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South Africa tightens links with Europe

South Africa is the latest country to have signed a reciprocal agreement with the COST Office to increase international cooperation between scientists.



This agreement which will now bring Europe and South Africa closer together was made possible thanks to the combined efforts of the COST Office and the South African Department of Science and Technology's European South African Science and Technology Advancement Programme (ESASTAP).

COST is Europe's oldest science and technology networking programme, and under the Reciprocal Agreement, which came into force on 1 July 2009, COST will fund European researchers to undertake short-term scientific missions to South Africa, whilst ESASTAP will avail funding to South African researchers undertaking such missions to Europe.

Martin Grabert, Director of the COST Office, is delighted with the agreement: "Both COST and South Africa's DST can give collaboration between Europe and South Africa an extra boost, by encouraging significant scientific work on a global scale and bringing new perspectives to nationally coordinated research."

Both Europe and South Africa generate countless discoveries and scientific achievements every year. Europe's scientific global cooperation policy is a key element of the Seventh Framework Programme, which strongly supports third country participation.

These cooperation efforts are vital to the economic competitiveness of European companies. Indeed, the European Commission is adamant that excellence in research stems from competition between researchers and from getting the best to compete and cooperate with each other.

On this understanding, the new Strategic Forum for International Scientific and Technological Cooperation (SFIC) – to which COST will bring a lot of experience – will soon form the backbone for European efforts to drive global sustainable development and foster Europe's excellence in science and technology.

In the meantime, COST's reciprocal agreements (also with New Zealand and Australia) are providing a sound and fruitful basis for cooperation.

For Daan du Toit, the Minister Counsellor (Science and Technology) for the South African Mission to the European Union, this is a wonderful opportunity offered by COST: "Our agreement will help South African researchers to integrate international networks, where they can contribute and share expertise, addressing many shared global challenges."

South Africa has a respected and world-class science and technology community that, over many decades, has pioneered globally significant and successful new ideas, techniques and technologies. It was the home to Allan M. Cormack, Nobel Prize winner (physiology or medicine) in 1979, it hosted the world's first ever heart transplant in 1967, and holds the world's first and largest oil-from-coal refinery.

There are clearly many more subjects on which South African scientists can offer their expertise. Already, many have participated in a number of COST [Actions](#) and [Framework Programme Projects](#), and the biggest economy of the African continent will now be able to collaborate with COST's member states even more in the future.

The COST Office is glad to be able to support European scientists who wish to make the most of this new opportunity, and extends a warm welcome to those South African scientists who will participate in COST [Actions](#) around Europe.

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