

***REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION THE AGREEMENT ON SCIENTIFIC
AND TECHNOLOGICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN
COMMUNITY AND THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA***

***Prepared by the Directorate General Research (European Commission) and the
Department of Science and Technology (Republic of South Africa) for the 6th meeting
of the Cooperation Council between the European Community and its Member States, ,
and the Republic of South Africa held in Brussels on 7 November 2005***

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1. PARTICIPATION OF SOUTH AFRICA IN THE SIXTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME (FP6)

Since the last meeting of the Cooperation Council held in November 2004, scientific and technological (S&T) cooperation between South Africa and the European Union has continued to grow stronger, consistent with the growth since the Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation between the European Community and the Republic of South Africa was concluded in 1996.

On the 14th-15th April 2005, the fifth meeting of the SA-EU Joint Science & Technology Cooperation Committee (JSTCC) was held in Pretoria, South Africa, hosted by the Department of Science and Technology. Convened under bilateral S&T Agreement, the JSTCC is tasked with reviewing collaboration between the two parties, including South African participation in the Framework Programmes, sharing new developments in science and technology policy matters and devising strategies for enhancing future collaboration.

The fifth JSTCC meeting reconfirmed the strategic and very positive nature of the SA-EU S&T Partnership. The Co-Chairs of the meeting, Dhesigen Naidoo and Dr Andras

Siegler, respectively Deputy Director-General of International Cooperation and Resources at the South African Department of Science and Technology and Director of the International Scientific Cooperation Programme at the European Commission, Directorate General Research, expressed their satisfaction with the progress achieved during the past year in promoting collaboration, noting a number of important successes being registered.

South Africa's engagement with the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) is indeed regularly increasing, with successful participation by South African research organisations in several of the FP6's thematic priorities, as well as in the focused activities for cooperation with Developing Countries (the INCO programme). South Africa has secured its position as one of the most successful FP6 participants amongst the EU's economies in transition and Developing Country partners. South African researchers performed best in the FP6's thematic priorities for Biotechnology and Genomics for Health; Food Safety and Quality; Global Change and Ecosystems; as well as Nanotechnology, Materials and Production.

Since the last Cooperation Council, serious efforts were undertaken with success by the Department of Science and Technology, the European Commission and their partners to improve South African participation in the FP6, most notably through the launch and operationalisation of the country's Network of National Contact Points (NCPs). The NCPs are tasked with improving awareness and rendering FP6 advice to South African participants. The ability of South African researchers to enter European FP6 consortia was identified as one of the key challenges for improved success in FP6. In this regard, the important role played by the NCPs in networking with their European counterparts must be highlighted.

As a specific example of the progress made, the significant improvement of South African participation in the FP6 thematic priority for Information Society Technologies,

following the concerted interventions by the responsible NCP, in partnership with his European counterparts, could be highlighted. As a result of these efforts, South African researchers are for example participating in FP6 projects related to the promotion of open source software, harnessing e-health for development as well as the employment of information and communication technology to safeguard cultural heritage. The DST and DG Research will continue work together to support the enhanced efforts by the NCPs and strengthening their institutional interface with the European Commission.

Despite the successes achieved, significant potential still exists to strengthen further the SA-EU S&T cooperation in other research areas, such as aeronautics and space (including Earth Observation), the hydrogen economy as well as the socio-economic sciences and humanities. A better utilisation of the Framework Programme Marie Curie mobility instruments could also be achieved. With the FP6 currently in its concluding phase, specific strategies will be developed to promote cooperation in these areas under the new Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), due to be launched at the end of 2006. Indeed the Department of Science and Technology and the Directorate-General Research will cooperate closely in preparing optimal cooperation under the FP7.

A recent highlight of cooperation was the launch of the European South African Science and Technology Advancement Programme (ESASTAP), a Specific Support Action supported by the European Commission under the FP6, at high-profile events organised in Pretoria on 28 June 2005 and in Brussels on 14 July 2005. Managed by the Department of Science and Technology, ESASTAP is a dedicated platform to promote SA-EU S&T cooperation. ESASTAP for example provides dedicated information dissemination and awareness-raising instruments for promoting cooperation opportunities, assistance mechanisms to South African Framework Programme participants and has a specific objective the marketing of South African science and technology excellence in Europe. A specific tool is for example the partner-matching database to bring South African and European partners into contact with each other.

ESASTAP will notably also seek to exploit the synergies between the participation in the Framework Programme, and South Africa's bilateral science and technology cooperation with the EU Member States and States Associated with the Framework Programmes.

2. POLICY DIALOGUE AND OTHER AREAS OF COLLABORATION

Apart from the joint collaborative research projects under FP6, a strong science and technology policy dialogue has also been established between the Department of Science and Technology and the Directorate General Research.

Building on and in order to complement, especially from an economic development perspective, the successes achieved under the Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation, the Department of Science and Technology and the Delegation of the European Commission in South Africa, have agreed on the terms of reference for a pre-feasibility study to be undertaken, which will examine opportunities for the European Programme for Reconstruction and Development (EPRD) to support South African science and technology- including through sector wide or budget support. The Directorate-General Research has noted with appreciation these efforts -

South Africa and the European Commission with the Member States of the European Union also cooperate fruitfully in promoting interregional partnership strategies and initiatives to harness science and technology for development. The very successful collaboration between South Africa and the European Commission in their capacities Co-Chairs of the Group on Earth Observation (GEO) is a prime example of such cooperation to advance the global sustainable development agenda.

The Department of Science and Technology and the Directorate-General Research are also committed to cooperate in facilitating the improvement of the European Union's interaction with continental and regional science and technology programmes in Africa,

chiefly those of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Science and technology policy collaboration, specifically the exploration of appropriate twinning arrangements between NEPAD and EU partners, is also foreseen.

The two parties are also continuing their fruitful cooperation to enhance science and technology cooperation and dialogue between the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union, including the advancement of the outcomes of the 2002 Cape Town Forum on Research for Sustainable Development. The Department of Science and Technology and the Directorate-General Research strongly agree on the importance of a reinforced ACP-EU science and technology policy dialogue to inform and prepare optimal engagement with the FP7's cooperation activities with developing countries. Within this context, both partners are convinced of the urgency for stepped-up research capacity-building in the ACP and on the need for the various services in the European Commission to address this challenge, including by the urgent finalisation of the ACP S&T capacity-building programme, within the Eighth European Development Fund.