


EUROAFRICA-ICT FP7 PROJECT
(January 2008 - February 2010)
PUBLISHABLE SUMMARY REPORT
MARCH 2010
Project context

*The Presidents of the European Commission
and of the African Union Commission
during a meeting held in Brussels in October 2008*



In the last decade, the African continent has quite significantly changed politically and economically and seems to have entered, at last, a true period of economic and social development, and started to move, under the aegis of the African Union (AU) created in 2002, towards an integrated area of peace and prosperity.

In this context, many world powers, among them the USA and China, have logically been striving during this period for closer links with this continent. It has also been the case, of course, of European countries, benefitting from close (however complex) historical links with African countries. But it has also been the case of the European Union:

- adopting a “**EU strategy for Africa**” in 2005, promoting in particular a more coordinated approach of the Member States (MS) policies and activities related to Africa,
- agreeing with the AU, end of 2007 in Lisbon (on the occasion of the second Africa-EU Summit), on a “**Africa-EU Joint Strategy and Action Plan**”, going beyond donor-recipient arrangements, and paving the way for a partnership of equals based on mutual interest.

It has to be mentioned that the EU wish to treat Africa as one region is quite challenging, not only because Africa remains diverse (development status, population size, political stability, etc.) but also because current EU policies and programmes typically consider 3 areas in Africa:

- **North Africa**, addressed through the “Euro-Mediterranean partnership” (Euromed), formerly known as the “Barcelona process” and re-launched in 2008 as the “Union for the Mediterranean”,



- **Sub-Saharan Africa**, addressed through the “ACP-EC-Partnership Agreement”, known as the “Cotonou Agreement” signed in 2000 in Cotonou, Benin and entered into force in 2003,
- **South Africa**, addressed through a strategic partnership signed in 2007 (building on former and thematic agreements).

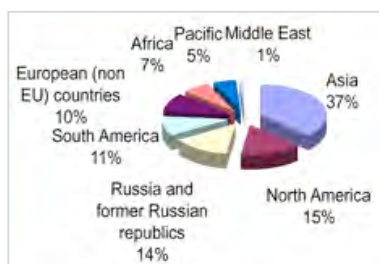
Africa has also recognised that S&T and ICT are key vectors for bridging the scientific and digital divides, for reducing poverty and ensuring socio-economic development, for reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and, eventually, for supporting the sustainable evolution of Africa.

The Africa Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action (CPA) formulated by the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and the AU, the creation of the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST), and the African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE), are only some of recent examples of **Africa’s determination to rely on S&T and ICT to achieve its growth and development objectives**.

It is therefore quite logical that one of the 8 thematic partnerships identified in Lisbon in 2007 on the occasion of the Africa-EU Summit is a “**Partnership for Science, Information Society and Space**” (known as the “8th EU-AU partnership”).

This thematic partnership, focusing on 19 lighthouse projects - 6 of them being considered as early deliverables - is under implementation since October 2008 and should definitely contribute strengthening S&T cooperation links between the two continents in the ICT domain.

When considering S&T cooperation on ICT between Europe and Africa, a lot of initiatives have already developed these last years, particularly under the aegis of the European Commission Framework Programmes 6 (FP6) and 7 (FP7), in order to increase the participation of African organisations in these Framework Programmes (a participation at a very low level, when compared to other regions of the world).



*Participation of 3rd country organisations in the FP6/IST Programme
(in % of the total number of participating 3rd country organisations)
(Source: FP6 START project)*

Among such initiatives:

- The FP6 **START** support action, funded by DG Information Society and Media (DG INFSO), aiming at strengthening policy dialogues, developing awareness on FP7 in Africa (ICT theme), identifying research areas of common interest, and eventually connecting research organisations from both regions so that joint research projects can be shaped,



- The FP6 **IST-Africa** support action also funded by DG INFSO, and in the framework of which many conferences, workshops and training modules are taking place in Africa (including the IST-Africa conferences),
- The **CAAST-Net** INCO-NET project funded by DG Research and aiming at fostering policy dialogues and steering S&T cooperation between Europe and Africa in new strategic directions (encompassing all thematic areas of the FP7 programme).

e-Infrastructures are logically playing a key role at a period when S&T cooperation between the two continents has to be strengthened, since they provide research organisations with a key opportunity to share access to (regional or global) scientific facilities and to support the development of their cooperation projects. Cooperation between Europe and Africa in this area particularly benefits from:

- The signature in October 2007 in Addis Ababa of the “**EU-Africa Partnership on Infrastructure**” aiming at interconnecting the African continent (in transport, water, energy, and ICT), identifying EASSy (Eastern Africa Submarine Cable System) as a flagship project, and supported by the creation of the EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund,
- The quick development of **African National Research and Education Networks** (NRENs) and of their interconnection, a momentum supported by the African **UbuntuNet Alliance**,
- the **AfricaConnect project**, one of the 6 “early deliverables” of the “8th EU-AU partnership” evoked above, supporting the development of NRENs in sub-Saharan Africa and their interconnection with Europe’s GEANT network, building on the EUMEDconnect initiative implemented in North Africa.

Taking the above into consideration, the perspectives of S&T cooperation in ICT between Europe and Africa can be seen as quite promising but a lot has to be done to identify, promote, support and exploit cooperation opportunities.

Project objectives



The FP7 EuroAfriCa-ICT project, a support action in the project portfolio of the International relations Unit of European Commission’s DG Information Society and Media (Project Officer: Mr Thierry Devars), has been designed in the context summarised in the previous paragraph and in full continuity with the FP6 **START** project (the two project partnerships having several partners in common, including the project coordinator).

EuroAfriCa-ICT activities have aimed, over the project period (from January 2008 to February 2010), at:

- Supporting **policy dialogues** (more particularly those addressing cooperation on ICT research between Europe and Africa),
- Strengthening **concertation and synergies** between key stakeholders in the field,
- Supporting the development of **effective cooperation projects**, namely under FP7,
- Raising **awareness** on FP7.



The project has mainly focused on **sub-Saharan Africa** (and the Caribbean region to fully take into account the ACP dimension evoked above) because this area is the one where the most important socio-economic changes will occur and the greatest opportunities will develop in the short to medium terms. Even if, during project activities, the EU-AU overall framework has of course been promoted and referred to, it has been indeed considered as preferable, for the sake of efficiency, not to target pan-African activities.

The EuroAfriCa-ICT project partnership consisted of 9 organisations from sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and Europe:

- **Sigma Orionis** (France), Project Coordinator,
- The **Meraka** Institute of the CSIR (South Africa),
- The Panos Institute West Africa - **PIWA** (Senegal),
- The Academy of Sciences for the Developing World - **TWAS** (Italy),
- The Association of Commonwealth Universities - **ACU** (United Kingdom),
- The **Makerere** University (Uganda),
- The Kigali Institute of Science and Technology - **KIST** (Rwanda),
- The Caribbean Academy of Science - **CAS** (Jamaica),
- The Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie - **AUF** (Belgium).



Sub-Saharan Africa



The Caribbean



Project activities

The EuroAfriCa-ICT project activities have included:

- The organisation of two “**Cooperation Forums**” (one in Europe and one in Africa),
- The organisation of three “**Concertation Meetings**” in Brussels,
- The organisation of five “**Awareness Workshops**” (four in sub-Saharan Africa and one in the Caribbean),



- The development of specific activities targeting **ETPs and JTIs** (European Technology Platforms and Joint Technology Initiatives) in the ICT area,
- **Support and guidance** to organisations from the 3 regions (Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Caribbean, in the development of potential cooperation projects,
- The development of a **web-based communication platform**,
- An extensive set of **promotion and dissemination activities**.

COOPERATION FORUMS



Two cooperation forums have been organised during the project lifetime:

- The “**2009 Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum on ICT Research**” on March 25-26, 2009, at the European Commission in Brussels,



- The “**2010 Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum on ICT Research**” on Feb. 4, 2010, at the UN Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.





These open and registration-free events, both organised under the aegis of the European Commission and of the African Union Commission (and with the support of many organisations), were important moments in the development of project activities since they aimed at providing a key opportunity to contribute achieving most of project objectives: exchange of information and networking between stakeholders from the two regions, development of synergies and consensus, policy dialogues, identification of cooperation priorities, support to interested organisations, etc.

Both have been very successful in terms of attendance (300-350 delegates from over 50 countries at each event) and have allowed to effectively reaching the above-mentioned objectives (which was confirmed by surveys of delegates).

CONCERTATION MEETINGS



Three concertation meetings have been organized in Brussels during the project lifetime:

- On June 26, 2008 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel,
- On December 10, 2008 at the European Commission,
- On October 1, 2009 at the Radisson Blu Royal Hotel.



The open and registration-free events, organised under the aegis of the European Commission, were also important moments in the development of project activities since they were mainly aimed at promoting and developing **synergies** between European (and other) stakeholders, at a time when cooperation initiatives with Africa (addressing ICT research or more general issues) are booming, making it important for all stakeholders to develop the best possible synergies, in order to avoid confusion, not to lose time, to reach greater impacts of each initiative, etc.

The **repeatedly high level of participation** in these events (70 to 100 delegates in average) is a sign that they have reached this objective (which was confirmed by surveys of delegates).



AWARENESS WORKSHOPS



Five awareness workshops have been organised by the EuroAfriCa-ICT project:

- In **Pretoria**, South Africa on June 17-18, 2008,
- In **Kampala**, Uganda on October 20-21, 2008,
- In **Kigali**, Rwanda on March 2-3, 2009,
- In **Kingston**, Jamaica on March 18-19, 2009,
- In **Cotonou**, Benin on May 19-20, 2009.



These open and registration-free events mainly aimed at introducing in detail to local stakeholders the international dimension of FP7 and related opportunities of cooperation with Europe. They also allowed to provide direct support and guidance to stakeholders showing the interest in these opportunities, to visit leading research laboratories, to better understand local research capacities and priorities, to more widely promote the EuroAfriCa-ICT initiative and FP7 through journalists and TV reporters attending these events, etc.

All these events have been successful with an average level of attendance of 70 to 100 delegates, coming not only from the hosting city and country but also from other countries of the region, and have allowed reaching the above listed objectives.

TECHNICAL VISITS



Each time it was possible to be implemented, the EuroAfrica-ICT Partnership organised in Africa half days technical visits (mainly during awareness workshops and during the 2nd cooperation Forum). Those visits were attended, in average, by 30 to 50 persons.



ACTIVITIES TARGETING ETPs AND JTIs

The European Technology Platforms (ETPs) and the Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs) are key constituencies in the development of European research policy, in particular in orienting the FP7 Work Programme to better meet the needs of industry. It is thus logical that the EuroAfriCa-ICT partnership had planned to implement close links with ICT-related ETPs and JTIs: they can play an important role in the effective development of S&T cooperation projects between Europe and Africa (and the Caribbean region).

Targeted ETPs and JTIs in the ICT area

Name	Focus	Nature
NEM	Networked and Electronic Media	ETP
ISI	Satellite communications.	
NESSI	Networked European Software and Services Initiative.	
eMobility	Mobile and Wireless Communications	
EPOSS	Smart Systems Integration	
EUROP	European Robotics Platform	
Photonics 2I	Photonics	
ARTEMIS	Embedded Intelligence and systems.	JTI
ENIAC	Nanoelectronics	

A number of activities have successfully developed over the project period, beyond day-to-day interaction, consisting in frequent updates of ETPs and JTIs on project developments, and on answers to specific questions from these constituencies (on certain aspects of envisioned opportunities, on key stakeholders, etc.):

- Participation of ETPs and JTIs in project events (concertation meetings, cooperation forums, EuroAfriCa-ICT networking session at ICT 2008, etc.),
- Participation of the project in activities of ETPs and JTIs (participation in ETP Summits, contribution to ETP newsletter, promotion of EuroAfriCa-ICT activities on their web sites, etc.).

At the end of the EuroAfriCa-ICT project, quite encouraging results have been obtained.

- **Close links have been established with all these constituencies,**
- Many of them (eMobility, ISI, NESSI, NEM, etc.) have strongly participated in project events and had the opportunity to meet key stakeholders, thus being in a better position to confirm their interest in envisioned cooperation opportunities, to include Africa in their strategic research agenda, and to start shaping concrete research projects.
- Some of them have even invited the project to be more visible among their members, through the participation in their events, the contribution to their newsletters, etc. which allowed an even closer interaction with these constituencies.

Links with these constituencies have become an important asset of “The EuroAfrica-ICT initiative” which can be exploited in the framework of the activities of the FP7 EuroAfrica-ICT.org project, defined in continuity with the present EuroAfriCa-ICT project and which started on January 1, 2010.



DEVELOPMENT OF POTENTIAL COOPERATION PROJECTS

All along the project period, all partners have made substantial efforts to provide, through face to face meetings, telephone and online **Helpdesk Services**, support and guidance services to organisations from both regions interested in developing joint ICT research projects under FP7, this increasingly important role in connecting research organisations from Europe and Africa being recognised by **Ideal-IST** (the European Commission's funded partner search and support network in the ICT area), leading to the signature of a MoU between Ideal-IST and the EuroAfriCa-ICT coordinator, aimed at closely cooperating in this region.

These services, added to the outputs of other project activities (for instance project events allowing stakeholders from the two regions to be fully informed of cooperation opportunities, to network and envision possible projects, to directly interact with policy dialogue officials, etc.) have led to **an important number of emerging projects** (even if for confidentiality reasons, it is not easy to precisely count them) out of which a high proportion should be presented to future FP7 Calls.

WEB-BASED COMMUNICATION PLATFORM

Starting from the web site already developed in the framework of the FP6 START project (with which the EuroAfriCa-ICT project had been defined in continuity) a revised version of the www.euroafrica-ict.org web site has been developed, following the concept of a "web based communication platform".

Beyond offering access to all content developed by the project, substantial background information and frequent news, and other standard functionalities, this revised web site has progressively included:

- A lively online **Community of researchers** from both regions interested in the development of joint R&D projects (over 200 members by the end of the project),
- An online **Database of excellence research centres** in sub-Saharan Africa specialising in the ICT domain (67 centres identified),
- An online **"EuroAfriCa-ICT database"** referencing organisations, projects, programmes and initiatives addressing S&T cooperation on ICT between Europe or other parts of the world, and sub-Saharan Africa (over 450 entries) and mainly used by the project partnership to better understand who is doing what and why, what are the local priorities and needs, which precise synergies can be found, etc.



Home page of the revised www.euroafrica-ict.org web site



OTHER PROMOTION AND DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

In order to widely promote the objectives of the project, to disseminate its results, and to ensure its overall impact among the European and African ICT communities, a great number of other promotion and dissemination activities have developed all along the project period.

Among such activities:

- The periodical sending of **blast emails** on project activities and results using the contact databases of each project partner,
- The preparation and wide dissemination (on the occasion of project events in particular) of successive versions of **project documentation** (flyers, brochures, posters) and “goodies”,
- The active contribution of the project to **external events**, organised by other programmes and initiatives addressing cooperation with Africa, or by the European Commission (the project managed an exhibition booth and a networking session, both on “Euro-Africa cooperation on ICT research, at ICT 2008), etc.
- The release and dissemination of a project **newsletter** to the contact database of each partner (and to all those subscribing to this free of charge newsletter online).



The EuroAfriCa-ICT booth and networking session at ICT 2008

Lessons learned and perspectives

International cooperation takes by nature time to develop and requires relentless efforts from any organisations wishing to contribute to its development. And when the focus is a region that is still in a development status not fully adequate to envision a strong involvement in ICT research under FP7 in the short term, an even longer time is needed...

However Euro-Africa partnership is strategic and, as a well-known motto says: “it is not because a tree takes a long time to grow that it should not be planted early”. Moreover, the main lesson learned through the EuroAfriCa-ICT project is that, in the present booming period of cooperation initiatives (from all over the world) targeting Africa, in most African countries, capacities can develop in quite a short time period, local stakeholders can quickly become ready to enter cooperation partnerships under FP7, and project results of mutual interest can be envisioned for the near future.



Therefore we would fully share the statement that Commissioner Viviane Reding expressed at the “1st Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum on ICT Research” organised by the EuroAfriCa-ICT project in March 2009 in Brussels that the perspectives of S&T cooperation in ICT between Europe and Africa can be seen with a reasonable amount of optimism.

Of course, it would help if Africa can be more significantly mentioned in the 2011-2012 version of the ICT Work Programme than it was in its 2009-2010 version. In all cases, the EuroAfriCa-ICT partnership, the core of which will continue developing activities aiming at strengthening cooperation on ICT research between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa in the framework of the EuroAfrica-ICT.org follow-up project, is committed to do its best efforts to make it happen, and this in close liaison with the other projects, programmes and initiatives so that the highest overall impact can be reached.

Further information

Please visit www.euroafrica-ict.org or contact the project coordinator

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