



*Strengthening EU-Africa
cooperation in Water RDI:
Opportunities and
Challenges*

Water JPI Workshop
26 October 2021

Making sure it's possible



science & innovation

Department:
Science and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Overview

- Opportunities
- Challenges
- Response (suggestions)
- “Science Diplomacy”



Science knows no borders

- International cooperation in science crucial to:
 - **For science to progress by sharing and learning:** experience, expertise, capacities research data, research infrastructures (reciprocity)
 - **For leveraging additional investment for science:** joint investment with international partners, attract foreign funding for RDI
 - **For harnessing science for global solidarity:** Advance regional, continental agendas multilateralism (Sustainable Development Goals)

Opportunities

- Water related problem statement” including climate change, food security, political insecurity, etc. **high on the political agenda** (SDGs, etc.)
- Importance of **international cooperation** in science emphasized by COVID-19 pandemic – both achievements and shortcomings highlighted – **political and public appreciation**
- **Mature and diverse portfolio** of Africa – EU instruments **and experiences** of RDI cooperation to draw on develop new initiatives – timing right preparation next African Union European Union Summit

Challenges

- Difficulties to **translate policy and political intent into concrete actions with impact**, often because sub-optimal integration cooperation between different sectors – “avoid science bubble”
- **Poor coordination and duplication** often because of a result of the “not invented here” syndrome and leading to a sub-optimal utilisation of resources as well as impact
- **Lack of real co-ownership** due to misalignment of RDI agendas, as well as asymmetry in African / European science and innovation systems, as well as resources (funding)

Response (for impact)

- Leverage synergies between science, development, economic and political agendas – without avoiding difficult discussions for example cooperation vs competition – e.g. market access is not unilateral, (unavoidable as projects move closer to market)
- Reconcile ambition and pragmatism – new cooperation instruments should also be an opportunity to learn for policy-makers and funders (and must be real dialogue with African funders), target low-hanging fruit
- Open science also means open to society, build diverse, multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinarian partnerships, avoiding “usual suspects”, broaden range of participants

Suggestions for JPI

- Cooperation (global challenges)
- Ideas (excellence)
- People (training / mobility)
- Capacities (infrastructure)
- Broadening *horizon*: competitiveness, innovation, widening participation, and *strengthening Africa – EU partnership*



Science Diplomacy

- Water RDI cooperation is not only an excellent example of *science in diplomacy*, but highlights the requirements of *diplomacy for science*, and is a formidable instrument of *science for diplomacy*



Parting words

“Scientific inventions, at all conceivable levels, should enrich human life ...”

Chief Albert Luthuli (first African winner of the Nobel Peace Prize) Oslo, December 1961

