

## Austria

### PROGRESS REPORT<sup>1</sup>

on recent developments regarding S&T cooperation in/with the WBC  
(1<sup>st</sup> half 2012 or - November 2011 / Sarajevo till June 2012 / Tirana)

#### 1 Policy actions

(e.g. essential changes in the political authorities, administrative bodies, agencies, institutions, personnel, development/launch of new national funding programmes, etc.)

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#### 2 Legislative initiatives - development of the legal and strategic framework

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#### 3 Important events, meetings, training activities, etc.

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#### 4 Development of international cooperation and actions on integration into ERA

(e.g. new bilateral/international agreements, memberships, support structures, important international projects, programmes, etc.)

#### Bilateral agreements on scientific cooperation:

##### *Albania:*

A bilateral agreement on scientific and technological cooperation between Austria and Albania has been signed in Vienna on May 2, 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> The progress reports are collected in preparation of the meetings of the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan Countries and will be provided for download from the WBC-INCO.Net homepage ([www.wbc-inco.net](http://www.wbc-inco.net)) about one week before the meeting takes place. Therefore please submit your report to [office@wbc-inco.net](mailto:office@wbc-inco.net) until June 5, 2012.

*FY Republic of Macedonia:*

The second meeting of the Joint Commission implementing the bilateral scientific and technological cooperation agreement between Austria and Macedonia (FYR) has been held in April 13, 2011 in Skopje. At this meeting 9 bilateral cooperation projects for the runtime 2011-2012 has been selected for funding. The Joint Commission for Scientific and Technological Co-operation will hold its next meeting to select the project proposals in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2012 in Vienna and the call for project proposals was open from 16<sup>th</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

*Montenegro:*

In June 2009 a bilateral "Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Austria and the Government of Montenegro on Scientific and Technological Cooperation" was signed in Podgorica and entered into force on August 1, 2010. The first meeting of the Austrian-Montenegrin Joint Commission for Scientific and Technological Co-operation implementing the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Austria and the Government of Montenegro on Scientific and Technological Cooperation has been held in June 24, 2011 in Vienna. At this meeting 5 bilateral cooperation projects for the runtime 2011-2013 has been selected for funding. The Joint Commission for Scientific and Technological Co-operation will hold its next meeting to select the project proposals in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2012 in Podgorica and the call for project proposals was open from 1<sup>st</sup> February to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012.

*Serbia:*

The bilateral agreement on scientific and technological cooperation between Austria and Serbia was signed on July 13, 2010, in Vienna by the Ministers of Science of Austria and Serbia and entered into force on May 1, 2011.

**Multilateral cooperation:**

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research is an active partner in European initiatives and cooperation projects within the EU Framework Programmes dedicated to foster and further develop the research cooperation with the Balkan region (i.e. **Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan Countries; Western Balkan Countries INCO.NET (WBC-INCO.NET)** (coordination ZSI, partner FFG), **Southeast European ERA.Net PLUS (SEE-ERA.NET PLUS)** (coordination ZSI).

Most activities on regional level, directly from / in Austria in this period:

- SEE-ERA.NET PLUS monitoring meeting organised by ZSI; April 23-24, 2012 in Vienna
- WBC-INCO.NET virtual training "How to write ERC Starting Grant Proposals" organised by FFG; June 10, 2012
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**ADA – Austrian Development Agency, ZSI – Centre of Social Innovation, WUS Austria–  
World University Service, OeAD GmbH - Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in  
Education and Research**

In December 2011 the project „**Higher KOS – Promoting Institutional Development in Higher Education and Research in Kosovo**“ has been launched. Its purpose is to effectively and

sustainable implement the principles of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in the public Kosovar Higher Education (HE) institutions and to sustainably enhance Kosovo's integration into the European Research Area (ERA). The project is financed by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and co-financed by the Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

The intervention focuses on three thematic areas, leading to three expected results each contributing to the above mentioned objectives:

- (1) The **quality of education** offered at public HE institutions will be enhanced through improved and labour market oriented teaching and learning (didactics, planning), and improved quality assurance mechanisms.
- (2) The system of **research promotion** in Kosovo will be improved substantially through developing capacities and establishing a national research fund and administration that is functioning according to international standards.
- (3) **Quality management and governance** as well as administrative capacities of main stakeholders (MEST, universities) will be further developed in order to be more efficient, transparent, effective and customer-oriented.

The three thematic areas are divided into ten components, thus allowing tailor-made measures for each of the expected results, specifically targeted at the direct beneficiaries.

Outlook: **Programmatic Partnerships** are currently being formed between Kosovar and Austrian public education institutions and will be launched in the second half of 2012.

The project is implemented by a consortium of the WUS Austria -World University Service (Consortium leader), the Zentrum für Soziale Innovation (ZSI) and the OeAD (Österreichische Austauschdienst-Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung) with a duration of 36 months.

### WUS Austria

**WUS Austria** implements a variety of projects in the Western Balkan Region; the main activities carried out/ developments which occurred in the last 6 months are listed below, a list of all running projects<sup>2</sup> can be obtained from here: <http://www.wus-austria.org/allprojects/38/15.html>.

Kosovo

SUMMARY: During the last half year/currently WUS Austria was/is involved in projects (as project manager or partner) which support **strategic development**, the establishing and implementation of **quality assurance structures**, the **enhancement of research structures** (through promotion of research, development of PhD programs and provision of equipment), and **institution/capacity building** (training of QA/R&D officers).

- HIGHER KOS (*Higher KOS – Promoting Institutional Development in Higher Education and Research in Kosovo*; <http://www.wus-austria.org/project/0/95.html>): (see above)

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<sup>2</sup> Projects with participation of Austrian Universities are highlighted in light blue.

- QA@UPPZ (*Strategic Support for the development of Sustainable QA Structures at the Newly Public Founded University in Kosova*; <http://www.wus-austria.org/project/0/93.html> ); includes the following main components, the first of which is currently being implemented:
  - **QA strategy development** (launched recently)
  - Capacity and institution building
- QC@UP (*Fostering and Developing the Quality Culture at the University of Prishtina*; <http://www.wus-austria.org/project/0/31.html>); **QA strategy development** is in its final phase, the project finishes in July 2012.
- PhD@UP (*PhD in Food & Technology & Creating Capacities for PhD Reform at the University of Prishtina/Kosovo*; <http://www.wus-austria.org/project/0/82.html>); PhD program is developed and currently under process of accreditation; it serves as **model for PhD curricula** in conformity with European/Bologna standards.
- KIKT (*Kosovo Interdisciplinary Knowledge Triangle Center – PhD based Education, Research and Training for Medical and Natural Sciences*; <http://www.wus-austria.org/project/0/77.html>): This project aims at improving the conditions for the development of professional research capacities and PhD study programs for Medical & Natural Sciences at the University of Prishtina (UP). This includes the establishment of a center for PhD studies, research, innovation and training and the development of a PhD program.

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

SUMMARY: In the last half year/currently WUS Austria was/is involved in projects which contribute to the **enhancement of the PhD structure**, with WUS Austria as one of the driving figures. Furthermore, the further **enhancement of quality management** structures at the 8 public universities remains a key issue.

- ESABIH (*European Union Standards for Accreditation of Study Programmes at BiH Universities*; <http://www.wus-austria.org/project/0/86.html> ): project in its final phase; has inter alia supported the capacity building not only for the QA officers of the 8 participating universities but also for a large number of external experts which are now at the disposal of the Accreditation Agency.
- EQADE (*Embedding Quality Assurance in Doctoral Education*; <http://www.wus-austria.org/project/0/89.html>): access to key online library databases is in the process of being provided to the 8 public universities.

## Regional

- QinR (*Quality in Research*; <http://www.wus-austria.org/project/0/92.html>), implemented in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia; project kick-off took place in January 2012; until spring 2013 **Guidelines for Quality in Research** will be developed in a series of workshops jointly with all partners.
- PATTERNS\_Lectures (<http://www.erstestiftung.org/patterns-lectures/>); project implemented in Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Ukraine; PATTERNS Lectures encourages the development of new university courses in the fields of art history, cultural theory, and cultural studies in Central and South Eastern

Europe; guest lectures within the newly established courses contribute to trans-institutional cooperation and internationalization of the higher education sector in the countries; project funded by ERSTE Stiftung, implemented by WUS Austria.

- R&D Capacities (*Creating R&D Capacities and Instruments for boosting Higher Education-Economy Cooperation*, <http://www.rd-capacities.org/>); (inter alia) establishment of R&D Centres and development of R&D strategies at the participating universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Montenegro; project final event in December 2011.

### **Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital (TFBHC)** **of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)**

The TFBHC is chaired by Mr. Remus Pricopie on behalf of the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports. The Co-chairs are Austria (represented on behalf of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture by Director General Mr. Anton Dobart and on behalf of Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research by Director General Ms. Barbara Weitgruber), and the second Co-chair is Republic of Croatia represented by the Ministry of Science and Education.

The TFBHC Secretariat is located in Vienna and jointly financed by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, and Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research.

#### **Cluster of Knowledge Activities**

In autumn 2011 the TFBHC commissioned an NGO from Belgrade *Centre for Education Policy* to produce a study on Evidence Based Policy Making in Education in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Rep. Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia. The results of the commissioned study "Mapping Regional Capacities for Evidence-based Policy Making in Education in South Eastern Europe" were presented at the Workshop in Vienna on Dec. 16. At this occasion regional stakeholders had the opportunity start developing a draft for a regional project within the "Evidence-based Policy Making in Education" Cluster of Knowledge based on the study presented. Since the meeting AT Co-chairmanship has been supporting the development of this project proposal which will subsequently be submitted for EU funding (ex. MB IPA)

The TFBHC will also continue to support and participate in three Clusters of Knowledge activities in Cooperation with the Education Reform Initiative of South East Europe (ERI SEE), and the Cluster lead countries on the following topics: 1) "Evidence-based Policy Making in Education" under RS leadership, "Development of National Qualification Framework" under HR leadership, and "Modernizing VET system – improving performance, quality and attractiveness of VET" under RO leadership.

#### **Important Meetings**

On Jan. 25 in Brussels, the TFBHC organized a meeting between the Working Group on Western Balkans of European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs and the representatives of the TF, ERI SEE, RCC and ETF. At the meeting the Working Group was introduced to the current state of play in the priority area of human capital development, as well as to the future prospects in this area.

An annual coordination meeting between the TFBHC, ERI SEE, RCC and ETF took place on Feb. 7 in Turin. At the meeting it was decided to intensify the cooperation in order to raise awareness of, and further the issues pertaining to human capital development issues in SEE.

### **Planned Activities**

In autumn 2012 the TFBHC will implement this year's phase of the TFBHC Capacity Building Mobility Programme. The programme is open to SEE civil servants, and consists of short-term placements at key institutions and networks in the area of cooperation aimed at furthering human capital development. The placements are offered in Belgrade, Chisinau, Podgorica, Sofia, Sarajevo, Vienna and Zagreb.

For autumn 2012 the TFBHC plans to organize a Workshop for Development of Regional Projects. This event will gather regional stakeholders, and allow them to identify common regional topic in harmony with the "ET2020" benchmark(s), and subsequently develop a project under the regional leadership to be submitted for the EU funding.

### **Information Exchange**

With the aim of enhancing information exchange and better coordination among the WB stakeholders as well as the EU, the TFBHC website ([www.taskforcehumancapital.info](http://www.taskforcehumancapital.info)) is being updated regularly. The E-Calendar of events is especially significant as it gives an overview of not only TFBHC events, but also other events in the WB in the field of human capital development.

### **Education Reform Initiative South East Europe (ERI SEE)**

AT, via the Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital of the Regional Cooperation Council holds a Co-chairmanship of the ERI SEE, and is represented by Mr. Jürgen Schick from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. Additionally, AT is represented in the ERI SEE Governing Board by Ms. Monika Mott from KulturKontakt Austria.

### **ERI SEE Work Programme 2012**

Current ERI SEE Work Programme focuses on: Institutional cooperation in the area of Vocational Education and Training and Quality Assurance in Higher Education; Support to the development of Regional Projects; and Cooperation in the fields of teacher professional development.

ERI SEE also focuses on and supports the above mentioned Clusters of Knowledge. AT, via the TFBHC cooperates intensely with the ERI SEE around the Clusters of Knowledge, especially within the framework of the "Evidence-based Policy Making" Cluster of Knowledge, and the planned regional project.

### **Establishment of the international ERI SEE Secretariat**

Within the framework of the ERI SEE, AT supports the process of establishment of the international ERI SEE secretariat in Belgrade. The establishment process is planned to conclude in autumn 2012.

## **CEEPUS – Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies**

### Planned outputs:

- Joint PhD Programs
- exchange actions in the framework of CEEPUS networks (priority) and Freemovers
- summer schools
- intensive courses
- excursions
- internships

### Next steps/events in 2012 and 2013

- Fall 2012: 2nd CEEPUS III Senior Officials´ Meeting; Discussion of CEEPUS Work Program 2013-15.
- Exchange for 2012/13 to start in Sept. 2012
- 18th Meeting of the Joint Committee of Ministers on March 15, 2013 in Vienna
- Chair: Austria
- Meeting with Accreditation Agencies to discuss easier procedure for CEEPUS Joint Degrees (still in 2012)

### Outputs to date:

- Approx. 35.000 persons exchanged since 1995
- Operative in 2011/12: 61 networks (800 participating units)
- 2012/13: 66 networks (879 participating units)
- Scholarship months available for 2011/12: 6065; for 2012/13: 6075

### Main events

- Fall 2011: Negotiations with MSUC (Moscow State University for Civil Engineering) to be included as Silent Partner
- 1st CEEPUS III Senior Officials´ Meeting in Ljubljana, Dec 2011: discussion of pledges for 2012/13, fine tuning of common procedures in 16 countries, discussion of further EUSDR activities.
- January 2012: Ministers´Prize Selection for best network - award in 2012
- 19th Meeting of the International Commission, Zagreb, March 2012: network selection 2012/13
- March, April, May 2012: National CEEPUS day in HR, CZ and AT. (Additional meetings later during the year.)
- Spring 2012: selection of this year´s 3 winners of the competition “europe now” initiated by the Central CEEPUS Office in 2008

**EVAL-INNO (Fostering Evaluation Competencies in Research, Technology and Innovation in the SEE Region)**

EVAL-INNO partners develop RTDI Evaluation standards in the frame of the project funded under the SEE Transnational Cooperation Programme, involving partners from Austria (ZSI as Lead Partner), Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Montenegro, Serbia. Trainings are planned to take place late 2012 and 2013.

**EU Strategy for the Danube Region**

Austria is very much involved in the implementation of the EUSDR and participates intensively in several of its 11 Priority Areas (PA). It acts as co-coordinator of PA 1 “To improve mobility and intermodality”, PA 9 “To invest in people and skills” and PA 10 “To set up institutional capacity and cooperation”. Furthermore BMWF is first national contact in priority area 7 “To develop the knowledge society (research, education and ICT)” coordinated by Slovakia and Serbia.

The next meeting of the Steering Group of the Priority Area 7 will take place in Vienna on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

**Cooperation of Austrian Universities with the Western Balkan Countries**

See attachments

**5 Statistics - major changes / updates of relevant statistical data**

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**6 Assessment of the developments and outlook on the next 6 months**

*(Optional personal opinion)*

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