



Operational Guidance for the Steering Platform

Editorial

Dear readers,

In this autumn edition of the eJournal of the 'Information Office of the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan Countries' we are introducing the latest developments on the way to a more directed and structured implementation of the Steering Platform and initiatives heading for the future (such as the INCO-NET action presented on page 2). You also have the opportunity to catch a glimpse of the team behind see-science.eu (on page 12).

To a large extent, this issue of the eJournal follows the structure of the summer edition: the special thematic focus lies on 'Information and Communication Technologies' (see pages 6-7) as the field of 'Health' was covered in the last journal. Again we take a look outside the European Union and update on Swiss initiatives towards the Western Balkans' research community (page 4). While the summer edition's country profile presented Albania, this time we get a flavour of the S&T system in Bosnia and Herzegovina (page 5). The SEE-ERA.NET project is announcing the launch of its Pilot Joint Call by the end of November 2006 (see pages 8-9). Following George Bonas' report on IPA initiatives in the previous issue, we are happy to inform on success stories from Serbia and the latest communications from Commissioner for Enlargement, Olli Rehn (page 10). Latest news on books and events are covered at the end of the issue.

More information is available on our project-website <http://see-science.eu>, and we strongly encourage you to participate in our dialogue on the topics of S&T in the Western Balkans and the European Union!

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Imprint

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After the launching event of the Steering Platform, further preparatory work continued on multiple levels: The European Commission was busy drafting the terms for the Seventh Framework Programme for RTD (FP7) and the parameters for the accession of the Western Balkan countries. Elaborations on the work programmes targeting horizontal issues of international cooperation were also substantially carried forward. Furthermore, several working groups discussed the Mission Statement and possible directions for the operation of the Steering Platform. Finally, the Information Office was setting up its services according to the project plan.

A major step towards ownership of the Steering Platform by the Western Balkan countries - as suggested by Commissioner Potočník in his opening speech in Vienna - happened on October 18, 2006, in Königswinter/Bonn, Germany. Taking advantage of a meeting in the so-called "Westbalkan Forum of SEE-ERA.NET", the participants representing the relevant ministries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, discussed a proposal for the rules of procedure for the Steering Platform.



On October 20, during the SEE-ERA.NET Steering Board Meeting, the results were presented to Tania Friederichs from the European Commission and Elke Dall from the Information Office in form of a working document, envisaging the establishment of a sustainable structure of the platform with a clear allocation of responsibilities.

In order to provide a sound basis for the Steering Platform in the future, the possibility of an INCO-NET was considered, which is an activity scheduled in the "Capacities" Programme under FP7. More details are provided on page 2. (ed)

Letters to the Editor

In the last eJournal, all readers were invited to comment on the articles and the publication itself. We have received positive feedback on the eJournal in general, but still lack an ongoing controversial discussion on its content. So, we'd like to urge you again to share your insight with us: mail to office@see-science.eu

Mission Statement under Construction (continued)

The process of drafting the mission statement was furthered by the contributions of an Austrian working group: Manfred Horvat, Anneliese Stoklaska and Barbara Weitgruber. This draft was then discussed and enhanced at the meeting of the SEE-ERA.NET Balkan Forum. After another small change by Klaus Schuch & Elke Dall, ZSI, this re-formulation resulted in the following proposal:

The Platform facilitates the interaction between the Western Balkan countries, the EU Member States, the Candidate Countries and other states associated to the EU Framework Programme for RTD and the European Commission. Its main objective is to support the enhanced integration of the WBCs in the European RTD cooperation activities. It is a strategic body to deal with European, multilateral and regional issues of Science and Technology policies in and with the WBCs. It acts as an information exchange centre, clearing house for joint ideas and activities, and coordination forum for needs, suggestions and proposals of the WBCs to the EU27 and the European Commission and vice versa. In this spirit, the Platform continues and intensifies the progress achieved under the EU-Balkan Countries Action Plan on Science and Technology.

Kindly follow the discussion and post your comments on the website <http://see-science.eu/news/111.html>. Information on future discussions will be published in the eJournal. (ed)

Council Working Group on Research Discusses Steering Platform

At a Working Group meeting in the European Council on September 18, 2006, a number of Member State representatives asked about the follow-up on the first WBC Steering Platform meeting. Tania Friederichs (European Commission, DG Research, Directorate D1) reiterated that the operational terms and working conditions of the Platform should be determined in function of both input and output. The Platform is a "clearing house", in which all interested stakeholders aiming to improve socio-economic development through research in this region should be actively involved (and not only the Commission). Based on the substantive input in the coming months, a follow-up will be considered. The possibility for additional means of support for the work of the Platform under FP7 is not excluded, while at the same time the existing infrastructure should be fully and synergistically used. In response to a question on additional stakeholders, the Commission agreed to involve business associations and chambers of commerce. The Joint Research Centers (JRC) also contribute to the Platform, which is open to further suggestions. (Information provided by Tania Friederichs, EC, DG Research)

New FP7 Instrument for International Cooperation: INCO-NET, a Possible Option for the Western Balkan Countries?

Under FP7 the possibility for international cooperation is included in all four major programmes. In addition, under the 'Capacities' Programme, a special horizontal programme is foreseen for international cooperation, aiming at strengthening the scientific ties with third countries. One of these activities is the strengthening of the bi-regional coordination of science and technology cooperation. The new instrument proposed is called 'INCO-NET'. The purpose of an INCO-NET is to bring together policy makers and stakeholders of a given region or group of countries with the EU partners to:

- < establish a dialogue to identify S&T priorities of mutual benefit and interest;
- < define cooperation policy orientations together;
- < implement specific activities to promote and contribute to the participation of the targeted regions or countries in the Framework Programme.

In other words, a kind of platform is envisaged, playing a bridging role between the international scientific community and the EU's research capacity. Activities can e.g. include surveys, studies, workshops, seminars and networking, leading to the definition and recommendation of priorities, strategic analysis and the dissemination of results. The work of existing initiatives has to be taken into account and built upon. Also, synergies and complementarities with the broader international cooperation policy framework have to be ensured.

Concerning the region of the Western Balkan countries, this new instrument seems to be an excellent opportunity to build upon the experience and broaden the scope of the work of the Information Office.

The first call for proposals will be published by the end of the year 2006 or the beginning of 2007 at the latest. As the Western Balkan countries are a priority area for research cooperation with the EU, this target region should certainly be included in the proposed call. In any event, the Information Office will closely follow the further developments on this interesting and challenging initiative. Any institute or stakeholder interested can contact us. (Information provided by Tania Friederichs, EC, DG Research)



Gateway towards FP7

<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7> is the most important website providing updated information on European research activities, such as the 7th Framework Programme, explaining the specific sub-programmes in detail and informing about support available. CORDIS (Community Research & Development Information Service) in general publishes news in the free printed magazine 'Cordis Focus' and the weekly online newsletter 'Cordis Express'. Several other interactive information services can be used free of charge: it's possible to search for partners and projects, to disseminate results, etc.

Links CORDIS
<http://see-science.eu/org/508.html>
<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/get-support.htm>

European Research Council Work Programme

The Scientific Council of the European Research Council (ERC) has finalised the first draft of its work programme for 2007, outlining the main aspects of the programme. It will be open to excellent researchers of any nationality who are citizens of the EU, an associated country, or who are moving to the region.

The first call in 2007 will focus on the 'Starting Independent Researcher Grant' with a budget of 300 million euro. The grant will allow researchers to independently manage the funding for the duration of the project. The bottom-up application process is open to all research fields. The second funding scheme - the 'Advanced Investigator Grants' - will be introduced under the second call for proposals in the FP7 sub-programme called 'Ideas', expected to be published later in 2007.

Links The draft work programme can be downloaded from
<http://see-science.eu/doc/506.html>

Lifelong Learning Programme: Open for Western Balkan Countries

On October 25, 2006, the European Parliament adopted the Commissions' proposal for the action programme in the field of education and training, which covers learning opportunities from childhood to old age. Almost seven billion euro are allocated to support projects and activities in the period between 2007 and 2013. They shall enable individuals in schools, universities and companies across Europe (including the Western Balkan countries) to participate in one of the sub-programmes that enhance trans-national mobility, promote bilateral and multilateral partnerships, or improve quality in education and training systems. The programmes are also aimed at research centres and bodies concerned with lifelong learning, higher education institutions, etc. The decision is expected to enter into force in December 2006. The first call is presumably going to be launched in February 2007 with a deadline in March/April 2007.

Links The common position and proposal can be downloaded from
<http://see-science.eu/doc/500.html>

The System of National Contact Points in the Western Balkan Countries

Researchers looking for support as regards their future participation in the Framework Programmes (FPs) often turn to the internet (e.g. the CORDIS website), but most successfully to their National Contact Points (NCPs). A well-established and professional NCP system is the basis for successful participation of researchers in the Framework Programmes. Therefore, one of the core objectives of the FP6 project ERA WESTBALKAN, coordinated by the Austrian Research Promotion Agency FFG, was the operational set up and training of the NCP network in the Western Balkan countries.

Now, more than two years after the start of the project, 19 NCPs are important information providers for their national research communities. They promote the Framework Programme, advise researchers on project-related issues, set up a data base comprising researchers and research institutions and offer partner searches to enhance their countries' participation in Framework projects.

The importance of the NCP system in these countries is for example reflected in the successful participation of researchers from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the 6th Framework Programme (FP6).

"The turning point happened when the Ministry got involved into the ERA WESTBALKAN project in May 2004", says Violeta Atanasovska, overall NCP coordinator and Senior Advisor in the Ministry of Education and Science of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

"As the 6th Framework Programme is coming to an end and first results become evident, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia can be more than satisfied by its participation in this Programme. According to an internal review by the Ministry of Education and Science, national researchers participated in about 50 FP6 projects with a total budget of about 5 million euro, which lies far beyond all expectations." The total yearly budget of the Ministry for research comprises about 2 million euro.

At the very beginning, due to a lack of personnel and training, participation in the Framework Programme was more than modest. Then, with the Ministry's involvement in ERA WESTBALKAN, a lot of work was done "on the ground": In order to present the possibilities offered by the Framework Programme and to answer questions related to project preparation, almost all faculties, institutes and research units in the country were visited. Besides the support from this project, help for all these activities and events came from the Slovenian Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, the Austrian Science and Research Liaison Offices (ASO) and the European Commission.

Encouraged by these activities, the Ministry is now making efforts to increase the number of NCPs for FP7 and to facilitate conditions for continuing this success story in the future.

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Reorganisation of DG Research



It has become a tradition that, in combination with the preparation of a new Framework Programme, the Commission's services are also re-organised. This is also the case now. Therefore the organisation chart of the Directorate General for Research changed substantially. In order to be fully prepared for the Seventh Framework Programme, it was already implemented as from October 1, 2006.

Major objective was a better reflection of the new tasks and actions in the framework of the Directorate General's respective responsibilities, which developed over the last years. Keeping this in mind, it becomes evident that research policy at a European level is more than funding research cooperation: the mobility of researchers, the link between research and universities, the stimulation of investment in research (3% action plan) and the European Research Council have all received their proper structure.

There has also been a change in the organisation of the Directorate on International Cooperation (former Directorate N). It has become Directorate D, leading to the question if this is a reflection that international cooperation has become more important and upfront in the organisation of the work of DG Research?! In any event, the international dimension seems to be much more present in FP7 than under FP6. There is room for international participation in all major FP7 programmes. This requires well considered coordination between the International Cooperation Directorate and the other, mainly thematic, directorates. This coordination task will, together with D3, be taken up by Unit D1, which is the Policy Unit responsible for the International Dimension of the Framework Programme. Head of Unit is Alessandro Damiani, who was the EC's scientific counsellor in the EU Delegation in Washington (USA) before assuming his new responsibilities. In this unit, the interest of the Western Balkan countries will continue to be considered by Tania Friederichs as desk officer.

A new unit D2 has been created, which is responsible for analysing and monitoring research policies in the different countries of the world. The purpose of this unit is to build knowledge and provide intelligence for shaping the EU's strategy on international scientific cooperation.

Unit D3 concerns the management of specific international cooperation actions. This unit will be among others responsible for the organisation and management of the specific horizontal international capacities call (e.g. INCO-NET). Head of Unit is Robert Burmanjer, previously Head of Unit at the Policy Unit in the old Directorate N on International Cooperation.

Unit D4 is responsible for administration and finance. They ensure the proper and timely conclusion of the research contracts and payments together with the units responsible for the scientific parts (mainly D3 and to a certain extent D1).

In a nutshell, this is the organisation and re-organisation of DG Research, particularly with some insight into Directorate D (International Cooperation). More information will follow when all persons have been nominated. A new Director and a Head of Unit for D2 are still to be designated. Overall, responsibility for international cooperation lies now with the newly appointed Deputy Director General Daniel Jacob and, of course, the Director General himself, José Manuel Silva Rodríguez, who attaches great importance to the international dimension of FP7 and this opportunity to establish major strategic projects with our international partners.

Links Organisation Chart and details:
<http://see-science.eu/link/429.html>

Switzerland's Science and Technology Initiatives towards the Western Balkans

Since 1990, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), together with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), has been conducting a programme of scientific cooperation with Eastern Europe. From the year 2000 onwards, Switzerland and the Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia) have been cooperating in the framework of the so-called SCOPES-programme (Scientific Co-operation between Eastern Europe and Switzerland). The cooperation programme is organised in four-year phases:

- < SCOPES 2000-2004: CHF 14,0 million budget (1 CHF = 0,6 euro)
- < SCOPES 2005-2008: CHF 13,0 million budget

The programme mainly comprises Joint Research Projects and Institutional Partnerships, the former focusing on basic research, the latter concentrating on the improvement of general conditions for scientific research. Each project and partnership is composed of a consortium of scientists from Eastern Europe and Switzerland. As SCOPES is open for activities within all scientific disciplines ranging from humanities and social sciences to natural sciences, medicine etc., thematic areas are defined by the participants themselves. Furthermore, conference grants are included in the programme, allowing scientists from Eastern Europe to participate in international scientific conferences taking place in Switzerland. The projects and partnerships have a duration of 3 years with the maximum grants of CHF 70,000 and CHF 100,000, respectively. At least 70% of the funds are earmarked for the partners from Eastern Europe. The current programme was implemented through a call in January 2005. Only the action line "Conference Grants" is still open. Conferences have to take place before December 31, 2008, and proposals have to be submitted at least three months in advance.

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S&T in Bosnia & Herzegovina



Location: South Eastern Europe, it consists of 2 entities: Federation of BiH and Republic of Srpska
Total area: 51,129 sq. km
Population: 3,845,000 (2005, mid year, preliminary) - source: WIIW
GDP - per capita: 1,961 EUR (2005) at official exchange rate - source: WIIW

Due to a very complicated and unique constitutional design, some very specific issues have to be resolved in Bosnia and Herzegovina prior to its transition and final accommodation to the standards of the EU.

Situation of the Bosnian S&T Sector before and after the war:

- . In 1991, BiH invested 1.5% of its GDP in R&D activities.
- . Present funding for R&D comprises 0.05-0.15% of GDP.

The state of Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of two entities, the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of BiH. The District of Brčko is a separate administrative unit. In the Republic of Srpska there is one Ministry for Science and Technology, while in the Federation of BiH, consisting of 10 cantons with own constitutions, parliaments and governments, the Federal Ministry for Education and Science is in charge of coordinating S&T policy issues, together with the 10 cantonal ministries. Consequently, there are 12 governments within the country autonomously pursuing rather independent policies for the regulation of this sector.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, through its Department for Education, Science, Culture and Sports, plays the key role in coordinating these policies within the country. Yet, its recommendations and decisions are not binding, as it has no power to impose decisions, and no funding is envisaged for the S&T sector in the state budget. At an international level, the Ministry has a mandate to take over the international obligations, but without any

S&T management of Bosnia and Herzegovina

1. Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH (State level)
2. Ministry of Education and Science of the Federation of BiH (Entity level)
3. Ministry of Science and Technology of the Republic of Srpska (Entity level)
4. Ministries for Education and Science of Una-Sana, Posavina, Tuzla, Zenica-Doboj, Srednja Bosna, Hercegovina-Neretva, Zapadna Hercegovina, Sarajevo and Canton 10 (Cantonal level)
5. Universities, Research Institutes and Research Centers
6. Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Academy of Sciences and Arts of the Republic of Srpska, and the Croatian Society for Science and Arts

Legal Framework:

Laws on R&D activities in the Republic of Srpska, in Sarajevo Canton, in Tuzla Canton, in Zenica-Doboj Canton
 Law on R&D from 1990 in the Federation of BiH and in those Cantons that did not adopt the new legislation

instruments or mandate to pursue the implementation of these obligations.

The ambition of the country to join the EU and the overall political consensus over this goal enabled a number of reforms, providing transfers of authority and competence from entity or lower levels to the state level. Since the S&T sector has not yet been recognised either by the government or by the European Commission as a key area in the Accession Process, it remained untouched by the reform processes.

If political consensus over the necessary constitutional changes is obtained after the October elections, there is a chance for BiH to get one single Ministry of Science and Technology. Prior to that, however, major disagreements over the competences and the role of this future Ministry itself will have to be resolved. A number of political factors support the idea of a full transfer of competences in this area to the ministry, but there are also strong political powers opposing the idea and insisting on a vague role of coordination for this ministry.

Similar controversies surround the debate on the State Law on S&T, the first version of which is currently being drafted.

In spite of existing obstacles and with the very limited resources and competence, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina managed to incorporate the S&T sector as a separate chapter, and as a precondition of the overall social development, into the Mid-Term Development Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Ministry of Civil Affairs also managed to include S&T as one of the national priorities for future IPA funding.

In this regard, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina accepts and supports the findings by UNESCO ROSTE experts in their 2006 report "Guidelines for a Science and Research Policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina". The report supports the idea of enabling the legal and institutional preconditions for the state to take responsibility for this sector by providing the proper legal and adequate institutional framework in order to develop a Strategy for RTD Development. In this regard, the rebuilding of the scientific and technological potential of BiH calls for the adoption of a 'road map' with three general mid-term objectives: the training of a new generation of scientists, the development of research infrastructures, and the establishment of a State Fund for R&D. A follow-up of this report is the Strategy Proposal produced by the Academy of Arts and Sciences of BiH under the title 'Strategy for the S&T Development of BiH', which will be presented soon.

It is a priority task for the State of BiH to work towards the implementation of the UNESCO ROSTE Report's recommendations in order to provide the preconditions for the BiH scientific community to join the European Research Area and to be more involved in international scientific cooperation, especially concerning regional and European cooperation in research projects, funded by the European Framework Programme for RTD.

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Current Research Information Systems in the Western Balkans

Systematic access to current research results and journals is essential for scientists, but the Western Balkan countries - as reported in the UNESCO publication "Accessing and Disseminating Scientific Information in South Eastern Europe" - struggle for this access on an international level. Local libraries are not yet fully able to make their publications available electronically. Researchers publishing in local journals that are neither indexed internationally nor available online remain invisible, both regionally and internationally.

The UNESCO publication (see also book announcement on page 12), written by Peter Ballantyne of the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INSAP), analyses the Western Balkan countries regarding Internet connectivity, access to international e-resources, access to local research and science/journal publishing (paper and electronic). His results are summarised in the following table.

	connectivity	eJournals	libraries	ePublishing
<i>Albania</i>	*	*	*	*
<i>Bosnia-Herzegovina</i>	*	**	***	*
<i>Croatia</i>	*****	****	****	**
<i>FYR of Macedonia</i>	**	*	**	*
<i>Montenegro</i>	****	*	**	*
<i>Serbia</i>	*****	*****	****	***

An important player in the region as regards these aspects is COBISS.Net, a project advancing the free exchange of bibliographic records. In its framework, autonomous library information systems of BiH, Montenegro, the FYR of Macedonia, Slovenia and Serbia were already created. The project and the corresponding software are developed by the Slovenian agency ISZUM (Institute of Information Science). This institute is also pushing CRIS (= Current Research Information Systems) initiatives in the region, which are overall coordinated by euroCRIS, an institution aiming at a European-wide interoperability of research data.

During the next year, special attention will be paid to the region: the upcoming biennial conference CRIS2008 (in June 2008) will be organised in Slovenia, taking into account the Slovenian EU presidency during the first half of 2008. This provides a fertile ground for collaboration and extension of the euroCRIS activities towards the West Balkan region. New members from the region are very welcome.

Currently, this dialogue is also furthered at the conference COBISS 2006, taking place in Maribor, Slovenia, on November 29-30, 2006. It discusses "The Role of Libraries in Providing Transparency of Bibliographic Indicators to Identify Scientific, Professional and Pedagogical Performance in Higher Education and Research Institutions" and focuses on South East Europe.

Links
[euroCRIS
http://see-science.eu/org/372.html](http://see-science.eu/org/372.html)
[IZUM
http://see-science.eu/org/513.html](http://see-science.eu/org/513.html)

ICT As Priority Area in FP7

The 7th Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP7) is grouped into four categories. Within the specific programme on "Cooperation", the ICT sub-programme (Information and Communication Technologies) aims to integrate technologies and to result in new applications for industrial as well as domestic settings. Its objectives are to improve the competitiveness of European industry and to enable Europe to master and shape the future developments of ICT, so that the demands of its society and economy are met. In order to promote these objectives, ICT has an overall budget of 9,110 million euro for the period 2007-2013. The ICT Work Programme 2007-2008 is in line with the main policy priorities as defined in the i2010 initiative, which sets the strategic framework for ICT policies in the European Union. In order to achieve the best possible impact, it is structured into 7 main challenges. The challenges are driven either by industry and technology objectives or by socio-economic goals. For each challenge precise targets and deliverables are identified in a 10 year time frame.

Challenge 1: Pervasive and Trusted Network and Service Infrastructures
 Challenge 2: Cognitive Systems, Interaction, Robotics
 Challenge 3: Components, Systems, Engineering
 Challenge 4: Digital Libraries and Content
 Challenge 5: Towards Sustainable and Personalised Health care
 Challenge 6: ICT for Mobility, Environmental Sustainability and Energy Efficiency
 Challenge 7: ICT for Independent Living and Inclusion

For each objective, the Work Programme defines the target outcome of the supported research and the expected impact of these outcomes on European economy and society.

According to the latest information from the Commission, the first call for proposals is expected to open in January or February and to close in March or April. A second call will follow in May/June 2007 with a deadline in September/October, and a third one may open in December 2007 and close in March 2008. More detailed information will be available after the IST 2006 conference in Helsinki (November 21-23, 2006), organised by the European Commission in cooperation with the Finnish presidency.

However, these first three calls do not have the same weight. The table below shows the number of different objectives that will be covered in each call, and the budget available.

	Objectives covered	Budget to be spent
1st ICT call	19	1,139 million euro
2nd ICT call	11	609 million euro
3rd ICT call	5	207 million euro

It is important to note that most of the objectives will be covered only once in the course of the ICT Work Programme 2007-2008. In order to plan your activities and to ensure on-schedule submission of project ideas, it is therefore indispensable to check the whole Work Programme at an early stage. The next possibility might lie somewhere in the more distant future. (by Carmen Siller, ZSI)



Boosting ICT Innovation in South Eastern Europe



In South Eastern Europe, efforts towards the restructuring of research capacities are gathering forward momentum, and opportunities for synergies with European research programmes and initiatives are markedly on the increase.

Still, turning such opportunities into realities presents a number of challenges: that's where supporting programmes and projects come in,

aiming both to boost the individual R&D systems in these countries, and to help their gradual integration in the European Research Area. Three such characteristic examples are IS2WeB, SEE-INNOVATION and SCORE, all supporting the participation of South East European research entities in Framework Programme-funded activities in the area of IST - Information Society Technologies (ICT in FP7). This is unarguably a top-level priority for cooperation with the EU in the region, and there is a pronounced need for enhanced S&T cooperation between the Western Balkans and the EU in this domain. In addition, it is necessary to increase private investment in ICT research in the broader South Eastern European region, mostly through the enhanced participation of innovative local ICT Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the 6th Framework Programme and other R&D schemes.

With regards to implementation, the results of two of the above mentioned projects have so far been more than encouraging, with both IS2WeB and SEE-INNOVATION managing to significantly increase awareness of and mobilise participation in FP6 activities amongst their target organisations - Western Balkan ICT research organisations and innovative ICT SMEs in South Eastern Europe, respectively. In IS2WeB in particular, over 20% of the target organisations participated in 61 IST Call 6 proposals, mostly in the strategic objectives related to the Western Balkans specifically and the development of Specific Support Actions (SSAs) or Coordination Actions (CAs) for strategic cooperation; 6 out of these proposals have been retained for funding, implying a satisfactory success rate of around 12%. SEE-INNOVATION has likewise provided consistent support to its target SMEs in their attempts to join IST Call 6 proposals, whereas SCORE, an FP6 SSA soon-to-be-launched, aims to take off from just where SEE-INNOVATION and IS2WeB are leaving by addressing so-far unmet policy challenges in ICT research in the Western Balkans.

In addition, SCORE will be building on the work of GREAT-IST and SEEFIRE, two further FP6 projects addressing ICT issues in the Western Balkans and the broader South Eastern European region. In particular, GREAT-IST focuses on the harmonisation of ICT research priorities in the Western Balkans, the Newly Independent States and the Accession and Candidate Countries, bringing together the IST research stakeholders of these countries so that they become more easily integrated in the European Research Area. In contradistinction, the key objective of SEEFIRE is to exploit results of existing IST projects, producing studies on the options available for network

infrastructure, and also on possible strategies for Research and Education Networking development in South East Europe. The ultimate aim is to raise awareness on the results of the SEEREN, GN1 and SERENATE FP6 projects, which were centred on interconnection facilities in South Eastern Europe and the measures needed to reduce the digital divide.

In terms of approach, the projects' IS2WeB and SEE-INNOVATION support to date has been primarily delivered via FP6-focussed mentoring workshops and coaching services to the target entities. However, a study of the IS2WeB IST Call 6 participation results recently concluded has revealed an additional critical factor for successful involvement in FP6 research: networking. According to this study's results, more than 40% of the IS2WeB target group organisations became involved in consortia featuring one or more IS2WeB partners, a finding that underscores the importance of collaboration partners for successful entry in this very competitive field. For the IS2WeB consortium, this insight further implies that not only should the project continue fostering networking between its target institutions and pertinent EU organisations, but that it should also intensify its efforts to network its target group members that will now enter EU-funded projects for the first time with the remaining target organisations, as this activity can act as a kind of "door opener" to participation for the latter.

Additional future activities in the IS2WeB agenda include the organisation of a new series of national thematic workshops, featuring best practises and future trends in ICT topics of interest to the project target group. In a similar vein, SEE-INNOVATION will be organising a number of international know-how transfer events, but the focus here will be on matchmaking and SME cluster formation with a view to improved South East European SME participation in FP7 ICT projects. For more information on these events and workshops, which are due to take place between December 2006 and March 2007, please visit the two projects' websites at www.is2web.org and www.see-innovation.org, respectively.

SCORE is planned to be launched in early February, so for further details please contact the project coordinator Raphael Koumeri at planet@skypro.be.

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Specific Partner Search for ICT

The Ideal-ist network, co-financed by the European Commission in the 6th Framework Programme, locates partners for organisations wishing to participate in the ICT Programme, provides personal support and organises information events. National services have been built up during FP6 with 34 representatives and now, in the context of FP7, services are also provided for all Western Balkan countries. All services are free of charge. (ed)

Links <http://www.ideal-ist.net>
<http://see-science.eu/org/530.html>





WWW.SEE-ERA.NET

Networking with Southeast Europe

SEE-ERA.NET Pilot Joint Call for Research Proposals



Nikos Sidiropoulos, Work Package Leader responsible for the Pilot Joint Call, interviewed by Florian Gruber

Gruber: The Pilot Joint Call "Networking with Southeast Europe" that is about to be launched is one of the major outputs of the SEE-ERA.NET project. What is this project all about?

Sidiropoulos: The major aim of our activities is to foster a multilateral programme approach by supporting R&D projects through the exchange of

knowledge. We aim to build up a stronger knowledge based society, to stop the brain drain, and to contribute to economic and social development, regional cooperation, and the stability of the region.

Gruber: What are the specific benefits for researchers participating in the Pilot Joint Call?

Sidiropoulos: Researchers can apply for research mobility projects, network projects, and summer schools. Our call will help to enhance mobility, to increase networking, to share results and experiences with colleagues, and to establish new partnerships. Additionally, participating researchers from Southeast Europe can take advantage of their knowledge gained from the Pilot Call for easier access to EU programmes.

The assessment of proposals will be transparent and fair. It will be carried out as an international peer review process. The final approval of a project application will be made by a committee representing the ministries and/or agencies from all participating SEE-ERA.NET member countries.

Gruber: This call is a pilot call with limited budget. There is an upper limit for project costs, and the three thematic areas "Food, Agriculture and Biotechnology", "Information and Communication Technologies" and "Environment", narrowed by sub-areas (see factsheet), have been selected as a focus. Why did SEE-ERA.NET choose these three areas?

Sidiropoulos: Our thematic areas were selected in relation to the national and regional research priorities of the Western Balkan countries, keeping in mind the strengths of these countries. These thematic areas are oriented especially towards relevant problems and the future economic development of the region; they are in line with

the Stabilisation and Association Process for Southeast Europe and will strengthen the participation of the Western Balkan countries in FP7.

Gruber: What will be financed by this call for proposals?

Sidiropoulos: Mainly expenses resulting from mobility costs of researchers. In addition, staff expenses for the implementation of projects and feasibility studies are eligible for grants, and also costs of events and meetings, for example the rental of venues, alongside with logistics and physical resources, e.g. consumables, printing costs, small equipment, and so forth.

Gruber: How many countries are participating in the Pilot Joint Call?

Sidiropoulos: All countries represented in the SEE-ERA.NET project participate in the Pilot Joint Call. They are: Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia.

These countries contribute national funding to this Pilot Joint Call. It was a very pleasant surprise that the whole consortium joined forces in order to create this call for proposals.

Gruber: Many researchers in South Eastern Europe cooperate with scientists from Italy and also Turkey. Why are those scientists not eligible for participation?

Sidiropoulos: Simply because Italy and Turkey and other Southeast European countries such as Cyprus are - up to now - not participating in the SEE-ERA.NET project. Therefore researchers from these countries cannot apply for funding.

Gruber: What is the benefit of SEE-ERA.NET for the EC in regard to funding RTD collaboration with the Western Balkan countries?

Sidiropoulos: SEE-ERA.NET is a useful tool, not only to provide funding. It aims at structuring and expanding the European Research Area to the Western Balkan countries by coordinating and supporting RTD activities. The important issue is that the funding of these joint activities such as the Pilot Joint Call is covered through the national contributions of all the partners. This facilitates the sustainability of our collaboration in South Eastern Europe.

Gruber: Apart from the call itself, several accompanying measures are planned.

Sidiropoulos: Yes, a number of accompanying activities are foreseen parallel to the Pilot Joint Call, concerning awareness raising in the Western Balkan countries, the participating EU-Member States and Associated Countries. We are planning qualification and training measures regarding R&D management skills in order to pave the way for a successful participation of the Western Balkan countries in European and multilateral projects. We will also organise brokerage and networking activities to foster the integration of researchers





from the Western Balkan countries in European consortia as a basis for joint R&D projects.

Gruber: When will these brokerage and networking events take place?

Sidiropoulos: They will take place in January and February 2007. We will organise one event for each thematic priority: in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in Montenegro/Croatia, and in Serbia.

Gruber: What are the steps researchers have to take to participate in the Pilot Joint Call?

Sidiropoulos: We are going to launch the call in the end of November 2006. The deadline for the applications is March 31, 2007. Applications for project funding may be submitted by legal RTD entities according to the national laws of the participating countries. This funding scheme targets at institutional collaboration, therefore private persons are not allowed to apply.

As the application procedure is completely based on electronic submission, interested researchers should visit our website www.see-era.net/pjc for a detailed description of the application process. For definitions and clarifications, the applicants should contact the SEE-ERA.NET National Contact Points of their countries. Contact details are provided on the website. We hope to receive high-quality research proposals, strengthening our aim to integrate Southeast Europe into the growing European Research Area!

Gruber: Which are the reasons for the countries to participate in SEE-ERA.NET and the Pilot Joint Call?

Sidiropoulos: The countries participate in the call because they want to test the implementation of a new multilateral funding programme, and also to monitor the opening of their internal procedures to a multinational level. Here I would like to emphasise that our target is to scale up our activities after this test phase and to launch a multilateral joint call in 2008, combining policy development, capacity building, infrastructure development, brokerage and networking activities: to end up with big joint research projects.

As for my country: Greece strongly supports the initiatives improving cooperation and coordination of national research activities, especially in Southeast Europe. I would like to remind you that the promotion of the exchange of knowledge, personnel and technological innovations in order to foster socio-economic progress throughout the Euro-Mediterranean area was stated as an important ambition and mission of the European Union according to the EU-Balkan Countries Action Plan on Science & Technology adopted at the Ministerial Conference in Thessaloniki under the Greek Presidency in 2003.

Gruber: One last question: which steps does the SEE-ERA.NET project envisage to ensure the sustainability of the the Pilot Joint Call initiative?

Sidiropoulos: As I mentioned before, one of our priorities is the detailed monitoring of this pilot phase, which will be implemented by an external expert. This will lead to a better design of the next joint call, which will be launched by SEE-ERA.NET in 2008. Furthermore, a white paper on RTD overlaps, gaps and opportunities in Southeast Europe will be drafted by our German colleagues. And finally, a turn-key ready RTD programme will be prepared by our Romanian colleagues in cooperation with all other SEE-ERA.NET project partners. From my point of view, SEE-ERA.NET - and the ERA-NETs in general, act as catalysts to initiate and facilitate the coordination and collaboration of national funding bodies.

Authors

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<http://see-science.eu/users/114.html>
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<http://see-science.eu/users/211.html>

Factsheet: SEE-ERA.NET Pilot Joint Call

Launch of the Pilot Joint Call: November 30, 2006

Deadline for submission of project applications: March 31, 2007

This first joint call by SEE-ERA.NET is a pilot case for the cooperation of the project partner countries in the field of research funding. The design of the call is based on research on the priorities and needs of the Western Balkan countries with a view to better integration into the European Research Area.

Funding will be provided for

- < Research projects: conducted by a project consortium with at least three participants from three different countries (at least one from a Western Balkan country)
- < Network projects: conducted by at least five partners from three different countries (at least two from a Western Balkan country)
- < Summer Schools: conducted by a project consortium with at least three participants from three different countries (at least one from a Western Balkan country)

Thematic priorities are

- < Environment: Environmental Technologies
- < Information and Communication Technologies: Applications Research
- < Food, Agriculture and Biotechnology: Sustainable Production and Management of Biological Resources from Land, Forest and Aquatic Environments

Indicative budget per project will be 20,000 euro for a period of maximum 9 months.

Language for project applications is English.

More information about the call and the online-application tool can be found at: <http://www.see-era.net/pjc>



Update on IPA Initiatives

Official EC-Support for the Use of IPA Funds for Research

On October 10, 2006, an important letter was sent to all ministers of the Western Balkan countries: Olli Rehn, Commissioner responsible for Enlargement reaffirmed that education in connection with research is the key element for the knowledge economy. He informs that "DG Enlargement is now preparing the Multi Indicative Planning Documents (MIPD 2007-2009) which are programming the assistance under the new Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, IPA. The sectors of higher education and research have been identified among the priority areas both in the National and Multi-Beneficiary MIPD." Also Commissioner Potočnik (and his services) insisted on this synergy between IPA and research. It is now clear that all necessary efforts will be taken by the Commission services to ensure adequate attention and resources for projects in the fields of education and research. (News provided by Tatjana Knezevic and Slobodanka Koprivica, Ministry of Education and Science, Montenegro)

History of Using CARDS/IPA Funds from the Serbian Point of View



The Ministry of Science and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia is pleased with the response of Commissioner Rehn, having in mind that the efforts to include research in the priorities of the pre-accession funding have quite some history. The needs for the reinforcement of research capacities have been identified in the EU-Balkan Countries Action Plan on S&T, adopted at the Ministerial Conference in June 2003 in Thessaloniki, during the Greek EU Presidency. The same document proposed using CARDS funds (the 2002-2006 pre-accession financial instrument for the Western Balkan countries) for a renewal of research infrastructures. However, the priority of research has not been set in the CARDS Multiannual Indicative Plan. Following the "Thessaloniki spirit", in June 2004 the Serbian Government decided to invest 9 million euro in R&D infrastructure and the development of technological parks. This was the first time that the significance of RTD as a fostering tool for the knowledge-based economy has been recognised by the highest level of authority in a Western Balkan country.

A further strong boost to the whole initiative has been given by the German delegation in the CARDS Committee in December 2004, which was supported by several other member states. Shortly afterwards, on February 3, 2005, the next milestone was reached during the Conference on Western Balkan Countries in EU RTD-Framework Programmes, held in the European Parliament in Brussels with the participation and strong personal engagement of the Commissioner for Science and Research, Janez Potočnik. Unfortunately, the issue of the lack of the budget line for R&D in CARDS remained an obstacle, which showed to be difficult to remove.

New encouragement for the whole endeavour has been given by the

Austrian EU Presidency in the first half of 2006, which put strong emphasis on the participation of the Western Balkan countries in the EU RTD Framework Programme and particularly on the reinforcement of R&D infrastructures. This issue has been raised by the Austrian representatives and recognized in the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI). Finally, the launch of the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan Countries by Commissioner Potočnik in June 2006, as a follow-up of the 2003 Thessaloniki Action Plan, has marked the continuous interest of the European Commission to assist the WBCs to improve their research capacities and encourage their participation in the EU RTD Framework Programme. One should not forget the two FP6 calls (2005 and 2006) for the reinforcement of research capacities, which shall introduce more than 7 million euro into 30 Centres of Excellence awarded in the Western Balkan countries.

Therefore, the letter of Commissioner Rehn to the WBC Ministers of Science and Technology has come as a result of the long-term efforts and synergies of both the Western Balkan countries and several Member States. We hope that this synergy shall remain part of our future joint actions aimed at further strengthening regional science and technology as a joint contribution to the competitive knowledge-based economy of the European Union.

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General Info: What is IPA?

The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) aims at providing targeted assistance to candidate countries and potential candidate countries for membership to the EU. Hence, all the countries of the Western Balkans are included in this instrument. It replaces the 2000-06 financial instrument for the Western Balkans CARDS and other pre-accession financial instruments. IPA concerns countries with candidate status (currently Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey) and potential candidate status (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro including Kosovo according to UNSCR 1244). There are five different components:

- < Transition Assistance and Institution Building,
- < Regional and Cross-Border Cooperation,
- < Regional Development,
- < Human Resources Development,
- < Rural Development,

the first two of which will apply to both potential candidate and candidate countries, the last three will apply to candidate countries only. As regards financial allocations, IPA will provide a total amount of 11,468 billion euro (current prices) over the 2007-2013 period. Each year, the Commission informs the European Parliament and the Council on its intentions regarding the breakdown of the total envelope. (ed)



Call for Proposals of the Austrian Science and Research Liaison Offices

Launch : November 10, 2006; Deadline : February 9, 2007

The Austrian Science and Research Liaison Offices (ASO) Ljubljana and Sofia launch their call for proposals for projects in research cooperation and networking between Austria, the ASO countries (Slovenia and Bulgaria) and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia (including Kosovo). Funding of 128,000 euro is provided by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture; a maximum of 12,000 euro per project is envisaged. Possible project activities are comparative studies, publications, mappings and the exchange of know-how, etc. in the field of "Information Science and Society in SEE countries". Deadline for the submission of proposals is February 9, 2007. More information on eligibility criteria, consortium composition and the details on the topics of the programme are available in the official call text which can be downloaded together with the application form from the ASO website. This website also provides information on the projects funded in previous calls dealing with "Governance - Civil Society" / "Education- Society and Science- Society Nexus". (ed)

Links

Call text:
<http://see-science.eu/doc/510.html>
 ASO Offices in Austria, Slovenia and Bulgaria
<http://see-science.eu/org/509.html>

Event Review: "Why Invest in Science in South Eastern Europe?"

The successful conference "Why invest in Science in South Eastern Europe?" confirmed the interrelation between investments in science and knowledge and socio-economic development in general in South East European countries. The participants came from a wide range of actors in the field - from local and independent experts in science and technology policy to representatives of Ministries for Science and Finance, from international institutions such as UNESCO, World Bank, WIPO, UNIDO to initiatives such as see-era.net, the Stability Pact for SEE. They discussed the current state-of-the-art and research results providing an overview on the region. Encouraging presentations were also held by Commissioner Janez Potočnik and Assistant Director-General at the UNESCO Walter Erdelen. The concluding high-level Round Table resulted in a final communiqué, which is - as well as all presentations given - available on the conference website. The communiqué calls for support to the South East European countries in the development and the implementation of quality science, technology and innovation policies and STI systems. The participating ministers and representatives hope for a successful follow-up. (ed)

Links

<http://see-science.eu/news/283.html>
 J. Potočnik's speech can be downloaded from:
<http://see-science.eu/doc/531.html>

Potočnik Visits Skopje

On November 15-16, 2006, Commissioner Potočnik arrives in Skopje for his first state visit to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Several high-level meetings are planned. He also meets the new Minister of Education and Science, Sulejman Rushiti. The main purpose of his visit is to discuss how research policy can facilitate integration. The Commissioner will also discuss the association of the country to the 7th Framework Programme and visit the Earthquake Institute (IZIIS).

New Perspectives in Project Financing

November 23-24, 2006, Sofia, Bulgaria

An international conference with the title "To Meet the Challenge: Perspectives for Project Financed Research and Project Oriented Research Institutions in South Eastern Europe" will take place on November 23-24, 2006, in Sofia. The event aims at reflecting on the practise of project oriented competitive research funding and its impact and influence on research organisations and individual scientists, and is focussing on South Eastern Europe.

Links

<http://see-science.eu/news/539.html>
 Contact: ASO Sofia, aso-sofia@zsi.at
[CSSHS, sts@unitednetworx.com](mailto:CSSHS_sts@unitednetworx.com)

Higher Education Management and Development in Central, Southern and Eastern Europe

November 26-27, 2006, Danube University Krems, Austria

In this conference, policy-makers, institutional leaders and managers, academic and administrative experts as well as researchers are invited to discuss innovative practises in higher education management in Central, Southern and Eastern Europe.

A keynote address on "The present and future of Higher Education in CSEE" will be delivered by Erhard Busek, Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, followed by presentations from several key-actors from SEE.

Links

Conference Website:
<http://see-science.eu/link/572.html>
 Contact: Danube University Krems
auer.barbara@donau-uni.ac.at

Building Knowledge Society through Public RTD Funding

May 31 - June 2, 2007, Nova Gorica, Slovenia

Several interesting sessions are planned in this initiative of the Slovenian Business and Research Association. The draft programme mentions a round table on 'Development Priorities, Preparations for IPA, and Public Funding of RTD in Countries and Regions of the Western Balkans' and a session on 'Linking RTD, Education & Training, and Innovation Policies in the Pursuit of Achieving Regional Knowledge-based

Competitiveness', as well as suggestions for parallel workshops.

Links

Draft Programme:
<http://see-science.eu/doc/535.html>
 Slovenian Business and Research Association (SBRA)
<http://see-science.eu/org/514.html>





Guidelines for a Science and Research Policy in Bosnia & Herzegovina

This report, part of UNESCO's Strategy for Strengthening Cooperation with South Eastern European Member States, was written by Pierre Papon with the contribution of Stane Pejovnik on the basis of several missions undertaken in Bosnia and Herzegovina throughout 2005 and was carried out in close cooperation with political authorities. It emphasises the need national authorities and the adoption of a national law.

Papon, Pierre, Stane Pejovnik: Guidelines for a Science and Research Policy in Bosnia & Herzegovina. UNESCO Science Policy Series, Vol. 2, UNESCO Venice Office, 2006.

Links

A pdf version of this text can be downloaded via:
<http://see-science.eu/link/515.html>
 (for free)



Accessing and Disseminating Scientific Information in South Eastern Europe

The report is analysing the situation of information systems in the Western Balkan countries. It provides recommendations for action at national level and ideas for regional cooperation.

Ballantyne, Peter: Accessing and Disseminating Scientific Information in South Eastern Europe. UNESCO Science Policy Series, Vol. 3, UNESCO Venice Office, 2006.

Links

A pdf version of this text can be downloaded via:
<http://see-science.eu/link/516.html>
 (for free)



Science Policy and Human Resources Development in South Eastern Europe

The authors of this book shed light on current science policy and human resources development issues in South Eastern Europe with special emphasis on the Western Balkan countries. It addresses socio-economic framework conditions as well as the effects of European integration processes on research and innovation systems in the region. The contributions were prepared and presented in the framework of events and activities organised and/or supported by the Austrian Science and Research Liaison Offices Ljubljana and Sofia.

Austrian Science and Research Liaison Offices (ed.): Science Policy and Human Resources Development in South-Eastern Europe in the Context of European Integration. bm:bwk, Vienna, 2006.

Links

Free print copies of this book can be ordered via:
<http://see-science.eu/link/581.html>
 ISBN: 3-85224-132-4

The Team behind see-science.eu

The eJournal, the services, and the thematic and regional studies available via the website <http://see-science.eu> are compiled by a team in Austria. It is closely linked to the region through several projects and personal experience involving science and technology development.

Project manager of see-science.eu is Elke Dall, sociologist, working for the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) since 2003 as an expert involved in the programme management of the ASO-Calls for Proposals (see page 11), and in programme and project evaluation. Florian Gruber, Communication Officer for the Southeast European Era-Net (SEE-ERA.NET), is co-editor of the eJournal. Proofreading is provided by Angelika Gruber, and Maroš Kollár is responsible for layout and design - not only of the eJournal, but also of the website and its Content Management System. Klaus Schuch, senior researcher at the ZSI, carries out project supervision and quality assurance. Several other colleagues at the Centre for Social Innovation are actively involved in the project by providing targeted information.

Our project partner - the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) - is represented by Evelina Santa, known as project manager of the ERA-WESTBALKAN project, and Ralf König, head of the unit for international cooperation at FFG.

To contact our team, please send your inputs to office@see-science.eu.



From left to right: Ralph König, Klaus Schuch, Elke Dall, Florian Gruber, Evelina Santa, Maroš Kollár

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