



MORE THAN €10 MILLION ENVISIONED FOR EUROPE-AFRICA COLLABORATION

PRETORIA, 24 JANUARY. The great library of Alexandria (Egypt) hosted the latest consortium meeting of the European Commission-sponsored ERAFRICA project, held on 18 and 19 January 2012 and attended also by a number of non-consortium members, from both Africa and Europe, interested in participating in the project's eventual funding of joint research projects. In one of the venue's so-called "floating rooms", suspended high above the massive main repository and its endless shelves of books, long lines of computer terminals and library patrons coming and going in otherworldly silence, the meeting attendees signalled their support for each of the proposed research topics, selected two months before in Lisbon, eventually to be funded as part of an ERAFRICA joint call for proposals. To general satisfaction each topic attracted not only sufficient interest but also enough of a preliminary financial commitment (in excess of €2 million each) to justify its retention as subject for investment, the final list of themes to be funded consisting of: Renewable Energy, Interfacing Challenges (i.e. research projects concentrating on a combination of two or more global challenges at the interface point between them), and Idea-Driven Research (that is, new ideas in any discipline, particularly marked by innovative thinking). Given that the total amount already pledged comes to about €8 million, and that a number of consortium members and other interested parties have not yet signalled the exact scope of their anticipated investment, it is now all but certain that the eventual amount of funding to be allocated to joint projects under the banner of an ERAFRICA call for proposals will exceed €10 million euros.

In addition, whereas the project consortium at the outset numbered 13 institutions from 12 countries (Austria, Belgium, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Kenya, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland and Turkey), following the Alexandria meeting this number seems set to grow quite considerably, with definite interest already expressed by Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Uganda and Norway, and high hopes held also for participation by Senegal, Morocco, Tunisia, Nigeria and Tanzania, all of which will be invited to a follow-up meeting to be held at the end of March in Stellenbosch, South Africa. Here the Groups of Funding Parties (GFP), each organised around a particular theme of interest to them, will begin the long process of preparing for the launching of the first ERAFRICA call for proposals, envisioned for January 2013. Already in Alexandria the first discussions were undertaken regarding funding criteria, evaluation processes and application modalities, these to be pursued for much of the year ahead at a series of meetings to follow, and each with expanded participation as more and more countries and institutions join a GFP and, through their financial commitment, obtain a share in the planning process. Indeed, the door to participation will remain open until the actual launching of the call, so there is still plenty of time for interested parties to join, no minimum amount of investment having been set and thus ensuring

that smaller countries and institutions will not be excluded based on an inability to match the funding provided by the larger funders. In this way ERAFRICA is a true north-south (and interregional) partnership, with everyone contributing what they can, and all contributions guaranteeing equal participation. This of course is particularly significant to Africa which, through initiatives such as ERAFRICA, can finally bid farewell to its role as perpetual aid recipient, and embrace instead an equal status as full partner with its European counterparts.

For more information, please consult the ERAFRICA website at: www.erafrica.eu



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