

## *ICT for Development - 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2008*

 <b>Summary of the engagement of DG INFSO on ICT for Development since the WSIS</b>
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As many of you will remember, the European Parliament and the EC notably DG INFSO played a very active role in the preparations and the celebration of the WSIS. And we consider that EU speaking with one voice exerted a significant influence on the outcome of the Summit.

On ICT and Development, let me just quote the second paragraph of the Final Document:

**We reaffirm** our desire and commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and multilateralism, and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, so that people everywhere can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, to achieve their full potential and to attain the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Three years after, what could I say about the follow-up? And more specifically about DG INFSO action in complement to the intervention from my Colleague from Commissioner Michel Cabinet.

**First an active cooperation with DG DEV to set up both partnerships with Africa (infrastructures and Science, Information Society, Space)**

- **EU-Africa Partnership on Infrastructures** - was adopted in 2005, as a joint EU effort to respond to the AU/NEPAD Infrastructure Plan, aiming at substantially increase EU investments in African Infrastructure, targeting regional interconnectivity in 4 domains: water, energy, transport and ICT. It

was officially launched in October 2006.

The approach is highly innovative in terms of governance and funding mechanism with the creation of the EU Infrastructure Trust Fund (jointly created with the EIB) : total of 5,6B€ expected funding (2008-2013) from the EDF and the Trust Fund.

Regarding the ICT component of the Partnership, the EASSy (East African Submarine Cable System) has been identified as a flagship project of the Partnership and already received a 14,5M€ loan and 3,8 M€ grant from the Trust Fund.

**- The Africa-EU Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space**, that DG INFSO actively contributed to set-up, is one of the 8 Partnerships adopted in Lisbon last December during the EU-Africa Summit. This new Partnership offers for the first time the opportunity to develop a sound EU strategy and public-private cooperation for tackling the digital divide in Africa, complementing investments on the deployment of physical infrastructures (as planned in the already adopted EU-Africa Partnership on Infrastructures) through support to key capacities.

The capacity-building activities foreseen at continental or sub-regional level are in support of ARAPKE (the African Regional Action Plan for the Knowledge Economy) adopted by the African Union in the context of the WSIS, and would concentrate on 4 main topics : support to regulation and e-policies, human resources development, content and e-services creation, research and education networks deployment and their interconnection with GEANT.

**Two criteria:**

**First working together with EU Member states**, as it is the case in the partnership I mentioned before and where is an EU approach.

This was done in line the Communication A Strategic European Framework for International Science and Technology Cooperation adopted by the College on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September as a joint initiative between Commissioners V. Reding and Jan Potocnik. And the central element is to work in a closer way with Members States notably by strengthening the international dimension of the European Research Area.


It will allow to improve the framework conditions for international cooperation in science and technology and for the promotion of European technologies worldwide. This includes the joint development of global large-scale research infrastructures (such as GEANT), support to mobility of researches of management of intellectual property.

### **Identifying concrete project from short term implementation**

- **AfricaConnect (12M€)**, extension of GEANT to sub-Saharan Africa, for which a physical interconnection was already achieved between the GEANT router in London and the UbuntuNet network (an alliance of national research and education networks in sub-Saharan Africa).

- **AXIS (2,5 M€)** : led by AfrISPA (African Association of Internet Service Providers) aiming to establish Internet Exchange Points in 44 African countries as well as 5 regional internet hubs (1 per sub-region).

Let me mention that at the same time the HISSPA Project EC\_ITU for better regulation has been launched.

 <b>The additional actions of DG INFSO with:</b>
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### **IST conferences Africa**

The goals of the IST-Africa Conference Series are Community Building to facilitate EU-African research cooperation and successful exploitation of research results, to stimulate take-up of RTD results by industry, Small and

Medium Sized Businesses and the public sector, to promote knowledge sharing between commercial organizations, government agencies and the research community, to exchange experiences about the current state of eAdoption at a sectoral, national or regional level, support International Cooperation and open up the European Research Area (ERA) to Africa.

Since 2006 the EU-Africa-IST project organized a conference each year, in Pretoria (2006), in Maputo (Mozambique 2007), in Windhoek (Namibia 2008), and Uganda (2009) offering an opportunity of exchange between European and African researchers.

In complement, the EuroAfriCa-ICT project aims at promoting and supporting the development of strategic cooperation on ICT research between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, and with the Caribbean as well. Project activities include the organisation of two cooperation summits: one in Europe (Lyon, France, November 2008) and one in Africa (2009); the organisation of awareness workshops in Africa and in the Caribbean (more precisely in Benin, Jamaica, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda) supported by a wide promotion of opportunities offered by FP7 (ICT theme). Euro-Africa also plans to organise periodical concertation meetings in Europe (4 over the project lifetime) supported by the implementation of links with national, European and international programmes and initiatives, including European Technology Platforms and Joint Technology Initiatives, and to give support to the development of strategic partnerships and flagship cooperation projects based in particular on the implementation and development of a EuroAfriCa-ICT database.

In the **Work programme 2009-2010** international cooperation is foreseen and notably a support to the uptake of European ICT research results in developing countries (e-government, e-health, e-education, e-commerce, m-banking).

Let me indicate that the participation of African partners are increasing in a significant way: from the FP6 with only 8 IST participants in total to the 2 first year of the FP7 where we have already registered 29 ICT participants in retained proposals.

**Prospective :**

- Among the factors I would like to identify a trend regarding the growth of GSM users. Today there are more than 250 millions of users in Africa, representing a level of penetration of 25 to 27% of the all the population. All countries are still registering high growth rates.

- A worldwide trend regarding availability of Internet form wireless handset. From an economic point of view there are 2 reasons in favor of further and more sophisticated developments: the low average revenue per unit and a real demand for new services trough internet.

- As example of new innovative services: micro payments which represent a shift from informal economy to a more formal way of working, using a basic banking service: transfer money, receive payments and get cash from little shops. The challenge is to keep costs low enough and to manage scaling up of the system from banking.

In this context, there are new perspectives to address the fight against poverty, among other inspired by the work of Hernando de Soto, identifying lack of legal certainty certainly among the key obstacles to capital accumulation and to lack of administrative records as an obstacle to the access to public services, notably regarding education and heath. Here there is a new challenge in the development world, about the capacity to develop "light" or basic public services to be eventually accessed by wireless networks, and even designed for mobile phone platforms.