

8th Africa-EU Partnership on Science, Information Society & Space

During December 2007, the Africa-EU Summit in Lisbon agreed the **8th Africa – EU Strategic Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space**¹ and process to shortlist flagship projects and agree funding mechanisms commenced. This provides a long-term framework for structured dialogue and cooperation between Africa and the European Union in the fields of Science, Information Society and Space. It introduced a wider policy dimension² and opened up new opportunities for cooperation between Africa and the European Union.

It provides a platform for promoting national and regional ICT policies and strengthening the regulatory framework in Africa based on international good practices. It also contributes to harmonising ICT initiatives, including infrastructure connectivity and interoperability. It supports regional research and education networks including interconnections to the GEANT-2 network.

It promotes the use of ICTs of high societal impact in Africa, for example in the areas of e-health, e-government and e-learning, as well as enhancing ICT human resources, e-skills and digital literacy.

It supports the application of Science, Technology and Innovation [STI] to achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), for example, through promoting integrated health research strategies and improving national capacities in areas such as health management information systems, epidemiological surveys and clinical and operational research.

It provides an important opportunity to enhance cooperation between African Regional Economic Communities [RECs] on mainstreaming Science, Technology and Innovation for socio-economic development and competitiveness – and strengthens the capacities of RECs.

It helps develop harmonised Science, Technology and Innovation [STI] policies in Africa, reinforces the importance of STI in education and training and promotes the participation of the African research community in EU programmes for research and technological development.

Projects under the 8th Partnership will help bridge both scientific and digital divides, strengthening Africa's base in the areas of Science and technology and enhancing the use of ICTs and space applications as enablers for growth and socio-economic development.

On 01 October 2008, the European Commission and African Union Commission held a College-to-College meeting in Brussels to agree the initial phase of the Implementation of the 8th Partnership.

Janez Potocnik, EU Commissioner for Science and Research, Viviane Reding, EU Commissioner for Information Society and Media, Günter Verheugen, EU Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry, Louis Michel, EU Commissioner for Development and Professor Ezin, African Union Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, discussed a portfolio of 19 "lighthouse projects" identified and designed by the EU-AU Joint Task Force to respond to African

¹ www.ist-africa.org/home/default.asp?page=euafrica

² <http://africa-eu-partnership.org>

needs to serve as the framework for implementing the EU/AU Partnership on Science, ICT and Space and its Action plan. They agreed that 6 projects would be considered as 'early deliverables' that would receive immediate attention (2 ICT related, 2 Science related and 2 focused on Space).

The **Information Society** priority is focused on bridging the digital divide and to enhance the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as key enablers for poverty reduction, growth, and socio-economic development.

Expected outcomes include:

- A more sustainable, accessible, affordable and effective African ICT infrastructure
- Enhanced use of ICT applications in order to achieve MDG objectives, notably in the health and education sector
- Progress toward inclusive and equitable knowledge-based societies
- Common African-EU positions and approaches in international and regional ICT for a

Five **Information Society** projects were agreed and the process to identify implementation partners and funding commenced under the first Action Plan (2008 – 2010):

- Africa Connect
- The African internet Exchange System (AXIS)
- African Virtual Campus
- The African Leadership ICT Program (ALICT)
- Harnessing information & Knowledge for Youth Development (ALIN)

A Joint Expert Group (JEG8) was established by the EU and African Member States to provide technical expertise and input to implementation of the 8th Partnership in the context of the first Action Plan. JEG8 Meetings took place in Hammamat, Tunisia on 23 November 2009, in Cairo on 05 – 06 March 2010 and in Durban on 19 – 20 May 2010 (in association with IST-Africa 2010).

Information Society Project Achievements under first Action Plan phase

The 2 projects in the ICT theme initially selected were the "African Internet Exchange System", focused on enhancing Internet deployment and use in Africa, and "Africa Connect" to extend the reach of the European research and education high-speed network GEANT to Sub-Saharan Africa.

The **African Internet Exchange System (AXIS)** project aims to support the establishment of a continental African Internet infrastructure through national and regional Internet exchange points. Such deployment is considered crucial for the development of the internet in Africa, generating huge costs savings by keeping local traffic local and offering better quality of service and new applications opportunities. AXIS activities will include technical assistance on planning, regulatory/policy issues, as well as human training to achieve this objective. Initial funding of €5 million was secured in 2010 from the EU-Africa Infrastructures Trust Fund.

The **AfricaConnect** project will support the development of regional research and education networks in Sub-Saharan Africa and their interconnection with the European GEANT2 network, building on a similar initiative, EumedConnect, implemented in North-Africa (currently interconnecting around 1.5 Million users across more than 500 research organisations). The objective will be to contribute integrating the African research community both at regional and international levels, through interconnection with the most cost-effective high bandwidth capacity.

On December 2008, the European Commission (EC) launched a ten-month feasibility study, FEAST³, to work with key stakeholders to provide the EC with a roadmap to implement the *Africa Connect initiative*.

The first phase of the *Africa Connect initiative* (supporting the deployment of regional research and education networks in Sub-Saharan Africa and their interconnection with the European GEANT Network) was financed in 2009 with €11.8 million from the 10th EDF Intra-ACP Indicative Programme. The project, to be implemented by Delivery of Advanced Network Technology to Europe (DANTE) was due to be launched during late 2010.

The **HIPSSA Project**⁴ aims to support the implementation of the AU Reference Framework for Harmonization of Telecommunications and ICT policies and Regulation in Africa. It started in December 2008 with €4 million in funding from the 9th EDF Intra-ACP indicative programme for a 3-year duration. It supports the harmonisation of ICT regulatory frameworks across Sub-Saharan Africa. Initially this targets four Regional Economic Communities (RECs): ECOWAS, ECCAS, EAC and SADC. Currently implemented by the ITU, the AUC is co-chairing the project Steering Committee.

UNESCO has commenced the **African Virtual Campus Project**⁵ with initial funding from Spain to establish campuses in 11 West African Countries. Additional funding is required to reach the final objective of an online African virtual campus network for STI education, based on the successful model of the Avicenna Virtual Campus established in the Mediterranean region.

The **ALICT (African Leadership ICT Programme) Project**⁶, which is leveraging a national initiative developed in Egypt, has secured €3 million in funding from Finland, and will be implemented in East and Southern Africa by GeSCI. The goal is to develop a pan-African ICT training programme for policy makers and IT professionals to support leadership and the creation of agents of change in the African ICT sector through especially designed training and capacity-building activities.

The ALICT programme is planned to be implemented in two phases over 3 years [June 2010 - June 2013]. During the first phase the focus is on researching, designing, piloting and developing an appropriate capacity building model for the programme. This will involve joint and participatory

³ www.feast-project.org/

⁴ http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/projects/ITU_EC_ACP/hipssa/

⁵ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/science-technology/sti-policy/african-virtual-campus/>

⁶ http://www.gesci.org/assets/files/ALICT%20Programme%20Document_%20Final_%20External%20use%20doc_17012011.pdf

planning with the AUC, and other partners such as UNECA to identify the needs, capacity gaps and Knowledge Society skills required by current and future African leaders. In Phase 2 the appropriate model identified in Phase one will be implemented, with support from the AUC and other partners such as UNECA.

AYIN (Harnessing information & Knowledge for Youth Development) is championed by Egypt to provide ICT training to youth and entrepreneurs. This project aims at deploying multimedia training centres targeting the youth as well as incubators funds for young ICT entrepreneurs. It is expected that expertise will be leveraged from existing Living Labs.

The EU and AUC Commissioners also agreed to leverage the European 7th Framework Programme for Research (FP7) to broaden African participation, notably in the areas of health, environment and climate, energy, agriculture and food, information and communication technologies and space applications. FP7 funding will complement other EC Development programmes.

Action Plan 2011-2013

The 2nd Action Plan 2011 – 2013⁷ was adopted at the 3rd Africa EU Summit⁸, which took place in Tripoli, Libya 29 - 30 November 2010.

The main objectives of the Information Society Priority are to complement investments in ICT infrastructures deployment, as planned in the EU-Africa Partnership on Infrastructures, by exploiting synergies between the EU 2020 Digital Agenda and AU ICT development frameworks, and support ICT capacity-building initiatives for mass diffusion of ICTs and related services, as key enablers for poverty reduction, economic growth, social development and regional integration.

Expected Outcomes include:

- A successful implementation of the AU ICT development frameworks including ARAPKE (African Regional Action Plan for the Knowledge Economy), Reference Framework for ICT Policy Harmonization and the 2010 Addis Ababa AU Summit Declaration on ICT for Africa's development.
- A more inclusive and affordable access to ICT applications and services and widespread use of ICTs, in particular the Internet, across all socio-economic sectors to fast-track the MDGs objectives, notably in the health sector, where use of telemedicine and the creation of biodata banks can be considered, and the education sector.
- Stronger cooperation regarding the digital economy and the reduction of the digital divide, including participation of the private sector, international financial institutions and UN agencies
- A more competitive African economy through ICT uptake and innovation

⁷ http://africa-eu-partnership.org/sites/default/files/doc_jaes_action_plan_2011_13_en.pdf#page=6

⁸ <http://africa-eu-partnership.org/node/398>

- Consultation on African-EU positions and approaches in international and regional ICT fora to enhance mutual understanding
- Mutual beneficial economic collaboration for AU-EU industries and SMEs involved in ICTs

Activities envisaged to be undertaken include:

- Set up an AUC-EC Information Society Dialogue, in partnership with EU and AU Member States, addressing all ICT-related cooperation issues in a comprehensive and integrated way, with the view to better bridge policies, programmes and practices related to the implementation of the EU 2020 Digital Agenda and AU ICT development frameworks, and to coordinate EU and African positions in global ICT Fora. These can include e.g. enhancement of digital literacy, skills and inclusion, skills for research and technological development, regulatory issues, infrastructure deployment with promotion of the use of e-applications in various sectors of governance.
- Establish a multi-stakeholders implementation group, co-chaired by the AUC and EC and gathering ICT representatives from European and African Member States, RECs, research community, private sector, civil society and NGOs, international financial institutions and international organizations in order to facilitate cooperation and better coordination of national and regional programmes as well as identify concrete initiatives of mutual interests in support of EU and AU priorities and mobilize funds accordingly. The implementation group will notably focus on the following activities:
 - Build on the current *Harmonisation of ICT Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa* (HIPSSA) Initiative to ensure the full participation of African non-ACP member states and to further support implementation of ICT regulatory and policy reforms and regional harmonization to create the right enabling environment to foster private investment and market development, while ensuring affordable service costs and the widest diffusion of ICTs and e-services.
 - Promote the diffusion and sharing of ICT best practices and successful public-private partnerships [PPP], notably through establishing close interaction with the EU-Africa Business Forum and support for Africa EU Networking platforms, as well as linking national initiatives to existing regional and global platforms and networks, notably to those provided by international financing institutions and private sector Fora
 - Design appropriate e-skills and digital literacy initiatives, supporting the development of local digital content and applications of high socio-economic impact, notably in the fields of health and education in order to fast-track attainment of the MDGs
 - Upgrade ICT research cooperation, local ICT innovation and entrepreneurship, exploiting in particular the potential of mobile and fixed wireless technologies as well as promoting ICT business incubators and living labs, including the *Africa Incubators Network* and the *European Network of Living Labs* [ENOLL]

- Promote cooperation in Research and Education Networking by exploiting interconnection between the European GEANT network and established African regional networks such as EumedConnect, Ubuntunet or WACREN, and supporting the development of an integrated pan-African Research and Education Network.

Key Actors to be involved include:

- AU Commission/NEPAD, RECs, African States,
- European Commission, EIB, EU Member States, Regions
- Research Community
- Private Sector
- Civil Society and NGOs
- Local Authorities
- International Financing Institutions
- UN specialized agencies and international organizations.

Finance methods to be leveraged:

- Dedicated financing tools and appropriate financing sources in accordance with their respective scope and their relevance to objectives and activities concerned, their specificity and eligibility criteria, such as the 10th EDF;
- ENPI; DCI; EU-Africa Infrastructures Trust Fund and FP7
- Bilateral contributions from EU Member States and African States
- Private sector; NGOs; local authorities; financial institutions

Outcomes from Africa-EU Joint Task Force Meeting, 4 – 5 April '11, Brussels

During the recent Africa-EU Joint Task Force Meeting, which took place 4 - 5 April 2011 in Brussels, the Co-chairs emphasised that following adoption of the second Action Plan, more focus should be put on implementation, a matter of shared responsibility, to which resources need to be made available. The co-Chairs called on the Joint Expert Groups to focus on prioritisation of activities and the delivery of concrete outcomes through developing clear roadmaps.

The co-Chairs agreed on the need to explore all possible avenues, including existing and new instruments, to finance the implementation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES).

The financing of the second Action Plan 2011-13 will primarily be undertaken through mainstreaming of the JAES activities in existing instruments. The 2011 Mid-Term Review of the Intra-ACP and the Regional Indicative Programmes of the European Development Fund, which takes place in June '11 and equivalent reviews of the ENPI programmes, will offer significant funding

opportunities in this prospect. It was agreed that no efforts should be spared on both sides to achieve significant results that would benefit the JAES.

In relation to the Information Society priority, it was agreed that the implementation roadmap of the P8/Information Society Priority will be discussed in Gaborone on 11 - 12 May in the context of the IST-Africa 2011 Conference⁹ where a meeting of the dedicated multi-stakeholders implementation group (as planned in the P8 AP 2011-2013) has been convened. Work has already started to identify the scaling-up of flagships projects launched under the AP 2008-2010, including the HIPSSA, ALICT and African Virtual Campus projects. The AYIN project is currently being refined taking into account possible cooperation and bridges to be established with the Finland/InfoDev incubators programme, ENoLL (the European Network of Living Labs) as well as emerging African Living labs. The IST-Africa Initiative has organised a workshop on Africa-EU cooperation on Living Labs in Gaborone on 10 May 2011 in cooperation with EnoLL as a pre-conference event.

It was also decided to launch at policy level a mapping exercise regarding synergies to be identified between the EU 2020 Digital Agenda and the AU ICT development frameworks including the current ARAPKE and its follow-up that the AUC is preparing.

Actions prioritised for 2011

The short-term objective in the Information Society Priority for 2011 will be to sustain and expand flagship initiatives launched under the AP 2008-2010. This includes:

- scaling-up the HIPSSA project (due to end in Q4 2011) in support of implementing the AU Reference Framework for Harmonization of ICT policies and regulation in Africa. The identification of key priorities to be implemented were identified in the context of the January 2010 AU Summit on ICT for African Development and their implementation is considered as a short term priority in order to benefit from the community-building dynamics generated by the on-going HIPSSA in terms of regional coordination and integration.
- expanding the geographic scope of the African Virtual Campus project which UNESCO has started to implement in 11 West African countries. Already recommended at the 2010 C2C meeting , this geographical extension to Sub-Saharan Africa is considered an urgent priority given the maturity of the initiative, and the investments already made to deploy the e-learning network in North Africa and West Africa
- expanding geographic scope of the ALICT project, which started being implemented by GeSCI (Global e-Schools initiative) in East Africa and Southern Africa
- refining the definition of the AYIN project together with committed stakeholders in view of its short term implementation

⁹ www.IST-Africa.org/Conference2011

In parallel the European Commission and African Union Commission will work on further mobilizing stakeholders (including Member States, private sector and financial institutions) to identify concrete projects in support of the AP 2011-2013 priorities not yet covered (e.g. support to developing local digital content and e-services) in support of ARAPKE II. Work will also concentrate on identification of innovative fast track funding mechanisms for ICT applications projects on the model of the e-transformation Trust Fund launched by the World Bank in cooperation with South Korea to support public-private partnerships [PPP] in the field. A short-term objective for the EU and AUC Commissions is to organize a dedicated workshop mid-2011 with committed and interested parties including the World Bank, AfDB, the EU-Africa Business Forum, the EIB, EU and African development banks as well as Member States.

Identification of opportunities and challenges in the implementation process

Huge cooperation opportunities exist in the Information Society sector given the current dynamics of ICT penetration and adoption in Africa, and the possible transfer of EU experience in setting up a regional inclusive Knowledge Economy. This has resulted in Europe being a world leader in broadband internet and mobile penetration, with ICT accounting for more than 50% of EU productivity growth. ICTs have a unique potential to fast-track African development paths in all socio-economic sectors. Those opportunities might however be wasted given the lack of available funding in the EU development programmes currently focused on the P8/Information Society priorities, despite the outcome of the January 2010 AU Summit that declared the ICT sector as a top priority for Africa's development strategy. In this context, both the EU and AUC urge in African RECs and countries to earmark EDF regional and national funds in the context of the EDF 10 NIPs and RIPs re-programming for the implementation of this important JAES priority.

Information Society Implementation Group Meeting, IST-Africa 2011, Gaborone, 11 – 12 May

A High Level Roundtable on Implementation of the Africa-EU 8th Strategic Partnership will take place during the Opening Plenary of IST-Africa 2011. Panel participants will include:

- Mr Nkatla C. Morupisi, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Infrastructure Science and Technology
- Mr Mabua L. Mabua, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Transport and Communication
- Dr Ahmed Hamdy, Deputy Director, HRST, African Union Commission
- Mr Zoran Stancic, Deputy DG, DG Information Society and Media, European Commission
- Prof Luis Magalhães, President, Knowledge Society Agency (UMIC), Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education, Portugal, European Chair of the Africa-EU 8th Partnership
- Dr Hannes Toivanen, VTT, Finland, European Co-Chair Information Society, Africa-EU 8th Partnership
- Dr Tomaz Augusto Salomão, Executive Secretary, SADC (tbc)

- Mr Ilari Lindy, Senior ICT Policy Specialist (Innovation), Global Information & Communication Technologies, The World Bank Group
- Mr Jose Vieira Couceiro, Chief Executive Officer, Mascom, Botswana
- Mr Pele Moleta, Chief Executive Officer, BotswanaPost
- Ms Michelle Makaroff, Co-chair, Europe-Africa Business Forum ICT Working Group
- Mr John Connell, Education Business Development Manager, CISCO

The first meeting of the Information Society Implementation Group will commence on Wednesday afternoon (Stream 3b – 8b) as part of the IST-Africa 2011 Conference.

Wednesday 11 May	
09:00 – 12:30	Opening Plenary, IST-Africa 2011 High Level Roundtable on Implementation of the Africa-EU 8th Partnership
14:00-14:20	1st Meeting of the Information Society Implementation Group (Session 3b) Introductory Remarks- Objectives
14:20 – 14:40	Implementation status of the Action Plan 2008-2010 flagship initiatives
14:40-14:50	Objectives of the Action plan 2011-2013
14:50-16:00	Financial resources mobilization - European Development Fund - EU-Africa Infrastructures Trust Fund - National funding / financial institutions - Innovative funding mechanism : World Bank e-transformation Trust Fund
16:00-16:15	Coffee break
16:15-17:30	Action plan 2011-2013 implementation roadmap (Session 4b) Support to ICT Policy and Regulatory Reforms / Scaling-up the HIPSSA Initiative
17:30-18:00	African RECs: Report on ICT regional initiatives and strategies
Thursday 12 May	
09:00 - 10:30	Action Plan 2011-2013 Implementation Roadmap (Session 5b) - public-private partnerships; interaction with the EU-Africa Business forum - sharing of ICT best practices; stocktaking of successful deployments
10:30 - 10:45	Coffe break
10:45 - 12:30	Action Plan 2011-2013 Implementation Roadmap (Session 6b) - e-skills, digital literacy programmes + sclaing-up the ALICT programme - promotion of digital content
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch

14:00-16:00	Action Plan 2011-2013 Implementation Roadmap (Session 7b) - <i>e-applications in the health and education sectors + full implementation of the African Virtual Campus project</i> - <i>ICT research, innovation and entrepreneurship / cooperation on living labs/ implementation of the AYIN project</i>
16:00-16:15	Coffee break
16:15-16:45	Action Plan 2011-2013 Implementation Roadmap (Session 8b) - <i>Research and Education Networking / AfricaConnect</i>
16:45-18:00	List of Actions-next steps

On Friday participants at the Information Society Implementation Group are invited to participate at the **IST-Africa workshop - Linking European & African Researchers (Session 9b & 10b 09:00 – 12:30)**, which provides an overview of ICT Initiatives and Research Capacity in Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Mauritius, South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Mozambique, Mauritius, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Cameroon, Senegal and Egypt. IST-Africa 2010 - 2011 is supported by the European Commission under FP7.