

**European-African Pact on ICT for Development:  
Creating synergies by supporting the emerging  
knowledge societies in developing countries through  
the European IST Programme  
2 February 2006**

***Developing countries need the deployment of ICTs for accelerated and sustainable development.***

A quantum leap in development is required for developing countries to achieve the „Millennium Development Goals – MDGs“. It is widely accepted today that a decisive accelerator for development processes are information and communication technologies – ICTs. In order to achieve, for example, the educational MDG - universal primary education by 2015 - UNESCO estimated that additional fifteen million teachers and hundred of thousands of teacher educators will be needed. This quantum leap in education can only be achieved through the deployment of ICTs.

This is what places ICTs so high on the agendas of many governments in developing countries. ICTs are seen as the key solution that will allow them to meet the needs in rural and under-served areas and bring services to widely distributed citizens rapidly and cost efficiently, be it in health, education or public services.

***Europe and the European R&D programmes need a strategic partnership with developing countries.***

In Europe the building of Information Societies is at the core of European Commission R&D programmes. The topics addressed by the European programmes such as eLearning, eWork, eGovernance and eHealth are highly relevant for developing countries. In 2005 the European Commission formulated a new strategy for Africa that relates to the MDGs and suggests a new framework for development policy in order to accelerate Africa's growth. In this new framework the digital divide is addressed through a proposed „EU-Africa Partnership for Infrastructure“ and a number of „access to knowledge and transfer of know-how“ initiatives. So far the framework offers an important access driven strategy. The new framework should however complement the access with an explicit ICT based enabling and accelerating strategy. Such a widening of perspective and deepening of impact can be achieved through building a bridge between the European „Information Society Technologies – IST“ programme and the many and ambitious „ICT for Development“ projects currently being deployed in numerous developing countries. In a European strategic partnership with Africa the IST programme should play a more active role. Creating the framework for an inclusive research and development approach between Europe and developing countries is not only very important from a European perspective, it will also play an important role for the dynamic leapfrogging phenomena one can observe today in many developing countries.

***Africa and Europe will both gain from joint applied R&D.***

For the European Information Society Technologies community the forging of close links with counterparts in developing countries is a highly relevant mission today. From a European perspective collaboration for the advancement of information society technologies with relevant institutions in the South will

- allow to taking-up of important requirements and needs of emerging markets;
- make R&D results more relevant and widen their up-take potential;
- open the potential of their application to new usergroups, communities, markets and thus valorise outcomes and results;
- build new valuable partnerships and
- have a significant impact on improving the lives of millions of underprivileged people.

For the R&D communities in developing countries partnerships with European projects will

- strengthen local and regional R&D capacities;
- enhance national „ICT for Development“ projects and widen and deepen the role of local ICT stakeholders in the implementation of multi-lateral ICT programmes;
- facilitate the entrance into an international research process and voice demands and concepts from a developing perspective;
- allow many higher education institutions to link up with R&D for the first time;
- have a significant impact on the quality of academic education;
- and create new business opportunities with partners in European countries.

## Conclusion and recommendations

European R&D projects have started to include African partners.<sup>1</sup> A specific inclusive approach of European IST projects, directed toward developing countries, is however just in its start-up phase.

The undersigning institutions – all engaged in European R&D projects of the Information Society Technology Programme and in „ICT for Development“ programmes in Africa and Asia - pledge to support the inclusion of counterparts in developing countries in forthcoming IST programmes with the following steps:

- European IST research programmes should take the aspect of inclusion with developing countries into account.
- The new calls for proposals should encourage institutions to initiate partnerships with developing countries.
- Innovative partnership projects should be launched in the fields of eLearning, eWork, eGovernance and eHealth, thus creating an immediate impact on the many “ICT for Development” projects in developing countries and accelerating cost-efficient development processes.
- Model projects should focus on inclusion in all project phases (e.g. within requirement analysis and dissemination).
- In 2006 the IST programme should - as a first step - set up observatories on knowledge, information and learning technologies and their application potential in developing countries. The aim: to identify stakeholders and to map out existing initiatives and their potential for sustainable development and partnership.
- The IST programme should become highly visible at the “eLearning Africa” conference in May 2006 in Addis Ababa through presentations and workshops and exploit the conference for fact finding and networking.
- A stakeholder conference should be organised by a European-African “Special Interest Group” as part of the “eLearning Africa” conference in Addis Ababa on 24 May 2006, that prepares the ground for the “European-African Pact on ICT for Development” and further recommendations for the European Commission.

### Initiated by:

#### Hoffmann & Reif Consultants, Germany

Hoffmann & Reif Consultants (“HRC”) have been involved in various flagship projects for the advancement of an eEurope since 1989. Since 1996 HRC have been helping to bridge the digital divide in developing countries. This includes the deployment of enabling applications and learning services as well as training and capacity building in African and Asian countries face-to-face and on the Internet. <http://www.hoffmann-reif.com>

#### International Conferences, Workshops and Exhibitions, Germany

International Conferences, Workshops and Exhibitions („ICWE“) is an international conference organiser with a focus on education and training, and provides the world largest annual international eLearning conference since 1995 “Online Educa Berlin”: <http://www.online-educa.com> In May 2006 ICWE together with HRC, will organise „eLearning Africa“, the first pan-African conference on ICT for Development, Education and Training in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: <http://www.eLearning-Africa.com>

#### University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany

The department Information Systems for Production and Operations Management at the University of Duisburg-Essen focuses on the integration and convergence of eLearning, knowledge management, and capacity building by using ICT within several international and EU funded programmes. In this regard, it has initiated strong research networks, such as the European Foundation for Quality in E-learning, the Sustainable Development Group and the German E-Learning Actors Network. A research focus is the development of long-term sustainable policies for ICT as enabler of education in developing countries. The research is brought into practice within projects to promote cooperation between African countries and Germany, such as the Learning Regions project in Meru (Kenya) together with the Kenyan Ministry for Higher Education. <http://wip.wi-inf.uni-essen.de/>

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<sup>1</sup> Such running projects and related fields of activities include: ACCESS (eGovernment); BEANISH (eHealth, collaborative networks); EPOCH (eLearning); FLOSSWORLD (Open Source Software); IST-Africa (promotion of IST co-operation); PALETTE (eLearning); SIMILAR (multimodal interfaces).