneven.

As we progress into 2009, what synergies exist between European development cooperation instruments, like the European Development Fund, and its research cooperation instruments, like the Seventh Framework Programme?

The sad fact is that the synergies are minimal at present. The Framework Programmes (FPs) have their own objectives and dynamic. They are designed to produce new knowledge to underpin the European Union's innovative capability. The overarching objective of successive FPs is to promote the competitiveness of the EU in the world economy; it is not to promote development in sub-Saharan Africa. The European Development Fund (EDF), on the other hand, is designed to promote development in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, among which the African group of states is the largest. Thus far, these two instruments have moved more or less on parallel tracks without much interaction. However, efforts were made in 2002 through the Cape Town Consensus to forge better synergies. It is the task of WP2 to contribute towards that objective.

The UNESCO Institute of Statistics estimates that Africa's share of world gross expenditure on R&D is 0.6%. This is very low in comparison to North America, for example, whose share is 37.7%. In general terms, what explains the disparity and what can be done to improve the situation given the enormous development challenges faced by Africa?

These statistics are yet another illustration of the disparity between rich and poor countries. It can be argued that the poor sub-Saharan countries are poor because they spend so little of their resources on S&T. Turning the argument around, it can also be argued that sub-Saharan Africa spends so little on S&T because it is so poor. The causation goes in both directions. The challenge is to break this vicious cycle. One way ahead is for African research institutions to participate more fully in S&T projects funded under the FPs and to harness the results for development purposes, for instance by increasing agricultural and industrial productivity.

Are there particular countries and or institutions in Africa who are succeeding in leveraging S&T for development?

Even though parts of Africa are lagging behind in the area of technological development, the continent does have a number of centres of excellence. Some of these have been successful in leveraging funds for S&T development through consortia with European counterparts. But such participation is very uneven across the continent. Many of the most successful institutions are located in countries such as South Africa and Egypt where the economies and research infrastructure are more developed. Still, other medium-sized economies, such as Kenya and Tanzania, have also had a measure of success. And the potential is there for others to join in. It is the principal task of CAAST-Net to contribute to greater African participation in the FPs.

Briefly, what is the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, and how does its formation support STI and development in the region?

The Cotonou Partnership Agreement is a comprehensive vehicle for cooperation between the EU and the ACP countries. The EDF is part of that partnership but its scope is much wider and includes political consultations, human rights and democratisation, as well as trade relations. The EDF has been used primarily to support urgent development needs in the countries concerned. Through negotiations National Indicative Programmes... (CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

CAAST-Net Workshop on S&T Cooperation and Development

**23-24 April, 2009
Kampala, Uganda**

The WP2 co-leaders — the Research Council of Norway (RCN) and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) — are organising a two-day workshop for eminent Africa- and Europe-based scientists, policy makers and development practitioners, to be held in Kampala, Uganda on 23 and 24 April, 2009.

Its purpose is to discuss the contents of two CAAST-Net reports and to deliberate on their recommendations to achieve better synergy and dialogue between the S&T cooperation and development communities.

The outcome of this important event will be a set of contributions to the ongoing EU-Africa dialogue on the interface between S&T cooperation and development.

To enquire about participating please contact
Arne Tostensen or Ismail Baraguhara.



Synergy: the name of the game (continued)

are agreed at the country level, and similar Regional Indicative Programmes for Regional Economic Communities (RECs) such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). However, S&T activities rarely figure in the indicative programmes, probably because they are considered too long-term. Putting money into S&T is a long-term investment whose yield can only be reaped at a much later stage. Normally, the urgency and immediacy of development problems in education, health, water supply, agriculture, and so on, trumps long-term investment. While understandable given the pressing need to address short-term development challenges, such a posture undermines the long-term ability of these countries to solve their problems in a sustainable manner.

What other efforts and interventions have been made, at the level of policy, to coordinate S&T and development?

So far the Cape Town Consensus on sustainable development has set the tone for closer synergy between S&T and development. To date it has resulted in the so-called Lighthouse Projects. Some of them are institution-building projects while others address key challenges in the use of S&T in development, for example, harnessing biotechnology for the advancement of African agriculture; desertification and forestry; water management for food security in Africa in view of climate and demographic changes. While the prospects for funding some of these Lighthouse projects seem good, others remain without funding. There is a long way to go, both at the policy level and, above all, at the level of funding and implementation.

What progress has WP2 made in achieving its objectives so far?

The objective of WP2 is to analyse the current state of affairs with regard to S&T and development synergies, and to make recommendations as to how closer synergies can be forged between these two types of activity. Even though it is a matter of urgency it

must be acknowledged that rapid progress is unlikely because the challenges are formidable. So far WP2 has produced two draft reports addressing the issues. The first one deals with the institutional and policy landscape with respect to S&T and development in Europe and Africa. The second is more operational and contains recommendations as to how closer synergies can be created between the science and development communities in order to create tangible benefits for the poor.

Although WP2 may make generic proposals, the concrete actions to be taken must be designed by those directly involved. For example, scientists and practitioners in the public and private sectors could meet in an agriculture-focused workshop stemming from a set of findings from FP projects for the purpose of finding ways and means of applying those findings to agricultural development in specified countries, even down to different agro-ecological zones. In other words, it is for the actors directly involved to work out the modalities of synergy.

A workshop will be held on 23-24 April 2009 in Kampala (see above) to deliberate over the two reports. The participants include a range of individuals across the S&T-development divide, from Africa as well as from Europe. After the Kampala workshop, the outcome of the deliberations will be fed into WP3 which will bring it into dialogue platforms with various stakeholders.

Editor's note: The particular policy documents referred to in this interview can be viewed online via the CAAST-Net platform

URL Document library <http://www.caast-net.org/xwiki/bin/view/Main/document+library>

WP2 is jointly led by the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology and the Research Council of Norway.

Setting up a joint Europe-Africa S&T dialogue: progress in 2008

CAAST-Net have taken a number of strides toward highlighting the importance of a joint Europe-Africa S&T dialogue. Nadia Meyer and Joern Sonnenburg of Work Package 3 explain its role in promoting the dialogue in 2008.

CAAST-Net's **WORK PACKAGE 3** aims to further improve the framework for science and technology (S&T) cooperation between Africa and Europe. Its method in doing so is to support a bi-regional discussion process among European and African policy stakeholders through what has been called a "Joint S&T Policy Dialogue". While still a work in progress, once this "dialogue" is formally established CAAST-Net's core contribution will be to offer secretariat services and intellectual input for its continuous implementation. In 2008, WP3 worked hard to contribute to a discussion among policy stakeholders from both sides. More than a year into the life of CAAST-Net there are therefore a number of facts to report.

Political context and vision

The abovementioned policy dialogue has been proposed by CAAST-Net as a forum for political decision-makers from relevant S&T-related ministries of countries from both regions, and from organisations within the European and African communities, to address policy issues of common concern in the field of research and technological development (RTD). Such a dialogue is intended to add a new component to existing dialogue schemes, and to support research cooperation, both between individual member states of the European Union and the African Union, and on bi-regional community level, through the EU and AU Commissions – the latter being part of the implementation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) as agreed in December 2007 at the Lisbon Summit.

The dialogue would provide a new opportunity for national policy stakeholders from both regions to build a common understanding and a shared vision for future S&T cooperation. While its purpose over the short term is to create an environment in which mutual learning and the exchange of information on policy objectives, strategies and policy instruments is fostered, over the long term the dialogue should prepare the ground for an advanced international cooperation addressing the joint interest of both regions.

On the EU side, international cooperation is a core component of the full realisation of the European Research Area, which itself is considered a key pillar of European competitiveness. On the African side, the Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action (2006) provides the vision for knowledge-based sustainable development of the African Union and its member countries.

The JAES bridges these two approaches and offers a scenario for joint implementation measures. A key EU instrument for international cooperation is the Seventh Framework Programme for research and technological development (FP7), which is offering new and exciting opportunities for European and African scientists to implement collaborative projects that cut across national and continental borders, and which has the potential to address areas of mutual interest.

However, the coordination of national instruments for S&T cooperation has hardly been addressed in terms of cooperation between Europe and Africa. The first steps in that direction are being undertaken by two regional Implementation Teams of the Joint Expert Group of the 8th Partnership of the JAES. Thus, a dedicated Joint S&T Policy Dialogue between European and African states would provide additional momentum for such strategic discussion, which has the potential to concrete implementation measures through the

coordination of policy instruments of interested countries from the two regions.

Progress and outlook

An essential part of CAAST-Net activities in 2008 was establishing contact with and reflecting on the idea with representatives of individual states both in Europe and Africa, on the one hand, and with Community institutions like the European Commission (Directorate General for Research), the African Union Commission (Directorate General for Human Resources, Science and Technology – the AU-HRST), and the African Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology (AMCOST), on the other.

In the meantime, the idea of a new format for a bi-regional S&T policy dialogue was taken up in the discussions of the two Implementation Teams and the Joint Expert Group as the central governance structures of the 8th Partnership of the JAES, building to an extent on a concept note provided by CAAST-Net. Near the end of 2008, the Joint Expert Group, followed by the regular high-ranking meeting of the EU Ministerial Troika (Czech Republic, France, Sweden) with representatives of the African Union, agreed to seriously discuss the set-up of the S&T policy dialogue in 2009 building on a consolidated concept.

CAAST-Net remains well-placed as a think tank to provide further input into the bi-regional policy debate, and is ready to provide secretariat services to the responsible stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of policy dialogue meetings. Along that line, there are continuous discussions between members of the CAAST-Net consortium, and at the policy level, both in Europe and Africa. It should also be mentioned, that a close coordination with the activities of the MIRA INCO-NET, targeting cooperation with the Mediterranean region, including North Africa, has been agreed upon. In the case of MIRA, a formal policy dialogue was established more than a decade ago, the so-called Monitoring Committee for Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation in RTD

(MoCo), which has most recently become a key pillar of the Union for the Mediterranean.

In 2009, CAAST-Net's WP3 will continue to work on the dialogue, and will be hosting the first of two stakeholder conferences, the aim of which is to bring together a series of stakeholders representing political decision-makers, the scientific community, industry and civil society from both regions in order to deliberate on the status and the perspectives of enhanced international S&T cooperation addressing joint challenges in bi-regional and global contexts. Recommendations will then serve to inform but also enlarge the agenda for the policy dialogue.

Preparations for the first conference are still at an early stage; however the conference will also seek to further deepen the participation – both in planning and implementation – of CAAST-Net's con-

“The dialogue would provide a new opportunity for national policy stakeholders from both regions to build a common understanding and a shared vision for future S&T cooperation.”

URL More info on the JAES? <http://europafrica.net/jointstrategy/>

WP3 is jointly led by the International Bureau of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Kenyan Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education.

Bulletin Notice Board

CAAST-Net's Work Package 1 invites all STAKEHOLDERS to view the first of four reports for its deliverable 1.7:

REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF COORDINATORS OF PROJECTS TARGETING SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

URL Deliverable 1.7 <http://www.caast-net.org/xwiki/bin/view/Main/Policy+makers+and+public+officials>



Events: April to June 2009

DATE (2009)	EVENT	WHERE	HOST(S)	CONTACT
9 April	HEALTH NCP-Net FP7 Health Workshop	Cape Town, South Africa	HEALTH NCP-Net & ESASTAP	Dr. Sabine Steiner-Lange
23-24 April	WP2 Workshop on Science and Technology Cooperation and Development	Kampala, Uganda	CAAST-Net	Arne Tostensen Ismail Baraguhara
13-14 May	WP4 Thematic Workshop - Energy	Dakar, Senegal	CAAST-Net	Jean Jacques Roubion
June (date to be announced)	WP5 FP7 Information Day	Cidade da Praia, Cap Verde	CAAST-Net	Jose Bonfim
16-18 June	CAAST-Net Annual Assembly	Marseille, France	CAAST-Net	Dr Andy Cherry Sara Calamassi

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

Letters

Value in exchange

Newspapers and newsletters have for long been sites for the reporting of events, but also sites for the exchange of views, insights, facts and opinions. The CAAST-Net Bulletin builds upon this model, and this letters section aims to provide the space for the comments of the project's partner and stakeholder communities to be presented. Indeed, it is these very exchanges and our ability to engage multiple stakeholders through exchange which will partly determine CAAST-Net's success. So let us have your thoughts in a few sentences. Or, if you've got more to say, or events to report on, contact us and we can facilitate a fuller contribution through full-length feature articles, interviews or shorter updates. Your news is our news!

Gerard Ralphs CAAST-Net Editor

CAAST-Net-AU engagement

At the maiden CAAST-Net Project Assembly in Kigali, concerns were raised to the effect that CAAST-Net should open its doors to more sub-Saharan African partners. I wish to reiterate the fundamental importance of this call: the

more African countries that participate in the project the easier it will be to engage with the African Union. It is not my intention to imply that there is evidence of any difficulty in engaging with the AU currently, but rather to imply that this would further facilitate and deepen engagement with the AU as more of the various member countries would be involved in the activities of the project.

Gordon Akon-Yamga *Science and Technology Policy Research Institute of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research*

Communication and support

Work Package 6 is responsible for the dissemination and communication of all information both within the project and to the stakeholder readership. It is our responsibility to collect, correlate and send out information that is useful and interesting to individuals in Europe-Africa S&T research cooperation.

The past six months has been full of change for the WP6 team. In addition, we have worked extensively to structure the information available on the CAAST-Net

website in a clear and easy-to-find manner. As the website support assistant for the CAAST-Net website I have enjoyed helping site visitors to understand and use the shared spaces, as well as to utilise the various functions the site offers. It has been with a certain sense of pride that I have gone from leading the first users to welcoming new readers of the CAAST-Net Bulletin to helping new partners in the project get started.

The CAAST-Net website is, in fact, a living growing community, and it is only through the participation and interest of those already using the site, as well as its new members, that it will continue to grow. I would encourage everyone involved to participate in the project by using the site, and to share with the site community and the larger research community the benefits of this project.

In any event, if you experience any problems, you know who to contact!

Caite McCann WP6

Send a letter to the editor by email to: editor@caast-net.org.

“Planning events in conjunction with one another, but also attending each other's events, is essential for project's to benefit from their respective networks.”
Sarah Hinz

Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum (continued)

as well as other key stakeholders, identify potential cooperation partners, learn more about the 8th Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (2007), as well as to find out about EC, AUC and ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) programmes on research and ICT.

At this year's forum, participants also had the chance to follow debates and discussions on various topics such as opportunities to enhance African participation in FP7, successful EU-African FP7 cooperation projects, and public-private partnerships in ICT.

CAAST-Net at the Forum

In addition to organising and conducting its mobility workshop (see Front Page) prior to the event in order to ensure the attendance of relevant stakeholders and experts, CAAST-Net was also one of the forum's endorses. On day two, CAAST-Net coordinator and EuroAfriCa-ICT partner, Andy Cherry, delivered a presentation on CAAST-Net which highlighted its compatibility with EuroAfriCa-ICT Project.

Here Cherry pointed out that while EuroAfriCa-ICT deals exclusively with ICT as a sub-sector of science and technology, CAAST-Net has a wider scope embracing science and technology in general. Yet, he stressed, the two projects have several commonalities. Most importantly, each tackles Europe-Africa cooperation and, more specifically, development and research co-operation. Moreover, both projects aim to facilitate a policy dialogue in their respective fields, and contribute

to the policy dialogue by organising events, identifying areas of common interest and mutual benefit for African and European experts, as well as by offering practical support to predominantly African experts.

At the political level, CAAST-Net and EuroAfriCa-ICT both operate within the structures of the European Commission, the African Union Commission, as well as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and have expressed their commitment to the 8th Partnership of the JAES, which CAAST-Net has embraced in addition to the earlier Africa Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action (2006) of the AU and NEPAD.

Cherry's presentation left stakeholders informed about the respective activities and objectives of the two projects, but also highlighted some of the possibilities and areas for synergies to be sought and entrenched.

Outcome

Planning events in conjunction with one another, but also attending each other's events, is essential for project's to benefit from their respective networks. In this way, Cherry's presentation at the forum made a useful contribution to increasing Africa's integration in global research exchanges in the field of science and technology and in ICT particularly.

A second Cooperation Forum is envisaged for early 2010 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Details to be confirmed.

Contact EuroAfriCa info@euroafrica-ict.org

The Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum in pictures...



Above: Dr. Andy Cherry
Below: General collage



Photographs by
Karin Valine.
With thanks, Ed.

News from the Africa-Europe S&T landscape

Applications open for the 2009 African Union Scientific Awards

The African Union Commission is promoting its 2009 Scientific Awards in recognition of the importance of the development of science in Africa. With three categories of awards – the AU Young Scientist National Award, the AU Women Scientist Regional Award and the AU Scientific Award – the 2009 programme will celebrate achievements made by African scientists in national, regional and continental contexts.

€2.7 billion EU-ACP cooperation agreement signed

The €2.7 billion cooperation agreement signed on 13 March 2009 between the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) Group of States and the European Commission is funded by the 10th European Development Fund, and will be directed toward health, climate change, water and peace-keeping efforts, says Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid Louis Michel. The additional funds supplement the €14 billion allocated to the Group in 2007 and 2008.

Botswana to launch \$100 million innovation hub

Finnish company, Technopolis Plc, and Botswana-based Variety Investments (Pty) Ltd have won the bid to assist Botswana's Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology in the creation of its innovation hub, taking the form of a local science park near Gaborone.

IST-Africa 2009

The IST-Africa 2009 conference and exhibition is scheduled to take place in Kampala, Uganda, between 6 and 8 May. IST-Africa 2009 will focus on: the Role of ICT for Africa's Development and specifically Applied ICT research topics in the areas of e-Health, Technology Enhanced Learning and ICT Skills, Open Source Software, ICT for Inclusion, e-Infrastructures, ICT for Environmental Risk Management, ICT for Networked Enterprise and e-Government and e-Democracy. The conference programme will be complemented by a demonstration and technology exploitation focused exhibition and a networking reception to take place on 6 May 2008.

First announcement for COVIDSET 2009

The third Conference of Vice-Chancellors and Deans of Science, Engineering and Technology (COVIDSET 2009), organised by the African Network of Scientific Institutions, will be held in Kampala, Uganda, in November 2009. The event will be hosted by Makerere University. The theme of COVIDSET 2009 is Revitalizing Science and Technology Research and Deployment for Sustainable Development in Africa: Strategic, Policy and Regulation Challenges, and will build on discussions and outcomes of the first two conferences: the State of Science and Technology Training Institutions (COVIDSET 2005) and Science and Engineering Education for Sustainable Development (COVIDSET 2007).

URL CAAST-Net Public Notice Board <http://www.caast-net.org/xwiki/bin/view/Main/Public+Noticeboard>

Building Africa's NCP network

South Africa's Department of Science and Technology is a co-leader in CAAST-Net's Work Package 1, but also a partner in INCONTACT, an FP7 project to build the capacities of third country national contact points for the European Commission's Framework Programmes. **Mabatho Ndwandwa** reports on some of the DST's recent work in this area.

THE INCONTACT WORKSHOP held in Pretoria in December last year was well-attended, with delegates from Europe as well as countries from different regions of the African continent: Angola, Botswana, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. From South Africa, a number of researchers, FP7 National Contact Points (NCPs) and government officials were present. A small contingent of CAAST-Net colleagues also attended.

The workshop focused on the need for a continued drive to promote awareness of FP7 in Africa, the role of government in supporting international cooperation and in particular prioritisation of S&T in bilateral engagement with the EU, the role of National Contact Points, and current challenges preventing African researchers from actively participating in EU Framework Programmes.

It also emerged that much needs to be done to educate researchers on the proposal writing process, as well as on the range of legal and financial matters involved in the FPs, specifically intellectual property rights.

“South Africa holds the view that initiatives such as the INCO-NET projects create international partnerships that allow all players to experience mutual learning...”

It was agreed that further cooperation will be sought with other INCO-NET projects such as CAAST-Net, Mediterranean Innovation and Research Coordination Action (MIRA), among others, to increase the success rate of FP proposals originating from potential participants in Africa. Indeed, there are a

number of reciprocal opportunities for CAAST-Net to build on the outcomes of this workshop in order further the project's objectives of strengthening the EU-Africa S&T dialogue.

Following this successful event in Pretoria, a workshop was organised and held in Lesotho on 11 and 12 February 2009, where Lesotho committed to appointing an NCP coordinator by the end of March 2009. A number of names have since been proposed. Senior officials from Lesotho's Ministry of Science and Technology have also identified researchers who will be the NCPs in the following FP7 thematic areas. They are: Health, Mr. Pharoe Sejojo; Environment (including Climate Change), Professor Olale, and assistant Masia Johane; Food, Agriculture and Biotechnology, Mr. Mahommed; Socio-Economic Sciences and the Humanities, Dr. Mampiti Matete; Information and Communication Technologies, Dr. Thabiso Nyabanyaba. Lesotho's Ministry of Science and Technology will also be submitting an official NCP appointment request to the European Commission, which will help them to formalise the process of setting up and hosting an NIP network. The Ministry will be soliciting support from South Africa's Department of Science and Technology in doing so.

Finally, preparations are underway to have an FP7 information session in Malawi in May 2009. South Africa's DST is also engaged in discussions with other sub-Saharan African countries in order to encourage them to consider hosting such events.

South Africa holds the view that initiatives such as the INCO-NET projects create international partnerships that allow all players to experience mutual learning, a view that was adopted by delegates at the December 2008 workshop.

CAAST-Net mobility workshop (continued)

Sub-Saharan African participation in the FP6 Mobility activities, and though there has been a slight improvement under FP7, there is not yet a substantial participation. A number of African researchers are participating in Marie Curie ITNs and a few have secured IIFs to work at European organisations. Encouragingly, there have also been a handful of African successes under IAPP. However, no European researchers were awarded IOFs to work in Africa.

During the third session of the workshop the outline of a CAAST-Net WP1 report was presented, which highlighted that enhanced awareness-raising, both in Europe and in Africa, would be a key intervention to improve African participation in the People programme, given that a lack of awareness was one of the main reasons for the low level of participation. Such efforts would, however, have to be strategically targeted and, as far as the OIFs and IAPPs are concerned, specifically also include the marketing of Africa as partner for global R&D cooperation. The comparatively low levels of African participation are not unique, since there is also comparatively little cooperation with Asia and Latin America. The specific opportunity of the IOF/OIF/IAPP call for proposals currently open was discussed. CAAST-Net will seek to actively promote Sub-Saharan Africa participation in these calls through its existing information and advisory services, and activities.

Going forward, WP1 will produce a report taking into consideration the workshop deliberations based on the outline report presented at the workshop. This report will be circulated for comment to a wide range of stakeholders with a final version due to be presented at the CAAST-Net Assembly in June 2009. The report will ultimately serve as guide to ensure the rich potential of the FP7 People instruments are optimally leveraged during the second half of FP7 to promote greater mobility of researchers between Africa and Europe, which, the workshop agreed, was essential component of S&T cooperation between Africa and Europe, and also served to strengthen international friendship and understanding between nations.

For more information contact Daan du Toit

CAAST-Net's 2nd Annual Assembly

Marseille, France
16-18 June, 2009

Interested in participating?

Please contact the
CAAST-Net Coordinators
for more information.

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The latest FP7 calls

All FP7 calls can be sourced on the Cordis website where they are first published.



URL Cordis http://cordis.europa.eu/home_en.html

KEY
CALL IDENTIFIER |
TITLE |
DEADLINE DATE |
LINK

COOPERATION

HEALTH

FP7-ERANET-2009-RTD |
Coordinated ERA-NET Call 2009 |
2009-04-21 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "Cooperation".

FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES, AND BIOTECHNOLOGY

FP7-ERANET-2009-RTD |
Coordinated ERA-NET Call 2009 |
2009-04-21 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "Cooperation".

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

FP7-ICT-2009-C |
FET Open scheme |
2011-05-24 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "Cooperation".

FP7-ICT-2009-4 | ICT Call 4 |
2008-11-19 | 2009-04-01 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "Cooperation".

FP7-ICT-ENERGY-2009-1 |
Joint call ICT & Energy 1 |
2009-03-31 |

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click "Find a call", "Cooperation".

CALL FOR TENDER
2009/S 57-081602 |
IPv6 Curricula |
2009-05-07 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "Cooperation".

NANOSCIENCES, NANOTECHNOLOGIES, MATERIALS AND NEW PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGIES

FP7-ERANET-2009-RTD |
Coordinated ERA-NET Call 2009 |
2009-04-21 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "Cooperation".

FP7-ENERGY-2009-BRAZIL |
Energy Second Generation
Biofuels - EU Brazil Coordinated
Call | 2009-05-05
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "Cooperation".

FP7-ENERGY-2009-2 |
ENERGY CALL PART 2 |
2009-04-29 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "Cooperation".

ENVIRONMENT (INCLUDING CLIMATE CHANGE)

FP7-ERANET-2009-RTD |
Coordinated ERA-NET Call 2009 |
2009-04-21 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "Cooperation".

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

FP7-ERANET-2009-RTD |
Coordinated ERA-NET Call 2009 |
2009-04-21 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "Cooperation".

IDEAS

ERC-2009-AdG_20090506 |
ERC Advanced Investigators Grant
2009 |
2009-05-06 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "Ideas".

ERC-2009-AdG_20090415 |
ERC Advanced Investigators Grant
2009 |
2009-04-15 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "Ideas".

PEOPLE

FP7-PEOPLE-2009-RG |
Marie Curie Reintegration Grants |
2009-12-31 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "People".

FP7-PEOPLE-2009-IEF |
Marie Curie Intra-European
Fellowships for Career
Development |
2009-08-18 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "People".

FP7-PEOPLE-2009-IIF |
Marie Curie International
Incoming Fellowships (IIF) |
2009-08-18 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "People".

FP7-PEOPLE-2009-IOF |
Marie Curie International
Outgoing Fellowships for
Career Development (IOF) |
2009-08-18 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "People".

FP7-PEOPLE-2009-EURAXESS |
Transnational operation of the
EURAXESS Services Network |
2009-04-22 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "People".

FP7-PEOPLE-2009-IRSES |
Marie Curie International
Research Staff Exchange
Scheme (IRSES) |
2009-03-27 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "People".

EURATOM

NUCLEAR FISSION AND
RADIATION PROTECTION
FP7-Fission-2009 |
Nuclear Fission and Radiation
Protection |
2009-04-21 |
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html. Then click
"Find a call", "Euratom".



The ACP S&T Programme

The Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States explain its science and technology programme and the terms of its implementation.

THE ACP SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMME originates from the need for a joint and systematic ACP-EU approach in the fields of research and innovation. The programme responds to the conclusions of both the 2002 Cape Town ACP Ministerial Forum on Research, as well as the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), and was designed based on an analysis of previous development cooperation programmes financed under the European Development Fund (EDF).

In spite of many years of EDF support to earlier projects in this field, it was noted that there was a lack of, or insufficient, systematic and coherent strategies developed with respect to science and technology advancement aimed at tackling the most pressing developmental needs in ACP States.

North-South partnerships in S&T have not prevented the overall brain drain in the majority of ACP States, and in some cases no significant S&T capacity has been built. Moreover, research and technological results achieved at universities, research and development institutions, as well as think tanks, only very rarely found their way into the national and regional political dialogue and decision-making processes. Following a needs analysis prior to the approval of the programme, actions in the fields of quality health care, applied environmental research activities, energy, transport, agro-industry and sustainable trade, were earmarked as focus areas for the programme.

The main objective of the ACP Science and Technology Programme is to support ACP States in formulating and implementing S&T policies that can lead to sustainable development and poverty

reduction through economic growth and progressive integration in the world economy. As such, the programme aims at strengthening the internal S&T capacity of ACP States at three levels;

a) Institutional administrative and policy making levels, b) Academic research and technology, and c) Business and civil society.

The programme has availed grants for actions presented by organisations such as government ministries dealing with S&T issues, universities, centres of excellence, science networks, the

private sector and civil society organisations. These activities need to focus on building human resources and institutional capacities, building bridges between policy-making bodies, academia and the private sector in order to introduce technological advancement in policy-making according to the needs and challenges of the particular ACP States.

In order to foster cooperation, the organisations need to form partnerships of at least three institutions from a minimum of two ACP countries. They may, but do not necessarily need to, act in partnership with similar European partners. It is important to note that the wide differences among the 79 ACP States, particularly, their levels of devel-

opment, is a formidable challenge for the ACP Science and Technology Programme. Even though there are no standard recipes for responding to the developmental challenges of countries, partnership and networking enhance learning from others, which invariably contributes to finding the most appropriate responses to these challenges for different countries and regions.

Editor's note: With thanks to ACP Secretariat for the contribution.
Contact the ACP Secretariat info@acp-st.eu

“The main objective of the ACP Science and Technology Programme is to support ACP States in formulating and implementing S&T policies that can lead to sustainable development and poverty reduction through economic growth and progressive integration in the world economy.”

More information on ACP S&T?
Visit <http://www.acp-st.eu/>



One laptop, many children

Nicholas Negroponte's One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) initiative has for long captured the attention of development practitioners, researchers, and policymakers the world over. Alison MacDonald argues that while this innovation demonstrates its obvious potential, its implementation and sustainability in local contexts begs many questions.

ONE LAPTOP PER CHILD (OLPC) founder and XO laptop creator, Nicholas Negroponte, hopes his "rugged, low-cost, low-power, connected" laptops can make a long-term difference to the range of pressing global issues by providing the world's poorest children with educational opportunities. According to its website, OLPC's mission is "to provide a means for learning, self-expression and exploration to the nearly two billion children of the developing world with little or no access to education". To this end the multinational organisation aims to "unlock" the potential of children by distributing its bright green laptops widely within a variety of developing world contexts.

OLPC is innovative, ambitious and even admirable, but it also raises a number of questions for teachers, researchers and policymakers alike in local contexts. How does the programme fit within or run against the grain of the education, but also science and technology (S&T), priorities of recipient countries, or entire regions, like the African Union? Will the laptops contribute to capacity-building efforts over the long term to produce a generation of African researchers with the capacity to engage in global research and technological development partnerships? Or, given the fast rate of technology decay, will the laptops simply be rendered obsolete, having had far less than the desired impact?

While the answers will undoubtedly unfold as the roll outs continue, at this early stage in its life perhaps the OLPC initiative demonstrates something of the potential but also the pitfalls of innovation for the purposes of addressing global development challenges.

The XO laptop

At the World Economic Forum in January 2005, Negroponte pitched the idea of creating a one-hundred dollar laptop that could be used by children around the world, especially in developing countries, as an aide to primary education. In just two years, mass production of the XO laptop began and, in November 2007, Uruguayan and Peruvian children were recipients to the first rollout. In January 2008, Ghana became the first African country to invest in the XO laptops when it commenced its pilot project to roll out 1000 units. It is hoping to roll out an additional 10 000 units this year.

In the case of Ghana — a country at the forefront of this project in Africa — one of the primary focus areas of president, John Atta Mills, is developing the capacity of the Ghanaian youth. In the 2009 budget speech as well as Ghana's broader economic policy outlook, there is a strong emphasis on expanding on the usage of computers at school

level, and the government is currently coordinating a number of its ministries to oversee the implementation of its OLPC programme. OLPC aims to get laptops into the hands of primary-level students in the hope that, by starting at a young age, the laptops can help provide a framework for drawing out the capacity for creativity and innovation, and thereby develop a solid foundation of technologically inclined minds. However, it is unclear whether at this early stage OLPC's XO laptop is the ideal tool of choice: of the relatively few African countries with OLPC pilot projects currently in place (approximately seven in total), at least two of them — Ghana and Ethiopia — are experiencing difficulty sourcing the funds for further rollouts. Moreover, even if the funds were available, the computers may not readily support or augment current curricula.

“OLPC is innovative, ambitious and even admirable, but it also raises a number of questions for teachers, researchers and policymakers alike in local contexts.”

CAAST-Net colleague Gordon Akon-Yamga, a research scientist at the Science and Technology Policy Research Institute (STEPRI) of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), in Accra, Ghana, explains that, although the OLPC initiative does compliment Ghana's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for Accelerated Development policy, it does not directly coincide with recent educational reforms. Within these reforms there is support for teaching ICT in schools but not necessarily utilising the OLPC model.

Within the broader debate about the value of using computers as teaching tools in Africa, CAAST-Net's Arne Tostensen, senior researcher at the Research Council of Norway, describes the "serious digital divide between Africa and Europe and North America" as a crucial factor to consider when evaluating the value of OLPC.

Although each laptop has the capacity to connect to the Internet, "the lack of broadband is a serious impediment to the efficient use of the Internet," says Tostensen.

"As a result, even if each pupil had a laptop of his or her own, the communications infrastructure as it is at present and for many years to come, would reduce the utility of such laptops."

The laptops, over the long run, could well assist a new generation of African researchers with a foundation in digital technology.

However, many students develop and hone their research skills later in their educational development, at high-school and at tertiary-level. At an early age, will students in difficult socio-economic circumstances be guided effectively to search the Internet and learn research skills? In addition, while the interconnectivity feature of the XO laptop, which enables children to communicate between computers without the Internet, could prove a useful tool in fostering the exchange of ideas, it may also prove a disruption to learning.

Overall, the OLPC initiative is a new and, to an extent, untested innovation, with very clear aims, but many factors which may prohibit its effective implementation and limit its sustainability. On the other hand, working in partnership with national governments and regional communities, OLPC may be in the position to move towards further developing a better suited tool to more effectively meet global development objectives in education and S&T.

Aligning innovations within the regional frameworks

OLPC's specific focus on youth capacity-building in developing countries, with an emphasis on integrating technology into education, might be seen to coincide with the broader aims and objectives of EU and AU research and development instruments and policies. For example, the EU Strategy for Africa outlines a number of priority areas, one of which is an emphasis on "investing in minds". Here, the EU is looking to provide regular funding for primary education with the intention of reaching children at the earliest possible level. While all levels of education are targets, an investment in early childhood education is a direct investment in potential future research partners for the EU. This focus on investing in minds is to an extent one shared by Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action (2006). Within the objectives of the CPA is a focus on ensuring "that Africa contributes to the global pool of scientific knowledge and technological innovations".

Increased access to computers, like the XO laptop, may be one way to create a foundation of tech savvy youth who, in the future, can contribute to intercontinental research and innovation. However, initiatives like OLPC may be limited by a narrow approach. Keeping all stakeholders involved will go a long way to improve their success.

Alison MacDonald is a political science graduate from the University of British Columbia, Canada, and former CAAST-Net intern at Research Africa. This article was written in a personal capacity and does not reflect the views of the CAAST-Net Project.

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



CAAST-Net is supported under
the Seventh Framework
Programme



Grant No. 212625

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ISSN 2073-610X

Published quarterly. The next
issue will be published on
1 July 2009.

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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 MD-Gs, 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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The limits to purchasing FP7 support

Weighing up whether to procure commercial products and services to support FP7 participation can be difficult. Here's why.

GETTING TO KNOW THE INS AND OUTS of the European Commission's single largest research and technological development platform ever—FP7—was never going to be easy for the newcomer, whether from Europe or elsewhere. That's why there is e-page after e-page dedicated to simplifying EC protocol and procedure. There are even consultancies and consultants, over and above the EC's networks of contact and information points (NCPs and NIPs), who can offer specialised FP7 advice and support, as well as sophisticated facilities for partner searches. Potential partners need only seek and the answer can be found; but sometimes it will come at a small price.

While this "FP industry" has undoubtedly come to the rescue of many past and present participants, how useful is its range of products and services for those from third countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, the Western Balkans or South-East Asia? Indeed, are they worth the extra spend given that there can be no final guarantees of an FP proposal being accepted by the EC?

Daan du Toit, South Africa's Senior S&T representative to the EU and partner in CAAST-Net's Work Package 1, brought the issue to the fore in a recent informal exchange between project partners.

Du Toit argued that although what's out there may indeed be useful, the extent to which such products and services may assist sub-Saharan African organisations to successfully participate in FP projects is subject to debate.

"These [tools] are of course not negative and they do have a role to play. However [they] are primarily aimed at a European audience.

"From an African perspective, the key challenge is to find European consortia to join, and in only a few rare cases will actual FP7 proposals be conceptualised and drafted in Africa (sic). Much of the information in some of the privately produced and very comprehensive but also very expensive FP7 guides will therefore be less relevant to prospective African participants, especially those engaging with FP7 for the first time.

"From the South African experience we have found such interventions sometimes to be distracting and we have preferred to channel our researchers to rather make use of our national advisory and support services, such as our NCPs and the ESASTAP programme, which are tailor-made to present the FP7 in a South African context.

"This is also the focus of projects like INCON-TACT and indeed CAAST-Net WP5 to avail similar services elsewhere in Africa," said du Toit.

For regional partners in the INCO-Net for EU-Latin America S&T cooperation, the position was similar to du Toit's. Angeles Rodriguez-Peña, EULARI-Net's coordinator, broached the question with EULARI-Net partners at a recent workshop.

"In general, our Latin American partners do not find these tools very useful, as they consider that they are aimed at people that already know or work within the Seventh Framework Programme."

Of course each organisation's perspective on the utility of these products and services will differ markedly. What is clear is that strong information services and support networks are needed to provide organisations with the knowledge to participate in the FPs. If these aren't freely and readily available, a consequence might be that potential participants will look elsewhere. **GR**