

The conditions related to this topic are provided at the end of this call and in the General Annexes.

International Cooperation activities

ICT-58-2020: International partnership building between European and African innovation hubs

Specific Challenge: To reinforce cooperation and strategic partnership with selected countries in Africa to support the strengthening of existing digital innovation hubs (DIHs) in Africa and to facilitate the collaboration between EU and African DIHs in order to strengthen a common EU-Africa innovation and start-up ecosystem

Targeted countries: Low and middle income countries⁷⁶ in Africa

Scope: a) Innovation Action (IA)

Cooperation on developing and strengthening of digital innovation hubs in Africa **actions will address:**

1. reinforcing the development and establishment of Pan-African networks of Digital Innovations/Tech Hubs through strengthening local digital innovation and startup ecosystems by:
 - i. providing technical capacity building and technology transfer to local SMEs, local governments and projects focused on digitalisation and the uptake of digital innovations such as the use of open data, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, blockchain technologies;
 - ii. fostering the development of an enabling environment for digital start-ups through establishing networks between fast growing companies, startup founders, local governments, academic institutions, early stage investors and corporates;
 - iii. providing capacity-building programmes, focused on digital and entrepreneurship skills specifically targeted to marginalised youth, women and vulnerable groups;
2. developing a mutually beneficial cooperation between African and European [Digital Innovation Hubs](#) to strengthen the long-term sustainability of DIHs by:
 - i. supporting local youth employment by developing collaborative projects, that match the demand for qualified digital skills in Europe with the existing ICT professionals in Africa;
 - ii. facilitating a network between African and European innovative entrepreneurs and start-ups with the goal to support start-up incubation, mentoring programs and facilitate increased investments in African start-ups and EU-African joint ventures;

⁷⁶ See World Bank country classification

- iii. carrying out capacity-building activities, such as Summer Academies bringing together successful entrepreneurs with African and European start-ups and ICT professionals;
- iv. facilitating linkages and partnerships with African diaspora communities in Europe with the goal to better support the creation and development of digital startups and SMEs in Africa

The activities will complement other European initiatives under the DCI and the ENI, such as the EU/DE/FR initiative on a Digital Innovation Bridge that will support the scale up of African startups.

Proposals should be submitted by a partnership complementing each other with a particular focus on the participation of relevant Member States or associated countries digital Innovation/tech Hubs, as well as African digital Innovation/tech Hubs. Due to the specific challenge of this topic, in addition to the minimum number of participants set out in the General Annexes, proposals shall include at least one participant from a low or middle income country in Africa.

The Commission considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the EU between EUR 1 and 2 million would allow this specific challenge to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

b) Coordination and Support Action (CSA)

The aim is to foster coordination between actions taken in Africa and the EU to implement the recommendations of the EU-AU task force on digital economy, in particular in the area of research and innovation, through support to, engagement with, and monitoring of ICT-related activities and organisation of events in a critical mass of African countries.

Activities will include:

- supporting initiatives in Africa on the digitalisation of economy and society, including common Research, Development and Innovation priorities;
- supporting research and innovation capacity and societal challenges in participating African countries and future cooperation opportunities;
- promoting awareness of cooperation opportunities, including under the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe programmes;
- disseminating results from EU support activities (including AfricaConnect and Digital4Development).

The activities of the CSA should be carried out over the remainder of the current EU financial framework (incl. Horizon 2020) and the initial phase of the new financial framework of the EU. Actions should take account of the networks and achievements of similar past or ongoing

support actions for Africa while focussing on the scaling up of digital technology and services in the EU financial cooperation with Africa under the new financial framework. The partnership should include relevant stakeholders Member States or associated countries from the public and private sectors, including Research and Innovation systems. The partnership should as well include relevant African stakeholders from the public and private sectors, including Research and Innovation systems. Due to the specific challenge of this topic, in addition to the minimum number of participants set out in the General Annexes, proposals shall include at least one participant from a low or middle income country in Africa.

The Commission considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the EU of around EUR 1 million for a duration of three years would allow this area to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

Expected Impact: a) Innovation Action (IA)

- Further development of digital innovation hubs to the support of digitalisation of SMEs and traditional sectors in Africa contributing to a vibrant digital economy and new job opportunities;
 - Strengthening of innovation ecosystems for digital startups at the local level;
 - Support of youth employment programs by facilitating collaboration between European and African DIHs and startups;
 - Enhancement of entrepreneurial and innovation skills of ICT professionals and start-ups in selected African countries;
- Sustainable uptake of results within the targeted countries, beyond the project completion date;
- Reinforced international dimension of the ICT and Innovation aspects of Horizon 2020 and contribution to the implementation of the EC digital for development strategy ;
- Reinforcement of strategic partnerships between EU and African Digital Innovation Hubs in areas of mutual interest.

b) Coordination and Support Action (CSA)

- Strengthening cooperative research and innovation linkages;
- Reinforced international dimension of the ICT and Innovation aspects of Horizon 2020 and contribution to the implementation of the EC digital for development strategy;
- Reinforcement of strategic partnerships between EU and African in ICT areas of mutual interest.

Type of Action: Innovation action, Coordination and support action