

South African entities recognised as European Living Lab members

An [announcement](#) on 25 November 2008 at a gala event in Lyon, France, during Europe's leading ICT research event, [ICT 2008](#), has seen South African Living Labs acknowledged as affiliated members of the European Network of Living Labs (EnoLL) as part of its 'Third Wave'. The Meraka Institute of the CSIR is involved in both Siyakhula Living Lab in Dwesa, Eastern Cape, and the Sekhukhune Rural Living Lab in Limpopo.



Kobus Roux of the Meraka Institute and Christian Merz (SAP) with MR Peltomäkki (DG INFSO Deputy Director) in a celebratory mood

The EnoLL's 'Third Wave' has brought 68 additional network EU members to the consolidation of the network. EnoLL is now based on a total of 129 Living Labs (including 10 affiliated Living Labs from non-European countries).

The Siyakhula Living Lab is managed by the universities of Fort Hare and of Rhodes, and hosts a collaborative research project between Nokia Siemens Networks and the Meraka Institute on the Village Connection project. The Village Connection is a unique concept that allows rural connectivity to be built one village at a time.

A Living Lab is a research and open innovation environment in real-life settings in which user-driven innovation is the co-creation process for new services, products and societal infrastructures. LLs encompass societal and technological dimensions simultaneously in a business-citizens-government-academia partnership.

LLs espouse a vision of open innovation in which goal posts are moved from a position where the user is seen as a traditional stakeholder and consumer of industry-led innovations, to a position where the user and user communities are contributors and co-creators of new innovation. LL sites offer site-specific services such as need-finding services; public innovation services; test and validation services; business incubation support services; collaborative mediation services and innovation externalisation services.

The Meraka Institute's Kobus Roux who was present at the event, noted, "This is a big achievement for South Africa to be recognised as a member of this network. It gives global recognition for the Meraka Institute's work and to the institute as a partner in research." More information about South Africa's second LL in EnoLL, the Sekhukhune Living Lab, will follow in the new year.

Roux was joined at ICT 2008 by colleagues from the Meraka Institute who are involved in several Framework Programme 7 (FP7) projects. These are:

- [Belief II](#), which aims to strengthen cooperation links in the e-infrastructure domains between Europe and emerging economies, especially Latin America, India and South Africa
- [EuroAfrica-ICT](#) aims to promote and support the development of strategic cooperation on ICT research between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa and between Europe and the Caribbean
- The Integrated Risk Management for Africa (IRMA) project aims to develop and implement an ICT platform to manage natural and environmental risks in Africa in a coordinated manner.

Speaking after the event, project manager Tshepang Moseia noted, "Our participation in the exhibition as one of the few African countries present at the event, provided the ideal opportunity for networking with potential European research partners. It was also an ideal opportunity to become acquainted with the latest ICT trends and projections for the future."