

Thursday, 6 August, 2015

African and EU countries have long worked together on science and technology research. Now the way they collaborate is being rethought for the modern world. An EU-funded project has used a different approach for a more equal, coordinated research partnership between Africa and the EU.



[1]

Traditional EU-Africa joint research is based on a ‘donor-recipient’ model, with the EU and individual Member States separately deciding how to develop science in Africa, then African institutions applying for funding to implement these ideas.

But this model did not always maximise EU and African countries’ priorities cohesively/in a coordinated fashion and sometimes did not built upon previous research. It also became outdated as African research capacity expanded – along with the local budgets to finance it.

In 2009, African and European countries launched the [ERAfrica](#) [2] project to develop a more balanced, coordinated way of collaborating on scientific problems.

Project coordinator Jean Albergel of France’s Institute of Research for Development says: “Research institutions from Africa and the EU defined how to work together in an equal partnership. It was also the first time there was equal funding from Africa.”

While European scientists have the chance to learn from Africa-driven research, African countries gain from a more efficient relationship with Europe, building their own innovation and technology expertise. A stronger research capacity supports African economies, reducing poverty and boosting growth.

The ERAfrica partnership was set up with seed-funding from the European Commission’s Seventh

Framework Programme for Research and fits within the overall policy framework of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, which has supported African science since 2007.

### **Consensus-based**

To identify areas for joint research and ways of funding it, the project first surveyed existing relationships between African and European research institutions. This showed partners where there were research overlaps and gaps and indicated potential project funding structures.

Partners agreed on three project themes: renewable energy, research crossing two fields (such as studying indigenous fungi to develop antibiotics) and new ideas from researchers. EU-Africa joint projects, partnerships to develop new ideas, and investment in African research institutions' capacity were settled on as funding mechanisms.

Albergel explains the themes selected: "It was a partnership so we needed to negotiate. For example, renewable energy resulted from combined African and EU priorities."

The team then disseminated information about the project through a dedicated website and publications to attract project ideas from African, European and international programmes and organisations.

After two years of preparation, the first call was launched to trial priorities, approaches and organisational systems developed using the project's collaborative ethos. The response was strong: 124 projects applied for funds.

A final list of 17 projects was chosen to share €8.29 million of funding. Food security was a clear priority in the list, while health and new energy were also popular topics.

The selected projects mainly chose the collaborative research model but almost half of the projects will contribute to capacity building, while almost a quarter are innovation partnerships. All projects have at least two African partners and two European partners.

### **To be continued**

Some of the ERAfrica partners are applying for further EU funds to finance the administrative costs linked to a second call in late 2015/early 2016. Angola and Mali have already promised experts to help prepare this call, while the South African and French project members will continue to support the ERAfrica approach financially beyond this call.

Albergel concludes: "The way of collaborating with Africa was changed by this project. No one partner is more important than the others - this was a collaborative project where all parties worked together on an equal footing."

**Check also our publication [Investing in European success - EU-Africa cooperation in science, technology and innovation](#) [3]**

### **See also:**

[CORDIS](#) [4]

### **Project:**

Developing African-European joint collaboration for Science and Technology

### **Project Acronym:**

ERAFRICA

### **Project website:**

<http://www.erafrica.eu> [2]

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**Source URL:** <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/news/rethinking-blueprint-african-eu-research>

**Links**

- [1] [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/system/files/newsroom/fotolia\\_61326042\\_subscription\\_s\\_\\_micromonkey\\_-\\_fotolia\\_com\\_9994.jpg](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/system/files/newsroom/fotolia_61326042_subscription_s__micromonkey_-_fotolia_com_9994.jpg)
- [2] <http://www.erafrica.eu>
- [3] <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/news/investing-european-success-eu-africa-cooperation-science-technology-and-innovation-0>
- [4] [http://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/96825\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/96825_en.html)