

Energising Scientific Endeavour through Science Gateways and e-Infrastructures in Africa: the Sci-GaIA project

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In African Communities of Practice (CoPs), international collaboration and the pursuit of scientific endeavour has faced a major barrier with the lack of access to e-Infrastructures and high performance network infrastructure enjoyed by European counterparts. With the AfricaConnect and the just-about-to-start AfricaConnect2 projects and the regional developments carried out by both the Regional Education and Research Networks (RRENs) and the National Education and Research Networks (NRENs), this situation is changing rapidly. In the “Teaming-up for exploiting e-Infrastructures’ potential to boost RTDI in Africa”(eI4Africa) project it has been demonstrated clearly that it is possible to develop e-Infrastructure services in Africa. It has also been demonstrated clearly that, as with the rest of the world, easy to use web portals, or Science Gateways, are needed to help CoPs to easily access e-Infrastructure facilities and through these collaborate with CoPs across the world. However, a major problem exists: it is very difficult for non-experts to develop Science Gateways and deploying and supporting e-Infrastructures. Elements of guides and supporting materials exist but these are either written for different audiences or out of date.

The EU-funded “Energising Scientific Endeavour through Science Gateways and e-Infrastructures in Africa” (Sci-GaIA) project started on the 1st of May 2015 for a duration of two years and proposes to bring together these materials into clearly structured guides and educational documents that can be used to train and support representatives of NRENs, CoPs and, importantly, Universities to develop Science Gateways and e-Infrastructures in Africa. This will give a sustainable foundation on which African e-Infrastructures can be developed. Importantly, the results of our project will be usable by CoPs in Europe and the rest of the world. To achieve this we bring together a highly experienced team of beneficiaries that have worked between Africa and Europe to advance African e-Infrastructures.

The objectives of Sci-GaIA are:

- To promote the uptake of Science Gateways and e-Infrastructures in Africa and Beyond;
- To support new and already emerging CoPs;
- To strengthen and expand e-Infrastructure and Science Gateway related services;
- To train, disseminate, communicate and outreach.

In the contribution we will present the consortium running Sci-GaIA, its workplan and the current status of the activities with special focus on the tools and services deployed to support the development of e-Infrastructures in Africa and train the CoPs working in that continent and collaborating with their counterparts in Europe. Opportunities for participation and collaboration for EGI-related communities will also be outlined and discussed.

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