

## **2nd INCO Conference "Supporting Research Integration", 26 – 28 September 2011, Kempton Park, South Africa**

The South African Department of Science and Technology, in the framework of the INCONTACT project, hosted the 2nd INCO Conference "Supporting Research Integration", that was held on 26 – 28 September 2011, in Kempton Park, South Africa. The conference brought together National Contact Points (NCPs) of all countries participating in the European Union Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). The conference sought to build capacity with regard to the European Union (EU) Seventh Framework (FP7) understanding and improving the ability of officially appointed FP7 NCPs to carry out their responsibilities in promoting FP7 participation in their respective countries.

The conference also provided a platform for networking between third countries, as well as promoting EU-Africa cooperation and coordination with regards to the promotion of FP7 participation. The conference was attended by about 150 delegates which included about 50 officially appointed INCO National Contact Points; about 5 Government officials from African countries, and researchers organisations from South Africa. The spread of countries represented was as follows: Kenya, Uganda, United Kingdom, Zambia, Ghana, Lesotho France, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Italy, Greece, Lithuania, Belgium, Norway, China, Thailand, Mexico, Argentina, Kazakhstan, Oman, Greece, Egypt, Israel, Morocco, Poland Estonia, South Africa., Qatar, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Bulgaria, and Philippines.

The first day of the conference was dedicated to the INCONTACT project meeting which was a closed session for project partners only. The project meeting looked at how the project is being implemented and the issues that were discussed were related to NCP training sessions; communication and dissemination of information; 3<sup>rd</sup> INCO conference that will be hosted by Germany in 2012; organisation of local NCP events; and Horizon 2020.

Day two was the official opening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> INCO conference and had a key note address by South Africa's Deputy Minister of Science and Technology, Mr Derek Hanekom, and EU Ambassador to South Africa, Ambassador Roeland van de Geer. The topics that were presented on and discussed at the conference included:

- Strategies towards international S&T cooperation and global challenges;
- Taking stock and learning from past and current international S&T partnership initiatives;
- Success stories and new challenges in Africa-EU S&T partnerships to address global challenges ; and
- Policy perspectives to enhance international S&T cooperation's response to global challenges.

### **Conference discussions**

Some of the issues that were raised at the conference that could assist INCO National Contact Points (NCPs) in disseminating opportunities offered by FP7 are indicated below:

- Horizon 2020 will have tools to engage with other regions outside the EU and the programme will have topics that address global challenges as well as topics focused international cooperation.
- Horizon 2020 will be less complex and bureaucratic as compared to what is been currently experienced in FP7 this will help in increasing the participation of third countries.
- On how to collaborate with the EU as third countries especially African countries, countries were encouraged to look into the South African model of collaboration with the EU where the country has also made resources available for their researchers to participate in FP7.
- With regards to African participation in FP7/Horizon 2020, countries represented at the conference committed to being more proactive in taking up opportunities offered as well as being able to match the research areas of

the Consolidated Plan of Action (CPA) with the thematic areas of FP7/Horizon 2020.

- Participants agreed that they need to start working in trilateral arrangements and take advantage of their existing bilateral arrangements with other countries to maximise the research capacities available in FP7/Horizon 2020 consortium partners.
- The conference highlighted the importance and the implications that science and technology (S&T) policy has in international S&T co-operation and dealing with global challenges,
- The experience of S&T partnership initiatives was discussed including international co-operation and possible common strategic framework for research and innovation between African and EU.

The third day of the conference was dedicated to the annual official NCP meeting between the INCO NCPs and the European Commission, and also included a special training on managing research projects and successfully disseminating research results. The trainers were Mrs Paola Materia (Italy's INCO NCP), and Dr. Elizabeth Rasekoala (a South African researcher with a wide range of experience in EU Framework Programmes and activities related to the EU).

Alongside the conference there was the first INCONTACT Regional Dialogue Platform which was held on 26 September 2011. The Regional Dialogue Platform brings together experts in international scientific and technological (S&T) cooperation from a specific region to discuss how S&T cooperation between that region and the EU. The experts participate in this discussion in their individual capacities and not as representatives from specific countries or organizations. The first dialogue was focused on discussion between Africa and the EU. The outcomes of the Africa regional dialogue is attached as an annexure for this report.