

Check against delivery!



Commissioner Janez POTOČNIK

Speech

*Opportunities for Montenegro in the
European Research Area*

Academy of Sciences and Arts of Montenegro

*Podgorica, Montenegro
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Dear Minister Škuletić, President of the Academy prof. Đurović, distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I value very much this opportunity to meet with you while being in Montenegro on an official visit. I already had interesting meeting with your Minister of Education and Science, prof. Sreten Škuletić. I am delighted to meet also with you, the representatives of scientific and business community.

Since the beginning of my mandate I have made it one of my missions to open European research programmes to the countries of the Western Balkan region. In January this year, I had the great pleasure of signing the Memorandum of Understanding that associates Montenegro to the EC 7th Framework Programme for Research as from 1 January 2008.

Before that we had signed the Memorandum of Understanding with Croatia, Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania. After the summer we will sign it with Bosnia & Herzegovina. This means that in less than 2 years since I announced this strategy, in Vienna in June 2006, at the launching of the Steering Platform for Research for the Western Balkan Countries, the entire Region is on board.

But allow me first to start with a broader picture and say something about the European Research Area and its importance for the future of Europe.

The ***European Research Area*** is a space where above all we work together and join forces to increase our scientific excellence. We need to create together at European level:

- An area where researchers, technology and knowledge can circulate freely (fifth freedom);
- An area in which Member States coordinate their efforts and join national research programmes to increase leverage;
- An area where we do mapping and benchmarking to measure progress...

We are also creating incentives and removing barriers:

- So that networks of scientists will have access to world-class infrastructure and facilities, and to which foreign researchers are drawn and retained;

- So that structured partnerships are formed between academia and industry, to meet the needs for new products, processes and services, as well as for skilled employees; and
- So that qualifications, experience, and social security rights of knowledge workers such as you will be portable across borders.

In other words, we are creating a knowledge society. Alongside the freedom of movement for people, goods, services and capital, we are creating a new fifth freedom in Europe – the freedom of knowledge.

By becoming an associated country you become an equal member of the European Research Area. Welcome! As member:

- You can cooperate and compete on an equal footing, in all calls of proposals;
- You are or will be part of the network of scientists, industrialists and policy-makers that are shaping the face of European research and innovation; and
- You will contribute to Europe's scientific excellence and competitiveness.

What changes does actually the *association status* bring to Montenegro?

As an associated country Montenegro has the same rights and obligations as the EU Member States, which means that:

- You can participate in all calls just like the Member States;
- You will always fulfil the minimum conditions on participation and therefore you will not have to wait for targeted calls or SICAs;
- You will also be entitled to intra community fellowships under Peoples programme and JRC.

In other words this means much more cooperation options under FP7.

And you have the possibility to attend our Programme Committees and others governing bodies which will help you to shape the European research policy or to be early informed about the upcoming Work Programmes.

For the European Union, it is an opportunity to continue to build and strengthen the European Research Area. You will contribute to Europe's critical mass and to Europe's target to become the most competitive region in the world.

Integration into the European Research Area and association to the FP7 should also be seen as a *first step of your country into the European Union*.

Indeed, research cooperation brings benefits in its own right; but is also an important learning experience and an economic development tool in the long road to membership of the European Union.

Research cooperation has an important part to play in preparing the ground for accession. I know this as the former lead negotiator for Slovenia, during our accession to the EU.

In this context I would like to refer to the special role of the *Joint Research Centre* for which I am also responsible. They have a special programme for enlargement countries. Today you have not taken much advantage of the special training for enlargement countries so I invite you to do it. The quality of the work of the JRC Institutes is very high and very helpful in implementing EC legislation.

Research cooperation also breaks down frontiers, both physical and cultural. That is because researchers from all backgrounds, from all nationalities, understand and share the same objective: improving society through curiosity and excellence. This is why we encourage so much research cooperation at *Region level*. Don't forget: doing the research together allows responding together and better to common problems. And I know well enough the Region to say that in many instances you have the same problems. I am thinking of improving the public health system, on meeting technical requirements in air and water quality, in contributing to our energy targets and energy efficiency.

I'm sure that you have heard that the main funding tool at our disposal to achieve European research area at European level is the *7th Framework Programme for Research*. Since some of you are already familiar with it, I will provide only the broadest of outlines.

This programme is funded to a total of €54 billion during its lifetime from 2007 to 2013 and consists of four major programmes:

The **Cooperation** programme funds collaborative projects among scientists, research institutes and the private sector in specific research themes. During last year - its first year of operations - nearly 27,000 proposals were submitted to over 50 calls for proposals.

The **Ideas** programme funds competition between individual researchers in cutting-edge fundamental science. The new independent European Research Council is supporting the best investigator-driven research that Europe and the world has to offer. The results of its first call for proposals are already known.

The **Capacities** programme supports the development of major European research infrastructures and the research potential of European small and medium-sized companies. 30 or more new pan-European research infrastructures will be enabled, using a legal framework to be proposed later this year.

The **People** programme funds training, mobility and career development of researchers.

The 7th Framework Programme is open to **international cooperation** on a scale that has never been seen in previous programmes. EU and national programmes will increasingly coordinate their international activities and R&D will in future more directly support the EU's foreign policy goals.

The level of competition is high and the average **success rate** is around 20%!

But since you are associated we have seen successful participation. So I would like to encourage you to continue to be interested and seek for research opportunities together with the other European partners.

As a small country, you cannot be excellent in all areas. You need to set priorities and develop knowledge in areas in which the integration of the country into the European Union will be facilitated or where research efforts are essential. I am thinking of: food safety and security, environmental concerns such as clean air, water or how to address soil erosion, but also on areas of interest for the well being of your citizens: like improvement of the health care and development of the information technologies.

I would also like to stress that your successful participation in FP7 projects depends very much on your ***national strategy and national capacity building***.

I am taking this opportunity to call upon you as the scientific community to support the reform of research, education and innovation efforts undertaken by your government:

- You can help to put research and innovation higher on the political agenda;
- You can help in the promotion of the new national science and technology strategy;
- You can advise the government in the implementation and making new proposals corresponding to your needs; and
- You can help by bringing Small and Medium Sized enterprises into your research. This will allow you to test immediately certain aspects of your research or to valorise it better.

Among the most important tasks will be:

- Establishing plans to stimulate investment in research;
- Creating conditions which will stimulate your enterprises to conduct research;
- Boosting the capacity of universities and the level of education and expertise of your scientists;
- Developing your research infrastructure and
- Stimulating partnerships between universities, research institutes and the private sector.

I could go on in indicating why we need to do research and why more needs to be done. This is the case for Member States and potential candidate countries as yours. I know it is a lot and not all can be achieved at once. It requires a collective effort. You can, of course, always count on our help and support.

In this context, one piece of important advice to your government is in using the ***Pre-Accession Instrument*** - also known as the IPA - for the purpose of strengthening your research capacity and human resources.

I am also pleased that your government is participating actively in the work of the *Steering Platform for Research in the Western Balkan Countries*. I am impressed with the number of subjects being discussed and analysed. But please use this Platform to steer the work. Only when we receive from you concrete ideas on how to strengthen your research capacity, we can try to deliver.

To conclude. I call on every individual here to assume your role and responsibility in these efforts:

- Making your voices heard in the setting of priorities and providing ideas for the national strategy;
- Developing your potential and capacities with the resources at your disposal; and
- Finding partners with whom to create proposals and exchange best practice.

Under these circumstances, I am confident that Montenegro will not miss its opportunities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Science and technology will help Montenegro in its progression as a dynamic and effective state.

Education and reform will support Montenegro's march towards the European Union.

Research and innovation will help Montenegro make its contribution to the Europe we are building:

- A strong Europe that can compete with the best in the world;
- A fair Europe that can provide for its citizens and also give to the world; and
- A responsible Europe that protects the environment and manages its natural resources.

As citizens we all have much to gain from these efforts.

As the Academy of Science and Arts - a house of knowledge – you have a vital role to play in shaping and supporting the necessary changes.

And as Montenegro, you will find your rightful place within the greater European family. Don't forget. You are part of Europe, historically, culturally, economically, geographically... name it whatever you want. You also belong to the European Union. The process of accession is long and far from easy. But there is no doubt, you can and you will manage it. And unfortunately, there will be difficult times. But in difficult times do not forget, you have the European perspective... and Europe keeps its promises. That is what I have learned from our accession process!