



Editorial

Dear readers,

Coordination with but especially among the Western Balkan countries has been improved in the recent period and this journal provides some information on the progress. The last meeting of the Steering Platform on Research in Paris (we report on page 1 and 2) has given guidance for several follow-up activities. The European Commission strives to enhance the European perspectives. In this regard, also the Regional Cooperation Council has taken many efforts, e.g. organising a ministerial conference on the development of a regional research strategy. On page 5, Mladen Dragašević from RCC presents his take on the role of research in South Eastern Europe in today's troubled times. The WBC-INCO.NET project also presents some of its latest achievements: the study on barriers in research cooperation, information rallies which we organised and our priority setting activities (pages 3 and 4). Furthermore we offer a range of news from the region on pages 6 to 9. National initiatives from Greece and some EU projects are highlighted on page 10, the projects SEE-ERA.NET and SEE-ERA.NET PLUS present latest developments. In this issue, we would also like to embed the WBC-INCO.NET in the context of other INCO-NETs, namely cooperation networks with world-regions such as: Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, South East Asia and the Mediterranean Area (pages 12 to 14). Last but not least, we provide information on other projects and publications on pages 15 and 16.

Register for our e-mail-updates on <http://www.wbc-inco.net>.

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Imprint

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Co-Chairing the Steering Platform: Resume from Serbia

The Steering Platform meeting held in Paris, France on December 19, 2008 was co-chaired by the Serbian Ministry of Science and Technological Development for the Western Balkan Countries (WBCs), the French Presidency and the European Commission. A continuation of good practice was introduced.

It has been stressed that the WBCs' co-chairing position is very important for the realisation of the EU idea of having all Balkan countries on board to participate in the European Research Area. With Bosnia and Herzegovina, all six WBCs are now associated to FP7, which will increase the research opportunities in the region and support the regional competitiveness. The membership in the FP7 family opens a possibility for further development of regional partnerships and for strengthening the links with scientists and companies across Europe. Co-chairing the Steering Platform is an instrument that can smooth the way for the integration process of candidate and potential candidate countries among the WBCs into the European Union.

Despite the fact that the WBCs are on board now, they are still in need of modern research infrastructures and centers, better conditions for young researchers and funds that will allow scientists to work on projects that suit the needs of the national industries. Only by creating these conditions, R&D sectors in the WBCs can have a serious impact on national economies and connect them to the rest of Europe. But current budgets for S&T are clearly insufficient to fund significant capital investments. The present economic crisis gives little hope that this situation will rapidly change. Furthermore, the WBCs are still not eligible for EU structural funds. Additional concern of the EC for the region will be needed in the coming months and years. Moreover, specific tools and measures to further develop the WBC research infrastructures as well as human capital need to be created. By these ways, the integration of the region in the European Research Area and European Community can improve as well.

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5th Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries, Paris, France

Conclusions of Steering Platform on Research for WBCs

The next Steering Platform meeting will be held on May 28, 2009 in Liblice, Czech Republic. It will also focus on the follow-up to the conclusions of the Platform, which were developed at the last meeting in Paris on December 19, 2008. The Platform adopted the following conclusions:

The discussion on recent developments in Science and Technology (S&T) and for the WBC gave an overview of the different actions taken during the last six months. It also took note of the growing cooperation within the region and with the EU Member States, the associated states in FP7, as well as with organisations such as RCC, EUREKA, COST and UNESCO.

The discussion took place on the basis of prior received information sheets. This exercise should be continued to allow for a more focussed discussion on key actions and events, which are important for the region.

While many of the suggested actions aim at reinforcing the participation of the WBCs in the 7th Framework, bilateral and multilateral programmes, other initiatives address the need to reinforce national S&T strategies and governance structures. The Platform took note that further work with regard to the latter topic is particularly needed.

The specific discussion on mobility of scientists in the context of setting up the Young Scientist Programme in the frame of the SEE-ERA.NET project showed that scientists from the WBCs are still hampered by the obstacles to the free circulation of persons in the entire European Research Area. To be able to react to this issue, the Platform underlines the importance to be specific in the identification of obstacles in order to be able to address them properly.

The Platform recommended that the Scientific Visa Package should be implemented, as a matter of priority, in order to facilitate the circulation of researchers coming from the WBCs in the European Research Area. The Platform also invites the WBCs to report on the specific difficulties encountered.

From the presentation of the work done on statistics and indicators, the Platform recognised that substantial further efforts are necessary in order to obtain good statistics and indicators, which are essential for a sound and effective S&T policy. In particular, the Platform emphasised the need to train national experts and to improve infrastructure. In that regard, the Platform

encourages the EU Member States to organise training of statisticians and the exchange of experts between the WBCs and the EU Member States.

Moreover, the Platform noted the progress made in planning the use of IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession) funding for research capacity building.

On the possibility to implement a regional research strategy, further clarifications are necessary before a study on the role of research in regional competitiveness may be fully supported, because the EC also offered a different option within IPA (on regional competitiveness). The WBCs reiterated their interest for the establishment of the Regional Research Strategy for the Western Balkans.

The WBCs will actively consider how they can programme a better use of IPA funding to support the efforts necessary to design and implement integrated research policies. This synergy was considered as a critical aspect for the further participation of the WBCs in the Research Framework Programme and their integration into the European Research Area.

The Platform took note that the report of the ESFRI Regional-Issues-Working-Group will be presented during the conference "Research Infrastructures and the Regional Dimension of ERA" (March 24–25, 2009) in Prague, which will be held under the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The importance of the regional partner facilities complementing large pan-European research infrastructures will be stressed during this occasion.

The Platform stated their encouragement for scientific cooperation between the WBCs and the EU. It should be dealt within the dedicated forum established by the recent conclusions of the Council on the European partnership for international scientific and technological cooperation.

LINK *Steering Platform meeting in Paris* ■
<http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/calendar/15029.html>

Commission Strives to Enhance European Perspective for WBCs



The report "EU regionally relevant activities in the Western Balkans 2008/09", published by the European Commission, addresses the main improvements and initiatives supporting the political and economic developments in the countries of the Western Balkans. The 7th Framework Programme is expected to further improve the cooperation between scientific and educational institutes.

"I welcome the progress achieved in the countries of the Western Balkans during the past year. I am proud that the EU contributed with concrete means to this success," said Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn. He underlined the importance of the possibilities of studying abroad and free travel for the people's every day life. "I am looking forward to seeing further progress, as 2009 will be an important year for the EU integration of the Western Balkans," commented Rehn.

In the case of the scholarships for students from all Western Balkan countries, the Commission doubled the budget and increased it by the sum of € 20 million, which will enable more students to benefit from the experience of studying in the EU. Newly opened programmes, for example the "7th Research Framework Programme", in which all countries of the region are now

participating, will improve the cooperation between scientific and educational institutions as well.

Moreover, the Regional Cooperation Council enhances the developments on the field of regional assistance, e.g. through the transformation of the "Regional School of Public Administration" (ReSPA) into a fully fledged school with a seat in Danilovgrad, Montenegro.

As a sign of the EU's solidarity with the region, the Commission decided to extend the Economic Recovery Plan for the Western Balkans regarding the issue of the global economic crisis; at least € 120 million of IPA funds will be allocated.

LINK *Download the Commission staff working document* ■
<http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/document/3295.html>

Barriers in Research Cooperation with WBCs

An important aim of the project WBC-INCO.NET is the identification of the barriers inhibiting WBC scientists from international R&D cooperation. A first study was conducted to bring those barriers to light.

An important part of the WBC-INCO.NET project is the identification of barriers, which inhibit researchers from the Western Balkan countries and Turkey (WBC & T) from international R&D cooperation. The final aim is to provide policy makers with the analytical backgrounds to create policy measures for facilitating research cooperation. The study on research barriers was performed by the Institute of Social Sciences IVO PILAR in Zagreb, Croatia (see p. 6 for further details).

This is the first study focusing on the identification of the factors, which hamper the cooperation of WBC & T in the two types of collaborative projects: (1) European Union Framework Programmes (FPs) and (2) bilateral projects. The study also investigated the differences in the perception of barriers between WBC & T and EU MS within these two types of projects.

Statistical Background

The data were collected in a questionnaire-based survey. A total of 809 responses were collected (10.49 % of response rate) and both groups of countries, WBC & T and MS were equally represented (46.8 % responses from WBC & T and 53.2 % from MS).

The six types of barriers were defined prior to conducting the survey and include the following:

1. Administrative and bureaucratic barriers;
2. Institutional capacity barriers on the level of the research institution;
3. Institutional capacity barriers on the national level;
4. Barriers of scientific excellence;
5. Socio-cultural and political barriers;
6. Personal barriers.

Same, same, but different...

The main finding of the research is that the pattern of barriers as well as the motivation for R&D cooperation is very similar for researchers from both groups of countries – WBC & T and MS – and for both types of collaborative projects – FPs and bilateral. However, the analysis also revealed that there exist significant differences between WBC & T and MS in the perception of barriers and the intensity of the cooperation present. Although the researchers from WBC & T and MS share similar barriers, these barriers present much greater difficulties to the researchers from WBC & T than to those from MS. Besides, researchers from WBC & T participate in international research projects to a significantly smaller extent. Therefore, the different policy measures to build the capacities of WBC & T for the participation in FPs are necessary compared to MS. In the case of bilateral projects, no differentiation is needed concerning conditions and procedures of R&D cooperation.

The largest difference in motivation is achieved by the “availability of research equipment”, which is much more emphasised in WBC & T and points to the lack of adequate research infrastructure in WBC & T. The three most important motives are the same for both groups of countries and consist of: (1) building up new research partnerships and networks, (2) access to new sources of knowledge and technology and (3) professional challenge.

The most important barriers are classified as “administrative barriers” and include: (1) “Project management barriers”, which are driven by the low capacity of researchers to submit and manage the project and (2) “EC bureaucratic barriers”, which are related to the modus operandi of EC administration and involve obstacles related to constant changes of the rules and procedures, the duration of the project evaluation, payment delays, etc.

The next group of barriers are “institutional barriers at national level” (e.g. lack of the country’s lobbying skills at the level of EU administration, low scientific image of a country, parochialism, etc.) and “socio-cultural and political barriers”, such as political antagonism, overall political instability in the region and democratic deficits. The most intriguing finding is that the institutional capacities of a research organisation are not perceived as important barriers. Researchers from both groups of countries are satisfied with the ability of their management teams to provide them with the professional support for participation in international research cooperation. Finally, “scientific excellence barriers” are neither perceived as important in WBC & T nor in MS. This fact illustrates that respondents are confident in their scientific competences and connections and perceive them as sufficient.

It is worth mentioning that the analysis of the mobility of researchers and the intensity of cooperation reveals that researchers from MS are much more mobile and active in international project collaboration than researchers from WBC & T. The intensity of cooperation index consisting of seven components shows that out of 21.5 % of respondents without any kind of cooperation 67.2 % are coming from WBC & T. Besides, 14 % of respondents from MS and 31 % from WBC & T have not participated in international collaborative research projects within the last 10 years.

The dominant type of research projects in both groups of countries are projects funded by the EU FPs, since 64 % of all projects within WBC & T and 76 % of all projects within MS are FP projects. However, researchers from WBC & T participate in FPs to a significantly smaller extent than respondents from MS, since 14 % of the respondents from MS and 31 % from WBC & T have not participated in international collaborative research projects within the last 10 years. Scientists from WBC & T have encountered mobility problems to a larger extent (74 %), while only 26 % of the respondents from MS have faced these kinds of obstacles. The most common problems that researchers from WBC & T have faced are problems with visa work permits and health care insurances.

Concerning the preferences in the choice of a country for visits and staying abroad the study reveals that researchers regardless of their country of origin prefer Germany, Italy and the UK. The favourite destinations among WBC & T are Croatia, Serbia and Turkey.

The same is true for the preferences concerning possible countries for future research cooperation. Germany, UK and Italy are the favourite destinations for researchers’ visits or staying abroad. Austria and Slovenia top the list of the most preferred countries due to the intensive bilateral cooperation with the WBCs.

Following the main findings of the research that the principle barriers are “project management barriers”, which can be fostered by the national science policy, and “EC bureaucratic barriers”, it is concluded that a proper policy mix of measures at both the national level and the level of the EC should be addressed.

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LINK Download the full survey ▪
<http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/document/38335.html>

WBC-INCO.NET Information Rallies

In the framework of WBC-INCO.NET, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science was responsible for the organisation of a road show covering all Western Balkan Countries (WBC) on the topics of financial management within the EU Framework Programmes.

The rally was organised as a series of one-day seminars and focused on the following general subjects: financial reporting; accounting; reporting; budget composition and preparation; financial and time sheets, consortia agreement, etc. The seminars were held in Serbia, the FYR of Macedonia, Albania, UNMIK Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

The programme, initially designed to be identical for all WBCs, was reshaped and adjusted to the specific needs of the participants, bearing in mind their different experiences in Framework Programme participation and their different statuses (e.g. third country participation, etc.).

The participants varied from project managers and partners to administrators and national contact points in the relevant national authorities responsible for the coordination of EU Framework Programmes.

The general pattern seen in all WBCs is that there is a high interest in the financial issues of FP7. Changing the status of these countries from INCO-targeted participants to fully associated partners inevitably leads to an increased importance of project-based funding of research activities. However, the difficulty to access thematic calls, and the consequent underperformance in the targeted research projects, remained a key concern to all participants. This is mainly due to strong competition, the lack of sufficient capacity in project preparation and the underdeveloped image of researchers from the WBCs in the European Research Area.

Another key message in the seminars is that the complexity of financial and administrative rules for preparation and follow-up requires a series of similar information days, rather than just single efforts, to be able to effectively implement the projects. All representatives from the WBCs agreed that a second round of identical learning fora will be very important. The Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science considers to organise another targeted seminar as a contribution to the WBC-INCO.NET activities.

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Setting Research Priorities in the Fields of ICT and AgroFood

In the framework of WBC-INCO.NET's priority setting activities, two consultation sessions were held bringing together stakeholders from the Western Balkan countries (WBCs) and other experts. The main objective is to define regional research priorities of common interest for the WBCs and the EU Member States. Three more events are still to come.

The aims of priority setting are to provide input to FP7 Work Programmes in selected themes and to the SEE-ERA.NET PLUS call to be launched in autumn 2009, to support the development of the Regional Research Strategy for the WBCs by giving recommendations for generic activities to be implemented at a regional level, and to put forward organisational learning, identifying suitable processes for stakeholder involvement.

During the consultation sessions, the findings from a previous study were discussed and later specified by various stakeholders. The consultation session on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) took place on December 10, 2008 in Belgrade, Serbia. It was based on the results of the project SCORE and brought up the regional research priorities of "ICT for Enterprises & eBusiness", "ICT for Government & eGovernment", "Network Technologies", "ICT for Learning & eLearning", "ICT for Health & eHealth", "ICT for Environmental Sustainability & Energy Efficiency" and "Software Engineering".

On January 15 and 16, 2009 the consultation session on AgroFood was held in Podgorica, Montenegro. It based its work on the results of the project BAFN (Balkan Agro Food Network). The results are the following:

1. Food/feed safety and quality, food biotechnology
 - a. Preservation of indigenous species and traditional food products (in South East Europe/WBCs)
 - b. Combined exposure of food and feed to environmental pollutants
2. Biodiversity
 - a. Investigation of regional genetic resources in the WBCs (plants, animals and micro-organisms)
 - b. Interdisciplinary field: Impact of land use in agriculture on biodiversity (Topic: Renewable energy production in the agricultural sector and biodiversity conservation)

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Evaluation Questionnaire on NCP Systems of the WBC Still Open

In the framework of the WBC-INCO.NET project and its work package 4 one of the tasks to be implemented is a comparative benchmark of the NCP system based on a web-based, extensive questionnaire, addressing the clients of each NCP system in order to collect feedback on the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the services provided by the respective WBC-NCPs.

The whole procedure will aim at the assessment and further development of the capacities of the NCP system in the WBCs, along European standards. The survey is anonymous. As a large quantitative basis is needed for the evaluation, we invite our readers from the WBCs to fill in

the questionnaire at <http://survey17.zsi.at/index.php?sid=63575>. For questions please contact Ms. Paraskevi Afentaki and Mr. Nikos Sidiropoulos, General Secretariate for Research and Technology, Greece.

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LINK Direct link to the questionnaire ▪
<http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/link/43616.html>

The Role of Research in SEE in the Light of Global Economic Crises

Spill-over effects of the ongoing global economic crises struck South East Europe (SEE) still in the process of transition, with unfinished peace, energy vulnerability, slow down of investment and underdeveloped potential of human capital. Since SEE used to be the most dynamic emerging market, collateral damage of the spill-over effect from the financial crisis raised growing concern and urged the necessity for consolidation in order to preserve stability and security in the region.

The crisis will not help the European and Euro-Atlantic integration. The SEE countries aspiring to join the EU should undertake the necessary pre-accession reforms, continue with regional cooperation and mutual assistance in a now much more challenging international environment.

Bearing in mind that the economic and financial crisis imposed the need for urgent and coordinated action at the regional level, the RCC made efforts to constantly communicate with the countries in the region as well as with its European and international partners. It is important to develop a strategic concept and projects at the regional level to serve as both a platform to counter effects of the crisis and an incentive to continue with necessary reforms in SEE.

Based on the input from the SEE national authorities, the RCC has recognised that building human capital is of utmost importance to increase the long-term competitiveness of the region, through developing R&D, innovation and education, including related necessary reforms and improved infrastructure. The region needs to improve its use of existing scarce human, institutional and financial resources, complying with the high-prioritisation of human capital development within the defined national priorities for regional cooperation. More effective regional response is necessary in order to increase investments into the knowledge complex, in accordance with the four priority areas of the Lisbon Strategy.

Building a knowledge-based society through developing human potential and competence is a challenge and a priority for the region, especially for the Western Balkans on their path towards EU accession. Regional cooperation in the field of research is an integral part of this effort.

Having recognised the need for fostering further cooperation in the field of research, respective ministries of the seven RCC members from the Western Balkans endorsed the idea of the establishment of the Regional Research Strategy for the Western Balkans, which will represent a framework for communication and cooperation among scientific and research communities in

the region. The strategy will foster research cooperation at the regional level and improve national research policies, through the exchange of experience and good practices.

The Regional Research Strategy for the Western Balkans will consider research, education and innovation in a comprehensive manner, shifting from a fragmented to an integrated approach to human capital development in the region. It aims at the establishment of competitive Regional Centres of Excellence in the fields of interest for the region, and encourages knowledge transfer through networks of researchers and scientists from the Western Balkan region and within the entire SEE region. Furthermore, it supports networks of scientists across the region and facilitates their training and cooperation.

Having placed the issue of WBC research cooperation high on their priority agenda, the RCC and the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union have decided to organise the Ministerial Conference "Developing Regional Research Strategy for the Western Balkans", which will take place in Sarajevo on April 24, 2009. The event will gather ministers responsible for science and education of the RCC members from SEE, the EU Commissioner for Science and Research, Mr. Janez Potočnik, as well as the representatives of other relevant international organisations and respective stakeholders.

The development of the Regional Research Strategy will foster further cooperation in the field of research in a strategic manner. It will define the roadmap for future activities, which will be implemented by the stakeholders from the region. The RCC will continue to coordinate the activities involved in this process and similar projects, promoting the value added of regional cooperation.

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After working in different positions in international organisations, such as the UN, the OSCE and the European Agency for Reconstruction between 2000 and 2003, Mladen Dragašević held diverse offices in the Montenegrin Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He started out as an assistant to the national coordinator for Stability Pact for SEE in 2003 to later become Senior Councilor in the Multilateral Department/EU and Council of Europe Sector and then Director of the Directorate for Regional Organisations and Initiatives. After a stopover at the office of the Montenegrin Prime Minister as his foreign policy advisor, Mladen Dragašević today is the head of the unit "Building Human Capital and Cross-Cutting Issues" within the Regional Cooperation Council. With his first academic degree in English Language and Literature and Italian from the University of Montenegro, Dragašević decided to continue his studies at the Diplomatic Academy Gavro Vukovic. He completed his academic career with a Master's degree in European Studies at the University of Bonn in 2006.



Mladen Dragašević
Head of Unit
at the RCC



Bosnia and Herzegovina's Association to the 7th Framework Programme

On November 24, 2008 Commissioner Janez Potočnik and BiH Minister for Civil Affairs Sredoje Novic (shown on the picture on the right) signed the Memorandum of Understanding associating Bosnia and Herzegovina to FP7 as from January 1, 2009.



Signature of the Memorandum of Understanding by Sredoje Novic, on the left, and Janez Potočnik

Support for FP7 and Other Activities in BiH

The Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has supported activities aimed at increasing and stimulating the participation of researchers and research institutions in the 7th Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007–2013) (FP7).

By the end of 2008, a total of 28 research projects had been supported by means of grants totalling KM 500,000 (€ 255,000).

The Ministry of Civil Affairs granted support to research projects and individual researchers in Bosnia and Herzegovina for (1) the preparation of projects already approved by the European Commission, (2) projects in the application stage related to all FP7 specific programmes and themes, and (3) present or future scientific and research projects in the framework of COST and EUREKA (Bosnia and Herzegovina has expressed an interest joining these cooperation mechanisms; see below). For five out of the 28 projects contracts have been signed with the Commission in the framework of FP7.

It is noteworthy that 33 per cent of the total grant was given to projects that come under FP7's Information and Communication Technologies theme. These projects deal or will deal (after they have been approved) with applications including the provision of health-care, developing ICT infrastructure and innovative networks, communication networks, infrastructure stability and security, robotics, etc.

The other FP7 theme for which BiH's researchers showed considerable interest was Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, and Biotechnology. Within this theme, projects centred on agriculture and food-supply; 12 per cent of the grant went to projects in these areas.

Given these figures, we may safely conclude that BiH has a considerable research potential in plant and animal production, plant-health and plant-care, sustainable

production, rural development and support to small local economies.

Another 12 per cent of the grant went to projects under the Nano-sciences, Nano-technologies, Materials and new Production Technologies theme. These projects focused on the design of new production-processes, developing new multifunctional materials with predictable performance for new products and processes, and the reduction of pollutant emissions.

The other FP7 themes within which projects were supported were Energy, Health, (including developing new therapies and preventing cardiovascular diseases) Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities, and Environment (including climate change).

Development of a Strategic Framework and Other Initiatives

Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to work on developing a Strategy for the Development of Science in BiH. The first draft should be ready in April 2009. A request for membership of COST and EUREKA has been forwarded to the respective secretariats.

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Croatia: An Institute of Social Sciences

The Institute of Social Sciences "Ivo Pilar" is Croatia's largest multidisciplinary national research institute in social sciences and humanities with 53 PhDs, 14 MScs and 30 research novices.



In addition to the basic scientific and research activity in psychology, sociology, history and anthropology, the institute provides professional and consulting services, conducts strategic analyses, market research and public opinion research and performs interdisciplinary research that connects humanistic and social aspects with economic, technical, or natural sciences.

The total number of publications and conference papers in the year 2007 amounts to more than 250, out of which 30 papers were published in international scientific journals and 90 are issued in the form of scientific books, book chapters or teaching literature.

Some recent titles issued by the institute include, e.g. "European integration for the 21st century", "Transition countries in the knowledge society", "Entrepreneurship", "Institutions and socio-cultural capital", "Croatian society of today: psycho-sociological aspects", "Immigrants and homelands", "Croatian happiness industry", etc.

The institute publishes the Current Content referred scientific journal

"Društvena istraživanja" (Social Research) and has published more than 50 research studies and proceedings.

Since its establishment in 1991, the institute participated in 50 research projects financed by the national resources. It has also established many international links through study tours, projects and conferences. It participates in the 9 COST projects, the project DIOSCURI (EU project on Eastern-Western enlargement) and the international consortium on European Values Study and Triplex Confinum (Croatia in Euro-Mediterranean context). The most recent projects include FP7 WBC-INCO.NET, METRIS and the "Systematic information exchange on bilateral RTD programmes targeting South Eastern Europe SEE-ERA.net" SWOT workshops.

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FYR of Macedonia: Membership in the EUREKA Initiative

The EUREKA 2008 Ministerial Conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia on June 6, 2008 confirmed the full membership of the FYR of Macedonia, which joined EUREKA as a co-operating National Information Point (NIP) country during the first EUREKA meeting under the Slovenian Chairmanship in October 2007 as part of the Slovenian Chair's desire to increase activities in the Western Balkans.

A full EUREKA membership will increase the mutual activities of Macedonian business and research sectors by proposing innovation and development projects at a European level with the possibility of implementing them in co-operation with partners from the other EUREKA member countries.

EUREKA offers concrete possibilities for Macedonian research and industrial organisations to take part in international co-operative innovation actions. EUREKA membership will enhance the joint activities of the FYR of Macedonia's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), large companies, research centres, universities and the public administration in developing market-oriented projects indispensable for supporting the economic growth.

The Ministry of Education and Science of the FYR of Macedonia is responsible for the organisation, financing and promotion of scientific research, technological development and innovation, technical culture, informatics and informatics systems and international co-operation in these areas. The Ministry has already established a EUREKA Liaison office providing support for participation.

Current activities are mainly focussing on the promotion of EUREKA projects

and search for new proposals. In spite of scarce resources for R&D, a separate fund has been established within this year's budget for national projects proposed in the framework of EUREKA activities.

In September 2008, the first EUREKA project titled "Development of new actuators, materials and technology for the production of advanced pneumatic and hydraulic valves" was submitted. The main participant is Slovenia with the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and the "Festo" Company. From the Macedonian side, the Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, the Institute of Chemistry, the SME "Centre for Plasma Technologies-Plasma" and SME "11 Oktomvri-Eurokompozit" participate. So far, all necessary procedures have been undertaken, so that the project is now ready for its endorsement. In compliance with the strategic goals of the EUREKA Initiative of generating increasingly more projects, the FYR of Macedonia endeavours to increase the number of project proposals in the near future.

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Minister Stojanovski Visits Croatia National Tempus Information Day

A Delegation headed by Pero Stojanovski, Macedonian Minister of Education and Science, visited Croatia from February 2–3, 2009.

The delegation had a meeting with Aleksa Bjelis, Rector of Zagreb University, and discussed issues of mutual interest, such as the improvement and development of the higher educational process and the further implementation of the Bologna process in both countries.

Furthermore, Minister Stojanovski met with his Croatian colleague Dragan Primorac. During the visit, both ministries signed a programme on cooperation between the two ministries in the field of science, technology and education for the period 2009–2012. The main objective of this programme is the improvement and deepening of the existing cooperation in the area of science between the two countries, the exchange of experiences in the recent educational development, the decentralization of education and public and private partnerships in the area of education. Cooperation in the field of science and technology will be mainly achieved by conducting joint projects in the defined priority areas of agriculture, IT, energy, transport, health and veterinary medicine. Furthermore, the ministers agreed on enhancing the exchange of university students on a scholarship basis and the mobility of young researchers and professors.

On February 3, 2009 Minister Stojanovski visited the Department for Macedonian Language, Literature and Culture at the Faculty of Philosophy of Zagreb University and donated a rich collection of selected literature and other multi-media materials produced by the most outstanding Macedonian institutions and production companies.

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On February 6, 2009 a National Tempus Information Day was held at the Faculty of Economics of the "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje.



This conference was part of the information campaign around the launch of the Second Call for Proposals under the Tempus IV programme. The programme is organised by the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission in close cooperation with the National Tempus Office within the Ministry of Education and Science and the EC Delegation in the FYR of Macedonia.

At the National Tempus Information Day, representatives from all public and private accredited institutions for higher education in the FYR of Macedonia, representatives from student's organisations, foreign institutions, public services, civil society and other relevant stakeholders and Tempus partners were present.

The conference was opened by the welcome speeches of Pero Stojanovski, Minister of Education and Science, H.E. Ambassador Erwan Fouéré, the special representative of the EU and Head of the Delegation of the European Commission in Skopje and Dr. Sadi Bexheti, President of the Interuniversity Conference and Rector of the State University of Tetovo.

With the launch of the Second Call for Proposals under the Tempus IV programme, an annual allocation of € 3.5 million from the Pre-accession Funds for 2008 was opened to the FYR of Macedonia.

It is expected that the Macedonian institutions of higher education will prepare joint projects and structural measures in the fields of curricula and governance reform with at least three universities from different EU member states. Thus, the relationship between higher education and society shall be fostered.

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Montenegro: Strategy for Scientific-Research Activities

Being fully aware that competitiveness of national economies will become the basic factor of societal development in a globalised, modern society, the Montenegrin Government is determined to build Montenegro as a state oriented towards science and technology. Thanks to the work of a group of appointed experts, the Strategy for Scientific-Research Activities was developed last year and officially adopted on July 17, 2008.

The strategy has several specific objectives, of which some are the following: the transformation of Montenegro into a modern, knowledge-based society, the increase of related investment in compliance with the recommendations of the Lisbon strategy and following adequate dynamics of allocation in relation to the GDP, the emphasis on human potential, the encouragement of technological development and innovation and drawing attention of economic entities to the fact that their market success depends on the acquisition and use of new and better knowledge, etc.

The strategy also deals with several important issues like the reorganisation and full development of an institutional framework for scientific-research work, the development of a triangle education-research-innovation and the provision of real possibilities for technological development in Montenegro, the significance of fostering international cooperation, the thematic and functional priorities of RTD in Montenegro, as well as financial matters.

The strategy puts its focus on science and education, ecology, tourism, agriculture and biotechnology, health and energy. The minimum amount of allocated funds, equalling 1 % of the GDP, is expected to be received the latest by 2011. Special focus is laid on the modernisation of scientific infrastructure necessary for competent doctoral studies and international research activities. A model of the rational organisation of laboratories with the establishment of multi-disciplinary centres is proposed.

One of the weak points related to research in Montenegro is the bad transfer of research data to the market, so the strategy tackles this issue with a series of proposed measures.

The issues of intellectual property have not yet been regulated. The strategy deals with the development of adequate advocacy of the scientific community in the regulation of the IPR at national and international levels.

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New National Projects

During 2008, the Montenegrin Ministry of Education and Science provided support for 66 new projects and continued to support eight projects from 2007. More than € 1.1 million are allocated for the purpose.

In the field of natural sciences, 20 projects are supported; technical – 21, biotechnology – 15, medical sciences – 4 and social sciences and humanities – 14. It is possible to support the engagement of PhD students within these projects.

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Small Countries – Big Scientists

Even without research projects worth millions, small countries can offer scientists and results to the world of research, that are recognised as leading in the field. In November 2008, a researcher from the University of New Hampshire, USA, was trained by the Montenegrin academician Petar Vukoslavcevic, one of the world's leading scientists in the field of fluid mechanics.

US-American James Forsythe visited the Heat and Mass Flow Laboratory of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Montenegro and talked to the journalist of the daily newspaper Pobjeda about his visit.

“At the University of New Hampshire, with a grant from the NSF, we have been constructing major infrastructure for research of fluid mechanics in super critical conditions (high temperature, pressure, speed). These conditions apply to the movement of e.g. aircrafts, ships and wind flow across cities, which makes this research interesting for us. The conditions for research in the States are excellent, but without the sophisticated vorticity probes that were developed in the laboratory of Petar Vukoslavcevic we could not execute these measurements.”

Asked what was his biggest impression from Montenegro, James Forsythe responded that it was, without doubt, his host, his knowledge and effort to provide the best conditions for training.



Peter Vukoslavcevic at work with James Forsythe

Back in Time

Petar Vukoslavcevic remembered that the first multi-sensor-hot-wire-probe of newest generation was developed in 1991 at the University of Maryland, within a project that he participated in. During the following years and several national research projects the probe was further developed and the heat and mass flow laboratory from the University of Montenegro held pace with the world's leading laboratories in the field. It was pointed out by Petar Vukoslavcevic that at that time several Montenegrin metal production and processing companies helped in developing the infrastructure needed for the research, while the most sophisticated parts he had brought from the USA. The 12-sensored probes that saw the light in the Montenegrin laboratory are not only described in the most prominent scientific works, but are a part of classic scientific literature, from university textbooks to specialised literature for research centres.

CREDIT Credits to Pobjeda daily ■ Edited by Branka Žižić

E-CRIS Data Base

The methodology of data collection and updating of the E-CRIS.CG system has changed. The system is now being managed by the Ministry of Education and Science, functioning as the National E-CRIS Centre.

There are 830 entries in the data base, mostly researchers from the University of Montenegro, which are currently being updated. As a next step, it is planned to include other research institutions in the country.

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Serbia Strengthens its Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation

Serbia is developing its bilateral cooperation in S&T. In the following, a few examples from Germany, Hungary and Spain are highlighted.

First Joint Calls of DAAD and the Serbian Ministry of Science and Technological Development

In 2007, the Serbian Ministry of Science and Technological Development and Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) signed the bilateral Programme of Researchers' Mobility. The aim of the programme is scientific cooperation development between Serbia and Germany through the exchange of scientists, especially young ones, in the framework of joint research projects. Thus, a call was published on June 6, 2008. Based on the results of the first call, from 25 project proposals the Joint Serbian-German Commission decided to finance 12 projects for the project period 2009–2010. The next call for the project period 2010–2011 is open during March 2009.

Bilateral Cooperation with Hungary

According to the Agreement on Bilateral Cooperation in the Field of Science, Culture and Education between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Hungary, the Serbian Ministry of Science and Technological Development and the Hungarian National Office for Research and Technology started activities related to a call for project proposal preparation.

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Conference on WB Information Society

The Conference "Towards an Information Society for the Western Balkans" was held on December 11 and 12, 2008 at Serbian Chamber of Commerce in Belgrade.

The conference has addressed Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) stakeholders such as leading researchers and experts from academia and industry and representatives of Ministries from the Western Balkan Countries (WBCs). The event represented an opportunity for formulating a coherent strategy and actions for the development of the ICT research environment in the Western Balkans and for the region's integration in the wider European effort to achieve an information society. The regional ICT research needs, capacities and priorities were discussed as well as the future challenges of the Western Balkan ICT research environment were explored in order to put forward concrete recommendations/actions for enhanced regional ICT research collaboration. The conference was co-organised by the two European projects SCORE and WBC-INCO.NET with the support of the European Commission, and hosted by the Serbian Chamber of Commerce. 110 ICT stakeholders, ICT experts and researchers have participated in the event coming from the Western Balkan region as well as from neighboring and other EU countries (e.g. Austria, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, and Greece). Svetlana Bogdanovic, Serbian ICT NCP has presented the 4th ICT Call possibilities at this event.

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Programme for Cooperation between Serbia and Spain

Serbia initiated a bilateral cooperation with Spain in the fields of science and technology in 2008. Following a bilateral Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation, which had been signed by the representatives of both countries in 2004, the Serbian Ministry of Science and Technological Development prepared the proposal of the Programme of Scientific and Technological Cooperation for the Years 2009, 2010 and 2011. The proposal of the programme has been sent to the Ministry of Science and Innovation of the Kingdom of Spain through the diplomatic channels. Serbia expects an answer and adaptation as well as the signing of the programme by Spain during 2009.

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Serbian S&T Events Related to SME Efforts by the EU

Regional SME Info Days

The Serbian Chamber of Commerce held introductory info days for SME representatives from the Pančevo and Kruševac region in cooperation with the Ministry of Science and Technological Development and Regional Chambers of commerce on January 26 and February 6, 2009. The EU has declared 2009 the year of creativity and innovations. As the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) supports the enforcement of cooperation between science and technology, the transfer of knowledge and commercializing those innovations, the main goal of this presentation was to introduce Serbian SME representatives to the process of how to apply for FP7 funding possibilities with their own projects. Furthermore, the Ministry of Science and Technological Development presented the numerous national activities and programmes to support innovation and encourage technological development of SMEs. During the two days in Pančevo and Kruševac, a total of more than 100 representatives from regional SMEs participated in the events.

SME Info Day

The Ministry of Science and Technological Development together with the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development and the Serbian Chamber of commerce organised an SME info day dedicated to the problem of better inclusion of national SMEs into European programmes. The info day was held on February 27, 2009 in Belgrade's Chamber of commerce. The goal was to enforce the links between science and the economy and to encourage SMEs to make use of national and EU programmes. More than 140 representatives from R&D institutions, researchers and economists were present at the meeting. Speakers on the SME info day were the representatives of the above mentioned ministries responsible for the development of SMEs, the S&T sector, as well as FP7 NCP for SMEs, EUREKA and EUROSTARS programmes. The main goal of the info day was to introduce economists to the possibilities of participation in FP7.

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Greek Progress on S&T Cooperation with the WBCs

New opportunities for enhanced cooperation between Greece and the WBCs are anticipated in the context of the new initiatives/actions for RTDI activities within the framework of the “Greek National Strategic Development Plan for Research, Technology and Innovation”’s (2007–2013) operational programmes. Thus, Greece initiated diverse programmes and actions to foster international cooperation in S&T.

The internationalisation of S&T is considered a major factor for a knowledge-based society. Therefore, Greece is enhancing the international S&T cooperation and, in particular, the cooperation within Europe. To this end, all of Greece’s state-funded programmes are scheduled to be open to international cooperation. Specific programmes for international S&T cooperation are planned as well.

In this context, a regional programme similar to INCO under FP6, but with third-country groups like those of SEE and in the region of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, is in preparation. In particular, this action called “Bilateral, multilateral and regional R&T co-operation” aims at:

- Financing projects on a bilateral R&T agreement basis, among others through the creation of joint funds;
- Supporting multilateral cooperation;
- Taking initiatives in order to support cooperation with third countries’ S&T groups, where there is political interest and financial capacity, such as the WBCs, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation countries and Mediterranean countries, through the financing of researchers, research groups and scientific/research entities.

The beneficiaries of this action are business associations, research centres and institutes, higher and technical educational institution laboratories.

Emphasis will be placed on young researcher exchanges (PhD and post doc candidates) to and from abroad, on specialisation and training in new techniques and in general on the support of international human resource mobility. All aforementioned initiatives for WBC S&T entities are funded by the Greek state.

Liaison offices

Greece will establish Liaison Offices in certain SEE countries to support the promotion of bilateral and regional cooperation between academia, research centres and the private sector. In addition, the Liaison Offices are anticipated to promote the networking of S&T parks and research centres in the region.

Projects Facilitating Cooperation

The I-SEE-MOB (Intersectoral mobility of researchers in South Eastern Europe) is a new project within the framework of FP7. Coordinated by Greece and partnered by Turkey, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, the FYR of Macedonia, Albania and Romania, the overall goal of the project will be to promote the intersectoral mobility policy issues in SEE by providing guidelines and recommendations for removing remaining obstacles, including legislative gaps in the national legislations. Additionally, another aim will be to enhance the collaboration between the academia and industry in the region. The intersectoral mobility will be examined as a criterion for the career development of researchers working in the SEE region.

Another new project within FP7 is SEERA-EI (South East European Research Area for Infrastructures). It is coordinated by Greece and partnered by Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Turkey.

SEERA-EI will capitalise on this momentum and link national-level programme managers. Furthermore, it provides an open forum for information exchange in order to enable coordination of national programmes in infrastructures and to set the framework for a common regional agenda. The project will gather and exchange information regarding current programmes and carry out a state-of-the-art analysis, produce a set of best practices and guidelines for national infrastructure programmes and identify areas for joint regional activities, ranging from short-term soft actions and mid-term policy-level actions to preparatory activities for long-term actions. SEERA-EI will reduce the fragmentation of national programmes, create a harmonised approach to national-level initiatives in infrastructures, ensure local commitment and pave the way towards common regional vision, strategy and sustainable cooperation.

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FP7 Project FOCUS BALKANS Started

The project FOCUS BALKANS with the general objective to improve competencies and understanding in the field of consumer food science in the Western Balkan countries (WBCs) will be running from 2008 to 2011.

Trainings on state-of-the-art methodologies, practical techniques and theories in Food Consumer Sciences will be organised targeting a wide range of organisations from the public and private sectors, NGOs and consumer associations. National meetings in each of the Western Balkan Countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia) with stakeholders active in food-consumption-related fields will take place twice a year.

Four market and consumer studies (on products with positive nutritional properties – fruits and healthy food – and sustainability – organic and tra-

ditional food products) will measure the drivers and determinants of these products’ related consumption behaviours. Additionally, one quantitative survey will systematically be conducted by WBC organisations as a mechanism for learning-by-doing.

Further information (news, events, project presentation, partners’ contacts, etc.) is available at the FOCUS-BALKANS website www.focus-balkans.org. FOCUS Balkans is supported by the European Commission, DG Research.

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Start of SEE-ERA.NET PLUS

The project SEE-ERA.NET PLUS, funded by the European Commission under FP7, started on April 1, 2009 and constitutes the first concrete funding activity under the Regional Programme for Cooperation with South-East Europe (ReP-SEE).

The project is embedded in an overall strategy of the enlarged SEE-ERA.NET consortium: the joint ReP-SEE. This programme outlines future joint funding activities, whereby the SEE-ERA.NET PLUS call for project proposals shall be the first concrete funding measure under ReP-SEE. Further joint funding activities will be developed subsequently, depending on the results of the SEE-ERA.NET PLUS call.

The impressive figure of € 2,675,000 shows the national commitment of the consortium members to the SEE-ERA.NET PLUS project: compared to other national funding sources for research collaboration in the target region, the SEE-ERA.NET PLUS call budget will be the largest amount of money dedicated to one call for project proposals in South East Europe including all the Western Balkan Countries (WBC). In combination with the contribution of the EC the total call budget amounts to € 3,500,000. The topics of the call will be ICT and Agro Food; subtopics are yet to be defined.

At the time being, a provisional time schedule foresees the launch of the call for the beginning of September 2009. The projects are planned to be selected through an independently reviewed two-step process. In a first step, Expressions of Interest (Eoi) will be collected (deadline: probably October 31, 2009). The Eoi will be evaluated remotely by at least two external evaluators per proposal. The SEE-ERA.NET PLUS Scientific Council will review the evaluations and establish a ranking list. The top-ranking Eoi will be invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals will also undergo a remote evaluation. Each full proposal will be evaluated by at least three external evaluators and a ranking list will be established as a result. The Scientific Council will review the evaluation results and the ranking list and prepare a funding recommendation for the Steering Board.

Further strengthening of the regional collaboration will be achieved by a minimum participation of at least two institutions from the WBCs and from at least one institution from a non-WB country in each project. The funded projects will have a duration of one to two years and need to include a substantial scientific contribution by each partner institution. The funding for one project amounts to a maximum of € 150,000 for the project duration. Updated information concerning the call will be available soon on www.see-era.net.

New SEE-ERA.NET Assistant Appointed

Ms. Rohsmann joined ZSI as an assistant in the field of R&D in 2008. So far, she contributed to the projects WBC-INCO.NET and SEE-ERA.NET PLUS. Since January 2009, she is also in charge of SEE-ERA.NET.

Ms. Rohsmann studied Political Science, History and German as a Foreign/Second Language at the University of Vienna and is currently enrolled as a law

student. The Western Balkan Countries have been among her prime interests during her studies. From 2000 onwards, she was working for a number of internationally oriented NPOs in Vienna. Before joining ZSI, she was the Office Manager of the Austrian Branch of the human rights organisation "Reporters without Borders".



SEE-ERA.NET Team Katarina Rohsmann and Marion Haberfellner

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Publication of a Booklet on Funded Projects

The booklet of projects will provide a documentation of the projects financed within the frame of the SEE-ERA.NET Pilot Joint Call.

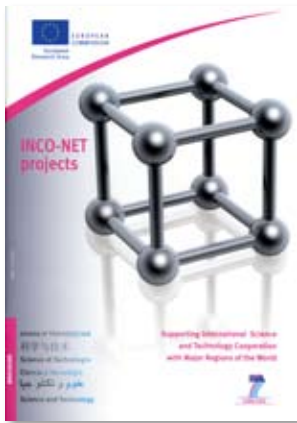
The booklet will include chapters on the SEE-ERA.NET project itself as well as general information about the Pilot Joint Call, e.g. background and objective, targeted institutions, thematic areas and type of projects as well as a comprehensive overview of the projects supported. Furthermore, other chapters will include information about accompanying measures (e.g. Conference on Evaluation and Benchmarking in Ohrid, Herman Potočnik Noordung Award etc.) carried out in the frame of the project. Finally, the last chapters will include reports by the teams of the supported projects on the outcome of their research, followed by the monitoring report of the Pilot Joint Call. This monitoring report was compiled by Manfred Spiesberger and includes lessons learned. This is especially important in the light of the joint call foreseen in SEE-ERA.NET PLUS. The booklet is expected to be published in May 2009. It will be distributed in all SEE-ERA.NET countries.

Mobility WS and Mobility Report

The Romanian partner of SEE-ERA.NET, the National Authority for Scientific Research (ANCS) has undertaken a study of various mobility programmes for young scientists. The main aim of the study is to identify potential niches and gaps concerning the possibilities for young scientists for mobility. The study provides the theoretical input for the workshop on Mobility of Young Scientists, which took place on April 2, 2009 in Timisoara/Temesvár in Romania. Among the participants of the workshop have been programme owners of already existing mobility programmes for young scientists, experts from universities and various institutions in the Western Balkan Countries as well as some young scientists.

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News from Other INCO-NETs

The WBC-INCO.NET is only one of the INCO-NETs funded by the European Commission (DG Research) in the field of International Cooperation. In 2008 6 INCO-NET started targeting Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Mediterranean countries, Latin America – and last but not least the Western Balkan countries.

All INCO-NETs have similar objectives to create and support a biregional dialogue platform, to support the cooperation between the region and the European Research Area, to define common priorities and to enhance capacities for cooperation. In the following, the INCO-NETs CAAST-Net (Africa), INCO-NET EECA (Eastern Europe and Central Asia), SEA-EU-NET (Southeast Asia) and MIRA (Mediterranean Countries) introduce their current activities.

CAAST-Net Looks Back and Forward

Gerard Ralphs, editor of CAAST-Net, takes a brief look at the progress made by CAAST-Net in 2008, and some of the tasks that lie ahead in 2009.



2008 was a busy year for CAAST-Net, the INCO-Net for the region of sub-Saharan Africa. 2009 certainly promises to be no less filled with activities. Three months into the new year, as the European Commission's annual reporting period draws to close, this is a useful opportunity to reflect back on 2008 and the advances that were made. Furthermore, I want to use this occasion to anticipate the challenges of the year that is to come.

Much like WBC-INCO.Net, CAAST-Net is charged with improving the quantity and quality of bi-regional cooperation between the EU and – in this case – sub-Saharan Africa in the field of science and technology (S&T). It has been crucial to set up the right cooperation structures within the project's relatively short lifespan. This was one of the main objectives in 2008 via Work Packages 1, 3 and 7.



CAAST-NET Group

The Role of CAAST-Net

In particular, strong links were forged to the two key regional bodies in Africa: the African Union Commission (AUC) and NEPAD. We are glad to say that this is an area in which CAAST-Net has achieved well; the project now enjoys the endorsement of the AUC's Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology via its representative, Dr. Thameur Chaibi. These are two fora CAAST-Net sees as vital to establishing its Steering Platform for high-level policy dialogue as well as to the broader success of its efforts in order to advance.

The second major task has been to lay the ground for partnerships between African and EU scientists via the EC's thematic priority areas. The plan is to identify topics for future specific international cooperation action (SICA) calls for proposals. In 2008, a series of six meetings were held with the EC's Thematic Directorates to identify focus areas. Moreover, a range of thematic workshops is planned for 2009 under WP4, including transport, energy and health.

A further role of CAAST-Net is to improve the access to information on FP7 for potential and existing participants from sub-Saharan Africa. This task falls under CAAST-Net's Work Package 5 and remains a crucial area of its activities. In December 2008, CAAST-Net participated in an information workshop hosted by South Africa's Department of S&T and INCONTACT, which

targeted African national information points in order to further develop their advisory capacities. The relatively low success rate of sub-Saharan FP7 proposals (approximately 1 in 5) remains a cause for more hard-pressed cooperation efforts, and will be an area of focus and activity in 2009.

Finally, a vital aspect of the CAAST-Net is knowledge management, communications and dissemination; an area which will play a significant role in determining the project's effectiveness as a broker of bi-regional S&T cooperation. The CAAST-Net Community Knowledge Management Platform was established in 2008 at www.caast-net.org, and will, we hope, evolve into a key Africa-EU S&T cooperation portal as the project matures. In this area, CAAST-Net can learn a lot from the efforts of WBC-INCO.Net. We are therefore open to finding synergies and areas in which we can learn from one another.

Indeed, 2008 yielded a number of positive results for CAAST-Net and Africa-EU S&T cooperation. With the input and participation of all partners and stakeholders, including those of you far from the shores of Africa, we hope 2009 will do the same and more.

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Policies and Activities of INCO-NET EECA

EECA as an international cooperation network for Eastern European and Central Asian Countries is organised in three complementary and interacting layers.

Policy Aspects

One of EECA's main aims is to enhance bi-regional S&T policy dialogue through the establishment of sustainable, knowledge-based platforms between stakeholders from the EU Member States (EU MS) and aspiring countries (AC), and the EECA countries. As a result of in-depth consultations with the EC and several EU/EECA National Authorities, it was decided to organise a large-scale EU-EECA Stakeholders' Conference involving representatives of the policy-making and academic communities from the EU MS and AC, and the EECA countries in order to establish more formal policy dialogue structures.

In addition to the aforementioned activities, EECA addresses other Community policies and instruments (e.g. the ENP) in order to contribute to the development of synergies among the relevant instruments and to identify opportunities for the support of S&T through these instruments.

Participation of EECA Countries in FP7

Several activities are implemented by EECA aiming at an increased participation of researchers from EECA countries in FP7, particularly in the Cooperation, People and Capacities Specific Programmes. They include the organisation of information days and brokerage events, the identification of barriers to researcher mobility, the training and support and networking of local NCPs/NIPs, as well as the organisation of thematic workshops aiming at the identification of topics to be proposed as potential Specific International Cooperation Activities (SICAs) in the FP7 Themes.

Analyses, Monitoring and Dissemination

To feed the policy dialogue and to increase its efficiency, the project improves S&T indicators, reviews S&T cooperation patterns, maps outstanding research institutes and reviews national policies towards global challenges.

To monitor EECA's activities, a Quality Assurance Plan to ensure the quality of the deliverables is already operational, while the mid-term SWOT analysis will be delivered on time. Furthermore, it is important to ensure the activities' continuation beyond the limits of the project, so work has already started for the mid-term sustainability monitoring report.

A number of dissemination activities were also carried out. The Central Information Office was set up, involving a wide network of local correspondents, and the website (www.inco-eeca.net) and the webportal (www.increast.eu) were launched, in order to inform interested stakeholders from science, industries and politics about opportunities for an enhanced S&T cooperation. In addition, preliminary work to the organisation of 'EECA sessions' in major European events has started. A first series is scheduled for the second year of the project.

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SEA-EU-NET – Facilitating the EU-ASEAN S&T Dialogue



SEA-EU-NET has been set up to expand scientific collaboration between Europe and Southeast Asia (SEA) in a more strategic and coherent manner. The 4-Year's project was launched in January 2008 and involves 16 key S&T institutions from the two regions.

Scientific collaborations and linkages between researchers in Europe and SEA are beneficial to all parties involved, resulting in advancements in research and in economic returns to both regions, and improving the quality of living. The measures of SEA-EU-NET include the implementation of joint fora, facilitating and strengthening the bi-regional and bi-lateral dialogue, activities to disseminate information on FP7 in SEA, the analysis of S&T structures, reporting to EU-presidencies in order to incorporate recent political developments and generally highlighting EU-ASEAN initiatives within the political decision making process. SEA-EU-NET will lead to enhanced S&T cooperation and provide the S&T base to address global challenges through joint efforts in nurturing human and scientific resources for sustainable development.

Results & Activities in 2008

SEA-EU-NET has had a busy first year and has already engaged in a number of activities enhancing S&T collaboration between Europe and SEA, which mainly focused on:

▪ Policy dialogue

The SEA-EU-NET stakeholders conference in November 2008 in Paris has been the main event of the project to engage in a discussion on S&T collaboration between the two regions with a larger audience of policy makers, scientists and representatives from NGOs. The event received considerable attention by the relevant stakeholders from both regions.

▪ Analysis and information gathering

This activity focussed on the analysis of S&T cooperation patterns between the two regions and on the internationalisation strategies of SEA countries in order to identify gaps in the cooperation patterns and to be able to develop ideas for new cooperation instruments and topics.



SEA-EU-NET Project Consortium

▪ Creating scientific contacts

The project supported and organised a series of scientific workshops to foster and create scientific contacts between researchers from the two regions, dealing with the areas of infectious diseases, renewable energy and food safety.

▪ Establishment of FP7 contact points

SEA-EU-NET has been actively assisting countries in setting up FP7 contact points, which are operational by the end of 2009.

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Activities of MIRA during 2008



The kick-off for MIRA took place in Carmona, Spain from January 9–12, 2008 with the attendance of 37 persons representing the 28 partners and several European Commission Services.

During 2008, several activities have been developed starting with the Screening Conference, which took place in Cairo from April 16–17, 2008. The MIRA partners analysed the past experiences of the Framework Programme and the MEDA actions, took their results into account, and identified new needs and means to improve this cooperation. The conference was a central event in structuring the content and the activities of all work packages, but particularly important for WP4. First focal points concerning priority setting were envisaged, the binding activities for the next months were fixed in a roadmap and a rough structure for the following years was designed. Measures were set also in practical work – the setting of a roadmap, the distribution of tasks and the development of a methodology for Priority Setting Workshops.

Another important activity developed in 2008 was the Evaluation of the Mediterranean Partner Countries' Information Points (IP) on FP7. The report states that the participation in the EU's Framework Programme (FP) and consequently the stimulation of the researchers for such participation reflects a political willingness to cooperate with the EU in S&T. In principle, such a decision and commitment exists for all the Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPCs) through their association to the Barcelona Process and more specifically, through their participation in the Monitoring Committee (MoCo) of the

Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation in S&T. In addition to the political considerations, it is normal that every MPC foresees concrete benefits in terms of participations in EU-funded research projects. Such projects contribute to a mutual exchange of expertise, to the development of products and processes to address societal needs, but also to the financing of research teams.

Finally, the organisation of a seminar to train the Palestinian Information Points on FP7, which was held in Nicosia, Cyprus, from November 23–28, 2008, should be mentioned as one very important activity of this year. This event was fully supported by the Planning Bureau of the Cypriot Government in order to facilitate the delivery of visas to the Palestinian participants and to solve other related problems. The Agricultural Research Institute of Cyprus also helped in facilitating the logistics of the seminar. The results of the training exercise were very well appreciated by the attendants and will constitute an important step toward improving the Palestinian participation in FP7.

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New Support Action: WINS-ICT

WINS – ICT provides a no-stop road towards the WBC integration into the EU ICT research initiatives.

A new Support Action funded under the ICT theme of the FP7 Cooperation Programme has recently started. Officially named “Western Balkan countries' INCO-NET Support in the field of ICT”, it soon will be better known as simply WINS-ICT. The project is coordinated by the Austrian ZSI – Centre for Social Innovation and covers the entire Western Balkan region. The main output shall be an improved policy dialogue in the field of ICT, reflecting the WBCs' needs and priorities in future ICT Work Programmes and thus, providing the ground for enhanced participation from the target region.

WINS-ICT officially started on Jan. 1, 2009, and gathers 15 different partners with a good balance between EU and WB organisations. It was conceived with the idea to suitably represent the follow-up of the FP6 SCORE project, but to be able to also act at a political level, and thus, it closely cooperates with WBC-INCO.NET.

In order to increase the visibility of the Western Balkan ICT research excellence and to foster networking, WINS-ICT envisages further collaborations, as for instance the one already started with ICT WEB-PROMS “Promoting ICT cooperation opportunities and policy dialogue with the Western Balkan Countries”. The two projects agreed on the mutual exchange of information and co-organisation of several training, mentoring and networking events.

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Strengthening of WBCs in European ICT Research

The ICT-WEB-PROMS project takes up its support activities.

The EU-funded project ICT-WEB-PROMS (“Promoting ICT cooperation opportunities and policy dialogue with the Western Balkan Countries”) took up its activities in January this year and will be providing support activities to the Western Balkans throughout its two year duration.

Partners from all countries of the Western Balkans are working together with EU partners from Italy, Greece and Bulgaria; they will address all players in the Western Balkan countries (WBC) interested in using or developing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in order to increase their capacity for participation in European ICT research and inflow of innovation to the market.

ICT-WEB-PROMS is developing a training programme for the participation in the ICT programme of the European Commission's FP7 that will be used in workshops and road shows in the whole area of the WBCs, including small cities, where training will be conducted in national languages. More technically oriented regional workshops will create understanding for the technology of the ICT FP7 Programme emphasizing areas of interest to both the Western Balkans and the EU. An interactive web portal will allow the publication of ideas, finding partners in the EU and will be the place for direct communication. Thus, increased participation of organisations from the WBCs in FP7 is expected, eventually leading to higher competitiveness in the region.

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The COGNAC Project Ended



Coordination of R&D&I policies and their coherence with other policies in newly acceded countries.

COGNAC (Coordination of R&D&I policies and their coherence with other policies in newly acceded countries) was a project funded by the EU within FP6. It was set up in order to support the regional dimension of the European Research Area by increasing the effectiveness and coherence of R&D&I policies focusing on two topics: public research spending and policy mixes as well as SMEs and research.

COGNAC lasted from October 23, 2006 until January 22, 2009 with a consortium of 16 partners out of eight regions within seven countries coordinated by INNOVA (North Great Plain Regional Innovation Agency). The consortium itself was represented by one regional administration authority and one scientific partner (university or RTO) in each region.

COGNAC's main objectives were to develop, design and implement coherent R&D&I policies in the partner regions, to strengthen the role of R&D&I policies in the policy mixes of the Regional Innovation Strategies, to develop a mutual learning process to disseminate good policy practices and benchmarking activities, to foster the development of policy coordination activities at EU level and to identify areas requiring complementary and mutually reinforcing actions in the partner regions and at EU level as well as to develop transnational concerted policy actions and joint initiatives.

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GLOBAL Project: Participate Online

For the event on July 16–17, 2009 on 'e-Infrastructure – Future Trends and Sustainable Development' it will be possible to participate online.

GLOBAL – Global Linkage Over Broadband Links – provides a Virtual Conference Centre using advanced communication technologies and concepts to support the promotion of e-Infrastructure topics in Europe and around the world. The main goal of GLOBAL is to allow research projects to disseminate their results and training events to a wider audience located in multiple geographical locations through the organisation of virtual conferences.

For the next event, the second international symposium of the BELIEF-II project, GLOBAL will enable remote participation, enabling remote participants to comment and ask questions live. This two-days event is dedicated to e-Infrastructures application and sustainable development. The symposium will take place on July 16–17, 2009, and will be kindly hosted by the Escola Politécnica da Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil.

The focus of the event will be about how the usage of e-Infrastructures can offer sustainable solutions to many development challenges faced by emerging economies, e.g. systems of eHealth, eEducation, and eScience. Experts from both Latin America and Europe will discuss and share their achievements, opinions, ideas and experiences.

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Main Findings of the Evaluation of CEEPUS

In January 2008, the Centre for Social Innovation has been commissioned by the Central CEEPUS Office to conduct an evaluation of CEEPUS with a focus on the implementation of common degrees. Furthermore, the evaluators were requested to analyse the cross-linking between CEEPUS and research and to identify CEEPUS specifications.

The evaluation methodology comprised document research, online focus group discussion, telephone interviews with experts and online questionnaires targeting CEEPUS network coordinators and partners, NCOs and students.

The main findings of the evaluation were that CEEPUS is highly appreciated by its target group including both the university staff, who is engaged in CEEPUS networks, and the students, who are the final beneficiaries of CEEPUS.

Its USPs are the unique regional focus and country composition, an innovative non-monetary funding system based on national resources in a variable geometry, the comparatively easy regulatory framework, the comparatively easy application procedure fully facilitated by the advanced online system and its thematic openness for advanced networking in all university disciplines.

Although the programme occupies an important and indispensable niche in the overall cooperation portfolio of universities in Central and Southeast Europe, the development of common degrees can still be improved: Despite

a high additionality effect generated through CEEPUS, there are weaknesses concerning the sustainability of networks, the quality and structure of knowledge provision concerning the development of common degrees, the awareness about the importance of common degrees in the EHEA and the partially inadequate funding mechanism for an advanced development of common degrees.

Moreover, more courses in foreign languages should be offered and eLearning be better exploited. Instead of overloading CEEPUS with a distinct separate research function more common PhD activities should be promoted and the usability of the CEEPUS-homepage gradually improved further and enlarged with new features.

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Der Donauraum



The Role of Migration and Diaspora in the Political and Socio-Economic Reform and EU Integration Processes in South East Europe

“The Role of Migration and Diaspora in the Political and Socio-Economic Reform and EU Integration Processes in South East Europe” is the title of a publication of “Der Donauraum”. It includes an article on scientific diaspora from the Bulgarian researcher Nikolina Sretenova.

She focuses on two case studies giving qualitative insight into (especially female) brain drain from Bulgaria. Another article by Drenka Vuković deals with the management of emigration by the Serbian government and Serbian institutions with brain gain constituting a main topic of the analysis. Furthermore Ilir Gedeshi discusses Albanian academics and researchers working abroad, conditions for sustainable return and possible ways of cooperation. Brain gain policies and their impact are also tackled in Ivan Damjanovski's article with a focus on the FYR of Macedonia. One objective of the publication is also to promote regional scientific research on the parallelism of migration trends and further development.

LINK *Der Donauraum* ■ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/document/43702.html>

Art & Science: Creative Fusion



The publication “Art & Science: Creative Fusion” aims to explain the theory behind the art-science interface and illustrates this academic perspective using concrete examples, including projects, institutions and festivals. In addition, it seeks to strengthen the role of a new artistic-scientific community in producing knowledge, imagination and practice, as well as in intercultural exchange and cooperation. The booklet also addresses the Western Balkan countries in a specific section.

The section on the WBCs elaborates this point: extending the “third culture” to the WBCs is viewed as a way to facilitate their integration into the EU, where cooperation can be much more than simply economic. As the publication suggests, art & science can play a role in creating public awareness and communicating and even bridging cultures, by providing a better understanding and acceptance of a new region with EU perspective.

Many intermedia centres based in the Western Balkans emerged in the mid-1990s, because of the initiative by the Open Society Institute, which was founded by George Soros. Today, the centres are supported by public and private funds. They have outgrown their basic activities and now act as spaces for analysis and reflection on newly emerging social paradigms that are accelerated by scientific and technological innovation.

List of intermedia centres of the WBCs:

- Multimedia Centres Network of Slovenia (www.m3c.si/dat/M3C/)
- Ljubljana Digital Media Lab (www.ljudmila.org)
- Multimedia Institute in Zagreb, Croatia (www.mi2.hr)
- The Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art (www.scca.ba)
- New Media Center_kuda.org in Novi Sad (www.kuda.org)
- The Visual and Cultural Research Centre in Skopje, FYR of Macedonia
- KONTEJNER / bureau of contemporary art praxis in Zagreb, Croatia (www.kontejner.org)
- Tirana Institute of Contemporary Art in Tirana, Albania

LINK *Download the publication at* ■ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/document/43705.html>

Final Report on Research Institutions in CEE and SEE



The final report developed by the University of Graz on its project “UnivSOE” covers “Institutions of Research and Tertiary Education in Central and South East Europe – Developments, Structures and Perspectives of these Institutions for their Integration into the European Higher Education and Research Area”. The final report is published by Wolfgang Mantl, Joseph Marko and Hedwig Kopetz.

LINK *Download the full report at* ■ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/document/40834.html>

Event Announcement 2nd Westbalkan Science Day

On June 22, 2009 the 2nd Westbalkan Science Day will be held in Vienna.

This meeting of researchers from Austria and the Western Balkan countries will take place on June 22, 2009 at the “Palais Eschenbach” in Vienna. The Science Day focuses on establishing and promoting networking activities (partnering) as well as strengthening existing cooperations between Austrian and Western Balkan researchers for further research activities.

The four themes of the conference are “Changing society in a comparative perspective” (Gesellschaft im Wandel in vergleichender Perspektive) and “Knowledge Triangle” within the domain Social Sciences and “Agro Food” and resource management (“Agro Food” and “Water Management”) within the domain Life Sciences.

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