

**Austria** (BMWF)

**PROGRESS REPORT<sup>1</sup>**

**on recent developments regarding S&T cooperation in/with the WBC  
(2<sup>st</sup> half 2011 or - May 2011 / Ohrid till December 2011 / Sarajevo)**

**1 Policy actions**

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

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

**CEEPUS III Agreement:**

The CEEPUS (Central European Exchange Program of University Studies) III-Agreement which was signed at the Joint Committee of Ministers in Budva/Montenegro 2010 entered into force this year on May 1<sup>st</sup>. CEEPUS III is designed as a framework-program which makes it more flexible compared to CEEPUS II. Its main focus - besides developing joint degree programs – is strengthening the cooperation between science and research, especially in the field of PhD-training. As a new member Moldova has been admitted to CEEPUS III and will provide 100 scholarship months for the academic year 2011/12.

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

A huge number of events dedicated to the STI-cooperation with the Western Balkan Countries took place in the past six months. So only selected events organized by ZSI (Centre for Social Innovation)/ASO Ljubljana (Austrian Science and Research Liaison Office Ljubljana) and FFG (Austrian Research Promotion Agency) are stated below; information about current events is continuously published at <http://wbc-inco.net/object/news/list> .

International Scientific Conference „Challenge Social Innovation: Innovating innovation by research – 100 years after Schumpeter“ including a NET4SOCIETY Networking event pertaining to the SSH Call for Proposals 2012; The event conference took place from 19th to

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<sup>1</sup> The progress reports are collected in preparation of the meetings of the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan Countries and will be provided for download from the WBC-INCO.Net homepage ([www.wbc-inco.net](http://www.wbc-inco.net)) about one week before the meeting takes place. Therefore please submit your report to [office@zwbc-inco.net](mailto:office@zwbc-inco.net) until November 22, 2011.

21st September in Vienna. A series of sessions took place over three days, moving from policy discussion and debate to FP7 networking and engagement. Further information and results of the event:

<http://www.socialinnovation2011.eu> and <https://www.zsi.at/object/news/1891>

Seminar on Innovation management in the EU Framework Programme, 4 May 2011, Ohrid, FYR of Macedonia:

The seminar emphasised on “Project and Innovation Management in the Framework Programme – The FP as an instrument for innovation” and was organised by FFG on 4 May 2011 in Ohrid, FYROM, back to back with the ICEIRD conference (5-7 May 2011).

15 participants from WBCs, 10 NCPs from Albania, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, and Montenegro.

Topics:

Innovation Union and a Common Strategic Framework, Innovation Foresight and Foresightful Innovation, Innovation Management and Technological Change - Micro and Macro Perspectives from Western Balkan Countries (WBCs), Modes of Innovation and Innovation management (workshop), Enterprise Europe Network and Technology Transfer in Serbia.

Conclusions:

Europe needs a better strategy for innovation, resulting in close to market results and greater impact. The innovation paradigm has shifted from technology and markets to ecosystems of research and social networks, services and policy with the new global context bearing challenges for nowadays' Innovation.

It is the global determinants that also shape the socioeconomic environment in the Western Balkan (WB) region, such as the access of the WBC to the EU.

The WBC need to support the development of innovative activities by establishing a national innovation system, securing funding and providing innovation law and policy.

“The sense for innovation is everywhere”. National Contact Points (NCPs) in the WB region are faced with innovation in their daily business since they promote services and funds for innovation. They themselves shall be innovative, as well, in delivering their services. Most important challenges they face are “lack of knowledge” and of “willingness to change”.

Skills that are needed for innovation are “open minded people” with good networking and communication skills and “long term / stable structures”.

Product and service development need innovation management, the systematic planning, steering and controlling of innovations. It is part of the implementation of the business strategy. Innovation management needs to be tailored to a company's individual requirement due to different cultures, size, organisation, business models, strategy, etc.

NCPs will have to put more emphasis on the importance of innovation and the structure of the innovation management system in the future, when dealing with future requirements of the EU Programmes for Research and Innovation.

Workshop “Mobilization of Intellectual and Financial Resources from Diaspora for Sustainable Development Efforts in SEE”, 12 October 2011, Sarajevo, Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Pre-Conference event of the TAIEX conference “Emigration Issues in the Western Balkans - joint approach to linking migration and development of the countries of origin“ of Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Department for Emigration/Diaspora); co-organizers: UNESCO Venice Office, Center for e-Governance Development in SEE CeGD, et al.; The conclusions of the workshop can be found at [http://www.glocha.info/attachments/article/167/ConclusionsSarajevoworkshop\\_MobDiaspora4SD.pdf](http://www.glocha.info/attachments/article/167/ConclusionsSarajevoworkshop_MobDiaspora4SD.pdf)

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

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

##### **Bilateral agreements on scientific cooperation:**

###### *Albania:*

A bilateral agreement on scientific and technological cooperation between Austria and Albania is under way.

###### *Croatia*

The next meeting of the Joint Commission implementing the bilateral scientific and technological cooperation agreement between Austria and Croatia will be held in Vienna on December 2, 2011. At this meeting bilateral cooperation projects for the runtime 2012-2013 will be selected for funding.

###### *FY Republic of Macedonia:*

The second meeting of the Joint Commission implementing the bilateral scientific and technological cooperation agreement between Austria and Macedonia (FYR) has been held on 13 April 2011 in Skopje. At this meeting 9 bilateral cooperation projects for the runtime 2011-2012 have been selected for funding.

###### *Montenegro:*

On Aug. 1, 2010, the bilateral "Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Austria and the Government of Montenegro on Scientific and Technological Cooperation" which was signed in Podgorica in June 2009 entered into force. A joint call for proposals for Austrian-Montenegrin research projects was launched in early 2011. The first meeting of the Joint Commission implementing the bilateral cooperation agreement has been held in Vienna on June 24, 2011. At this meeting 5 bilateral cooperation projects for the runtime July 2011 to June 2013 have been selected for funding.

###### *Serbia:*

The bilateral agreement on scientific and technological cooperation between Austria and Serbia was signed on July 13, 2010 and entered into force on 1 May 2011. Further steps in developing the bilateral cooperation based on this agreement are under preparation.

### **Bilateral and multilateral cooperation:**

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

### **SEE-ERA.NET PLUS – Joint Funding of European Research Projects:**

The BMWF together with 16 international partners takes part in the FP7 ERA.NET project “Southeast European ERA.NET PLUS” (SEE-ERA.Net PLUS) which started in April 2009. This project aims at further integrating key research institutions from Southeast Europe into the European Research Area by launching a joint call for European Research Projects. The call for project applications in the areas Agro/Food/Biotechnology and ICT focused on WBC’s scientific strengths to ensure a strong participation of WBC researchers and was carried out in autumn 2009 (LINK: <http://plus.see-era.net/pjc/index.html>). In the course of a two-step application/evaluation procedure 23 excellent cooperation projects were selected for funding. Austrian scientists are taking part in seven of these projects which shows the huge interest of Austrian researchers to cooperate with researchers in Southeast Europe. SEE-ERA.NET PLUS is coordinated by the Centre for Social Innovation – ZSI (Austria). The scientific cooperation projects are co-funded by the partner countries and the European Commission with a budget of about 3 Mio €. The first interim project reports have been submitted and are currently being checked.

### **WBC-INCO.NET:**

The BMWF has been supporting the further integration of the WBC into the ERA as a partner in the INCO.NET project “Western Balkan Countries INCO.NET” (WBC-INCO.NET) since 2008. The successful work of the consortium will be continued until the end of 2013 with a strong focus on the innovation sector. The support for the meetings of the “Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan Countries”, an important dialogue forum for international developments in S&T, will be continued until the end of the project runtime.

### **EU Strategy for the Danube Region:**

The ministers of the 27 EU Member States, have on April 13 in Luxembourg, endorsed the EU Strategy for the Danube Region adopted by the European Commission last December. The implementation of the Strategy started in summer 2011. Around 200 priority actions will contribute to developing the area's huge economic potential and improving environmental conditions in the region.

The strategy concerns mainly 14 countries of which 8 are Member States (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania) and 6 are non-EU countries (Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Ukraine and Moldova). Organisations representing civil society and private companies are also involved in the implementation of actions and projects, and achievement of precise targets. The strategy follows the best practice example of the first “macro-regional” strategy, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The novelty of this macro-regional approach is the way it brings countries together to cooperate on setting goals, aligning funding, and working together to achieve their objectives, with the Commission playing a leading role in coordination.

The strategy focuses on 4 main pillars and its Action Plan sets priorities, identifies projects and proposes some deadlines. The different priority (PAs) areas of the strategy are coordinated by teams of priority area coordinators who are responsible for the implementation of activities which will be monitored by the Commission. Austria is strongly involved in the implementation of the EUSDR and participates intensively in several of its priority areas. It acts as co-coordinator of PA 1 “To improve mobility and intermodality”, PA 9 “To invest in people and skills” and PA 10 “To set up institutional capacity and cooperation”. BMWF is member of the Steering Group and first national contact in priority area 7 “To develop the knowledge society (research, education and ICT)” coordinated by Slovakia and Serbia.

Further information: <http://www.danube-region.eu>

Further support for the NCP in Bosnia/Herzegovina:

The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) continues to support the National Contact Point (NCP) for EU-Framework Programmes in Bosnia/Herzegovina in the period 2009-2012.

Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital of the Regional Cooperation Council (FBHC):

Austria actively supports the RCC’s Task Force FBHC and plays an active role as a co-chair. The Task Force is a platform for dialogue, lobbying and awareness raising at the interface of education, science and research and aims at supporting the development of human capital for the research sector. Detailed information about recent activities of the Task Force is provided in its separate WBC progress report.

SEE-Programme/IPA-Project EVAL-INNO, Fostering Evaluation Competencies in Research, Technology and Innovation in the SEE Region:

In May 2011 the project EVAL-INNO, Fostering Evaluation Competencies in Research, Technology and Innovation in the SEE Region was started. Its objective is to increase capacities for RTDI evaluation by addressing programme owners and agencies implementing programmes as (potential) users of evaluations and potential and experienced evaluators. Main activities are the definition of standards for RTDI evaluation, training activities for programme owners, agencies and for (potential) RTDI evaluators in the field. Pilot programme evaluations and a benchmarking study will be implemented. An important output is a web-based platform containing relevant documents, methodology guidelines and the results of the project. Geographically it covers the SEE-Programme countries (including all WBCs), a number of project activities will be open to participants from all countries.

EVAL-INNO is co-financed by the SEE-Transnational Cooperation Programme in Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece and by IPA funds in Montenegro and Serbia. The project is coordinated by ZSI, the requested Austrian public co-financing is provided by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research (BMWF). Funded till 2014, the continuation of the platform will depend on contributions from the SEE countries.

Further information is available in the autumn 2011 issue of the Journal of the Steering Platform and can be found on: <http://www.eval-inno.eu>

Austrian Development Agency - Call for Proposals: "Higher KOS - Promoting Institutional Development in Higher Education and Research in Kosovo" (Call June-Sept. 2011):

The overall objective of projects submitted under this call for proposals is to contribute to the well-functioning of the public higher education institutions in Kosovo/UNMIK along European values and standards and therefore supports the European integration process as well as democratisation and sustainable economic growth."

The objectives will be achieved by providing support in three thematic areas:

1. Strengthening customer/student oriented education quality: Strengthened education quality makes training at public universities of Kosovo/UNMIK labour market oriented, based on state-of-the-art methods (didactics, planning, internships) and provides quality assurance mechanisms that are independent and meet international standards.
2. Research promotion: Research promotion leads to broadened and improved capacities as well as quality of research, including management and operational support for the newly established national research fund.
3. Improved quality management, following the principles of good governance and transparency: Quality management and governance aims at improving the management and administrative procedures of main stakeholders (MEST, universities) in order to become more efficient, transparent and effective as well as oriented towards the real needs of customers.

The selected project shall start in 2012.

**European Higher Education Area (EHEA):**

Austria continuously supports institution building and the implementation of the Bologna process in the higher education sector in the WBC.

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

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

*(Optional personal opinion)*

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