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WP 6 - Implementation of a Pilot Regional RTD Program
D 6.1. - Report on the outcome of the mobility workshop for Young Scientists with Relevant stakeholders in SEE and EU

Results of Timisoara Workshop for Mobility

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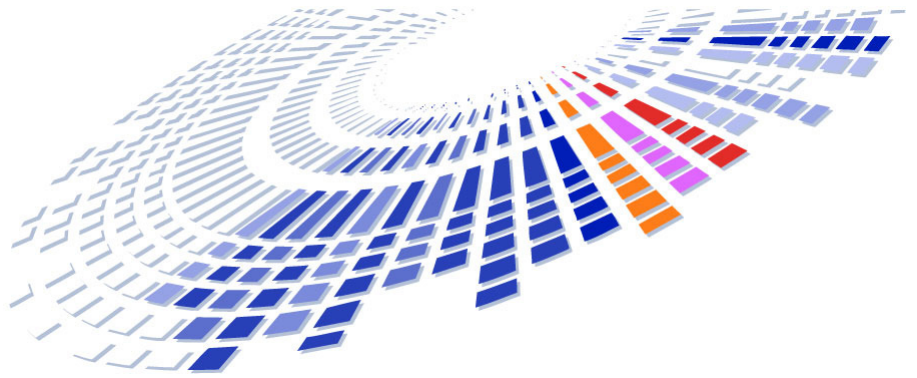
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<u>Dissemination Level</u>	
PU	Public PU
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)

WP 06

D 6.1



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Implementation of a Pilot Regional RTD Programme

D 6.1. - Report on the outcome of the mobility conference for Young Scientists with Relevant stakeholders in SEE and EU

The deliverable D.6.1 “Report on the outcome of the mobility conference for Young Scientists with relevant stakeholders in SEE and EU” is one of the results of WP6: Implementation of a SEE-ERA.NET Regional Programme for Cooperation with South-East Europe (ReP-SEE)

The main purpose of the work package is to develop a ReP-SEE and in particular, following the previous activities, to develop a specific programme targeting the young scientists and the development of their carrier linked to their mobility into ERA.

One of the instruments envisaged by WP6 is the Young Scientists Programme which was planned to take shape after several working group meetings. One of these meetings took place in Timisoara, April 2nd 2009 and it is the object of this report.

The main objectives of the Workshop were:

- To promote the ReP-SEE, including its four Pillars: the Joint Call for European Research Projects; the Accompanying Measures; the Young Scientist Program and the Innovation Program;
- To identify career development opportunities and mobility needs in the West Balkan Countries (WBCs);
- To analyse the fragmentation phenomenon in terms of objectives, evaluation methods and working conditions of the national and regional trans-national mobility Programmes, focusing on the WBCs;
- To identify synergies in terms of trans-national mobility between actions at national and regional level in SEE countries actions at European level;
- To map existing gaps between mobility schemes dedicated to young scientists;
- To discuss the opportunities and the concept of a SEE-ERA.NET Young Scientist Programme as an option to develop the ReP-SEE Young Scientist Pillar.

The agenda of the meeting was structured as follows:

Part one:

- Introduction and welcome
- Results of Bad Neuenahr
- Short presentation of existing programmes by WP leader 6
- Short presentations on the carrier development opportunities and mobility needs by the Representatives of the WBC
- Input by programme owners as regards experiences of their programmes and identified lacks and gaps for participants from the WBC
- Assessment of existing programmes and the participation of WBC researchers in it: Input by Experts and Young Scientists: Needs and experiences
- Summary of the results of the morning session as input for the two working groups

Part two:

- Parallel working groups
- Working group 1: Designing the core elements of the ReP-SEE Young Scientist Programme
- Working group 2: Identifying stand-alone measures to support the mobility of Young Scientists in and with SEE (Measures independently of a YS Programme)

- Report from the two working groups
- SEE-ERA.NET internal: Next Steps in WP6: Building the last WP6 deliverable

Part one

1. Presentation of the Results of Bad Neuenahr

Even though the results of **Bad Neuenahr** do not make the object of this report, some outlines are necessary as they are important elements for the Timisoara Workshop serving as basis for the discussions.

The main tasks undertaken at Bad Neuenahr were:

- Assessing the need for action in the field of mobility with the Western Balkan countries;
- Stocktaking of the existing mobility programs and
- Drafting a first concept of the Rep-SEE Young Scientist Program.

The following needs have been identified:

1. Increasing and promoting attractiveness of the WBCs R&D landscape by creating centres of excellence
2. Awareness raising measures/dissemination of information on mobility opportunities, including appropriate structures as a major challenge in the WBCs
3. Enhancing funding schemes
4. Increasing participation in FP7, in particular in the PEOPLE programme
5. Improving Framework conditions (visa, working permits, social issues, degree recognition, taxation, etc.)

The following existing /"in the pipeline" measures were tackled:

- Web portal www.westbalkanresearch.net
- WEB MOB FP6 project; mobility policy guidelines for the region of Western Balkans
- ERA MORE network,
- WBC-INCO NET
- ERA WESTBALKAN – a database of excellent research institutions in the region
- NCPs: ERA WESTBALKAN+, WBC-INCO NET
- Information Office of the Steering Platform for the WBC
- Bologna Process: EHEA to ERA
- Scientific Visa Package

Presentations were held on national (Austrian, French, German, Greek and Slovenian) mobility programs open to WBCs researchers and on European opportunities for the WBCs in the frame of the FP7 PEOPLE Program (e.g. the Marie-Curie COFUND).

Some of the *comments* made at Bad Neuenahr were that **no new mobility program is needed**, because there should be avoided the overlapping of existing programs, but dissemination of information on existing programs needs to be improved. Other participants

prompted that that training measures for Young Scientists within research networks (as opposed to individual mobility) should be funded.

The following outline of a Young Scientists Programme has been developed at Bad Neuenahr:

General aspects

- Research networks of SEE ERA NET partner countries will be funded
- Mobility measures for young scientists for training and knowledge transfer purpose
- Networks (university+ institute+ innovation center) located in the participating countries
- Young scientists of any nationality, stays of 3 months to 3 years
- Selected networks will recruit the young scientists directly

Core elements

1) Mobility of young scientists:

a) Outward short-term / b) Outward long-term stay with return phase / c) Inward

2) Training activities: provision of training courses, mentorship through experienced researchers, etc. shall be provided

3) Networking activities: conferences, joint workshops, dissemination, etc. for the enhancement of the regional aspect

4) Preparation of EU- or other international projects by jointly selected young scientists in the course of the mobility phase of the research network project

5) Invitation of international top-class researchers to summer schools, workshops organised in the frame of the research network project.

Important facts

- mobility grants inside the networks offered to young scientists (≤ 4 years research career)
- consortium of at least 3 partner institutions (at least 2 in SEE region)
- max. duration 3 years (outward mobility with long-term then mandatory re-integration phase)
- priority given to networks fostering regional cooperation

The following *remarks and suggestions* have been made on the draft concept:

- effectiveness of existing opportunities should be increased by awareness raising events
- attractiveness of the WBCs should be increased by setting up of centers of excellence in the region
- “network projects” of mobility should be funded, not individual mobility projects
- all 3 mobility phases should be addressed: inward, outward and return mechanisms
- inter-sectorial mobility should be tackled, SMEs should be involved
- as there are already established networks are running, existing programs could be opened
- mobility grants should be based on the *juste retour* principle; there should be a real common pot for administration

- however, the principle of juste retour would make it very difficult for WBCs to benefit from the call due to limited national budget.

Most of the comments and remarks made at Bad Neuenahr were again stated at Timisoara:

1. mandatory commitment of the countries involved, especially the WBCs, is very important. The comment was made judging by the fact that more than half of the WBC representatives were not present at the meeting(s) and the workshop would be missing their input and commitment.
 2. it will be very hard to set up a programme for mobility of young scientists if the gaps themselves cannot be identified. There is a danger of missing the main concept of this workshop due to the lack of participation from the WBC side.
 3. is not quite sure if the work package leader would be able to build up a new programme on the limited information available so far.
 4. It should be discussed if opening up already existing programmes would not be a better option than creating a new programme.
 5. the participants are still in the stage of gathering information of existing programmes in the existing countries and the general impression was that the discussion has not moved very much forward since the meeting in Bad Neuenahr.
 6. the main concept of the workshop would be enhancing information on already existing programmes.
 7. the coordinator also agreed with the comments and considering that WBC participation in Bad Neuenahr and Ljubljana has also been very low, one can probably conclude that the WBC concerned are not interested in a new mobility scheme.
 8. Still, apparently Serbia and Montenegro are interested but, whether Bosnia and Herzegovina is interested also, is not clear.
2. There were also presented some of the **existing programmes and initiatives** like: Marie Curie Actions, COST, EMBO, the Alexander von Humboldt foundation, DAAD, different initiatives in Slovenia and Slovakia as well as the French ECO-NETS, with the observation that all these programmes still face some obstacles described in an previous study¹, such as fragmentation and limited scope.

3. Short presentations on the carrier development opportunities and mobility needs by the representatives of the WBC

This section comprises the presentations of Serbia and Montenegro, according to their background papers. The background papers describe the current situation of national opportunities for researcher's mobility and represent the input that all WBCs had to give for

¹ *Barriers to international mobility and the integration of researchers from Western Balkan Countries (WBC) in the European Research Area (ERA)* by Victoria Solitander and Elli Stepanovic, FFG Austria

the Timisoara Workshop. Background papers have been *delivered* by five WBCs: **Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Hertegovina, Albania, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.**

MSTD, Serbia: there are seven different actions for mobility but the most important of them are DAAD (the agreement on young researchers' mobility was signed in 2007) and COST

MPIN, Montenegro: still not participating in COST; there is mostly academic mobility (CEEPUS), PhD studies, ERASMUS/BASILEUS and, as a criteria, applicants are looking for simple application procedure.

4. Input by programme owners as regards experiences of their programmes and identified lacks and gaps for participants from the WBC

This section provided short overviews of existing programmes, in order to identify possible gaps and to gather feedback of programme owners:

- DAAD, Germany
- Humboldt Foundation, Germany
- Marie Curie Fellows Associations, Greece
- Programme for Young Researchers, Slovenia
- Programme for Human Capital, Greece

As an observation, the DAAD representative does not see any really big gaps to be filled, but rather a lack of contacts and information. This problem cannot be solved by adding more programmes, but by promoting efficiently enough the already existing ones. As an option, the states involved could give some additional money dedicated to these programmes so that they can be opened up for additional countries and/or can fund more students. This observation found the support of other participants; still, the budget supplementing issue cannot be raised by most of the countries at the moment.

Also, the Greek representative of MCFA points out that mobility should be considered as a quality indicator for both researchers and researching institutions (proving the ability to be successful in different scientific environments, which trends to become a selection criterion).

6. Assessment of existing programmes and the participation of WBC researchers in it – input by experts and young scientists

This section aimed at revealing the needs and experiences of WBC participation in existing programmes and also revealing the core obstacles to mobility of WBC in order to design a concept for a new programme or complementary measures

The presentations were held by representatives from:

- Centre for Research and Technology Hellas (CERTH)
- University of Nis
- International Relations Officer, University of Sarajevo
- Young Scientist, University of Sarajevo, Montenegro
- Young Scientist, Bay Zoltan Institute for Applied Research, Hungary

After their presentation and discussions some challenges were identified, some particular, but many of them common to all WBCs, like:

- Political fragmentation, no ministry at the state level (Bosnia)
- Foster mobility while avoiding complete brain drain (Serbia, Bosnia)
- Visa, temporary residence and work permits (Serbia, Bosnia, Montenegro)
- Searching for adequate programs is time-consuming (Montenegro, Bosnia)
- Complicated paper-work for application (Montenegro, Bosnia)
- Finding a replacement for researchers with teaching obligations (Montenegro, Hungary)

The participants also learnt about various projects that CErTH coordinates and that perfectly complements the objectives of SEE-ERA.NET: WEB-MOB (www.web-mob.eu), E*CARE (trans-national EURAXESS project), I-SEEMob, SEE-MOB (INCO-NET project).

Important information would also be that EURAXESS is fostering two other EC projects under specific actions, People FP7: HR-MOB – Croatian Mobility Centres and SER-MOB, Serbian Network of Mobility Centres.

Part two

Report of the Working Groups

The second part of the workshop has been dedicated to the setting up of two working groups and SEE-ERA.NET internal affairs.

The groups formed on voluntary bases, each present country decided for one group or another according its own national interests. The groups held their sessions in separate rooms, each having nominated a rapporteur.

Working group 1: Designing the core elements of the Rep-SEE Young Scientists Programme – Rapporteur: Nikos Sidiropoulos – GSRT, Greece

Participating countries: Greece, Romania, Germany, Austria, Montenegro, Hungary, Slovenia and Serbia.

Mr. Sidiropoulos briefly explained the origin and purpose of Rep-SEE. The Joint Action Plan is based on four pillars, the first of which is the Rep-SEE (Regional Programme for SEE). The first pillar of Rep-SEE is a collaborative regional project consisting of the SEE-ERA.NET PLUS joint call, which will be published in summer 2009. The third pillar is the Rep-SEE Young Scientists Programme.

The scope of the present working group was to design the core element of the Young Scientists Programme, but the reality has shown differently. Due to a series of factors, depending or not on the project consortium, the results of this working group and the results of the workshop itself need to adjust accordingly.

Unfortunately, most of the WBC concerned did not participate in the meeting, as well as some of the EU partners. Due to the absence of most partners, the dialogue on the Young Scientists Programme (YSP) cannot take place at the moment, but will hopefully take place in the near future.

Three partners (Hungary, Germany and Greece) expressed their interest to participate in the YSP without making any particular commitment. Participation will only be possible under the conditions that the dialogue will (1) lead to a draft working paper, (2) include at least all the WBC and (3) not result in a duplication of already existing activities. Furthermore, a task force will need to be set up including all WBC representatives.

The sustainability of the Young Scientist Programme is of particular importance. However, Austria, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia are not interested to participate in this kind of dialogue at the moment because (1) there are other tools such as national programmes or Marie Curie programme covering the mobility issue, (2) for some of the partners, a lack of funds available is another reason, (3) some partners prefer to support accompanying measures for awareness-raising and information on existing programmes.

Working group 2: Identifying stand-alone measures to support the mobility of Young Scientists in and with SEE

Rapporteur: Thomas Zettler – DAAD, Germany

Participants: Germany, Austria

Mr. Zettler reported the results of the second working groups on stand-alone measures. The working group had especially discussed the question of information, as well as the possibility of implementing a small programme for short-term stays abroad.

Information is a core element but not always easily accessible. The second working group suggests some actions in order to integrate the existing information on mobility, for example the Excel table prepared by ZSI (see project website) could be updated with more relevant information on the funding schemes, networks and projects active in the region and then published by the EURAXXESS portal, the network of the Humboldt Foundation, the ERA-NET regional newsletters, the Marie Curie website etc.

TO DO for all participants:

- ⇒ All participants should re-write the information on their respective programmes and add more relevant information. Information on networks and projects active in the region should also be added. For each mobility scheme, a very brief description should be provided to facilitate the quick and easy identification of appropriate schemes (in general, application procedures should be simplified).
- ⇒ All input should be sent to the work package leader Romania (oana.costea@ancs.ro), which will provide an updated version of the table with information about existing mobility programmes and information sources. The updated table could then be published by the EURAXESS portal, the network of the Humboldt Foundation, the ERA-NET regional newsletters, the Marie Curie website etc

Furthermore, information on different actions such as training sessions organised by participants could be published by the networks of the institutions present. There should be additional space for best practises of projects or networks (concrete examples, contact

addresses of professors if they agree etc.). Furthermore, the National Contact Points have been mentioned in relation to dissemination on the regional level.

The second suggestion by this working group was to finance so-called “**contact trips**” for **young researchers**, e.g. grants to participate at conferences (including a contribution, such as a presentation or paper) and summer schools for PhD candidates, workshops, etc (similar to the Humboldt Foundation’s “Conference Grants”). The conference participation should also be used to make contacts in the respective country and could create a motivation for longer stays abroad.

These trips should be financed ad-hoc. According to the proposal made by Mr Zettler, all ministries should dedicate some money to finance these grants To apply, a letter of invitation of professor from the place where the conference takes place should be presented, assuring the researcher the opportunity to visit the professors institute/laboratory or similar to assure added value.

SEE-ERA.NET internal: Next steps in WP6: Building the last WP6 Deliverable

From this point forward only consortium members were present and the session was used mostly to discuss over the results of the two working groups and over Deliverables D.6.1 and D.6.2

After the parallel sessions it became obvious that the results of this workshop will not be as proposed by the project when it started in 2004.

The contingency plan conceived to tackle different risks identified in the writing phase of the project (almost 5 years ago) could not foresee the global economic crisis that is affecting each member of the consortium in terms of financial contribution in a regional programme. Also, lack of interest (at least in terms participation) could not be foreseen either as a risk, due to the enthusiasm shown by the entire consortium in the writing and starting phase of the project.

Besides, meanwhile many of the targeted countries (WBS) became Associated Countries to FP7, thus, opening up Marie Curie mobility schemes and this may also be one of the reasons for their little interest in a ReP SEE Young Scientists Programme.

Taking into account all mentioned above, the comments and remarks made during the day, as well as the conclusions from Bad Neuenahr, **the consortium has reached to several conclusions:**

- 1. there is no need for an additional mobility programme dedicated to young researchers in the WBCs, many programmes are already in place**
- 2. there is a need of opening up or extend these programmes to new regions and target groups**
- 3. there is a need of awareness raising and proper dissemination for the existing programmes to the target groups**

4. there is a need of establishment of complete networks of contacts for the existing programmes

Besides, even if the reactions from the participants in both meetings (Timisoara and Bad Neuenahr) were different, the consortium still could not proceed to drafting the Young Scientist Programme because:

5. it is impossible to set up a Young Scientists Programme without the financial commitment and interest of partners concerned

6. at this moment, there is obviously no interest on the side of most partners to set up such a programme.

These conclusions were based solely on the position that the participating partners had to adopt considering new political, social and economic environments. Therefore, the outcome of the two relevant meetings for YSP is not a matter of effort of the consortium, but of the response of the target group and the participants themselves.

The issue of changing the theme of the deliverable will be presented to the Steering Board members and a decision should be taken as soon as possible. The new deliverable could take the form of an “action plan” (however under a different name in order not to create wrong expectations) along with a list suggestions for accompanying measures as mentioned above. The paper is to be prepared until about two weeks before the meeting in Skopje, disseminated through the project consortium with a request for feedback.

As regards to the suggestions made by the Working Group 2, some of them could be presented in more detail. While the idea about the Excel table is rather easy to implement, financing of conference trips is a more difficult endeavour and this idea was not fully appreciated, especially that it would be probably overlapping existing bilateral programmes, as well as current universities procedures for financing this kind of trips. More to it, the procedures for setting up, running and administrating the common pot for such an action would cause a lot of work and costs and the resources, obviously, are not available for most of the partners right now. Still, a suggestion could be made to the countries which do not have such programmes yet to establish a specific national fund for such purposes.

The first idea presented by working group 2 is a lot more feasibly and the EURAXESS portals (EU-wide and national) would be more than happy to publish relevant additional information.