

EC-Egypt Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement

Road Map

2007-2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	pp.
INTRODUCTION.....	3
FACILITATING COOPERATION	3-4
ENERGY.....	4
ENVIRONMENT (INCLUDING CLIMATE CHANGE)	4/5
FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND BIOTECHNOLOGY	5
HEALTH.....	6
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES	6/7
NANOSCIENCES, NANOTECHNOLOGIES, MATERIALS AND NEW PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGIES	7
SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES	8
PEOPLE	8
CAPACITY BUILDING IN S&T and SYNERGIES BETWEEN S&T AND OTHER EC INSTRUMENTS.....	9

INTRODUCTION

Engaging in science and technology through increased research efforts is both for the European Union and Egypt important to achieve economic development and competitiveness in a sustainable way.

Research cooperation between the EU and Egypt has taken place for many years and in July 2005 both parties signed a Science and Technology Agreement consolidating this cooperation with the aim of extending and intensifying the research cooperation in areas of mutual interest and to facilitate Egypt's integration into the European Research Area.

The first meeting of the Joint EC-Egypt Committee took place in July 2006 during which a useful exchange of information took place on research cooperation and some possible actions for further cooperation had been identified.

It is important to underline that after one year of implementation of the EU/Egypt Science and Technology Agreement, the results of co-operation are very encouraging: over 91 Egyptians participated in 71 projects in partnership with EU institutions under the FP6 programme with a total of €6.6 million granted to participants. In addition, the RDI programme (MEDA-11 millions euros) supporting Research, Development and Innovation in Egypt was recently signed. This programme will support in particular the establishment of new EU/Egypt Innovation Fund of more than €6 million. Furthermore, a network of over 30 focal points was established to disseminate information on FP7 in Egyptian universities, research and technology centres.

At the Joint Committee meeting which took place in Cairo on 20 June 2007, both parties presented the latest developments in their respective research policies and discussed in more detail a number of research areas agreed in advance on which increased cooperation would represent a mutual benefit.

The operational outcome of the Joint Committee is reflected in a Roadmap which is to be considered as a rolling agenda for the further cooperation between the EU and Egypt aiming at ensuring research cooperation in areas of mutual interest and supporting scientific excellence, and increasing Egypt's participation in the Seventh Framework Programme and its integration into the European Research Area.

FACILITATING COOPERATION

In general, exchanging information and data on the research cooperation between the EC and Egypt is seen as a means to facilitate Egypt's participation in the Seventh Framework Programme. In this context it is agreed:

- That the EC will provide, on a regular basis, and in due time, information and data (quantitative and qualitative) about the number and areas of proposals submitted by Egypt and the proposals evaluated and retained for funding in Framework Programmes and other S&T activities
- Egypt will encourage the collection of project information exchanged through its contact points.

- Both Egypt and the EC should engage in priority setting, utilizing the appropriate tools (policy dialogue, workshops, identification of regional priorities, identifying topics' niche of mutual interest).
- Egypt is encouraged to further promote S&T Regional Cooperation.

ENERGY

Achievements

- Within the context of a reinforced EU-Egypt cooperation on energy DGRTD is starting to promote the research dialogue with Egypt within the opportunities offered by FP7 Energy theme. The importance of renewable energy has been underlined in many occasions and meetings between EU and Egypt, particularly for Photovoltaics and Solar Thermal Energy. In addition, there is a planned intervention of the European Commission to the development of the Regional Centre of Excellence for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency.
- Egypt has significantly increased participation in the field of Energy, from one single project in FP5 to 10 projects in FP6. Topics ranging mainly from cost-effective renewable energy for rural and peri-urban areas to solar thermal systems, solar thermodynamic engines, autonomous desalination, solar cooling in agro-industry, integrated small scale heating and cooling systems for sustainable air-conditioning.

Future activities

- Taking into account the importance of renewable energy in general and Egypt's potential on Photovoltaic and the Solar Thermal Energy, it was agreed to consider, already in the 2008 Work Programme, to organise SICA calls targeting the Mediterranean region (including Egypt)
- Egypt has expressed its readiness to co-finance a targeted call in Energy along the same procedure of the EU-Russia call 2008.
- As suggested at the 2nd JSTCC (Joint S&T Cooperation Committee) Meeting, synergies should be developed between DG RTD Theme Energy and the Innovation Fund of the RDI (Research, Development and Innovation) Programme to ensure that the 11 M Euro of this programme could include funds for successful innovation proposals in photovoltaics and solar thermal energy.

ENVIRONMENT

Achievements

- The participation of Egypt in the field of environment in FP6 is improved. Egyptian researchers and institutions participate in 15 projects, the large part of them focusing on water issues: water management, water quality, socio-economic-governance aspects relating to water, waste water treatment and re-use, water saving.
- In the 2nd JSTCC (Joint S&T Cooperation Committee) Meeting, Egypt indicated its main priority areas: integrated coastal management, use of earth observations and remote

sensing in water quality monitoring, regional networking to harmonise research on prevention of pollution in the Mediterranean, climate change impact on sea level.

Future activities

- From the EC side there is a special request to Egypt to better specify research needs, particularly for water research, which would allow better targeting of the upcoming calls addressed to Mediterranean countries on topics such as water management and desertification.
- A video-conference could be organised in early 2008 involving experts from Egypt and other countries concerned as well as from FP7 / Theme Environment, for joint identification of specific topics in the water sector.

FOOD AGRICULTURE AND BIOTECHNOLOGY (FAB)

Achievements

- The participation of Egypt in the FP6 and first call of FP7 has increased. A total of 10 projects with Egyptian participants have been funded in WP6, of which 7 in the thematic area "food and agriculture". Also several projects funded in the area of environment (water saving and water use efficiency), including Egyptian participants, have many linkages with agriculture, the latter being the main water user in Egypt. In FP7, Egypt ranks the third among third country participants in number of proposals submitted. Egypt participates in the ERANET " Coordination of agricultural research in the Mediterranean (call ERANET 2007)"
- On the EC side there has been an important increase of attention towards issues raised in the food and agricultural sector in the Mediterranean, including topics of high interest for Egypt. In this regard, two targeted brokerage Workshops have been organised recently by the EC:
 - i) a Workshop co-organised by RTD / FAB and CIHEAM (International Centre for High Agronomic Studies in the Mediterranean) in Rabat, on 6 March 2006, "Forum on FP7: towards a Euro-Mediterranean Agricultural Research Area".
 - ii) a Workshop co-organised by RTD / FAB and the EC Delegation in Cairo on 11-12 February 2007: "Agriculture, food and biotechnology: Cooperation between the EU and the Mediterranean Partners".

Future activities

- Following the above events some targeted SICA have been included in the last calls and other could be included in the future, with particular regard to prevention of obesity, agro-forestry at farming level, biotic and abiotic stresses on relevant crops. Egypt expressed interest for nutrition practices, particularly for children.

HEALTH

Achievements

- Egypt participated in FP6 with a total number of 5 projects, mainly aiming at services and infrastructures in the health sector in areas like thalassaemia, genetics, detection of pathogens, cystic echinococcosis.
- During FP7 calls, a proposal on Thematic NCPs with Egyptian participation has been selected.
- A more in depth discussion on Health for the identification of specific topics and actions has been undertaken in the regional Workshop on Health Research Cooperation between the EU and Mediterranean Partners, on 29-30 October 2007, in Cairo. The event focused on Stem Cells, Cancer, Diabetes, Kidney Diseases, Liver Diseases and Health care systems, under the health theme of FP7. The event aimed at: i) Providing information on opportunities for EU-Mediterranean cooperation in health research; ii) Enhancing contacts and networking between researchers; iii) Exchanging experiences and defining actions that foster the regional priorities of the Health sector, iv) Coming up with regional priorities in the field of Health, that could be considered in outlining work programmes under FP7 Health thematic priority.

Future activities

- At the 2nd JSTCC in Cairo (June 2007) Egypt has indicated main priority topics, namely liver and kidney diseases, and cancer. Following the above Workshop Egypt could be interested also in topics such as stem cells, diabetes and health care.
- Building on the conclusions of the working groups of the Cairo Workshop, Egypt would like to ask the EC to consider SICA calls targeting the Mediterranean region (including Egypt) in one or more of the regional priority topics.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Achievements

- Egypt has increased the participation in the area of ICT, bringing it up to - under FP6 - five projects, addressing topics including the promotion of participation in FP7, mapping of IT competences, the Mediterranean information society and e-Governance.
- Several centres of excellence have been established by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT) – already involved in FP6 - to encourage R&D innovation in the ICT sector. The following centres are successfully operational in Egypt:
 - i) Data Mining and Computer Modeling
 - ii) IT-Academia Collaboration
 - iii) Nile University.

Future activities

- Egypt is active in developing language technology (Arabic natural language processing) and a future targeted call SICA in this field could increase Egyptian participation in FP7.
- Two conferences are foreseen in the Mediterranean region which should raise awareness on the importance of the ICT sector and promote research opportunities for Egypt.
- A ministerial meeting focusing on research in IST will be hosted by Egypt under the Slovenian Presidency.

NANOSCIENCES, NANOTECHNOLOGIES, MATERIALS AND NEW PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGIES

Achievements

- The participation of Egypt in the FP6 has been very limited. With a view to potential applications in areas like water management, agriculture, health and ICT, Egypt is building a good national knowledge basis in the theme but still needs to develop national centres of excellence able to cooperate with EU partners and regional networks.

Future activities

- During the FP7 the EC intends to encourage the interest and the participation of Egyptian partners.

While detailed topics on nanotechnologies have not been yet identified, networking activities (workshops, seminars) should help to define priorities for future SICAs in nanotechnologies, materials and production.

On the occasion of the 2nd Multifunctional Nanocomposites & Nanomaterials International Conference & Exhibition, organized by the American University in Cairo, the European Commission (DG RTD) and the Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research held a Euromed Workshop/brokerage event on Nanomaterials (11-13 January, 2008).

The Brokerage event involved potential partners from Europe and the Mediterranean region aiming at: -) sharing the European Research agenda and future trends in the region with regard to Nanotechnologies, -) identifying common research priorities for future collaboration under FP7, -) facilitating networking in view of future partnerships.

As follow-up activity of the Brokerage event, the Egyptian authorities envisage to organise a small group of national experts to monitor the evolving needs in nanotechnologies and report back to the Joint Committee.

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

Achievements

- The participation of Egypt in FP6 has been very limited, with only two projects having Egyptian partners. Efforts should be deployed from both parties to analyse the reasons of this situation and how it could be improved

Future activities

- For effectively improving the current situation, appropriate understanding of the specific interests of Egyptian potential partner organisations should be better known in the area of socio-economic sciences and Humanities.

PEOPLE

Achievements

- During the 2nd JSTCC Meeting the Egyptian delegation has expressed high interest in the mobility programme. The problem of research system capacity, including quality of human resources, is of high priority. Several measures are taken at national level such as the Egyptian S&T portal under the umbrella of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, which will provides information and statistics on mobility of researchers.
- DG RTD - People Programme has organised a Workshop on the "Staff exchange scheme (IRSES)" in Brussels on October 2007 for presentation to third countries concerned, including Egypt, of the action and discussion on rules and programme content.

Future activities

- As regards career development and mobility of researchers there is a need to jointly identify tools and financial instruments to support national mobility strategy.
- Egypt plans to prepare the mobility gateway based of the national S&T portal. The Commission has offered to provide a lay out and technical inputs based on the experience of the EU portal if Egypt would like to use them.
- A video-conference between Egypt and Brussels is foreseen during the second half of February to inform senior university administrators and Egyptian National focal points about the rules and possibilities offered by the IRSES scheme.
- The EC also announces that "NERE-Link" action is planned for initiation in the Work programme 2008: it will support exchange of information and networking of non-European researchers coming from the same country and working in Europe.

CAPACITY BUILDING IN S&T and SYNERGIES BETWEEN S&T AND OTHER EC INSTRUMENTS

Achievements

- An important contribution in promoting capacity building through cooperation comes from the successful establishment of the thematic National Contact-Points and a large network of University and Research Institutes' Focal Points. The whole system contributes substantially to promoting and disseminating the activities of FP7. It provides information to local researchers and institutions about national project funded, EU partners, info for preparation of research proposals, training on preparation of proposals.
- The recently signed RDI (Research, Development and Innovation) funding programme of 11 M Euro is an important achievement of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) Action Plan. This funding is aimed at strengthening capacity in research and innovation complementing funding of FP7.

Future activities

- As emphasized by the 2nd JSTCC Meeting in Cairo, more synergy is needed to ensure the effective use of ENP Action Plan and FP7 to improve research and innovation system.
- In addition to its engagement in bilateral priority setting with the EC, Egypt can play an important role to promote further S&T Regional Cooperation, by using the appropriate existing tools and fora.
- Future synergies could be promoted between FP7 activities and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP), which will be open to Mediterranean Partner Countries within the ENP, following a bilateral agreement and depending on co financing.