

## Austria

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

on recent developments regarding S&T cooperation in/with the WBC  
(December 2012 / Belgrade till June 2013 / Budva)

#### 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. The first Meeting of the Joint Commission for Scientific and Technological Co-operation will take place at the end of 2013 in Tirana, Albania.

#### 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:**

The requested prolongation with 6 months was agreed with the EC, the last Monitoring of projects is progressing. The monitoring should prepare and contribute to a possible future evaluation of the joint call and joint funding experiences in view of future joint funding activities.

SEE-ERA.NET PLUS contributed to the organisation of the Workshop: How to commercialise research results in the Western Balkans (Novi Sad, 23-24 May 2013) mainly focusing on the funded JERP projects and their relevant partners, organised with WBC-INCO.net

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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 May 29, 2013.

## Western Balkan Countries INCO.NET (WBC-INCO.NET)

Workshops and events organized in this period (with ZSI involvement) within the project:

- The two-day training event on **Smart Specialisation**, jointly organised by WBC-INCO.NET (co-organised by the Mihajlo Pupin Institute (MPI), by ZSI Austria and by the South East European Research Centre (SEERC/GR) with financial support of Central European Initiative (CEI), took place on 11-12 April in Belgrade, Serbia. Smart Specialisation is a unique concept gaining momentum in the research and innovation priority setting agendas in the EU Member States. Moreover, smart specialisation is also gaining importance in the **Western Balkan and Danube region countries**. Its uniqueness lies, among others, in the necessity for a strong interconnection, dialogue and consent between key stakeholders of research and innovation policies as well as in its comprehensive regional approach to the definition of national strengths, weaknesses and strategies for research and innovation. The event has featured a number of top-notch experts in the smart specialisation concepts as well as practitioners experienced in the implementation of the research and innovation strategies for smart specialisation in practice. More than 45 participants from Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, FYR of Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244), Montenegro, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain and Ukraine have contributed to the workshop.
- On April 8, 2013 the representatives of WBC-INCO.NET (ZSI as coordinator) and representatives of "**Western Balkans Regional R&D Strategy for Innovation**" technical assistance project met in Vienna in order to further explore cooperation potentials. The World Bank Team and WBC-INCO.NET jointly organised a meeting which took place at World Bank premises in Vienna. Representatives of the ministries of science from WB countries, the European Commission, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and Central European Initiative (CEI) exchanged information on current activities while future cooperation and potential joint activities were explored.
- WBC-INCO.NET (ZSI as coordinator) participated at the first meeting on Research, Development and Innovation dimension of **SEE 2020 strategy**. The meeting, organized by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat in **Vienna** (April 2013), provided representatives of the ministries of science from South East Europe (SEE), the European Commission, the World Bank as well as other relevant regional and international partners (such as UNESCO, OECD and WBC-INCO.NET) with an opportunity to get acquainted with the process of development of the SEE 2020 regional growth strategy.
- On April 10, 2013 the **6th Regional Dialogue Meeting** was organised and hosted by ZSI in Vienna. This event serves for the WBC as a forum of regional information exchange while inputs on different topics can be provided by invited guests. Representatives of the Ministries of Science from WBC, TUBITAK (Turkey), the European Commission and WBC-INCO.NET coordination team (ZSI) discussed this time the topic of Association to Horizon 2020

### EU Strategy for the Danube Region

Austria is strongly involved in the implementation of the EU-Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and participates in several of its 11 Priority Areas (PA). Austrian partners are coordinating 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".

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research (BMWf) is member in the Steering Group of the Priority Area 7 “To develop the knowledge society (research, education and ICT)” coordinated by Slovakia and Serbia. The Steering Group is at the moment focusing its efforts on one main ‘Flagship Activity’ the so-called “Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund” (DRRIF), which aims at the coordination of national and regional research and innovation funds in the Danube Region. The BMWf was entrusted by the Steering Group of the Priority Area 7 to lead a Working Group for setting up and implementing the DRRIF. This Working Group was established by the Steering Group in its most recent meeting in Bratislava on 14th February 2013. Very soon the 14 EUSDR countries together with further countries wanting to participate in the activities of Priority Area 7, in particular Italy, Poland, Montenegro, Kosovo\* and Albania and especially Germany on the federal level, which has always been a strong partner in the regional cooperation, will be invited by the Austrian Federal Minister for Science and Research Prof. Karlheinz Töchterle to nominate high level officials to discuss ways how to implement the DRRIF.

The political dialogue in the Working Group will be technically supported by the INCO.NET for the Danube Region, which is currently being negotiated with the European Commission and will start its activities in the beginning of 2014. This FP7 funded project includes many important actors in the Danube region and will be coordinated by the Austrian Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI), which is very experienced in regional and European projects. The BMWf will be in charge of the project’s work package for the „Policy Dialogue“.

The flagship project “DRRIF” is strongly supported by the EC and PA 7 is one of only 4 priority areas that received an extra financial aid. This “Technical Assistance of DG REGIO” will support the set-up of the DRRIF. A tender for a feasibility study and the set-up of the DRRIF has been launched on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

Beside the mentioned Working Group “DRRIF” the Steering Group of PA 7 set up further Working Groups in the areas of Higher Education and Mobility, Research, Innovation and Development of Research Infrastructures, Information and Communication Technologies, and Smart Specialisation.

### **ZSI – Centre of Social Innovation**

#### **ESSle - Enhancing Social Scientific Research in Kosovo\* and its Integration into the European Research Area**

ESSle focuses on the priority sector “social sciences” as stipulated in the National Research Programme of Kosovo\* 2010-2015 (NRP). It contributes to the upgrading of social scientific knowledge in support of the socio-economic development of Kosovo\*.

The project is supported by the European Commission Delegation in Prishtina.

Progress during the last 6 months:

- establishment of an empirical social sciences laboratory at the University of Prishtina resulting in 15 work stations equipped with statistical and text analysis programmes;
- preparing and implementation of the first out of 3 training weeks under a 'Training Programme for International Social Scientific Research Qualifications' resulting in 30 younger Kosovar researchers and 5 additionally users of social-scientific evidence trained in state-of-art scientific methodology and in scientific management; focus of the first training week was on quantitative and qualitative methods of empirical social sciences, research design and project management and proposal writing

Upcoming activities:

- continuation of the training programme (summer and autumn school)
- establishing an international mentorship programme for 10 younger Kosovar social scientists
- organisation of a large public "Horizon 2020" conference in Prishtina

### **Higher KOS - Promoting Institutional Development in Higher Education and Research in Kosovo\***

The project „Higher KOS – Promoting Institutional Development in Higher Education and Research in Kosovo\*“ contributes to the well-functioning of the higher education and research system in Kosovo\* along European values, practices and standards.

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 supported by the Austrian Development Cooperation and the Kosovar Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

Progress during the last 6 months:

- call for joint R&D proposals (Kosovo\*, Austria and another SEE-country) successfully accomplished - selection of around 10 proposals
- awarding of PhD grants to study in Austria ("sandwich type" PhD studies)
- workshop on eLibrary-systems

Upcoming activities:

- upgrading of the research promotion system in Kosovo\* (fund structure, instruments)
- advice on the establishment of a Research Promotion Agency in Kosovo\*

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

Eval-INNO partners developed RTDI Evaluation standards in five local languages + English in the frame of the project funded under the SEE Transnational Cooperation Programme, involving partners from Austria (ZSI as Lead Partner co-financed by BMWF), Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Montenegro, Serbia. They are available in print and electronic on <http://eval-inno.eu>

A consultation workshop “Public procurement for SEE innovation evaluation: a comparative and needs assessment study” took place in Athens on 28-29 January 2013 including the WBC countries and Bulgaria, Greece, Austria, Hungary.

Trainings have been set up and were held in

- Bulgaria 18-22 March 2013 (trainees involved from Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Greece)
- Hungary 15-19 April 2013 (trainees involved from Hungary, Slovakia, Ukraine, Montenegro, Austria)

Upcoming Trainings:

- Montenegro 17-21 June 2013 (addressing trainees from Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo\*, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Serbia 7-11 October 2013 (addressing trainees from Serbia, Croatia, FYROM, Slovenia)

### **WUS Austria**

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

KOSOVO\*

*SUMMARY: Since June 2012 the project Higher KOS implemented WUS Austria in consortium with ZSI and Oead-GmbH has progressed from the Inception Phase of the project Higher KOS towards implementation of several activities. In other projects study programs have been accredited and equipment for scientific work has been bought for the University of Prishtina.*

**HIGHER KOS (Higher KOS – Promoting Institutional Development in Higher Education and Research in Kosovo\***; <http://www.wus-austria.org/project/0/95.html>): start of the project Higher KOS in December 2011 with official launch in March 2012; the project is implemented by WUS Austria (Consortium leader) together with ZSI and OeAD GmbH, with funding from the ADC and co-financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Kosovo\*. The project consists of 3 components:

- Education Quality

- Research Promotion
- Quality Management and Governance

Outlook:

- Four programmatic partnerships between Kosovar and Austrian higher education institutions were granted, the activities started in February 2013.
- Ten collaborative research projects were granted, two additional projects are on the waiting list.
- 12 PhD fellowships have been granted.

The first Workshop for EIFL- Electronic Information for Libraries took place in Prishtina in January 2013 (15.01.-16.01.2013) with the aim to raise awareness about the importance of access to e-resources for education and research.

**PhD@UP** (PhD in Food Science & Technology & Creating Capacities for PhD Reform at the University of Prishtina/Kosovo\*; <http://www.phdatup.org/>); PhD program has been developed and accredited and the enrollment of students was completed with 15 students selected to attend the PhD programme in conformity with European/Bologna standards. The students had the possibility to choose the modules for the first semester and the seminars for the second one that will be led by the local and professors from the partner international universities.

**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. On March 30, 2012, the official opening of the IKTC\_ Interdisciplinary Knowledge Triangle Center for PhD studies, research, innovation and training in Medical and Natural Sciences took place in the premises of the University Clinical Center of Kosova

The PhD program in the framework of the TEMPUS project KIKT has been accredited for three years by the Kosovo\* Accreditation Agency (KAA). The PhD students have been selected and the PhD has started with the spring term 2013.

## 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 implementation has been successfully brought to an end.

**EQADE** (Embedding Quality Assurance in Doctoral Education; <http://www.wus-austria.org/project/0/89.html>): The previously established Units for Doctoral Education (UDEs) at 8 BiH public universities were equipped with office equipment necessary for efficient functioning of the units and installment of pilot PhD study groups. Additionally, the Springer publisher gave permission to the members of the BiH universities online access to all Springer publications over a period of 1-2 years.

University management representatives and members of the established UDEs at 8 BiH universities participated and contributed to the Training on QA in PhD which was organized at the University in Palermo, March 18 – 20, 2013. The Training focused on the following topics:

- Elaboration of procedures, systems and processes of quality assurance and advancement in PhD education
- Institutional experience (as case studies) with regard to how the University of Palermo manages quality of PhD education
- The standards in dissemination and mentorship
- How to measure the impact of scientific work, etc.

Furthermore, the 8 universities finalized their Road-maps as strategic documents which define concrete steps involving all scientific affiliations in order to create a positive environment for creation of new doctoral programs, based on institutional (not only Faculty) research capacities to the aim of initiating modern (integrated) research education aligned with BiH society needs. In the upcoming period, EU Partner institutions will provide their expertise and review of Road-maps, especially focusing on feasibility of proposed action, quality, methodology, appropriateness of QA mechanisms, and conditions to create up-to-date PhD education. The aim will be achieving alignment between actions proposed by 8 BiH universities and good practice models from EU universities.

#### **CHILDREN'S UNIVERSITY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA – II PHASE** (<http://www.wus-austria.org/childrens-university/>)

The Children's University in Bosnia and Herzegovina aims to increase the interest in science, research and technology from a very young age and to engage children in exciting, interactive, real-world learning experiences. This way the children develop academic talent and knowledge, creativity and personal growth, and they are encouraged to be curious and to think critically. The Children's University provides knowledge transfer for 10 to 12 year old children. Through this project many children experience their first encounter with the university and learn more about their future educational choices. After the successfully implemented first (pilot) project phase within which the Children's University was held at five faculties of the University of Sarajevo with participation of 96 pupils of 9 schools from different parts of BiH, the implementation of the second project phase is currently in preparation, in terms of securing the necessary funds. Within this phase, the Children's University will be held at the faculties of the University of Mostar in autumn of 2013.

REGIONAL

**QinR** (Quality in Research; <http://www.wus-austria.org/project/0/92.html>; BiH, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia): 1st workshop for drafting of guidelines held in September 2012 in Novi Sad, 2nd workshop for drafting of Quality in Research Guidelines /study visit held in Paris in November 2012> guidelines are planned to be finalized throughout 2013. The mid-term conference was held in Novi Sad in April 2013. Together with the new management at the University of Sarajevo (coordinator of project) a new project management team has taken up the coordination of the project at UNSA in January 2013.

### **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).

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**

TFBHC launched a new Cluster of Knowledge on the topic of Teacher Training. The kick-off meeting took place in Podgorica on Feb. 20, and the CoK will be lead by Montenegrin VET Centre.

Based on the results of a study commissioned by the TFBHC *Evidence Based Policy Making in Education in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Rep. Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia* it was decided to peruse to develop a regional project on this topic and submit for the EU funding. AT continues to support the process of project drafting which will be submitted for MB IPA funding in 2013.

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 leaders 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.

#### **Planned Activities**

In June 2013 the TFBHC implement this year’s phase of the TFBHC Capacity Building Mobility Programme. The programme was 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 were offered in Belgrade, Chisinau, Podgorica, Sofia, Sarajevo, Vienna and Zagreb. In 2013 eight civil servants, four from Montenegro, two from Albania, one from Bosnia and Herzegovina and one from Serbia are planned to participate in the programme.



In autumn 2013 the TFBHC together with Montenegrin VET Center and ERI SEE plans to organize a second Teacher Training CoK meeting during which specific topics will be identified to be tackled with in this field.

### **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. Additionally, AT is represented in the ERI SEE Governing Board by Ms. Monika Mott from KulturKontakt Austria.

In 2013 ERI SEE was invited to actively participate in the drafting and implementing the “South East Europe 2020 Strategy” (SEE2020), primarily of the “Smart Growth” pillar where ERI SEE is expected to take of the coordination role.

#### **ERI SEE Work Programme 2013**

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 to conclude in the near future.

### **CEEPUS - Central European Exchange Program for University Studies**

- 3 Conferences were held between Jan 1 and April 4, 2013:

Feb 2013 – 18th General Evaluation Conference and 2nd CEEPUS III Senior Officials’ Meeting

April 4, 2013 18th Meeting of the Joint Committee of Ministers (= JCM), Chair Minister Töchterle.  
Current Chair 2013 -15 is CZ.

Decisions by the Joint Committee of Ministers:

- Quota 13/14: 6096 Scholarship Months
- CEEPUS to award a new label for CEEPUS – Joint Program friendly universities. Label to be awarded by the JCM.
- Recommendation to ensure easier access to regional funding – CEEPUS could then up its overall quota and support more networks
- Recommendation to hold proactive regional meetings of public servants to discuss mobility relevant developments in combination with the Senior Officials´ Meeting. Test run later this year in Prague.
- Award of the Ministers´ Prize for Excellence (best network) 2013. (Mathematics and Computer Science, 35 Partners)
- CEEPUS TV: Viribus Unitis – film on occasion of 20 Years CEEPUS : <http://www.ceepus.info/default.aspx?CMSPage=72>
- Cooperation CEEPUS and RC-LACE (Regional Cooperation in Limited Area Modelling for Central Europe) – CEEPUS to “provide” PhD students for modelling. Other subject areas to be attached to this project via CEEPUS.
- Application round 2013/14: 89 networks, more than 1100 partners. 66 networks selected plus 14 more: these were quality networks but funding them was not possible due to lack of scholarship months.
- Further developments: more and more „Silent Partners“ cooperating with CEEPUS networks, esp. from Russia and Turkey.



